

September 1, 2021

Supervision Letter of Understanding

Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, McGill University

This Letter of Understanding aims to facilitate positive and mutually beneficial student-supervisor relationships, and to avoid problems on matters such as authorship and credits on publications, the extent of participation in activities other than the Thesis, Research Project, or Special Activity, and future access to data collected in the course of our work together. Some of the activities described below may be conducted in groups. Where these notes hinder rather than help, they should be amended to meet mutually acceptable needs, in general or as occasions arise.

Supervisor's Responsibilities

- Meet regularly with the student and be contactable at other times.
- Arrange substitute supervision during extended absences.
- Advise on time management when needed.
- Assist in the preparation for comprehensive examinations.
- Help prepare conference and journal presentations based on work done in the program and assist with applications for support to attend suitable conferences.
- Help apply for funds to cover direct research costs.
- Help apply for external and/or internal student funding.
- Provide feedback within a mutually agreed time-frame on written work submitted for review, including on the Thesis or Research Project.
- Provide guidance in all phases of the student's research.
- Determine, in agreement with the student, the composition of the advisory committee.
- Provide supervision in a way that leaves the student with room for autonomy.
- Be open, honest and fair with the student when academic performance is not meeting expectations.

Students' Responsibilities

- Regularly pursue work and keep the supervisor informed of progress and problems, and inform the supervisor, in a timely manner, of any foreseen prolonged absence.
- Inform the supervisor, in a timely manner, of any issues arising throughout the course of their program (e.g. difficulties of integration, availability of the supervisor, absence or delay in feedback material concerning work of the student or any other difficulty related to the supervision framework, etc.).
- Seek assistance from the supervisor when making important decisions about the course of study or when looking to define or redirect the thesis or research project, and keep the supervisor informed of commitments outside the University which may affect progress with research (e.g. before accepting a position).
- Join in the preparation of conference presentations and publications on research.
- Comply with Policies and Regulations on Safety and on Ethical Conduct of Research, and understand what constitutes plagiarism, misconduct and cheating, and abide by policies and rules and regulations in effect at the University (<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students>).
- Inform themselves of university and program requirements and deadlines, and work within these deadlines, and submit annual reports to the supervisor/program before the set deadline, for revision.

- Interact with graduate and undergraduate students, staff and faculty in a professional and mature manner.
- Apply for scholarships and bursaries, especially FQRSC, FRQS, McGill internal, CIHR and SSHRC (where eligible), until such funding is obtained or the student is no longer eligible to apply.
- Apply for travel awards for any conference to be attended.
- Keep at McGill a copy of raw data, coding sheets, instruments, and subject- identification data.
- Regularly attend and participate in research-team meetings.

Joint Responsibilities

- Give full credit for the contributions of others and to research funding in all products.
- Both have unlimited access to the data collected on or about the topic of a thesis or project during the time worked together, plus any other that may be agreed to, giving due credit to its origin through shared authorship.

LABBIE INFORMATION

Welcome to the newest incarnation of The Connections Lab. The purpose of of our work is to get better every single day. This includes not only our work; but my supervision, the structure of the lab, our work with research partners, funding, and everything that we do. In addition to the other information that is available on this website, especially the blog page entitled “how not to suck in graduate school” here are some of the goals and procedures that we will be implementing.

REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS OF DR. SHAW

- Expect 24-hour turnaround on e-mails. Yet during summer, holidays, and weekends e-mails typically require 48 hours. Feel free to nag and mock me if I go over that time frame.
 - Expect 10 working days for any letters of recommendation. I will let you know if there is any deviation from that.
 - Expect 5 working days to read and edit manuscripts, proposals, and other work.
 - Expect 15 working days to read doctoral theses and masters projects.
 - I can be distracted and a bit of a slacker. Feel completely free to remind and nag me. I am okay with that.
 - Remember that theses are your projects. I am the leader of your support team.
 - Labbies are divided into two groups: Active labbies—those who are currently taking classes and collecting data. Senior labbies—those who are on internship, are co-supervised, or completing doctoral theses. Most of these points are relevant to active labbies. Undergrads and volunteers are considered active labbies.
 - I will be meeting with each active labbie once per week for 30 minutes during fall and winter terms.
- History: The term “labbie” was used by residents of Los Alamos, New Mexico to refer to the influx of scientists into the community during the Manhattan Project. It was first a term of derision, but later became a term of affection.

EXPECTATIONS OF LABBIES

- For active labbies with a full class load and clinical responsibilities, it is best to think of time commitments to the research lab as an additional course. As such, graduate student labbies are expected to average 10 hours per week on Connections Lab activities. Undergraduate commitment is to be negotiated individually.

- Within 24 hours of our meeting, please send me a summary of the meeting via e-mail—this is a reminder of what I am supposed to do, makes sure we both have the same understanding of the meeting, and keeps meetings focused on issues.
- Have an agenda coming to each meeting. Preparing for the individual meeting is at least ½ of the value of the meeting.
- Bring a log of all laboratory-based activities that you have done each week. We will be reviewing these at every meeting.
- Summer is the most productive time of the year for manuscript production. For labbies to meet their goals they will almost certainly need to produce at least one manuscript for publication over the summer months. Summer is also prime time for thesis writing and developing conference of examinations.
- I will support your masters or doctoral theses and your required two manuscript submissions per year, but they are your projects.

LAB SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Students who use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication should be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and other mental health professionals. As such, each student should make every effort to minimize visual or printed material that may be deemed inappropriate for a professional psychologist. To this end, student should set all security settings to “private” and avoid posting information, photos, or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image. Students should consider limiting the amount of personal information posted on the sites and should never include information or comments about clients and/or students for whom they currently serve or have served as an instructor, clinical supervisor, and/or clinical consultant. Clients should not be included as part of a personal social network, because doing so constitutes a boundary violation. Discussion of any clinical activities should be avoided. In addition, any information that might lead to the identification of a client or student represents a violation of confidentiality, which is a breach of ethical standards that govern the practice of counsellors, psychologists, and mental health professionals and training. Engaging in these types of actions could result in the student being dismissed from the program.

Separating personal accounts from professional accounts is an important task. Social media and networking sites can be critical to developing a professional development network. However, personal accounts for social networks are quite different. Most trouble occurs when these two things are blended. The program recommends that social networking that involve nonprofessional activities including but not limited to politics, family, religion, relationships, and hobbies be reported on anonymously labelled accounts.

Social networking sites are critical aspects of controlling your Internet footprint. Every employer and most clients will conduct an Internet search of you before working with you. Ensure that all content on social networking sites and other locations reflect the professional image that you wish to project.

Be a good leader and scientist. We will discuss these elements—often.

1. Learning: Listen Attentively, Read Critically
2. Trust: Seek Diversity, Not Validation
3. Experience: Make It Relevant but Not Narrow
4. Detachment: Identify, and Then Challenge, Biases

5. Options: Question the Solution Set Offered
 6. Delivery: Factor in the Feasibility of Execution
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Establishing a lab culture: How not to suck in graduate school

SR Shaw

The fall term brings new graduate students, visiting scholars, post-docs, and undergraduate research volunteers into research labs. Integrating new people into the lab and re-incorporating returning students and collaborators creates new issues. It is important to establish a culture quickly, so that the work can be done efficiently, cooperatively, and even joyfully. Sometimes, as an older scholar I make the mistake of assuming that returning members of lab remember the key features of the lab culture and that new members will somehow magically absorb the values that I wish the lab to possess.

My twitter account and this blog are ways for me to put the values of the lab and our work in writing, so that there is an archive of ideas and tone. But in the hustle of day-to-day work, values and culture can be forgotten or lost due to busyness. And some labs find themselves adrift and moving in a direction that the director did not intend.

There is nothing that replaces the modeling of these values by the principal investigator. They must be lived or members of the lab will not buy-in and accept these cultural touchstones. In addition, these values must be emphasized explicitly, evaluated, rewarded, and established. Building a culture is a long-term process. However, a quick overview of the established credo of the lab can be a starting place and set expectations and aspirations for all lab work. Below are the 10 components that are the most heavily valued in my lab.

The 10 core values of the Connections Lab at McGill University:

- *Strive to become a professional, but do not forget to be a human*
Work every single day to become a useful professional. That is, conscientious, independent, skilled, knowledgeable, ethical, and courageous; but realize that you will fall short some days. Always focus on being better tomorrow than you were today. You will never have a problem with me if you do something every day to improve.

- *You will need to trust that I define my success by your success.*
My job is to prepare students as professionals. I know what it takes to be a successful school psychologist and the more successful you are, the more successful I am. I welcome challenges from you. A very reasonable question that you should ask me frequently is, “how will this task help me to achieve my professional goals?”

- *Wellness: yours and your team's.*
 Consider your mental and physical well-being a central part of your graduate education and work in this lab. Feel comfortable discussing issues and concerns that you may have. Your long-term development as a person and as a professional require attention to your physical and emotional well-being. At the first sign of any issues, let me know and we will develop a plan. In addition, look after your peers. We are a team and need to take care of each other. Although it may be obvious; harassment, sabotage, creating a hostile environment, or any other behaviours detrimental to the wellness of the team, our clients, or individuals will result in removal from the lab.
- *Write it down or it did not happen.*
 Writing is an essential component of graduate school. Any thoughts, ideas, findings, notions, and other contributions are only real if they are written. This is the most effective way to communicate and to create a trail of your thinking that will have an important influence on research and clinical practice. Writing is also a mechanism of accountability, minimizing misunderstandings, and improving communication.
- *We all do better when we all do better.*
 There is inevitable competition for authorship, grants, fellowships, and time and attention of senior members. However, this lab is a team. The success of any one of us reflects on all. Share credit, be generous with authorship, listen to the ideas of others, be genuinely happy for the success of your peers, and assist the work of others. When this becomes a habit, everyone benefits.
- *Do more: everything takes three times longer than you expect.*
 Doing more than the bare minimum is an essential part of professionalism. In addition, it is nearly impossible to plan your time and work accurately. No matter how much time you devote and plan to a specific task, you need to multiply the number of hours by three. Just achieving minimum expectations will require much more time and energy than you expect.
- *Attention to detail.*
 I completely dismiss the concept that “idea people” are important and effective parts of the lab. Ideas are only important if they are paired with an intense work habit, focus on implementation, and single-minded attention to detail. The focus on detail will certainly annoy most of the lab members at some point. Attention to detail is the difference between a vague idea that is floating in the ether and high-quality research and clinical practice.

- *Ethical behaviour.*
Too often, students and professionals gloss over ethical behaviour because they believe that they are good people who would not ever do anything evil or wrong. Ethical violations are not usually due to bad actors. Ethical violations are usually committed by good people who are tired, emotionally overwhelmed, stressed, overloaded with work, up against timelines, or ignorant of the exact ethical standards and procedures to be followed. Ethical guidelines need to be memorized, automatized, and second nature. They will be challenged when life becomes chaotic.
- *Invest in preparation.*
Writing activity is the tip of the iceberg. For every hour of writing there is at least two hours of planning and four hours of reading (not to mention: seemingly endless hours of data collection and analysis). Be prepared for every meeting by having questions or information to present. Investment in preparation allows you to be a better worker, have more clear thinking, reduce stress, and leads to improved overall productivity and success.
- *Develop productive habits.*
Inspiration comes and goes, but habit remains. To be an effective worker in this research lab, your aspirational goal should be to read 100 pages per day and write 1000 words per day. This will take time, practice, and training. Whatever habits you develop, focus on being the most productive person you can be. Positive habits create professionalism. Such habits also reduce stress.

Developing a culture is far more than 10 simple and vague ideas. This only becomes a culture when these 10 points are modeled and lived. However, starting by communicating goals and expectations is a good way to begin the term.