

LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING

GRADUATE & UNDERGRADUATE THESIS STUDENTS

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Student Responsibilities

Research Group Participation

- Attend regularly scheduled research group meetings (weekly).
- Actively participate in all scheduled research group meetings, including providing presentations as requested, contributing to discussions of ongoing projects, and offering constructive feedback to other research group members.
- Complete assigned readings and preparatory materials in advance of meetings, as appropriate.
- Advise the supervisor of planned absences, vacations, conferences, or other periods of unavailability at least **two weeks in advance**, whenever possible.
- Treat all research group members with professionalism, respect, and collegiality, and minimize disruptions within shared research spaces.
- Inform the supervisor at least **two weeks in advance** of participation in other research groups or significant research commitments outside the research group.
- Inform the supervisor of outside employment or other substantial commitments that may affect research productivity or availability.
- Use research group facilities, equipment, computers, and resources responsibly, with research and thesis-related activities taking priority.
- Adhere to confidentiality requirements concerning research data, protocols, analyses, participants, and unpublished findings.
- Complete and maintain [TCPS2: CORE Certification](#) throughout the duration of their studies.
- Contribute to collaborative research activities and support fellow research group members when appropriate and feasible.
- Students are encouraged to provide a photograph, CV, and statement of research interests for the research group website but may opt out for personal or confidentiality reasons.

Research and Scholarly Development

- Make consistent and satisfactory progress toward degree and research milestones.
- Apply for appropriate scholarships, fellowships, awards, and travel funding opportunities regularly, in consultation with the supervisor.
- Seek opportunities to present research at conferences and other scholarly venues, with conference submissions discussed with the supervisor prior to submission.
- Participate in professional development and specialized training opportunities relevant to their research and career development.
- Pursue opportunities for collaboration and co-authorship within the research group and with

external collaborators where appropriate.

- Conduct research activities necessary for completion of thesis or dissertation requirements, including ethics submissions, data collection, data management, statistical analyses, and knowledge dissemination as appropriate.
- Ensure that conference abstracts, posters, presentations, and manuscripts comply with conference, journal, ethical, and institutional policies, including policies regarding duplicate submissions.
 - Students may not submit the same statistical analyses of a given poster at two separate conferences without the expressed written consent (or policy note) of the conference organizers indicating that duplicate submissions are permitted; if unclear, the student is required to confirm the acceptance policies prior to submitting.
 - Students are strongly encouraged to submit the same poster to multiple conferences to maximize publications and constructive feedback from conference participants, if the additional conferences permit duplicate submissions.
- MSc students are expected to contribute to at least one manuscript project during each year of study whenever feasible; PhD students are expected to work toward regular first-authored scholarly publications consistent with disciplinary and program expectations.
- Comply with all policies and regulations related to safety and ethical conduct of research.
- Understand what constitutes academic misconduct, plagiarism, and cheating, and abide by all policies, rules, and regulations in effect at Dalhousie University.

Communication and Professional Responsibilities

- Attend regularly scheduled meetings with the supervisor, typically **every one to two weeks**, unless otherwise agreed.
- Provide a written summary of key decisions, action items, and next steps arising from supervisory meetings within **two business days** of each meeting.
- Clearly identify and communicate important deadlines related to program requirements, ethics applications, scholarship competitions, conference submissions, and other research activities.
- Inform the supervisor promptly of circumstances that may significantly affect research progress, degree completion, or academic performance (e.g., living arrangements, financial need, mental health, supervisor availability, quality/timing of supervisor feedback).
- Provide adequate time for review of grants, scholarship applications, conference submissions, presentations, manuscripts, and other materials requiring supervisor feedback.
- Respond to emails and other research-related communications from the supervisor within **48 hours on weekdays**, whenever possible.
- Maintain an up-to-date curriculum vitae and provide it upon request for reporting, funding applications, website updates, or other academic purposes.
- Maintain appropriate documentation related to research activities and make such documentation available upon reasonable request (e.g., search terms, copies of reviewed articles, digital formats of analysis output, etc.).
- Communicate with supervisory committee members as required, and coordinate **a minimum of one committee meeting per year** to review thesis objectives and goals in the progress tracking report.
- Recognize that routine research activities and email correspondence are generally not expected during evenings or weekends unless otherwise agreed upon between the student and supervisor.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Mentorship and Academic Support

- Provide in-person (or virtual) support regarding research design, theoretical and conceptual development, and statistical analysis.
- Provide mentorship for the development, review, and submission of scholarship applications, fellowship applications, conference submissions, and manuscripts.
- Meet regularly with the student, typically through **weekly or bi-weekly individual meetings** and research group meetings.
- Respond to student emails and other research-related communications within approximately **two business days**, unless away from the university or on vacation.
- Provide constructive feedback on student work within reasonable timelines.
- Discuss concerns regarding research progress, academic performance, professional conduct, or research productivity directly with the student and provide opportunities to address concerns before major decisions regarding funding, employment, or supervision are considered.
- Advise on coursework, comprehensive examination preparation, committee composition, degree requirements, and program milestones as needed.
- The supervisor reserves the right to terminate research group participation/employment or graduate supervision if the student's responsibilities are consistently not met (e.g., at least one progress report is indicated as unsatisfactory).

Research Opportunities

- Provide opportunities for collaboration and co-authorship consistent with the student's level of contribution and professional development goals.
- Facilitate student involvement in research projects, conference presentations, manuscripts, and scholarly dissemination activities where opportunities are available.
- Support participation in professional development opportunities, research exchanges, workshops, conferences, and training activities where feasible.
- Assist students in identifying research, networking, and career development opportunities.

Funding and Resources

- Regularly seek external funding in an attempt to support student research activities, conference participation, publication costs, and research assistantships where possible.
- Clearly communicate funding arrangements, expectations, responsibilities, timelines, and deliverables associated with funded research activities in writing.
- Provide research assistantship (RA) funding, stipends, or hourly employment opportunities when resources are available and contingent upon external grant funding (e.g., CIHR).
- Funding levels vary based on factors such as student status (e.g., MSc or PhD, international or domestic), funding availability, the student's external funding awards, and institutional or funding-agency requirements. Any funding calibrations will be communicated in writing and will not alter funding requirements previously guaranteed through admission offers or other written agreements.
- Research activities, responsibilities and timelines associated with funded positions will be specified in advance and reviewed periodically with the student. Failure to satisfy agreed-upon research activities may result in the delay or termination of RA funding, in accordance with applicable written agreements and university policies.
- Support student participation in scholarly dissemination activities, including attendance **at a minimum of one conference per year**, where funding is available, and the student is presenting work conducted in collaboration with the supervisor.
 - Conference funding allocations may vary depending on available resources, conference location, the number of conference presentations, and other external funding.
- Funding provided by the supervisor for research activities is limited to the duration specified in the student's admission offer, funding agreement, award letter, or other written correspondence.

Additional years of funding are not guaranteed and are subject to available resources and mutual agreement between the student and supervisor.

Additional Research Policies

Data Ownership, Access, and Confidentiality

The student and supervisor acknowledge that data ownership, access, storage, and dissemination should be discussed and agreed upon at the outset of any research project.

- Although data collected for a master's thesis or dissertation research is typically considered the intellectual property of the student, data ownership and sharing arrangements must be discussed before data collection, particularly when external funding agencies impose data-sharing requirements.
- Research materials, datasets, recruitment records, and research protocols developed independently by the student without financial support from the supervisor are not generally required to be shared beyond what is necessary for supervisory oversight, verification of data integrity, and review of analysis.
- Data collected through projects that receive financial or material support from the supervisor (e.g., grant-funded participant recruitment, research assistant support, software, equipment, or participant compensation) will be made available to the supervisor following data cleaning and preparation, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed upon in writing.
- Students are strongly encouraged to use secure, university-approved data storage systems and data management practices available only to themselves to ensure the privacy of thesis data.
- All publications, presentations, and scholarly outputs must appropriately acknowledge funding sources that supported the research, including grants, fellowships, scholarships, and research awards obtained by either the student or supervisor.
- Research data, analyses, study protocols, and unpublished findings generated through research group activities must be treated as confidential and may not be shared outside the research team without appropriate authorization and, where applicable, ethics approval.
- Research participants may only be contacted for purposes that are consistent with approved research ethics protocols and informed consent procedures.
- Both the student and supervisor are expected to comply with university policies, research ethics requirements, funding agency requirements, and applicable privacy legislation governing research data.

Authorship and Scholarly Dissemination

The student and supervisor acknowledge that authorship and intellectual contributions should be discussed openly and reviewed throughout the research process.

- Although thesis and dissertation documents are protected by copyright, scholarly products arising from graduate research often involve collaborative intellectual contributions. Expectations regarding authorship, intellectual property, manuscript preparation, and publication should therefore be discussed early and revisited as needed to prevent misunderstanding of thesis-based manuscript submissions.
- Authorship and author order for conference presentations and manuscripts should be discussed and agreed upon before the majority of the work has been completed whenever possible.
- Decisions regarding authorship should follow the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](#)).

- First authorship is generally based on the overall intellectual and scholarly contribution to a project, including leadership in study development, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript preparation, and revision (e.g., entire first draft written independently). Data collection or statistical analysis alone does not automatically warrant first authorship.
- Participation in data collection, recruitment, or development of study materials does not necessarily warrant authorship; acknowledgement may be more appropriate where contributions do not meet accepted authorship criteria.
- The supervisor will normally be included as a co-author on conference presentations and manuscripts arising from research conducted under their supervision, using data collected through the research group, or supported through supervisor-held funding, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed upon.
- Non-supervisor thesis committee members are not automatically entitled to authorship on publications arising from thesis or dissertation research solely by virtue of serving on a committee, unless otherwise decided by the student in consultation with the supervisor.
- Other research group members, collaborators, and trainees should be appropriately recognized through authorship or acknowledgement based on the nature and extent of their contributions to increase research participation and recognition.
- Authorship on a conference presentation does not necessarily guarantee authorship on a subsequent manuscript; manuscript authorship should reflect contributions to the published work.
- Students may serve as first author on projects where they have made the primary scholarly contribution, including leading the data analysis and preparing the substantial majority of manuscript content.
- For collaborative projects using research group data, authorship and author order will be determined through discussion between the lead author and supervisor, taking into account the contributions of all individuals involved.
- For multi-study manuscripts that incorporate thesis or dissertation research alongside other studies, authorship arrangements will be discussed before manuscript preparation and determined based on the relative contributions of all contributors.
- Manuscripts, conference abstracts, presentations, and posters that include the supervisor as a co-author must be reviewed and approved by all co-authors, including the supervisor, before submission of the final copy.
- If findings from a grant-funded student research project remain unpublished one year following the student's graduation, the supervisor reserves the right to pursue publication of those findings following reasonable efforts to involve the student. In such cases, the student will be provided co-authorship (unless the student declines) consistent with their contribution and applicable authorship guidelines.

Signatures

The student and supervisor indicated below agree to participate in an advisory relationship in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines.

Student Name: _____

Supervisor: Dr. Caitlin McArthur

Student Signature: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____