

Dear incoming graduate student,

Welcome to the Graduate Diploma program of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry at Western University. Two important goals for your time in our program are to:

- (1) further your academic and professional career in a stimulating and rewarding work environment, and
- (2) produce a body of scientific research that enhances our knowledge of human health and disease.

To assist you in achieving these goals, we are providing you and your supervisor with the attached *Letter of Understanding* that outlines your individual roles and responsibilities. It is important that the two of you meet to discuss the expectations of our graduate program, and to review the obligations that you have to each other and to the other members of your laboratory.

If you have any questions regarding the content of this document, or if other issues arise as you proceed through your graduate studies, please do not hesitate to discuss these with your supervisor or myself as the Chair of the Graduate Education Committee for research-based programs.

Again, welcome to our department. We are confident that you will find your graduate training a positive experience and that you will share the enthusiasm that we have for research and our disciplines.

Sincerely,

Art Poon, PhD

Professor; Chair, Research-based Graduate Programs
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry
Western University

Statement of Purpose

The combined effort of graduate students and their advisors/supervisors is essential if we are to achieve excellence in graduate education. Because conflict and /or tension can arise in situations where expectations are unclear or mismatched, a thorough understanding of each person's role is critical to productive learning and successful outcomes. The following is a *Letter of Understanding* that can serve as the basis for discussion between graduate students and their supervisor(s) to clarify expectations.

LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING

OVERALL ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisor (s): it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ familiarize myself with the regulations of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (SGPS) and the department.
- ☐ make every effort to ensure that student's learning and research environment is adequately supported with suitable resources and workspace.
- ☐ ensure that student's project has an appropriate hypothesis/question and achievable goals.
- ☐ establish a professional working relationship to guide the student in approach to research.
- ☐ guide student in learning to work independently and as a member of a team.
- ☐ give credit in an appropriate manner to the student's contributions to scholarly activity, whether presented at professional meetings or in publications.
- ☐ to read, in a timely fashion, portions or whole of the graduate student reports submitted by the student and offer constructive feedback.
- ☐ meet regularly with student to provide guidance, assess progress and assist student in the goal of completing the program on time.

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ learn skills and approaches to thinking about problems that are suitable for an advanced educational program.
- ☐ exhibit independent judgment, academic rigour, and intellectual honesty.
- ☐ devote full time to scholarly studies and make timely progress towards completion of the diploma.
- ☐ meet regularly with supervisor(s) to assess progress.
- ☐ participate in departmental seminars and training regularly as determined with supervisor(s) and the department.
- ☐ interact with fellow students, both graduate and undergraduate, staff and faculty in a professional and respectful manner.
- ☐ negotiate amount of time and timing of holidays.

MEETINGS

Meetings can be called by the student or the supervisor, and usually by common agreement, with the frequency varying according to the stage of the program and the tasks at hand.

Supervisor(s): it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ monitor the accuracy, validity, and integrity of student's progress.
- ☐ respond in timely manner with comments/revisions to drafts of reports or research presentations.
- ☐ ensure that student is aware of relevant policies and procedures for the conduct of research.
- ☐ be available to meet on a regular basis and as needed for progress and completion of the program.

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ set up weekly meetings with supervisor(s) to discuss progress in research and to meet deadlines.
- ☐ balance duties and allocate professional time to be academically effective.
- ☐ distribute progress and final report to supervisor(s) in advance of submission to the department.
- ☐ plan appropriately to allow time for your supervisor(s) to review and comment on reports before submission to the department.

TIMELINES

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ be aware of the limited time span of the diploma program and make every effort to complete research, course work and/or progress/final reports within the period.

FUNDING

- ☐ funding support is not provided to students in the diploma program.
- ☐ students may apply for Graduate Teaching Assistantships to gain teaching experience.

SAFETY

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ complete, in consultation with supervisor(s), Western University's Position Hazard Communications form.

- ☐ complete required safety courses and workshops, including Health and Safety Awareness, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), Safe Campus Community.
- ☐ complete additional safety training courses and workshops as recommended by the supervisor(s).

PERSONAL CONDUCT: Research and/or Lab space

Supervisor(s): it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ maintain good professional and personal relationships with trainees in the research group.
- ☐ treat all members of the laboratory (and their work) with verbal and intellectual respect.

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ keep space tidy, respect the space of others, clean glassware, etc.
- ☐ understand that space and equipment is shared, and that care must be exercised, with problems reported as they arise.
- ☐ not borrow others' supplies without asking or remove anything from the laboratory without asking permission.
- ☐ participate in periodic laboratory cleanup.
- ☐ maintain good professional and personal relationships within the research group.
- ☐ treat all members of the laboratory (and their work) with verbal and intellectual respect.

LABORATORY & COMPUTER USE

Candidate: it is my responsibility to:

- ☐ maintain daily records of laboratory notes, including printed records of primary data.
- ☐ use this data as the basis for meetings with supervisor(s) and the preparation of progress/final reports.
- ☐ leave laboratory books and primary data within the laboratory; if signing out, a process must be pre- determined.
- ☐ use laboratory computers for research purposes only (e.g., email, data analysis, literature searches and other forms of scientific communication).

PUBLICATIONS

Candidates & Supervisor(s): it is our joint responsibility to:

- ☐ present research results, when applicable, in reputable, externally refereed journals, thereby achieving the goals of creating new knowledge and reporting it to the appropriate community.

- ☐ determine authorship, and process for shared and non-shared authorship, when applicable.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- ☐ maintenance of appropriate confidentiality concerning the research activities, in accordance with existing practices and policies of the discipline.
- ☐ circumstances of the research and student's contributions will influence the extent of your intellectual property (see <http://www.cags.ca/> for discussion of the factors that come into play).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- ☐ work together to find opportunities for students to attend suitable conferences and present research findings.
- ☐ investigate sources of funding for travel, when applicable.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I have read the letter of understanding and I have had the letter contents discussed with the student/supervisor. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

_____ Supervisor's name:	_____ Supervisor's signature:	_____ Date
_____ Co-supervisor's name:	_____ Co-supervisor's signature:	_____ Date
_____ Student's name:	_____ Student's signature:	_____ Date

Return the signed letter of understanding within 4 weeks of starting the graduate program to:
Graduate Program Administrator, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine: pathgrad@uwo.ca