

Introductory discussions:

Choosing a supervisor and assessing alignment

A strong supervisor-student fit supports progress and a positive grad school experience. Use this short checklist of questions and considerations to guide your early conversations.

Working style and needs

- ☐ Review the supervisory styles in the Supervision Guidelines to assess the support and structure you prefer: uoft.me/styles.
- ☐ Check the expectations for:
 - In-person vs. remote work
 - Office space availability
 - Typical work hours
- ☐ Are there any personal circumstances (family, health, travel) that may affect fit?
- ☐ If preferences differ, what compromises are possible?

Availability and communication

- ☐ Will the supervisor be available throughout your program (administrative duties, travel, leaves)?
- ☐ How often will you meet 1:1 and as a group?
- ☐ How should you schedule and prepare for meetings?
- ☐ What are their preferred communication methods (email, messaging)?
- ☐ What is typical feedback turnaround time, including for deadlines (thesis drafts, publications, presentations, grants)?
- ☐ Do turnaround times change at certain times of the year?



Early milestones of the program

- ☐ Are you interested in the research and what is the potential thesis topic?
- ☐ What courses will you take to support your research?

Research culture

- ☐ Will you work independently or within their program?
- ☐ If working independently, who supports questions outside their expertise?
- ☐ Clarify intellectual property practices (data, authorship, industry involvement, embargoes, patents).

Professional development goals

- ☐ Do their experience and expertise align with your career direction (academia, industry, other)?

Financial support

- ☐ What financial support does the supervisor provide?
- ☐ What are the expectations for teaching or research assistantships?

We are here to help.

Situations can arise that can critically delay progress or completion of your degree program, such as personal reasons (e.g., family, health), a lack of communication with your supervisor, lack of resources that are required for you to complete the project, as well as a supervisor's relocation to a different institution. Reach out to us.