

School of Graduate Studies, Queen's University

Guidelines for Effective Remote Supervision,¹ March 24, 2020

In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, supervisors and students should explore appropriate ways to continue research and scholarly activities. Discuss, plan, and act with consideration for everyone's preferences and abilities for working in a virtual collaborative space. Consider how information will be shared, create clear guidelines for when responses are expected and if working in teams, find a way to ensure that information threads do not get lost.

Beyond making arrangements to ensure continuity of research, it is important to remember that these are exceptional times calling for mutual support and understanding, and may require continuous adjustment and accommodation.

Keep the following in mind as we transition to a Work from Home (WfH) environment.

1. Designate a home space and establish a daily work schedule.
2. In consultation with your supervisor, make sure you have transferred or have remote access to appropriate resources from your study or research spaces on campus.
3. Ensure IT supports are in place to access data/resources.
4. Ensure any data or information related to your research is safely stored and not easily accessed by others.
5. Ensure that supervisors have an up-to-date contact list for all member their research group.
6. Make yourself accessible to safe and secure telecommunications via TEAMS, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or telephone. **Queen's ITS, however, recommends [Microsoft TEAMS](#).** Ensure that the supervisor has an up to date contact list for all members of their research group.
7. Make sure your connection is safe and secure. Please visit [IT Services to learn how](#).
8. Communicate your work schedule to people staying with you at home and adhere to it.
9. Take breaks.
10. When WfH, take care not to isolate yourself and try to maintain personal interactions with friends from within the university and outside beyond strict research related work.
11. International students may be especially vulnerable given their distance from family members. Please keep this in mind by reaching out and supporting them.

Guidelines for effective supervision of students working remotely:

1. Ask what resources and support are needed to WfH.
2. Maintain as much as possible the forms of interactions you had before switching to WfH (e.g., research discussion meetings, regular reports, presentations). Maintaining contact and interactions with other research team members can be useful not only from a

¹ These guidelines have been adapted from the University of Calgary, with thanks.

research productivity perspective, but also for morale and social support. Consider more regular group meetings via TEAMS/Skype/Zoom/teleconference.

3. Be transparent. If you have limited availability due to other obligations, let your students know when you will be available and can respond to questions.
4. Schedule regular and frequent check-ins with each student individually.
5. Respect students' time and availability and try to stick to business hours for deadlines and meetings. Be understanding of the time constraints of students caring for children, the elderly or other family members.
6. Take into consideration that remote communication is not always a perfect substitute to in-person meetings. Feedback, enquiries and answers should be formulated very clearly.
7. Time away from the university under these circumstances is not to be counted towards students' vacation. Ensure that students continue to receive their regular level of funding/scholarship support.
8. Be clear about expectations and be willing to adapt as the situation changes.
9. Be understanding about decreased productivity – there is a lot of anxiety, people are caring for family, might have a lack of resources, and need time to adapt to this new way of doing things.
10. Create smaller, manageable deliverables rather than focusing on big projects that don't require regular check-ins, so that communication can be regularly scheduled.
11. Create opportunities for lab/team members to engage with each other virtually to help maintain social contact.
12. Do not just focus on research and productivity, ask each other about health and wellness.
13. Know what resources are available to students and faculty who are feeling anxious or stressed. The [Division of Student Affairs](#) oversees an array of resources to support students.²
14. These are tough times. However, be cognizant of your emotional leadership as negativity is infectious and can lead to increased anxiety and stress in students. Try to be positive in your interactions with students. Focus on opportunities and making "lemonade from lemons".
15. It doesn't have to be all about work. WfH can be isolating and dispiriting. Make it fun! Start and encourage activities that will lift the spirits of your group and encourage remote social interactions (e.g. custom crossword puzzles, generate memes/videos, create chat groups). Ensure that all activities are appropriate and inclusive.

Practical Research Considerations:

1. Supervisors and students should work together to develop a personalized plan that allows each person to conduct research remotely to the fullest extent possible (e.g.,

² Services students can access for support include [Student Wellness Services](#) (for graduate student counsellors, email: counselling.services@queensu.ca), the [Ban Righ Centre](#) (email: brc@queensu.ca), [Queen's University International Centre](#) (email: isa@queensu.ca), and the [Office of Faith and Spiritual Life](#) (email: chaplain@queensu.ca). There are also supports available in the Kingston community. Please see [Queen's Green Folder](#) for resources in the community. For academic support, students may wish to reach out to [Student Academic Success Services](#) (aka the writing centre).

performing data analysis, literature review, modeling and computation, writing manuscripts and applications, and planning).

2. Prioritize activities, and discuss which activities can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed and possible alternatives that can limit potential research interruptions.
3. Discuss possible impacts on activities and deadlines involving external collaborators or partners as well as planned research-related trips. Develop strategies to deal with these while WfH.
4. Communicate with students that ethics approvals may be modified to shift from in-person contact to phone/video contact with subjects.
5. Suspend all testing for any studies with human participants that take place on campus. Find other research-related tasks that can be performed (e.g., literature reviews, draft chapters/articles, data analyses, etc.).
6. For any community-based research, postpone any in-person contact with study participants, including study visits, focus groups, interviews, etc. and advise your collaborators in the community to do the same. Where possible, these in-person meetings should be rescheduled as virtual meetings by telephone, Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom or similar (Queen's University recommends Microsoft Teams).

Find additional information see the university's IT Services [webpage for preparing to work remotely](#).

Sources:

1. Grosse, C.U. (2002). Managing Communication within Virtual Intercultural Teams. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65(4), 22-38.
2. University of Calgary, Guidelines for Remote Supervision, adapted with thanks.