Guidelines for first supervisory committee meeting

For all new MSc or PhD students, a supervisory committee consisting of the senior supervisor and normally two additional faculty members is established in the first semester, under the guidance of the senior supervisor. The committee must meet with the student during the first semester, on a date assigned by the graduate program assistant. The objective of the first meeting is to communicate the new student’s academic/research background and to introduce to the committee the research area they are proposing to explore.

Prior to the meeting

One week prior to the meeting the student should circulate to the committee two documents:

1. an up-to-date Biographical Profile, signed by the senior supervisor

2. a brief written summary of the research area to be investigated, together with the proposed hypotheses/questions and experimental approaches to be used for tackling these.

The suggested length of the report is 2-3 single-spaced pages, not including Figures (which may be useful) and relevant references. It is understood that at this point the student’s knowledge of the research subject may be rudimentary, and that they may need input from the senior supervisor in preparing this document.

During the meeting

During the meeting, the student will review the proposed project aims and approaches with the committee and receive their comments on its significance, feasibility and suitability for that student. This normally takes the form of a relatively brief presentation (e.g., 20 minutes or more, as required); it may include preliminary data already collected, although this is not required. The committee is also encouraged to suggest a suite of courses that will provide the best scholarly preparation and enable success with the research project.

At the very end of the meeting, the student should leave the room (but remain nearby) to provide faculty members the opportunity to discuss matters pertinent to the meeting in private.

The student is expected to bring to the meeting the Meeting feedback form (preferably on a laptop) so that the form may be filled in by the committee members at the meeting. The comments and suggestions will then be discussed with the student.

Following the meeting

Once the student has read the comments and suggestions in the Meeting feedback form, they must compose a brief Response (~1 page) that outlines measures to be taken to meet any concerns raised during the meeting; if there were no concerns, the student’s Response could simply be an outline of the experimental and educational priorities to be pursued during the academic year. The student may wish to discuss this response with their supervisor. Finally, the student must compile into a single PDF file the following: (i) their response; (ii) the senior supervisor’s comments; (iii) each of the committee member’s response; (iv) written summary. It is the student’s responsibility to send the compiled document to all supervisory committee members, and graduate program assistant within one week after the meeting. Also send the signed Biographical Profile and Student/Supervisor agreement to the grad program assistant.