

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY

School of Environmental Studies Graduate Program Guide

Supervisors, Advisors and Committees

© School of Environmental Studies
Rm 3134 Biosciences Complex • Queen's University
Kingston • Ontario • Canada • K7L 3N6
Phone 613.533.6602 • Fax 613.533.6090
envst@queensu.ca

www.queensu.ca/ensc

August 2011

Table of Contents

SUPERVISORS AND ADVISORS	1
SUPERVISORY AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES	2



Supervisors and Advisors

Student supervision will follow the general models described in policies of the SGS. Please consult the Guide to Graduate Supervision located at <http://www.queensu.ca/sgs/forfacultyandstaff/gradsupervision/GuidetoGraduateSupervision.pdf>.

All students accepted to the program must have a supervisor (or advisor for course-based students), and a supervisory/advisory committee with expertise appropriate for their planned area of study.

Supervisors and advisors in the MES program must be identified at the application stage by the student and Graduate Program Committee. Committees are usually formed after the students have registered in their first semester. All regular and cross-appointed faculty members of the School of Environmental Studies are eligible to supervise students provided they are recognized as eligible by the *School of Graduate Studies*. Adjunct, and emeritus faculty members are also eligible, but a regular faculty member must be part of the supervisory committee to ensure that someone appointed to the School can supervise a student should the person outside the School no longer be in a position to continue supervision. Potential applicants to the MES program are encouraged to look at research areas available in all departments at Queen's.

Role of the Supervisors and Advisors

A **supervisor** is a faculty member who has agreed to supervise thesis research by an MES student.

An **advisor** is a faculty member who has agreed to advise a course-based student doing a project for their MES Report.

Supervisors and advisors are faculty members selected by graduate students because they have expertise related to the student's interests. In the case of research students, supervisors may also have research grants that are relevant to the students' thesis and that are committed by the supervisor to support the students' research. Advisors do not have any financial commitment to support a course-based student's work needed for their report.

Both supervisors and advisors may request research funding support for their students. Application must be made to the School by November of the first semester of study.

Supervisors and advisors are the students' first point of contact related to their academic program and progress. In contrast, the Graduate Chair and the Graduate Program Assistant are the first administrative contacts. The role of supervisors and advisors is to stimulate the thinking of students, to advise and guide them on project selection and development, to provide feedback on

ideas and reports, and to guide students in course selection and research activities. It is the responsibility of Supervisors and Advisors to provide guidance on research methods and resources within the subject area of the project, to provide guidance on course selection and other academic matters, to ensure that all requirements are met in a timely manner, and to report any problems to the Chair of Graduate Studies.

Supervisors play a more prescriptive role than do advisors, because research funded by grants or contracts is often highly focused, and may require regular progress reports towards specific objectives. By agreeing to work with a supervisor on research supported by the grant, the student is, in effect, agreeing to work in the subject area defined by that grant, and often following a pre-defined schedule. The details of these arrangements should be worked out with the supervisor and reflected in the student's initial research proposal.

While advisors play a similar role as supervisors, they have no financial obligation to support the student's work from a research grant, and they have correspondingly less frequent contacts. While they can advise, it is the student who establishes the project subject matter, goals, and schedule.

Both supervisors and advisors are required to contribute to the stipend of a student funded at the minimum stipend level. If funding is not available, application can be made to the School of Environmental Studies for stipend support.

Supervisory and Advisory Committees

FORMATION:

- Supervisory and advisory committees **should be formed within the first semester** of the student's term of graduate study and are chosen by the student in consultation with the supervisor or advisor. The members of the committee are to be members of the *School of Graduate Studies* at Queen's. Members from outside the University can be added if they provide an expertise not available at Queen's but permission to include outside members at completion must be received from the School of Graduate Studies. No funding is provided by the School or Graduate School for outside members. All members must be listed on the student's Financial and Supervisory Statement each year. The Graduate Program Committee may recommend changes if the committee structure is unsatisfactory (see below).

COMPOSITION:

- The committee for both research and course-based students consists of the supervisor(s) or advisor(s), and **at least** two other members. It is recommended to have at least one committee member from each discipline included in the proposed project. Co-supervisors and co-advisors count as one of the three members.

PROGRAM APPROVAL:

- The student's committee should interview each new student as early as possible during their first term of study and plan the program of studies and research. This program may later be changed by consultation between the student and the supervisory committee.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

- The student's committee **MUST** meet at least once and preferably twice a year with the student. The student must prepare a written summary of progress (usually 3-5 pages) to be distributed to the committee members at least five working days prior to the meeting. The student may also choose to do a presentation to the committee. Video projectors and laptops are available for loan from the main office.
- The supervisor or advisor will keep copies of these summaries and it is recommended that copies also be submitted, along with the committee report (see below), to the Graduate Office for the student's file.
- It is the responsibility of the supervisor or advisor and the student to ensure that these meetings take place. Students should also call a supervisory committee meeting any time they have academic problems or difficulties with their program.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

- A committee report (forms available from Graduate Assistant or [online](#)) must be filed with the Graduate Assistant after each committee meeting, summarizing the student's academic and research progress and plans for the future. Progress reports **must be signed by all members of the committee and dated.**
- On each report the student's progress to date must be indicated as "Satisfactory", "Conditional" or "Unsatisfactory". "Satisfactory" indicates that the student has received a passing grade on graduate courses and that the thesis research is progressing well and on schedule. "Conditional" indicates that due to course failure or lack of research progress the student is not performing at a level that would allow the planned program to be completed successfully within the expected period. In such cases, another committee meeting must be held within four months to further evaluate the student's progress and to assess any conditions imposed at the previous meeting. In some cases this follow-up meeting might have to be delayed for up to eight months if a course has to be taken. At this second meeting the student's progress must be indicated as either "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" only. If an "Unsatisfactory" rating is indicated, another committee meeting must be held within two months to further evaluate the students' progress and again only a "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory" rating can be given. Students receiving a second consecutive "Unsatisfactory" rating

will be asked to withdraw from the program.

- All "Conditional" and "Unsatisfactory" ratings from committee meetings will be brought to the attention of the Graduate Studies Committee which may recommend further courses of action to the student and/or supervisory committee.

ABSENCE OF A SUPERVISOR OR ADVISOR:

- If a graduate supervisor or advisor leaves the University, or is absent on sabbatical leave, or is required by the University to perform other duties that would impair effective supervision, they must make formal written arrangements for an interim supervisor or advisor. Copies of this written arrangement must be given to both the student and the Graduate Office to be put in the student's file. Applicants for graduate study in this Department will be informed by the Graduate Office when their prospective supervisor or advisor will be absent from the Department for any prolonged periods during their first year of graduate work.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE:

- A student who is dissatisfied with his/her progress, or feels that the commitments of the supervisor or advisor are not being fulfilled, should call a meeting of the supervisory committee to discuss the problem.
- If this procedure is unsatisfactory or inappropriate, the student should request an interview, through the Graduate Program Assistant, with the Graduate Chair and/or a member of the Graduate Studies Committee who will recommend an appropriate course of action. In some circumstances, students may be advised to request an interview with the University grievance officers so that an official documentation of complaints can be recorded by an impartial party.