



Procedure for Approving Academic Faculty as Graduate Student Supervisors

1. Introduction:

In order to serve the best interests of graduate students, faculty, and the university, it is imperative to implement supervisor approval and appointment procedures that are consistent, transparent and that promote accountability. Since the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) has a unique faculty appointment track structure, the purpose of this document is to outline the approval requirements and the supervision privileges of the three different faculty appointment tracks in the FoM (Tenure, Partner and Clinical) and of prospective co-supervisors who are not affiliated with UBC. For more in-depth information regarding the background and processes of supervisor approval in the FoM see Appendix A.

2. Key Points and Processes:

2.1 Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies Membership

Members of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) have full supervisory privileges, including the privilege to chair PhD examinations, and vote at G+PS general meetings. G+PS members must be listed in the UBC Calendar under the graduate program(s) with which they are affiliated and they can be given access as evaluators to the admissions system. They also have an extended supervisor profile on the G+PS website.

Only (Grant) Tenure-track faculty members holding the rank of Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, or Professor are eligible for membership in G+PS, and must be approved by the graduate program with which they are affiliated.

While other faculty types (Partner-track, Clinical-track and non-UBC affiliates), who have been approved by a FoM program and G+PS, may supervise, co-supervise, or serve on the supervisory committee, are not eligible for membership in G+PS.

Importantly, partner-track faculty, while not full G+PS members, **DO COUNT towards the 50% G+PS member requirement (See Section 2.2.1)** for supervisory commitment composition.

For more information regarding G+PS membership and privileges visit [Membership in G+PS page](#) and [G+PS Affiliation page](#).

2.2 Information regarding supervisory committee structure

Doctoral supervisory committees must consist of a minimum of three members (including the supervisor), and must assume one of the following configurations:

- one supervisor and at least two committee members;
- one primary supervisor and one co-supervisor and at least one committee member;
- Or two co-supervisors and at least one committee member.

Note: a doctoral supervisory committee may not have three co-supervisors.

Master's supervisory committees must have at least two members, but a minimum of three members (including the supervisor) is recommended. The committee structure must assume one of the following configurations:

- either one supervisor and at least one committee member;
- one primary supervisor and one co-supervisor and one committee member;
- Or two co-supervisors and one committee member.

Note: a master's supervisory committee may not have three co-supervisors.

2.2.1 Supervisory committee 50% G+PS membership requirement

Importantly, at least 50% of the members of a supervisory committee must be members of G+PS. This is to ensure that the committee has sufficient institutional knowledge, experience and affiliation with UBC to maximize the level of support that is provided to the graduate student.

While Partner-track faculty are not considered UBC employees, and are therefore not eligible to become **full** G+PS members, it is important to note that they **DO COUNT towards the 50% G+PS member requirement** for supervisory commitment composition.

For more information regarding supervisory committee structure and responsibilities visit the [G+PS Supervision web page](#).

2.3 General overview regarding approval process

Approval to supervise any graduate student, irrespective of faculty track type, must first be made at the individual program level, based on the unique requirements and expectations set forth by each program. It is important to note that while initial approval of supervisors is made by each individual program, **final approval rests with G+PS**. Thus, it is not appropriate to confirm any approval until confirmation from G+PS has been received.

There are several types of graduate programs within the FoM (some departments run their own graduate program, others do not), each with its own specific approval procedures. Some departmental graduate programs only accept supervisors who are appointed in that department, while others will grant supervisor privileges to non-departmental members (e.g. Experimental Medicine). Other programs are interdisciplinary, and are not affiliated with a particular department (e.g. Cell & Developmental Biology, Interdisciplinary Oncology, or Neuroscience). The program may require a CV and letter summarizing why a prospective (co)supervisor wants to join that program. A committee within each program must be designated to approve supervisory privileges.

It is important to note that approval to supervise a graduate student in one program, does **NOT** provide access for supervision in all other graduate programs (even for (grant) tenure-track faculty). Instead, eligibility to supervise in multiple programs will require separate approvals.

2.4 Approval information for specific appointment types

2.4.1 (Grant) Tenure-track Faculty

(Grant) Tenure-track faculty must apply for initial approval with each FoM graduate program that they wish to supervise in. Prospective supervisors must contact the Program Director (by way of the Graduate Program Coordinator) of the program that they wish to be affiliated with to ask if they can be considered as supervisors in that program. For administrative contacts for all FoM graduate programs visit the [GPE Office Contact page](#).

(Grant) Tenure-track faculty are the only faculty group with full [G+PS privileges](#) (see section 2.1). They are also the only group whose names are added to the UBC [Calendar](#). Once a Tenure-track faculty member has been approved at the program level, they must inform Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies at graduate.curriculum@ubc.ca and ensure that Tenure-track faculty members get added to their [Calendar entry](#). You will receive an email from G+PS confirming addition to the Calendar and the G+PS website. This also serve as a confirmation of final approval of supervisory privileges for the faculty member.

2.4.2 Partner-track Faculty

Partner-track faculty must apply for initial approval with each FoM graduate program that they wish to supervise in. They must contact the Program Director (by way of the Graduate Program Coordinator) of the program they wish to be affiliated with to ask if they can be considered as supervisors in that program. For administrative contacts for all FoM graduate programs visit the [GPE Office Contact page](#).

Partner-track faculty are not considered UBC employees, and are therefore not eligible to become full G+PS members. However, it is important to note that partner-track faculty **DO COUNT towards the 50% G+PS member requirement** for supervisory commitment composition. Once a Partner-track faculty member has received approval from a program in the FoM, their privilege to count towards the 50% G+PS committee membership requirement will be retained in any other program in the FoM, as well as any other faculty at UBC. However, they must still be approved for supervision by each program separately.

Once a partner-track faculty member has been recommended for approval (either as Supervisor or for Committee Membership) at the program level, the following form must be completed and sent to FoM's GPE Office (med.research@ubc.ca):

- [FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form](#)
 - **Note:** This form must be completed and submitted to FoM's GPE Office for each student, unless approval has been granted for a 5-year period.

GPE office will forward this approval form to UBC G+PS with a cc to graduate program in the email. Please note that final approval can only be granted by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

Note: if the faculty member wishes to be affiliated with a Graduate Program in a Faculty other than FoM, a different set of procedures needs to be followed which involves completion of the [Recommendation for Supervision of Graduate student by Non-G+PS Member Form](#) and/or [Recommendation for Non-G+PS Member to Join Supervisory Committee Form](#) and associated documentation. Please contact relevant individuals in that Program/Faculty.

2.4.3 Clinical Faculty

Clinical faculty must first be approved for all supervision and co-supervision of students at the graduate program level. They may be recommended for a given student, or for all students over a 5-year period, but this latter request is at the discretion of the individual graduate program committee. **NOTE:** If a program grants supervision privileges for a 5-year period, then the accompanying Letter of Recommendation has to clearly stipulate the rationale for doing so, rather than merely indicating why the nominee is qualified to supervise the proposed graduate student. All recommendations must ultimately be approved by G+PS via the relevant forms, which must first go through the FoM Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Office who will check them for completion and forward the approvals to G+PS.

For Clinical-faculty to obtain permission to supervise or co-supervise, the following form and accompanying documents must be submitted via the GPE Office's [Supervisor Approval Online Application Portal](#):

- [Recommendation for Supervision of Graduate Student by non-G+PS Member Form](#)
- Letter of Recommendation from graduate program that indicates the particular qualifications that make the nominee suitable for proposed graduate student and/or 5-year period.
- Statement from nominee assenting to supervise or co-supervise and accepting supervisor responsibilities (supervisor responsibilities should be reviewed and discussed by the student, graduate advisor, and the prospective supervisor to ensure the viability and desirability of the arrangement, including provision for financial support).
- Curriculum Vitae (not required for UBCO faculty in the Research Professoriate Stream).
- [FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form](#)

For Clinical-faculty to obtain permission to join a doctoral supervisory committee, this can be approved by the Program Director alone. The following forms and accompanying documents must be submitted via the GPE Office's [Supervisor Approval Online Application Portal](#):

- [Recommendation for Non-G+PS Member to Join Supervisory Committee Form](#)
- Letter from graduate program that indicates the particular qualifications that make the nominee suitable for proposed graduate student and/or 5-year period.
- Statement from nominee assenting to supervise or co-supervise and accepting supervisor responsibilities (supervisor responsibilities should be reviewed and discussed by the student, graduate advisor, and the prospective supervisor to ensure the viability and desirability of the arrangement, including provision for financial support).
- Curriculum Vitae (not required for UBCO faculty in the Research Professoriate Stream).
- [FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form](#)

2.4.4 Non-UBC Affiliates

Non-UBC affiliates can only apply for co-supervision privileges in the FoM. In very rare cases, they may be given primary supervisory privileges, though this is not preferred. They may be recommended for a given student, or for all students over a 5-year period, but this latter request is at the discretion of the individual graduate program committee. **NOTE:** If a program grants supervision privileges for a 5-year period, then the accompanying Letter of Recommendation has to clearly stipulate the rationale for doing so, rather than merely indicating why the nominee is qualified to supervise the proposed graduate student. All recommendations must ultimately be approved by G+PS via the relevant forms, which must first go through the FoM Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Office who will check them for completion and forward the approvals to G+PS.

For non-UBC affiliates to obtain permission to co-supervise in the FoM the following forms and accompanying documents must be submitted via the GPE Office's [Supervisor Approval Online Application Portal](#):

- [Recommendation for Supervision of Graduate Student by non-G+PS Member Form](#)
- Letter from graduate program that indicates the particular qualifications that make the nominee suitable for proposed graduate student and/or 5-year period.
- Statement from nominee assenting to supervise or co-supervise and accepting supervisor responsibilities (supervisor responsibilities should be reviewed and discussed by the student, graduate advisor, and the prospective supervisor to ensure the viability and desirability of the arrangement, including provision for financial support).
- Curriculum Vitae.
- [FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form](#)

For non-UBC affiliates to obtain permission to join a doctoral supervisory committee, this can be approved by the Program Director alone. The following forms and accompanying documents must be submitted via the GPE Office's [Supervisor Approval Online Application Portal](#):

- [Recommendation for Non-G+PS Member to Join Supervisory Committee Form](#)
- Letter from graduate program that indicates the particular qualifications that make the nominee suitable for proposed graduate student and/or 5-year period.
- Statement from nominee assenting to supervise or co-supervise and accepting supervisor responsibilities (supervisor responsibilities should be reviewed and discussed by the student, graduate advisor, and the prospective supervisor to ensure the viability and desirability of the arrangement, including provision for financial support).
- Curriculum Vitae.
- [FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form](#)

3. Supervision Privileges Approval Matrix:

	(Grant)Tenure-Track Faculty	Partner- Track Faculty	Clinical Faculty	Non- UBC Affiliates
Able to be primary or co-supervisor?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (usually co-supervisor only)
Full G+PS member?	Yes	No	No	No
G+PS member for 50% committee complement?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Able to vote at G+PS meetings?	Yes	No	No	No
Able to Chair PhD exams?	Yes	No	No	No
Approval needed by program committee to (co)supervise	Yes (once, upon entry to program)	Yes (once, upon entry to program)	Yes (for each student)	Yes (for each student)
Faculty member added to UBC Calendar	Yes (email G+PS at graduate.curriculum@ubc.ca to inform about faculty member addition)	No	No	No
FoM Graduate Supervisory Privileges Approval Form	Completed once, when first approved by program committee	Completed for each student or for 5-year period, (email the form to FoM GPE at med.research@ubc.ca)	Completed for each student via Online Portal	Completed for each student via Online Portal
Recommendation for Supervision of Graduate Student by non-G+PS member Form	n/a	n/a	Completed for each student via Online Portal	Completed for each student via Online Portal
Able to sit on advisory committee?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Approval needed by program committee to sit on advisory committees?	Yes (once, upon entry to program)	Yes (once, upon entry to program)	No – can be approved by Graduate Advisor	No – can be approved by Graduate Advisor

Recommendation for non-G+PS member to join supervisory committee	n/a	n/a	Completed for each student or 5-year period via Online Portal	Completed for each student or 5-year period via Online Portal
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APPENDIX A

1. Background

UBC [Senate policy](#) stipulates that members of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) may supervise graduate students, chair examining committees, and vote at Faculty general meetings. It states that faculty members ‘must be approved by their disciplinary faculty’ for membership in G+PS, and that supervision privileges for faculty or individuals other than those on tenure track need additional approval by G+PS.

Three issues have brought the Faculty of Medicine and G+PS to a conversation around this policy and the general procedures for granting supervision privileges:

- The first is the development of Partner-track appointments. Faculty appointed through the Partner-track are not employees of the university, and are not considered Tenure-track according to the definition of the above Senate policy. However, they are held to the same academic expectations as those in the tenure-stream, and are expected to contribute to the University according to established responsibilities in teaching, research, and service, depending on the appointed rank. Because they are not Tenure-track, they are not members of G+PS, but are eligible for full graduate supervision privileges. Currently, therefore, they need separate approval by G+PS to supervise students. This was considered problematic as this extra requirement differentiates them from individuals who have the same qualifications, responsibilities and expectations.
- An additional issue in Medicine is that of the diversity of faculty members’ academic backgrounds and employment terms. Both of these may in theory be considerations in the granting of supervision privileges. It is the Faculty of Medicine’s responsibility to approve membership in G+PS for Tenure-track faculty, however that responsibility has been delegated to graduate programs. There is currently no standardized approach to that assessment, either with regards to process or criteria, and there are no standardized policies or processes for stipulating potential conditions around supervision.
- Medicine has a significant number of interdisciplinary programs drawing faculty supervisors from departments with no graduate programs. In these cases (and in departmental programs as well), the decision to grant membership in G+PS often resides with a single individual – the graduate program director. This can place that individual in a difficult position, and could result in inconsistencies or pressured decisions around an outcome that is of immense importance to all concerned.

Both the faculties of Medicine and G+PS are interested in introducing processes to address the above that are consistent, transparent, and promote the right accountability around designating graduate supervisors to allow the best interests of students, faculty, and the University to be well served.

In the discussions between Medicine and G+PS, it was agreed that processes should be put in place across all programs in Medicine to ensure consistency and rigour in the decisions around graduate supervision privileges for all faculty members. If these are in place, then G+PS has agreed to delegate the authority to graduate programs to grant supervision privileges to partner appointees. The process applies to decisions regarding sole or co-supervision of master's and doctoral students, membership on doctoral supervisory committees, and eligibility to serve as university examiners on the final doctoral examination.

The process applies to tenure track, grant tenure and partner track appointed faculty. Clinical faculty stream and others outside the tenure and partner streams will still require G+PS approval (as has been the case in the past).

2. Committee

All decisions regarding granting of supervisory privileges to academic faculty members as outlined above will be made by a committee. Generally, the graduate program director will chair the committee, and it will be composed of at least three tenured faculty. The committee may be the same as the graduate program advisory committee if already in place.

3. Assessment Standards and Decisions

The committee will review the candidate's curriculum vitae, including an outline of his/her experience in graduate education and appointment conditions (e.g., employer, % FTE clinical responsibilities, and term, if applicable), and use the standards of G+PS in making its judgment.

Decisions regarding full/co-supervision or supervisory committee privileges should be based on the following criteria:

- *Appropriate academic background and experience in graduate education.* Candidates who hold PhD degrees and who meet the additional criteria below are normally granted full supervisory privileges. Some programs may require additional experience in graduate education (e.g., service on supervisory or examining committees, or co-supervision) or professional development (e.g., a G+PS workshop on graduate supervision) before granting sole supervision privileges. Candidates without a PhD, and who meet the additional criteria below, will normally be granted co-supervisory privileges initially; an experienced faculty member will be required to serve as the other co-supervisor for their first doctoral student. Thereafter this requirement would not usually apply.
- *Productive research program relevant to graduate education.* The candidate should have a substantial research track record and a suitable level and duration of funding to support graduate student research activities.
- *Appropriate time commitment.* The candidate should be able to commit an appropriate amount of time for graduate student supervision and active participation in the educational activities of the graduate program.

Candidates who are granted full supervision privileges (Tenure-track only) will normally also be approved to serve on supervisory and examining committees, and to chair examining committees. For others, decisions regarding service on master's and doctoral examining committees and doctoral supervisory committees should be based on their expertise and track record relevant to students' research projects.

In addition to ensuring that relevant disciplinary expertise is represented on students' committees, it is important to ensure such committees have a majority of members experienced in the graduate education process.

4. Communication

Upon the committee's recommendation, the program director sends the faculty member a letter outlining the privileges granted, any associated conditions (such as initial co-supervision), and associated duties. The faculty member is reminded of expectations regarding:

- *Bullying/harassment.* All UBC faculty are required to take the online [course](#) on bullying and harassment.
- *Responsible conduct of research:* It is recommended that all faculty participate at least once as a facilitator in the 'Responsible conduct of research' course required of biomedical graduate students in Faculty of Medicine.
- *Mentor obligations:* G+PS outlines major supervision responsibilities [here](#). Programs are strongly encouraged to have official documents discussed and signed by each student and supervisor outlining mutual expectations and working conditions. Such a document is required by UBC Policy SC6 (*previously Policy 85*) on Scholarly Integrity. A template is provided [here](#).

The names of approved faculty members and associated privileges are communicated to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Office in the FoM, who checks it for completion and sends it to G+PS for final approval.

5. Review

It is essential that any concerns about ongoing supervisory practice are addressed as they arise. These may include student complaints, or patterns of excessive times to completion, high attrition, inadequate funding, or poor performance at thesis examinations. Assistance with the handling of these concerns is available from the G+PS dean's office. Programs are encouraged to articulate high expectations for graduate supervision and to inculcate a culture of excellence in that realm.

6. Documentation

Graduate programs are asked to submit written confirmation to the Faculty of Medicine Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Office once the above processes for approval of supervisory privileges are in place.