



Supervision of Doctoral Students: A Checklist for Students

By entering into a doctoral program, a student has made a commitment to devote the time and energy necessary to engage in research and write a dissertation that makes a substantial and original contribution to knowledge.

It is the responsibility of the student to conform to university and program requirements and procedures with regard to such matters as research ethics, dissertation style, etc.

Although it is the duty of the supervisor to be reasonably available for consultation, the primary responsibility for keeping in touch rests with the student. Building a good supervisor/supervisee relationship will likely be fostered by attending to the following checklist:

- Have you determined whether the program and area in which you wish to concentrate are staffed by several active faculty members? Before choosing a supervisor, have you consulted the list (available in the Department Bulletin) of faculty research interests and publications? Have you asked students in the program currently working with a prospective supervisor what their experience has been?
- Does your supervisor know how to reach you (email, telephone, other) when you have to be off-campus for significant periods of time? Do you respond promptly to all communications received?
- Have you developed an understanding with your supervisor concerning both the mechanics of supervision and the kind and amount of direction you wish and expect to receive? Are you in agreement about the frequency and regularity with which you plan to see each other, and about a “plan of campaign” (choosing a thesis topic, the time of submission of a dissertation outline, of draft chapters, etc.)? Have you discussed your mutual expectations concerning the quality and originality of the completed dissertation?
- Have you spent some time in devising a plan for writing the dissertation that can be discussed with your supervisor? (Remember that by and large the dissertation should be the student’s own effort.) Have you obtained any indication that your research is beginning to yield new and interesting material? Are you meeting regularly with your supervisor to review progress? Do you consult with other members of the advisory committee as appropriate?
- Are you presenting your work to your supervisor chapter-by-chapter (or section-by-section) in an approved format? The typescript should be legible and, unless you and your supervisor agree otherwise, accompanied by notes.
- If you are working towards a deadline, are you allowing sufficient time for your supervisor to read all parts of the thesis in the final form? The responsibility for proofreading the final clean copy is yours, and this reading, too, may take some time.

Are you aware that the doctoral dissertation, though important to your career, is the beginning rather than the sum of your academic life, and should be completed without undue delays? In other words, the dissertation should be no longer than necessary.

Are you fully aware of your rights as a graduate student? These include:

The right to demand that faculty members read and comment on your work within reasonable delays. Barring explicit agreement to the contrary, a few weeks' turnaround on a chapter is reasonable: a few months is not. On the other hand, it is not reasonable to expect a week's turnaround if you present a professor with 300 pages of unseen typescript.

The right to choose a supervisor and adviser who need not be members of your original area committee.

The right to appeal what seem to you unreasonable treatment on the part of any faculty members. If you as a student have a dispute or problem that you cannot resolve with a supervisor or other faculty member, you are strongly advised to discuss it in confidence with the Graduate Coordinator. The GPSU president will also be available to assist or advise.