Guidelines for supervisory committee meetings for progress assessment

For all continuing MSc or PhD students, progress must be assessed and approved by the student’s supervisory committee through regularly held supervisory committee meetings.

Students who are due to submit a graduate progress report (GPR) will receive a generated email from Grad Studies with instructions. Committee meetings must occur no later than 12 months after the previous progress approval.

Please note: There are additional instructions in these guidelines. You do not only complete the online GPR. Follow the instructions below.

(Note: The PhD Graduate Research Candidacy Examination (MBB 806) also involves committee members and progress assessment, but is not identical to a Progress Meeting in format or purpose and does not replace a supervisory committee meeting or GPR.)

The objective of progress approval is to confirm that the student’s academic development is keeping up with expectations for students at a comparable training level in the chosen research discipline. Aspects to be assessed typically include not only progress in original research (the thesis project itself), but also technical skills, theoretical knowledge, and written and oral communication skills.

- Note: student interaction with committee members is not intended to be restricted to committee meetings. Indeed, the department encourages students to seek guidance from committee members whenever needed, either one-on-one or assembled in informal meetings.

The workflow will look like this:
Report generated and student receives an email notification > Student schedules supervisory committee meeting > Student verifies pre-populated information and adds any applicable updates online (go.sfu.ca) and submits to sr. supervisor > Senior Supervisor completes evaluation online > Student acknowledges > Supervisor Committee Meeting held > Committee members complete evaluation online > Chair approves (optional: comments) > Student acknowledges entirety of report.


The moment you receive the generated email you should schedule a meeting and follow the workflow above. Update all your information as soon as possible and submit (go.sfu.ca) to sr. supervisor.

Your sr. supervisor should summarise his/her evaluation of your success in meeting previous year’s research and training expectations, while also highlighting notable strengths and/or weaknesses, and suggested goals for the coming year.
Prior to the meeting

At least ONE week prior to the meeting, circulate the following documents to your committee via email:

1. A written summary of your progress made in your thesis project. The suggested report is 5 single-spaced pages, not including figures and relevant references. The report should include:
   - a title
   - an abstract
   - background information pertaining to the research area; include useful figures as needed; state hypotheses and specific aims
   - description of the results obtained during the last year, and interpretations
   - future directions (proposed research) with estimated timelines

2. Committee comments and your response from the most recent committee meeting (if not accessible online).

During the meeting

During the meeting, the student will deliver an oral presentation to the committee, explaining the project background, aims, approaches, outcomes (including data collected over the past year) and significance. The presentations, together with questions/comments by the supervisory committee, vary in duration, but are typically 1.5 – 2 hrs. A suggested use of the meeting time would be: < 1 hr presentation, 0.5 hr questions from the committee, 0.5 hr discussion of progress and plans future work. It is suggested that the student’s presentation time be focused on progress made since the last meeting.

At the meeting, the student will receive oral comments from the committee on recommendations for the coming year and its significance, feasibility and suitability for that student. Notably, the discussion should explicitly include any of the following administrative milestones that are anticipated in the coming year:

- transfer from MSc to PhD program
- undertaking the MBB 806 PhD Candidacy Exam
- submission of the MSc or PhD thesis for defence
- if applicable, planned leaves of absence
- if applicable, need for significant changes in research direction (e.g. a new project)

At the 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.
The comments and suggestions will then be discussed with the student. The student should then explain to the other committee members that they must complete their comprehensive feedback in the online system and will receive an auto-generated email to do this. Comprehensive feedback should cover comments on:

- progress in original research
- technical skills
- theoretical knowledge
- written communication
- oral communication
- steps that should be taken to ensure goals are reached

*External committee members can complete the attached Supervisory Meeting Feedback form and the Grad Program Assistant will enter online on their behalf.*

Also refer them to [http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/gpr/committee-resources.html](http://www.sfu.ca/dean-gradstudies/current/gpr/committee-resources.html) for more information and instructions.

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**Following the meeting**

The student will only be able to read the feedback once all committee members have completed the online form and the grad chair approved and sent it back to the student to review and accept the feedback. [At this time, there is no option in the GPR online system to upload a pdf with the student’s response and progress report. Grad Studies office is working on this.]

*Once the online system allows to upload a pdf, the following will apply:*

After the student has read the comments and suggestions online, 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. The student will then upload their response with the progress report.

But, for now, submit your progress report to the Grad Program Assistant until the pdf option in the online system is available.

Finally, the student must send the **updated and signed Student/Supervisor agreement** to the grad program assistant. *The grad program assistant will not follow-up on this. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure this is done.*

*Revised: January 15, 2019*