

ALBERTA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS PHD PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR DISSOLVING STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS

RATIONALE

Doctoral students and supervisors are sometimes uncertain about how to dissolve supervisory relationships. This document provides guidelines that could be used to resolve this uncertainty, regardless of the reason for the dissolution.

THE POLICY FROM THE GRADUATE PROGRAM MANUAL

The Graduate Program Manual contains policies that apply to all graduate programs at the University of Alberta. In reading the policy, be aware that the department is the Alberta School of Business – not a department within the faculty – and the graduate coordinator is the Associate Dean of Alberta School of Business PhD Program in Business Management.

[8.1 Resolving Conflicts in Supervisor-Student Relationships](#)

The relationship between students and supervisors is normally close and long lasting. At times, conflicts may arise between a student and the supervisor. In such cases, the first step must be to try to resolve the conflict or misunderstanding informally. This is more likely to be successful if attended to as early as possible. The supervisor and student should discuss the problem together. The supervisor should document the discussions and keep a record of any agreements made. In the event of a conflict the graduate coordinator should be notified as early as possible.

It is the responsibility of the graduate coordinator to arrange for consultation and mediation. The graduate coordinator or the parties involved may request advice and/or mediation assistance from their Faculty, the FGSR, and/or other appropriate services, such as the [Student Ombudservice](#). The student and supervisors shall not be required to participate in informal resolution.

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, and the graduate coordinator determines that the supervisor-student relationship is beyond repair, the department will attempt in good faith to work with the student to find alternative supervision within the department, and will keep the FGSR apprised of these efforts.

Where the supervisor has been providing funding to the student, the funding should continue for a period of at least 30 days from the date on which the graduate coordinator determines that the supervisor-student relationship is beyond repair.

If the best arrangements of the department and the FGSR fail to meet the expectations of the student, the student may choose to withdraw without prejudice. If the student refuses to accept the supervision provided, or if no supervision can be secured, then the student is not fulfilling the

academic requirement of having a supervisor and may, on academic grounds, be required to withdraw.

GUIDELINES FOR THE ALBERTA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS PHD PROGRAM

In accordance with the Graduate Program Manual's policy, the School of Business provides these guidelines for use when needed.

It is important to note that a supervisor **cannot** terminate a student's program of study. The Department Chair or Graduate Coordinator for a department may write a recommendation of termination to the Associate Dean of FGSR (with a copy provided to the student) instead ([see here for more information](#)).

In the event of the supervisor dissolving the relationship

1. Prior to or immediately upon notifying the student, the supervisor must notify the PhD Office and the area representative of the specialization on the PhD Policy Committee. The supervisor must include the name of the student, the reason for dissolution, and the date/time the dissolution will take place.
2. Upon learning that the dissolution is pending, the PhD Office must contact Counselling and Clinical Services (C&CS) main Centre (780-492-5205) and request an appointment for the student. Information on this may be found in the Appendix.
3. The supervisor must notify the student of the dissolution, either via email or in person.
4. The area representative will attempt to meet with the student at their earliest convenience, certainly no later than two weeks have elapsed, whenever it is possible to do so. If the area representative is also the supervisor, the PhD Office must be notified and the Associate Dean of the PhD Program will meet with the student instead.
5. At the meeting with the area representative or Associate Dean, the student must receive information regarding how they must proceed. They should be given a reasonable timeline for how long they have to find a new supervisor, and be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns. In these situations, the area representative and Associate Dean are encouraged to involve an alternate faculty member who can provide support within the specialization's department.

In the event of the student dissolving the relationship

1. The student must meet with either their area representative and/or the Associate Dean of the PhD program to discuss the reason for the dissolution.
2. At this meeting, it will be determined who will contact the supervisor to let them know of the dissolution.
3. Upon learning that the dissolution is pending, the PhD Office must offer to contact Counselling and Clinical Services (C&CS) main Centre (780-492-5205) and request an appointment for the student. Information on this may be found in the Appendix.
4. The student, the area representative, or the Associate Dean must notify the supervisor of the dissolution, either in person or via email.
5. At the meeting with the area representative or Associate Dean, the student must receive information regarding how they must proceed. They should be given a reasonable timeline for how long they have to find a new supervisor and be given the opportunity to discuss their concerns. In these situations, the area representative and Associate Dean are encouraged to involve an alternate faculty member who can provide support within department.

A checklist for dissolution

- Area representative contacted
- PhD Office contacted
- Counseling and Clinical Services Contacted (PhD Office)
- Meeting with student arranged (area representative or Associate Dean)
- Information provided to student regarding their current options (area representative or Associate Dean)

Policy History

Passed by PhD Policy Committee, April 7, 2015

Updated by PhD Policy Committee March 2018.

APPENDIX**Information provided by Counselling and Clinical Services for the Event of Student/Supervisor Dissolution.**

The steps to take are very straightforward and include:

1. Once you know the meeting time, contact a satellite psychologist to request a diffusion, or contact Counselling and Clinical Services (C&CS) main Centre (780-492-5205) and request this service (i.e., an appointment for the student).
2. Either way, a psychologist from C&CS will confirm being available for after the meeting time.
3. Once the student is finished the meeting with the faculty member/associate dean/etc., they would be given the option to speak with the psychologist.
4. If student declines, no service is provided. If student says "yes," the psychologist and the student will meet, which may or may not turn into additional service provision beyond that.

Factors to consider and elements of the process (for your awareness):

- A. We have extra time in our schedules to make room for these types of services, but as advanced notice as possible is appreciated.
- B. The psychologist will NOT attend the original meeting; we are an independent and neutral third party for the student after the meeting. It should be made clear to the student that meeting with the psychologist is a separate process, voluntary and confidential.
- C. In the diffusion, the psychologist will have a conversation with the student regarding the various services that are available, and may attempt to normalize feelings, to outline the various stages that the student may experience, and to offer to connect them with C&CS if appropriate/desired. We strive to make students not feel coerced into these services.
- D. If further service is desired by the student, the psychologist moves forward with C&CS processes.
- E. Again, the diffusion meeting is voluntary and confidential; the psychologist will not report back to faculty members about the meeting or comment whether the student is accessing further services UNLESS the student gives written permission for the psychologist to do so (e.g., perhaps permission for the psychologist to give a faculty member a "general" comment about the student as follow-up).