

PURPOSE: Clarify and update DCS's rules for graduate student supervision.


This update is, in part, motivated by a stricter application and approval process for DCS graduate faculty memberships (i.e., CS-SGS memberships).


Note: SGS makes a distinction between the supervisor of record, and other co-supervisors. A student must have one supervisor of record. The supervisor of record has the responsibility of overseeing the student's progress, and s/he is responsible for the DCS's obligations to the student. We use this terminology here.

PhD supervision and supervisory committees:

For each student who starts their PhD program on or after Nov. 1, 2013:

0. [Approved in 2012-13] Before an offer is made to a prospective student, one or more full members of CS-SGS must have agreed that they are willing to supervise and fund this student. The identity of these "sponsors" should be included in the student's offer letter.

1. **[PROPOSAL]** A new student student may take some time to find a supervisor (for example, when there is more than one "sponsor"). The supervisor should be selected within six months. (The point here is to encourage new students to try to find the supervisor who is the closest match to their research interests, not to force students to compete for a limited number of supervisor vacancies.) 

2a. **[PROPOSAL]** Within **four** months  the start of their program the student must have one (and only one) supervisor of record. The student may, in addition, have one or two other co-supervisors. Within these rules, SGS does accommodate some variation. In particular, the supervisor of record and other co-supervisors may wish to all be credited equally for their contributions to the student and the research. Alternatively, one of the co-supervisors might play a more significant role in the research supervision, and wish to have his/her contribution formally recognized. Such assignments of credit should appear in the Acknowledgements section of the thesis.


2b. **[PROPOSAL]** The supervisor of record must be a full or emeritus* member of CS-SGS (this individual has the primary responsibility for supervision)**. The additional co-supervisors must be members of SGS (i.e., associate, full, or emeritus), although not necessarily members of CS-SGS.

3a. **[PROPOSAL]** Within twelve months of the start of their program, the student must have a PhD supervisory committee.


(Currently, the time limits for PhD committee formation is 3 months for PhD students with an MSc from UofT, 12 months for PhD students with a relevant MSc from elsewhere, and 6 months for PhD-direct students . SGS rules(see notes from the SGS calendar near the end of this

document) require that the supervisor and the supervisory committee must be chosen within 4 sessions, i.e., 16 months.)

3b. The PhD supervisory committee must consist of at least three members of SGS, with at least two members in CS-SGS, counting the student's supervisor and co-supervisors (if any). The supervisory committee must be approved by the DCS Assoc. Chair for Graduate Studies.

[DEBATE: Alternatively DCS can constrain the composition of the examination committee at the doctoral Final Oral Examination (FOE). SGS rules for the FOE committee are included in the note 7 below. Do we wish, for example, to require that the FOE committee must include at least two full members of CS-SGS (including the student's supervisor)? 

4. The student may have one or more "external advisors" [without SGS status] on their PhD committee. External advisors do not contribute to the quorum, but can fully take part and vote at all the departmental checkpoints. They have a restricted status at the FOE

5. **[PROPOSAL]** A student **who decides**  switch from an existing supervisor has up to six months to find a new supervisor (the student's funding will continue during this time, up to the maximum number of months provided in the guarantee).

[DEBATE: A faculty member raised the point that this might not always be appropriate. Should the guarantee of funding be made conditional? E.g. "A student who is otherwise making good progress, and who decides to switch ..."]

Failure to maintain good academic standing (PhD students):


1. Failing Grad Courses: Students will be asked to either repeat a graduate course they failed or pass an alternative course recommended by the graduate chair.

[PROPOSAL] A student who fails two or more graduate courses will not be considered to be in good academic standing. They will have their funding stopped, and will be asked to either withdraw from the program or have their registration terminated. (See Note 6 from the SGS calendar below, which states that failure in one course may be sufficient to ask that a student withdraws.)

2. **[PROPOSAL]** A student without a supervisor for six months or longer will not be considered to be in good academic standing. They will have their funding stopped, and will be asked to either withdraw from the program or have their registration terminated.

3. (SGS Calendar, 2013-14, p. 55): A student is expected to meet with [their PhD supervisory] committee at least once a year, and more often if the committee so requires. At each meeting, the supervisory committee will assess the student's progress in the program and provide advice on future work. In each of two consecutive meetings, if a student's supervisory committee reports that the student's progress is unsatisfactory, the graduate unit may recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student. [Typically, the student should be offered the chance to withdraw from the program first.] A student who encounters difficulties arranging a meeting of this committee should consult the Chair, Director, or Graduate Coordinator of the graduate unit in advance of the relevant deadline for doing so. A student who, through his or her own neglect, fails to meet with the supervisory committee in a

given year will be considered to have received an unsatisfactory progress report from the committee.

[Note: If a student is not prepared to hold the next DCS PhD checkpoint meeting (e.g., the thesis proposal), a student can arrange for a generic "PhD supervisory committee meeting" to get feedback and have their annual progress reviewed.] 

Time Limits on the PhD program:

1. Achieving Candidacy (2013-14 SGS Calendar p.54):

To achieve candidacy, students in doctoral degree programs must:

1. complete all requirements for the degree exclusive of thesis research ... and
2. have an approved thesis topic, supervisor, and supervisory committee.

Candidacy must be achieved by the end of the third year for all doctoral programs, except for [the PhD-direct program, in which case candidacy must be achieved by the end of the fourth year of registration.]

In "exceptional circumstances", up to two 12-month extensions can be applied for.

Currently, DCS requires only that a PhD student has completed all course and breadth requirements, and has passed the Qualifying Oral, before they are considered to have achieved candidacy.

[PROPOSAL] We should require that the DCS Research Proposal checkpoint must be passed, instead of simply the Qualifying Oral, in order for a student to achieve candidacy.

2. Completion of Degree (SGS, Calendar, p. 70): All requirements must be completed within six years from first enrolment for the PhD program [given a previous, relevant MSc] and within seven years for the [PhD-direct] program. In exceptional circumstances, a candidate who has failed to complete all the requirements for the degree within this period may be considered for a maximum of four one-year extensions.

MSc supervision:

For each student who starts their MSc program on or after Nov. 1, 2013:

0. [Approved 2012-13] Before an offer is made to a prospective student, one or more members of CS-SGS must have agreed that they are potentially willing to supervise** and fund this student. This information is included in the student's offer letter.

1. **[PROPOSAL]** A new student may take some time to arrange for a supervisor. In particular, when there is more than one "sponsor" for the student's admission, the student can spend up to four months working with each sponsor before deciding.

2a. **[PROPOSAL]** Within four months of the start of their program the student must have one (and only one) supervisor of record. The student may, in addition, have one or two other co-supervisors.

Credit: The co-supervisors may wish to all be credited equally for their contributions to the student and the research. Alternatively, one of the co-supervisors (not necessarily the supervisor of record) might play a more significant role in the research supervision, and wish to have his/her contribution formally recognized. Such variations in the assignment of credit are left for the Acknowledgements section of the MSc research paper.

2b. **[PROPOSAL]** The supervisor of record must be an associate, full or emeritus* member of CS-SGS (this individual has the primary responsibility for supervision)**. The additional co-supervisors must be members of SGS, although not necessarily of CS-SGS.

3. May have one or more "external advisors" [without SGS status] to provide additional advice.

4. After completing the MSc research paper, the paper must be evaluated and approved by two readers, one of whom must be the student's supervisor of record. The second reader must be a member of SGS. (Note: While an external advisor can provide feedback on the research paper, they cannot serve as a one of these formal readers.)

[DEBATE: Require that the second reader also be a member of CS-SGS?]

[NOTE: No arm's length requirement for the second reader. A student's co-supervisor could serve as second reader.]

5. **[PROPOSAL]** A student who decides to switch from an existing supervisor has up to six months to find a new supervisor (the student's funding will continue during this time, up to the maximum number of months provided in the guarantee).

Failure to maintain good academic standing (MSc students):

[PROPOSAL] Same as points 1 and 2 for a PhD student, that is, cannot fail two or more courses, or be without a supervisor of record for more than six months.

Time Limits on the MSc program:

1. Completion of Degree (SGS, Calendar, p. 42): The time limit for the MSc program is three years (part-time MSc, 6 years). In exceptional circumstances, a candidate who has failed to complete all the requirements for the degree within this period may be considered for a maximum of three one-year extensions (p. 46 of SGS calendar).

MSc to PhD Transition: Currently, the transition is approved on the same form as the MSc research paper evaluation. One of the readers (perhaps a third reader) must check boxes that say they have read and evaluated the research paper, a box that says they are willing to supervise this student's PhD, and a questionnaire about the student's performance. This may be inappropriate if a student plans to switch research areas for their PhD.

[PROPOSAL] In order to transition to the PhD program, one or more full members of CS-SGS must have agreed that they are willing to supervise and fund this student. The identity of these "sponsors" should be communicated to the student before the transition. (This proposed process for MSc-PhD transitions would then be somewhat similar to recruiting a new PhD student with an MSc from elsewhere.)

MScAC supervision:

For each student who starts their MSc program on or after Nov. 1, 2013:

1. **[PROPOSAL]** On admission, the student may have no supervisor, and has four months to arrange for one.
- 2a. **[PROPOSAL]** Within four months of the start of their program the student must have one (and only one) supervisor of record. The student may, in addition, have one or two co-supervisors.
- 2b. **[PROPOSAL]** The supervisor of record must be an associate, full or emeritus* member of CS-SGS (this individual has the primary responsibility for academic supervision)**. The additional co-supervisors must be members of SGS [broader than CS-SGS].
3. The student may have one or more "external advisors" [without SGS status] to provide additional advice.
4. In addition, the student will have an industrial supervisor during their internship.

Failure to maintain good academic standing (MScAC students):

1. **[PROPOSAL]** A student who fails two or more graduate courses will not be considered to be in good standing. They may be asked to either withdraw from the program or have their registration terminated. (Students will be asked to either repeat a course they failed or pass an alternative course recommended by the director of the MScAC program. Students must repeat the required courses in this program if they fail them the first time.)

Footnotes:

* Emeritus SGS members need to have written approval from DCS before taking on new supervisory duties.

** CS-SGS members with "associate (restricted)" or "full (restricted)" status are typically not permitted to take on new supervisory duties. Members with a restricted status should check their most recent appointment letters for details.

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NOTES from the 2013-14 SGS Calendar:

<http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/Documents/2013-2014-SGS-Calendar.pdf>

1. (p. 158) The SGS calendar has a recent (but not quite up to date) list of DCS graduate faculty members: http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~jepson/gac/DCS_Grad_Faculty.pdf

2. (p.54) All doctoral students should have an identified supervisor and supervisory committee as early as practicable in their program.

3. (p.54) The supervisory committee should consist of the **supervisor chosen from among the graduate faculty members of the graduate unit** and two other members of the graduate faculty.

4. (p.54) Unless the graduate unit has specified earlier deadlines, supervisory committees should be established no later than the end of the fourth session in all doctoral programs, except in five-year (direct-entry) PhD programs, ..., where the supervisory committee should be established no later than the end of the seventh session

5. (p.55) A student is expected to meet with [their PhD supervisory] committee at least once a year, and more often if the committee so requires. At each meeting, the supervisory committee will assess the student's progress in the program and provide advice on future work. In each of two consecutive meetings, if a student's supervisory committee reports that the student's progress is unsatisfactory, the graduate unit may recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student. A student who encounters difficulties arranging a meeting of this committee should consult the Chair, Director, or Graduate Coordinator of the graduate unit in advance of the relevant deadline for doing so. A student who, through his or her own neglect, fails to meet with the supervisory committee in a given year will be considered to have received an unsatisfactory progress report from the committee

6. (p.54) Satisfactory performance in a degree program requires the completion of every course taken for graduate credit with a grade of at least a B- ... If a student fails to complete a graduate course in a satisfactory manner (i.e., receives a grade report of FZ or NCR in a course or receives a grade report below the minimum acceptable by the graduate unit), then the graduate unit in which the student is registered may recommend to the School of Graduate Studies the termination of registration and eligibility of that student. If the student is permitted to continue, he or she must repeat the relevant course, or an alternative course recommended by the graduate unit and approved by the School of Graduate Studies, and obtain a satisfactory grade. The report for the course that was not completed in a satisfactory manner as well as the report for the repeated or alternative course will appear on the student's academic record.

7. p. 56 [A PhD] examination committee, appointed by SGS on the recommendation of the graduate unit, will conduct the Final Oral Examination. The examination committee must include at least four, but no more than six, voting members: one to three of the voting members will have served on the candidate's supervisory committee, and at least two voting members will not have been closely involved in the supervision of the thesis. Eligible for inclusion in the latter group are the external appraiser (in person or by audio connection), members of the graduate faculty of the candidate's graduate unit, and members of the graduate faculty of other departments, centres, or institutes of the University. The examination committee may include, in addition, up to two non-voting members, who will be members of the graduate faculty of the candidate's graduate unit or members of the graduate faculty of another graduate unit of the University. A quorum is four voting members, two of whom must not have been closely involved in the supervision of the thesis.

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ToDo's:

1. Review by GAC and DCS faculty.
2. Existing supervisory relationships that do not satisfy these constraints will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis (and, typically, grandfathered).
3. If such a policy is approved, then notifications need to be sent.

- a) This impacts grad student recruiting, the faculty will need to know.
- b) It also impacts students who plan on transitioning from the MSc to the PhD program. They will need to know any new policies asap.
- c) Modify Grad Handbook and place a FAQ accessible from web.cs