



uOttawa

L'Université canadienne
Canada's university

HOW TO FIND A THESIS SUPERVISOR

www.grad.uOttawa.ca

Before you contact a potential thesis supervisor:

- **Make sure you have done your homework before approaching any potential supervisor!**
- Have an **idea of the field or research** you are interested in and a possible thesis topic.
- Check that potential supervisors are **members of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (FGPS)** and therefore **eligible to supervise** theses.
- **Read professors' profile** on the University of Ottawa FGPS "Members" website and consult the faculty/program websites.
- Compare your areas of interest with those of potential supervisors.
- **Talk your present professors** in the field about your area of interest and who could be a good match.
- **Read the academic publications** of potential thesis supervisors to see if their areas of research and approaches fit with your thesis topic or, if you haven't narrowed down the topic yet, your research area. Also read student papers or theses that they have already supervised.
- **Consider the supervisor's track record in graduate education:** e.g. successful completion of previous graduate students; average timeframe to complete the program.

MAKING FIRST CONTACT:

- Attend the University of Ottawa and the Faculty individual open house events.
- Send a letter or an email to a potential supervisor to introduce yourself.
- State clearly, what your interests are and how they match those of the professor you are contacting.
- Include information on your academic background.
- **Do not send generic letters or emails!**

AN ONSITE VISIT:

- Plan a visit to the University of Ottawa and ask to meet with potential supervisors.
- When you meet with a potential supervisor, **come prepared with as much information about your thesis topic as possible.** Make a list for yourself of questions you would like to ask and issues you would like to discuss when you meet, and bring this list to the meeting.
- **Visit the lab.** Find out what research infrastructure (laboratory or other facilities) professors have.
- **Meet the students** and other lab members being supervised by the potential supervisor. This is a critical aspect of finding the right lab for you: the lab members will be your day-to-day colleagues and major source of scientific interactions/support will come from them throughout your graduate work. Be sure to ask about their work, ask to see data, hear about their projects, lab interactions, etc.

IF YOU CANNOT MAKE AN ONSITE VISIT:

- Ask for a telephone interview.
- Be prepared **with as much information about your thesis topic as possible.** Make a list for yourself of questions you would like to ask and issues you would like to discuss when you meet, and bring this list to the meeting.
- Find out what research infrastructure (laboratory or other facilities) professors have.
- Consider personality and interaction dynamics.

After the meeting: Ask yourself...

- Is this professor interested in the thesis topic?
- At least at the outset, does this professor have theoretical and philosophical assumptions similar enough to your own for you to work together?
- Will there be a free discussion of ideas with this person?
- Does the lab environment seem to be one where you could work?
- What is the possibility of funding via the supervisor's grants or contracts? *Some departments have minimum funding regulations.*
- Will there be opportunities for conference participation, and for participating in preparing publications and grant applications?
- Do you share similar assumptions about how independently you will be working, or how close a collaboration each of you expects as far as thesis content goes?
- How often can you expect to meet with the supervisor?
- How long will the supervisor take to read draft chapters and give you feedback? This is especially important to discuss early on in discourse-based research. *In the sciences, contact is ongoing, with the supervisor discussing the project and the design of experiments, making changes after viewing initial results, and so on.*
- Is this professor available during the time periods that you will be doing your research and/or writing?

Keep in mind that this is a two-way street. A professor is not obligated to take on a student if he or she feels the match-up would not be a good one, or if the professor lacks lab space, time or funding.

For the Complete list of Members of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies:
<http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=2464>

For more information on the University of Ottawa, faculties and research interests visit the University of Ottawa website at: www.uOttawa.ca

For programs and admission criteria consult The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies website:
<http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1406>

Direct link for more information on "Finding a thesis supervisor":
<http://www.grad.uottawa.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=1390>