

Complete Policy Title:

**Ph.D. Supervision at McMaster
University**

Approved by:
Senate

Date of Original Approval(s):
January 14, 1998

Responsible Executive:
**Associate Vice-President and Dean of
Graduate Studies**

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Enquiries:
[University Secretariat](#)

A SUMMARY STATEMENT AND REAFFIRMATION OF POLICIES

PREAMBLE

Graduate education has a number of linked attributes. Primarily, it concentrates on the formation of appropriate research skills. One objective in focusing on these skills, especially at the Ph.D. level, is to prepare students to undertake independent inquiry. This goal places responsibilities on supervisors who must guide students to productive lines of research and ethical conduct, and promote students' professional careers. Typically, graduate education is advanced through highly personalized arrangements embodied in the direction provided by the primary supervisor and supervisory committees. The responsibilities and personalized character of graduate education mean that supervision at McMaster University is a privilege granted and retained through assessment.

The Faculty of Health Sciences has in place procedures for the review of faculty members to establish their suitability for Ph.D. supervision. The following document assembles in one place the processes and criteria by which suitability for Ph.D. supervision are monitored and reviewed elsewhere in the university.

I CRITERIA

Normally, to qualify as a primary supervisor for Ph.D. students a faculty member will have demonstrated many of the following: 1) a programme of research, as shown by research grants or contracts; 2) a regular flow of peer-reviewed publications, consistent with expectations in the discipline; 3) experience with the supervision of graduate

research papers or masters theses; 4) experience with designing and teaching a graduate course; 5) membership on Ph.D. supervisory committees, or involvement with graduate supervision as a secondary supervisor. Please note that the above list is intended to be suggestive, rather than comprehensive.

II **THE PROCESSES FOR INITIAL DESIGNATION AS A Ph.D. SUPERVISOR**

The Dean of Graduate Studies, as a member of the Faculty Appointments Committee (the Provost, the Dean of the Faculty, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Chair of the Department), interviews all candidates for tenure-track positions and is expected to report in writing to that committee on the candidates' suitability for Ph.D. supervision effective upon their appointment.

In the case of new appointees, particularly those newly graduated from Ph.D. programmes, who have not previously participated in graduate supervision, each candidate's suitability as a primary supervisor for Ph.D. students rests with an assessment of that candidate's potential to meet the criteria mentioned above. In such circumstances, it is reasonable for members of the Faculty Appointments Committee to discuss the scope of graduate supervision that the candidate may undertake, and to discuss the mechanisms by which the quality of participation in graduate studies will be monitored.

III **THE PROCESS FOR A PERIODIC REVIEW OF SUPERVISORS**

As a requirement of the periodic appraisal of graduate programmes by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies is expected to review the eligibility of individual faculty for graduate supervision. As part of the OCGS appraisal process, the cv's of faculty listed as eligible for Ph.D. supervision ("core faculty" in the terminology of the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies) are reviewed by the Dean of Graduate Studies roughly six months before the internal deadline for the reports that must be sent to OCGS. The Dean may consult with the appropriate Associate Dean. The list of eligible "core faculty" - those who may be primary supervisors - is based upon the Dean's assessment.

IV **APPEAL PROCESS**

[We would like to institute a procedure for Chairs to appeal the Dean's decisions regarding "core faculty." This mechanism is not currently available.]

Chairs can appeal a decision. They should submit a statement through the Registrar of the School of Graduate Studies to members of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council; they may appear at the Executive Committee of Graduate Council. All members present at the Executive Committee meeting may vote on the appeal request,

except the Dean and the Associate Dean who have made the prior decision. Quorum shall be all voting members of the Executive, less three (one member and the two deans). The decision of the Executive Committee of Graduate Council will be final.

The decision will be communicated to the department chair by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.