

Guidelines for the Operation of Student Programme Advisory Committees

The purpose of this document is to establish guidelines for the mode of operation of a student advisory committee. It should be stated at the outset that these committees should not be perceived as onerous by either the faculty or the students. The committees are of benefit to **both**. For the student, they provide a safety net in case of conflict, they give valuable practice in oral presentation and discussion, and they help to keep research efforts organized and focussed. For the faculty, these committees offer an efficient gauge of student progress while also helping to keep research continuous. This document is not meant to be negative; however, certain situations pertaining to conflict must be discussed and clarified. An advisory committee should operate according to the following ideals:

1. The title of the student committee is *Programme Advisory Committee*. This was a title decided upon by the GAU to make sure that the committee did not override the supervisor's authority regarding the student. There are two key words in the title: **programme** and **advisory**. The intent of the committee is to help with decisions regarding the student's programme. Such items like courses to take relevant to the research, possible avenues to pursue in the research project, and satisfactory progress towards the degree, are all things the committee should advise upon. The committee is to advise and make recommendations. The ultimate authority still rests with the supervisor who funds the research and who, in most cases, does provide a significant portion of the student's financial support. Supervisors must not use the committees to make decisions for them although recommendations may be sought.
2. One of the original intents of the advisory committee was to help ensure the perceptions of the supervisor and those of the student regarding satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress were the same. This is still one of the major goals of the committee. A major function of the committee is therefore to help ensure both the supervisor and the student agree whether progress is being made. The advisory committee decides whether progress is satisfactory or not and the result is communicated on the *advisory report form*, available in the Chemistry office. In the event of an unsatisfactory decision, the student has the opportunity to rebut the decision at this stage. Perhaps the decision could be changed given sufficient evidence. The student will sign in the appropriate place indicating that s/he has seen the decision in any case. There is another area on the form for additional comments by the committee. This may be conducted in the student's presence or if the committee members believe that this needs to be done privately, the student may be requested to leave while this part of the form is filled in. Once these recommendations have been written, there are places where all committee members are required to sign indicating their acceptance and agreement with what is written in the report. The report will be given to the Director of Graduate Studies who will initial it, indicating that s/he has seen the report. A copy will be put in the official GAU file of the student and also distributed to the student and the supervisor within a week of the committee meeting.

Ideally, the committees would like to consider satisfactory progress only. Every effort should be made to *commend* the students. In warranted cases, the committees could also recommend that a student and supervisor consider a transfer from the M.Sc. programme to the Ph.D. programme. The supervisor would then write a letter on the student's behalf to the Director of Graduate Studies requesting that a transfer take place.

3. The committee will in general number three: the supervisor, a faculty member in the same general field of research and a faculty member outside the field of research. In the case of joint supervision, there will be four members (the two co-supervisors and two other faculty). There can be more members if it is deemed that more expertise is necessary to guide the programme. The purpose of having these members is to give the student the opportunity to speak with someone in the field other than the supervisor or to speak with someone outside the research field. This would depend on the reason behind the student's need to talk with a committee member: to discuss chemistry matters, to seek advice, or to resolve conflict. Sometimes the student may want to talk to someone other than the supervisor and the committee serves this purpose. In the case of conflict, the departmental procedure is:
 - A. The student is to try and resolve the problem with the supervisor by themselves.
 - B. Failing a resolution, the problem is addressed through the advisory committee.
 - C. Failing this, the next step would be to see the Director of Graduate Studies,
 - D. Following this, the student would approach the departmental Chair.
 - E. As a last resort, the student may decide to see the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Of course, the department would like to see any problems brought to the advisory committees and resolved promptly.

4. **A minimum of one graduate student advisory committee meeting must be held annually.** These will normally be held in the Fall term, to facilitate completion of the [Annual Progress Reports](#) required by the School of Graduate Studies by 1 December each year. It is the responsibility of the graduate student to schedule all advisory committee meetings. Therefore, it is imperative to set up your committee members immediately following your arrival at UNB. Failing to do so, a committee and any subsequent meetings will be scheduled on your behalf. The student should give a clear and concise presentation about their research and progress. This may be in the form of a written report given to the committee a day or so before the meeting (which can be discussed at the meeting) or in the form of an oral presentation given at the meeting. As stated, a written report indicating satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress should be written. The report may also suggest possible research directions to take, it may suggest possible courses to take, or it may indicate weaknesses in the student's knowledge that should be improved. In the case of unsatisfactory progress, the report should indicate that a future meeting of the committee will take place within 4-6 months to reassess the progress.
5. In the case of unsatisfactory progress, the report should make the student aware that certain disciplinary action may occur depending on the result of the next meeting:
 - A. Possible demotion from the Ph.D. to the M.Sc. programme.
 - B. Possible reduction in funding by the research supervisor
 - C. Possible removal from the degree programme.

The above are important bearing in mind that a student should be informed at least four months in advance that funding is going to be affected.

6. A student, supervisor or the Director of Graduate Studies may request a meeting of the advisory committee at any time during the year. Such a meeting must be held within one week of the request.
7. This document is freely available to both the students and faculty.

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