

Guidelines for Effective Remote Supervision

Updated February 2021

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for supervisors and graduate students to establish clear plans setting out how they will work together remotely. These plans should consider everyone's preferences for working at a distance from campus and one another. Guidelines for communication, meetings, and response times should also be established.

As events continue to evolve, plans may need to be adjusted. This will require patience and understanding from both parties.

Suggestions for students to consider while working in a remote environment

1. Establish a dedicated workspace at home and create a daily work schedule identifying reasonable, doable tasks/goals. Set reasonable expectations of what you can accomplish during these stressful and unpredictable times.
2. Discuss with your supervisor how you will remotely access the resources you need to continue moving forward in your program. Ensure IT supports are in place to access data/resources from home.
3. Take appropriate measures to secure your data/information so that it cannot be readily accessed by a third party. Please see the Chief Information Security Officer's information about [securely working from home](#).
4. Check to make sure your supervisor has your current contact information, and share with others in your research group as you feel appropriate and necessary.
5. Be sure to take breaks and build downtime/self care into your work schedule.
6. Stay connected with friends, family, and members of your community so as to limit feelings of isolation, which can negatively affect personal wellness.

7. Be respectful of the demands on your supervisor's time and energy as they are likely dealing with the challenges of teaching remotely, in addition to potential child care challenges and employment interruptions for family members.

Suggestions for supervisors to consider to effectively supervise students working remotely

1. Ask your students how you can support them to work remotely. (FGSR has created helpful [video resources on remote supervision that you can access here.](#))
2. Make every effort to increase the current consultation/meeting/reporting schedule you have in place so that a structure is maintained for the students.
3. Make every effort to maintain existing meetings with research groups (as applicable) so that collegial connections are maintained and the collective scholarly momentum of the group is preserved. This can be achieved using teleconferencing platforms like Google Hangouts, Zoom, and Skype.
4. If you know you are going to be unavailable for whatever reason in the coming weeks, advise your students of that now. If you know you will be away for an extended period of time, you must adhere to existing regulations to assign an interim supervisor so that your students are not stagnated in progress because of your absence.
5. Maintain regularly scheduled meetings with each student so that they can report their activities individually and gather direct feedback on their progress. The meeting schedule will depend on the individual student circumstances, but it is a good idea to meet at least once a month. When students are preparing for important milestones, more meetings may be warranted.
6. Be understanding and respectful of your student's time, situation, and effort in maintaining positive progression in their program. They are experiencing their own stresses and concerns just as faculty are.
7. Be mindful that 25% of all graduate students are parents. They will be trying to balance all of those demands as they transition to working from home. They may also be dealing with layoffs for spouses, partners, and their own selves at this time.
8. If the university enters into a facilities shut down, student time away from campus is not vacation time. As stated by [University of Alberta's Human Resource Services](#): In accordance with Article 6.04 of the GSA Collective Agreement, academically employed graduate students with graduate teaching assistant (including principal instructor) appointments, graduate research assistantship appointments, and graduate research assistantship fellowships will continue to be paid until the conclusion of their current appointments.

9. Expectations about what can be reasonably accomplished in these challenging times should be clearly communicated. Previous goals/milestones may need to be revisited and adjusted accordingly. Students are facing great uncertainty and will need latitude to adjust as best as they can. (For information on modifying community-based research projects, see [this resource](#).)
10. If your students cannot deliver on goals set out before the COVID-19 situation happened, it will be important for supervisors to revisit and readjust expectations given the unanticipated, uncontrollable factors affecting this evolving situation.
11. Be sure to do wellness check-ins with your students and team, as applicable, so as to maintain points of connection for everyone.
12. Familiarize yourself with student support services via the [FGSR](#), [Dean of Students' office](#) and [GSA](#), and communicate them regularly to students so that they know it is okay to access them as needed.

Contact us

FGSR is available to respond to your questions and concerns. Contact us via email at gradmail@ualberta.ca.

From 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Mountain time on Monday to Friday (except statutory holidays), students can arrange to speak to an FGSR graduate student advisor via Zoom. [Click here to visit our Virtual Counter](#).