



Series: Academic / Courses, Curriculum, Exams (A 2)
Number: A 2-24
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Policy Title: Supervisor and Supervisory Committee (PhD/Doctoral)

Parent Policy	None
Policy Administrator	Associate Provost, Research & Graduate Studies
Approving Body	Senate
Approval History	2026-04-28; Senate Motion #2025/26 – 049 2024-04-02; Senate Motion #2023/24 – 026

Purpose:

The objectives of this policy are to clarify the composition, qualifications, roles, and responsibilities of a PhD/doctoral student’s supervisor and supervisory committee.

Scope of this Policy:

All PhD/doctoral graduate programs and students

Policy Statement:

Every student in a dissertation-based PhD/doctoral program must have a supervisor and a supervisory committee. The supervisor has responsibilities as outlined in the A 2-33 Graduate Student Research Supervision Policy (linked below) including but not limited to chairing the supervisory committee and providing commitment, accessibility, professionalism, guidance, respect, and consistent encouragement to the student. The supervisory committee should be established within 12 months of the student starting in the PhD/doctoral program.

A supervisor is assigned by mutual agreement between the student, director, and supervisor within the first 12 months of the student’s program. Supervision is a valued aspect of teaching and considered in the allocation of workload.

1. Supervisor Qualifications:

- a. Must be a tenure-track or tenured academic faculty or ranked contract academic faculty who have research as part of their duties.
- b. Supervisors should have competence in the student’s proposed area of research or their methodology.
- c. If the supervisor retires or is re-assigned from the University, they can no longer act as sole supervisor, but may continue as co-supervisor, with the consent of the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS).

2. Supervisory Committee Composition:

- a.** The supervisory committee is structured by Month 20 in the program, consisting of a supervisor and two committee members (or 2 co-supervisors and a committee member).
- b.** The committee is structured in consultation between the student, supervisor, and program director with final approval by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS). Typically, one member is a substantive expert and another member a methodology expert.
- c.** It is recommended that at least one committee member be from a department or a university other than the student's. Interdisciplinary representation (e.g., educational leadership, philosophy) is encouraged, and may involve a qualified faculty member from another department or institution as the third member.
- d.** A fourth committee member may be appointed, with clear rationale. Under certain circumstances, substitution of committee members may be required but the qualifications/constitution of committee as specified in this policy must be retained.

3. Supervisory Committee Qualifications:

- a.** To be considered a qualified committee member, faculty have credentials and record of scholarship (publications, research) in the areas of the student's proposed research or methodology.
- b.** Supervisory committee members are to be available for help at every stage of the student's program, from course selection to comprehensive examination to formulation of the research proposal by establishing the methodology and discussing the results, to presentation and publication of the dissertation.

4. Meetings of the Supervisory Committee

In addition to informal meetings, the student and supervisor are responsible for working together to arrange and hold an annual meeting of the supervisory committee with the student where the student presents their progress and discusses/plans subsequent research towards completion of the thesis as well as any potential additional course requirements. The supervisor is responsible for providing a single page report (form provided by the OGS) signed by all members of the supervisory committee to the OGS no later than 10 days after the annual committee meeting.

Definitions:

Co-Supervision: Joint primary academic mentorship of the PhD/doctoral student by two supervisors.

OGS – Office of Graduate Studies

Supervisor: The primary academic mentor to the PhD/doctoral student in the supervisory relationship.

Supervisory Committee: A committee of TWU's faculty or appointed members who assist the supervisor in providing guidance, consultation, and advice on the PhD/doctoral student's candidacy examination and dissertation. Supervisory committee members are from the PhD/doctoral student's home department but can also be faculty members in other Faculties/Schools/Departments or approved appointed members external to Trinity Western University.

Procedures: Procedures for this policy can be found [here](#).

Child Policies: None

Other Related Policies: A-2-32 PhD/Doctoral Comprehensive & Candidacy (Examination(s))

A-2-33 Graduate Student Research Supervision; A-2-34 Quality of Graduate Research Work Products

R-1-05 Integrity in Research and Scholarship