Clarifying expectations for graduate students and supervisors

Maintaining clear and open communication is fundamental to a positive experience for both graduate students and supervisors! The following are some important topics in the course of a graduate student's degree as both a student and an employee. This document is a management aid and it is recommended that student and supervisor both review all topics, agree on a shared understanding for each one, write this down in the spaces provided, and sign at the bottom. Then, photocopy/scan this document so both parties can keep a copy and refer to it in the future.

There may be other topics that students and supervisors may wish to discuss, or some may not be applicable. This is also not meant to replace any existing contracts, but rather to serve as a tool to help both parties navigate the student's degree program. It may be helpful to revisit and update these expectations from year to year.

There is also a more extensive guide to student-supervisor relationships at sfu.ca/biology/graduate/info-current-students/student-supervisor-relationships.html.

If you have any questions or concerns about this document, you can contact the Biology Graduate Caucus (DGSC student reps, associate chair, and/or chair; biscgrads.blogspot.com/p/contact.html), the Biology Departmental Graduate Studies Committee Chair (see sfu.ca/biology/contact/dept-committees.html), or the Biology Department Chair (biscchr@sfu.ca).

What are some of the key goals and milestones to complete in: the next year? In the whole degree? (e.g. publications, chapters, timelines)

Will the student select courses or will the supervisor/committee be involved?

How often will in-person meetings with the supervisor be held? Who will be responsible for initiating these meetings? Will this be individually, or as a group? What will be discussed in these meetings (e.g. research updates, student well-being)?

How will the student determine which conference(s) to attend, and how will they be financially supported to attend? Often supervisors sponsor 1 conference/year, and students seek travel grants from conferences, SFU's Travel/Minor Research Awards (TMRA; high chance of success), or other sources.

What is a reasonable turnaround time for feedback on written work (e.g. conference abstracts, manuscript drafts)?

Is there an expectation that the student will apply for funding for stipend, and/or for research? Who is responsible for finding funding opportunities?
From which sources will the student **be paid**? How often and when will they be a teaching assistant (TA), and/or a research assistant (RA)?

If the student receives a scholarship that provides the entire minimum guaranteed stipend, will they receive a **top up**, and if so, how much?

What happens if a scholarship **runs out**, or if the student leaves the **guaranteed funding period**?

What happens if the student needs to take a **leave of absence** related to physical or mental health, family responsibilities, etc?

What is the expectation for **working off-campus**? Are there certain hours that the student is expected to be in the lab/field/on campus?

Are there circumstances that affect which times the student or supervisor can be **reached by email** (e.g. family responsibilities, teaching duties, health issues, etc)? *(Note that the caucus does not endorse expecting availability in all non-work hours)*

How much **vacation** time is reasonable? Is there an expectation that the student will notify the supervisor of vacation time in advance? Are there research/course requirements that constrain when vacations can be taken?

What opportunities and expectations are there for the student to **mentor or train** others in the lab?

**Signatures**

**Student**'s name: ________________________    **Supervisor**'s name: _______________________  

**Student**'s signature: ________________________    **Supervisor**'s signature: _______________________

DATE: ______________