

# Supervisor For Masters and Ph.D Program

A supervisor is a professor who oversees your research and the development of your thesis. They provide mentorship, support, and guidance throughout your studies.

If you are interested in a thesis-based graduate program or few coursework graduate program, your relationship with your supervisor will directly impact your success. It's important to take the time to find a supervisor who will complement your research and learning style.

## Types of supervisors

### 1) Thesis Supervisor:

- The thesis supervisor is an active mentor in the scientific development of the student. They correspond regularly with the student and are accessible in responding to the student's queries.
- They supervise and support the development of the thesis proposal and assess the final version.
- They ensure that the subject of the thesis proposal is suitable for a thesis and feasible within the allowed time period.
- They provide timely review of all written material submitted to them by the student.
- They review, comment on, and approve the thesis prior to the submission. They identify thesis examiners and obtain their approval to examine the thesis prior to the submission.

- Finally, the thesis supervisor must be a primary appointed, cross-appointed, or adjunct member of the program.

## 2) **Thesis Co-Supervisor:**

- (The nomination of a co-supervisor is not mandatory)
- The thesis co-supervisor can complement the supervisor's advice by contributing specific skills or knowledge. They provide timely review of all written material submitted by the student. They review, comment, and approve the thesis prior to submission.

## **Do I need to find a supervisor before I apply?**

Supervisors are not required for most professional coursework and professional online programs.

For research-based masters and doctoral programs, you'll find that some school departments do not expect you to find a supervisor prior to applying while others do. Contact your department/program graduate coordinator to determine if having a supervisor before you apply is required for your program incase it's not expressly written on the program website

The graduate coordinator will be able to answer questions about program requirements, the admission process, supplemental materials, and funding opportunities.

## **Before You Search For Supervisor**

Do your research. You should know:

- What program you want to take?
- What are the admission requirements for your chosen program? Remember some programs may have higher than the minimum admission requirement. Some programs may require additional documentation such as a GMAT. Check what is required for your program.
- What area of research do you want to pursue? Are there professors doing research in the area of interest to you?
- You should identify at least two or more professors who are doing research in an area closely related to what you are interested in.

-Read the Professors website if they have to learn more about them and their work;

-Check out any of their online publications that are available and read them;

-Calculate your current grade-point average and grade point average in the last two years

## **Finding Potential SUPERVISOR For M.Sc and Ph. D Program**

Foremost, don't just go and mail any professor (potential supervisor) in your choice school department without learning more about them, there is a reason why most of the departments in Canadian Universities list all the names, contact, and research interest for all their lecturers, some lecturers also have website or the website of their lab where they list

all their research interest, publications, seminars, previous thesis they supervised, the current work going on in their research lab.

Some schools even go to the extent of listing all their graduate students (both M.Sc and Ph.D) with their thesis topics, their supervisors and publications, some schools also collect the previous thesis and publish them online on their website.

When contacting potential supervisors, it is important to make a good first impression. I suggest you take the following steps:

You need to understand that these potential supervisors need to know what you will be contributing to their current research work or what new research topic you had in mind. As a student who wants to pursue Thesis based M.Sc or Ph.D, you need to know your research interest or what you want to Work on when you reach Canada.

Look through graduate programs and find the research program that best matches your skills and qualifications.

Click through to the department's website. Most departmental websites will have a list of faculty members (potential supervisors) and their research areas, labs and contact information. Some departmental websites could tell you which faculty members (potential supervisors) are accepting new graduate students currently

Review the faculty member's information online and become familiar with their research. Do a web search on the faculty member's name and you could get a better-rounded picture of their research interests. You can also use - <https://scholar.google.com/>, <https://www.academia.edu/>, <https://www.researchgate.net/>, and related scholar search engines.

Read their publications. Do their theoretical, conceptual or methodological approaches interest you? Do their profiles show research interests similar to your own?

Make conclusions about the research topic you want based on the information you find from the research you did above, or at least know what part you are interested in and the recent developments going on in that part as regards to your potential supervisor's research interest.

It's always an added advantage if you have a research topic right before you start contacting potential supervisors; I know most of us from Nigerian, Ghana and co will find this a little bit hard since most of our schools are not research oriented so we don't have background in doing research. But that's where the information on the department website and Google can be of help.

**NOTE:** this could take several days so set aside some days and concrete time for this, after all remember you are going for a research in Canada so you might as well start to learn how to go about doing it

At the end of your research, come up with a list of professors that suits your research needs and get ready to contact them

## **CONTACTING SUPERVISOR**

### **1) You Can Contact Them Directly:**

Write a concise introductory email to the faculty member (potential supervisor) you would like to work with. Introduce yourself, your academic credentials (GPA, academic awards, research experience, etc.), and the kind of research you would like to pursue and the reason for it. Tailor your email to the individual recipient and do not send a general email to multiple faculty members.

Do address your letter carefully. Use formal salutations ("Dr./Professor" followed by last name). For example, if you are sending a letter to "Susan Smith, PhD", address as "Dear Dr. Smith" or "Dear Professor Smith." (Salutations such as "Respected sir" or "Dear Mrs. Smith" will demonstrate that you haven't done enough research to find out her gender or professorial rank.) And close ("Yours sincerely" followed by your name and contact information). Attach your current CV and transcripts.

If you have your own funding (e.g., external scholarship), specify the source and amount you have been awarded.

Do customize the letter as much as possible to begin building a relationship between yourself and your prospective supervisor.

Do proofread your letter and have someone else proofread it for you. If you're new to this process, consider this your first academic proposal. Poor grammar and spelling errors will reveal quite a bit about your academic abilities and attention to detail.

If you don't receive an immediate response, do not be discouraged. Faculty members might just need some time to review and get back to you, especially in the middle of a busy semester or during the summer if they are in the field or away at a conference.

## **2) You Can Contact Through Graduate Program Chair:**

You may also consider contacting the Graduate Program Chair with a brief research proposal, asking if they could recommend anyone in the program engaging in similar work. It is always a good idea to reach out to the Graduate Program Chair before applying to any graduate program. They will be your main point of contact to answer questions about eligibility requirements, funding, or assistantship opportunities.

### 3) **You Can Contact Them Through Current Or Old Graduate Student:**

Talk to current graduate students about their experience working with their supervisors or other faculty members in your discipline. Look for students in the department doing research on your area of interest and their current supervisors. Find out their contact email and write them a friendly email with your research interest and ask politely if they could connect you with a particular potential supervisor you feel you can work with. Try to cultivate a relationship with them which will help to fast track the process for you

You can also check previous graduates of the department and find out from their published thesis the supervisor they worked with and send them a friendly email requesting if they could connect you with a potential supervisor and further questions about your potential supervisor after you've gained connection with them. They probably have invaluable advice or suggestions for you.

## THINGS TO DO WHEN YOU'RE READY TO CONTACT POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS

**Organize your CV:** A Curriculum Vitae, or CV, is like an academic version of the resume, but it is not a resume. I repeat: A CV is not a resume. CV's may be more than a page long, and should include everything about you that's relevant— your educational background, work experience, publications, presentations, awards and honors, etc. I strongly recommend reading several CVs before you build your own, especially from researchers from different stages.

Don't put anything on your CV that you started before college/undergrad – no high school grades— and avoid part-time jobs that aren't directly related to the work you want to do.

**Don't treat graduate school inquiries as though you're applying for a position in a marketing firm:** Avoid what I call “business school language.” You'll notice how in the examples below, I didn't include anything like “I am a highly motivated student, committed to academic excellence.” That's what should be included in your letters of recommendation, not in your inquiry email. In other words, show, don't tell. Your first sell, to me, is your brain— I'm interested in whether you'd be a good fit for research work, and demonstrate an ability to think originally and well.

Your CV should tell whether you've done fieldwork in adverse conditions, and whether you've published. Saying “I have experience in conceiving, executing, and bringing to fruition an original research project” is pointless if your undergraduate thesis is listed on your CV already.

**Write a concise, tailored, informative, and mature inquiry email:** You've got a dream list of prospective supervisors, or perhaps have come across an advertisement for a funding opportunity you're really interested in. When you're ready to contact them, take some time to craft a brief, informative email that is individually tailored.

## How to Email Professors (Potential Supervisors) and Virtually Guarantee Response

Once you've identified two or more potential supervisors, the next step is to make contact with the professors who lead that labs/department usually by e-mail. Here are some items to include in your initial brief contact email.

- Your name
- Academic background (your GPA)
- Academic awards or highlights
- Research experience
- Why you wish to enter graduate studies



- Why the faculty member's area of research will match with your research goals (cite the faculty member's publications if relevant)
- Make it clear that you are familiar with their work and how their research interests mesh with your own (if there is a research idea in one of their papers that you would like to explore in your work, explain that briefly)
- A research proposal, if appropriate
- Ask them specifically if they are accepting new graduate students for the coming academic year.

**NOTE:** Consult This Video for More Briefing around Getting Response from a Potential Supervisor and Eventually Get Scholarship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auitkak4f-c>

You don't have to be perfect in your application. You don't have to meet up the entire standard shared in the video to start your application

Do not write a supervisor without having read 2 or more publications from him/her. They do not take you seriously if you are not already familiar with their research focus. When writing them an email, use a catchy subject like "PROSPECTIVE GRADUATE STUDENT, FALL 2020" or "PROSPECTIVE Ph.D. STUDENT (ALREADY APPLIED), FALL, 2020" If your proposed school demands that you apply before securing supervisors. Please note the keywords in the subject!

**DON'T YOU EVER USE GENERIC EMAIL!** All emails sent to each Prof. must be constructed personally for them because they always detect and detest copy and paste generic email. The body of the email should have the following:

## **FORMAT 1:**

Dear Prof. Xyz,

Your name? Graduate of what, and where? your grades; overall and last two academic years in percentage (No Prof. has time to be converting your grades), your interests in relation to the research focus of the Prof.

What you read about the Prof's paper and how it captured your interests, what point and suggestion were you able to derive from the research you read? Your own research interests and how it relates to that of the Prof.

Let him know you met the requirement for admission (you must have checked the school portal to know if you meet admission requirements) and when you intend to resume. Ask him about the possibilities. Tell him you have attached a CV and Transcript.

Thank him/her for the time

Sincerely,

Your name

(Do not put your number, they won't call you, and stop putting your email here, it is already on the mail you sent)

## **FORMAT 2:**

This format is simple and straight to the point, you state why you are e-mailing and you direct them to your CV and transcripts for further information.

Dear Dr/Prof X,

My name is X and I am a candidate for the MSc X program at the University of X to begin in Fall/Winter/Summer 202x. The purpose of this e-mail is to enquire about the

availability of masters graduate student positions in your lab.

I am interested in the research you are conducting on (what you are interested in). The basis of my interest in your research is a scientific interest in (reasons why you are interested). I have attached my CV and transcripts for your consideration. Thank you for taking the time read my e-mail.

Kind regards,  
Your name.

### **FORMAT 3:**

This format is more robust and indeed you give the supervisor a good picture of yourself as an applicant, I do think it is a bit lengthy and might be a turnoff for supervisors; however I have received positive responses with this format. Some Supervisors might however ask you to send something like this as a "career plan".

Dear Dr/Prof X,

My name is X and I am interested in applying for the (your program) at the University of X for Fall 202x. The purpose of this e-mail is to enquire about the possibility of you acting as my faculty supervisor during the course of the (your program).

To briefly describe my profile, I am a (your degree) graduate from (your University) with a passion for research (if you are going or a thesis based program you will be doing research). I am interested in the research you are conducting on [b] (summarize their interests) [/b] which motivated me to contact you regarding the possibility of you being my supervisor for (your program).

I possess knowledge of (knowledge relevant to their research) which I gained through modules on these topics during the course of my (what you studied) degree. I have also had experience of geology/biology/chemistry/finance etc research; (How you gained this experience). I have described this/these experiences/projects (as appropriate please) in my attached curriculum vitae. Through these experiences I have gained (briefly describe what you gained from these experiences- laboratory techniques, analytical methods, project

management etc)

I have attached my CV for your consideration which describes my research experience and research competencies. I have also attached my university transcripts which show the courses I studied during my (what you studied) degree. My transcripts are graded using the Nigerian (mention your country) grading system which differs from the Canadian system however I have confirmed my overall grade of Second Class, Upper Division is sufficient for entry to the (your program of interest).

I believe I can gain valuable knowledge and experience under your supervision but also use the knowledge and research experience I have previously gained in order to contribute positively to your research. I am very happy to further discuss my grades, research experience, and interests and I look forward to your reply at your convenience.

Kind regards,  
Your name.

#### **FORMAT 4:**

Dear Dr. Smith,

**Introduce yourself:** Tell the professor in two or three sentences who you are. State your degree level and your research area. Give a clear statement indicating that you meet the admission requirements which includes your grade point average and, if required, your English proficiency test results.

My name is XX XX and I am from the University of XX. I am in my final year of masters in Biology with focus on plant breeding research. My GPA is 76% and my program was done in English language.

**Make a connection and provide reasons to be considered:** Use specific references to make a connection between the work that you have been doing and the research projects that the professor is working on. Important points to include:

Papers, journal articles, published, accepted or submitted.

Conference papers given;

Scholarships won

My current research project for my master's program is in canola breeding for fungus disease resistance and I have just submitted a co-authored article which was accepted by XXX. I have attached a brief research interest statement with more details. I was reading about recent work in genetically modified wheat on the website and it looks very interesting. I am interested in building upon my master's experience and expanding my research into related areas. I have attached a copy of my C.V. for your review.

**State your request; tell the professor what you are looking for:**

I wish to begin a PhD program in XX in September 2020 and would be very interested in working under your supervision. I would appreciate if you could review the attached documents and let me know what the possibilities might be. I look forward to your reply at your convenience.

Kind regards,

Your name.

## **When To Send An Email**

Always check the local time in the Professors Canadian province and send the email in at around 8 am and 3:50 pm their local time. If they fail to respond in 5 business days, keep resending it at that interval until they reply to you.

# TIPS IN GETTING A SUPERVISOR SHARED BY A RECENT Ph.D STUDENT

I applied for PhD at some universities in Canada in 2018 but was rejected in ALL of them. I had to use the rest of the year to rethink what went wrong and I believe what I did can be useful to prospective PhD and Masters by research applicants. I finally got 3 fully funded PhD offers in my second attempt. I had to select the one with the best offer.

1. Be patient, the process takes time and a lot of e-mails correspondence. Admission into Master's or Ph.D program in Canadian Institutions is not an easy task; you have to be ready to do some research in order to submit an airtight application.

2. Make sure you tailor each e-mail specifically to the supervisor you are interested in. Check their profile, read their research interests, check their current projects, and if possible glance at one or two of their recent publications. Sometimes on the profiles of supervisors their number of graduate students are mentioned, if they have a lot it's unlikely they would have space for you, this isn't always true but it can save you time when you are prioritizing who to e-mail.

3. Include your CV and transcript with each e-mail. You can attach your CV to reflect your academic/professional progression in your area of research. If you're applying for masters in Engineering and your CV keeps screaming Banking/Finance. Your CV is invariably telling the grad admissions committee that you're better positioned to probably advance your studies in banking/finance. Please review your CV, ensure it aligns with your proposed program. This is one of the subtle/background factors to be considered.

4. Ensure your e-mail is well written; use simple English as well as good punctuation and spelling. Use appropriate titles, do not call a Professor a Doctor, some supervisors will not

care, some do care very much

5. Your CV is an important part of your application. I say application because you are basically applying to work with the supervisor, spend time crafting a straight to the point CV. A good CV (for a fresh graduate anyway) should be no longer than 2 pages, if you have been working it is understandable that it might be longer. Make your CV appealing to the eye. Also avoid including your age, sex, religion, marital status or all of that, these are simply unnecessary and might make the supervisor be biased against you for example with your personal religious affiliation or else you have confirmed you are of the same religion which could be good for you

6. You can send e-mails to supervisors at around 8:30-11AM in their local time. I suggest this because these are the times an average working person would get into the office and read their mail to plan for the day. No data to prove this helps though

7. This is very important when you write your proposal/statement of purpose. You should try to read as many successful proposals as you can and then model yours after them. The implication of this point is that you should be mindful of your expressions, research interests, how you present your work/structure, etc. Locate the page that lists current graduate students on the department's website and mail current students. Ask those questions about the program, the admission process, the Professors you can contact and most importantly, ask them to send you their proposals. You can also read the chapter one of recent theses from the department via their online theses repository.

8. If you're applying to thesis-based programs, you should focus on a concrete research plan rather than personal stories of how you grew up in poverty or how you've always dreamt of studying in Canada and so on. Those personal tales are not necessary for research based programs. You may probably start with a motivation for your work but leave it there and concretize your research plan by detailing research questions, gaps in scholarship, purpose of proposed work, methodology, theories to be used, anticipated findings, and if possible, a short working bibliography.

9. Do not limit yourself to one school. Apply to as many as 5 or 6 schools. Initiate contacts with supervisors from a wide range of schools and then apply to the ones where you have supervisory confirmation. Note that some departments do not require you to get a supervisor before application. You should always confirm this on the department's website or with the Graduate Program Coordinator. In any case, apply to many schools. Sometimes, the gamble can pay off and you'll get into more than one school.

10. Always emphasize what the department can offer you. Since resources are small and the applicant pool is large, you have to establish how your research "fits" into the department. Many departments have peculiar interests or focus. For instance, Carleton University's Department of Linguistics may focus on generative linguistics whereas University of Alberta's Department of Linguistics may focus on historical linguistics. You should always confirm this through the staff profiles and strengths. You can also ask the Graduate program Coordinator for confirmation.

11. Look for a supervisor that is currently searching for students, you will find this information on their personal webpage. If you have a very strong background in a course that is related to the supervisors area of interest, mention it, boast about it. Most importantly, find a supervisor whose interest fits well with yours. If you have any publications, talk about it, and make sure you have an online directory for your papers.

**NOTE:** Consult This Video for More Briefing around Getting Response from a Potential Supervisor and Eventually Get Scholarship:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auitkak4f-c>

You don't have to be perfect in your application. You don't have to meet up the entire standard shared in the video to start your application



## QUESTION AND ANSWER

**QUESTION:** I sent an email to a Prof at Univ of Sask - just for PhD research supervision (Fall 2020) - he replied that based on my GPA he would support me for the deans scholarship at Univ of Sask; he requested documents from me like my transcript etc and asked me to fill out a particular form for consideration. After this, he informed me that he has submitted it to the department for consideration. My question is that, since I have not applied for admission at all; is it possible to be granted a dean's scholarship in Univ of Sask prior to applying? How long does it take to get response on this scholarship? My MSc GPA converted to univ of Sask equivalent was 85.5% and BEng was 4.43/5 - what are my chances?

**ANSWER:** The University of Saskatchewan Dean's scholarship is a prestigious scholarship aimed at attracting intelligent graduate students to their university. To the best of my knowledge, the scholarship decisions cannot be made if you have not applied for admission. Guess the professor is only trying to gauge your chances for obtaining the scholarship before offering you any guarantees or he thought you applied already? The scholarship committee will still conduct a skype interview for you after you've applied for admission. So I will advise you to apply for admission without further delay.

**QUESTION:** I noticed that the deadline for supervisors to submit nominations is Feb 1, 2019; what are am my chances of still applying for admission at this time - already I see that he has filled out the scholarship form but with a blank in the column written Nominee student's number.

**ANSWER:** As long as you file an application for admission and all outstanding documents before the deadline, you will be fine. The scholarship decision is made concurrently with the offer of admission. Scholarship decision cannot be made in the vacuum until there is an active application for admission. If you are accepted, you will be

assigned a student number and access into the full panoply and universe of USASK network and database. As for your chances, I am not privy to your life story and work you have done. High GPA is only one of the criteria. But your life story and the work you have done, scholarly and volunteer humanitarianism, also counts greatly. So concentrate greatly in writing a great thesis proposal and statement of intent. Support them with great recommendations from employers and at least one of your professors. You will stand a good chance.

**QUESTION:** I have tried getting supervisor from Manitoba and Saskatchewan university after sending various mails last month but am yet to get a positive response. Two already replied that they can't accommodate more students. Engineering field. Had 4.1cgpa. Last two sessions Cgpa was around 4.7. Any advice please?

**ANSWER:** Considering that your proposed course is being offered in limited schools, that means there will be very limited professors available and fewer willing to take students. Now what should you do? If you want it so badly, you need to do something really unique. You gotta stand out in result, research, and packaging. Do you meet the minimum requirements of these schools? Do you have a direct interest in the research scope of some of the professors?

Assuming you met the above; now begin to do things differently. Connect with the potential supervisors on research network, such as Google scholars, research gate and others. Build connection by commenting and appraising their publications. I recommend you read, critique, and give a future-oriented summary of their publications. And finally, express your interest in working on similar areas.

**QUESTION:** I would love to do my masters in Canada. I studied Mechanical Engineering and finished with a strong 2:1. Please which universities are easiest to get admission? I want to do my masters in mechanical engineering as well.

**ANSWER:** The first thing for you is getting a Supervisor. So you gotta mail Supervisors of different universities in CANADA first. (Don't give up when you get a Mail from a Supervisor that he can't supervise you or not accepting student for supervision, Try and look for other supervisors). It's after a Supervisor has accepted to supervise you that's when you will now process the admission and pay the Application fee.

Lastly, don't assume that the professor is under any obligation to supervise you; don't include too much information which isn't relevant to an inquiry mail (e.g., extended biography, high school diplomas, and certificates); don't send impersonal, spam-like emails to a large number of professors.

You may get a polite response with an apology that you lack funding, almost always nowadays, graduate school starts with the first email; it's the modern-day foot in the door. Your prospective advisor will not only guide you through the application process and advocate for you, they'll also be the one you spend the next two to eight years with, mentoring you in your development as to an academic adult. You're going to be a huge investment of their time, resources, and energy, and your communication really needs to show them that you have the independence, intellectual maturity, and professionalism to succeed as a student. Don't blow it!

## **IMPORTANT RESOURCE LINK:**

- 1) Scholarship/Job advertised position: <https://scholarshipdb.net/scholarships-in-canada-1>
- 2) Getting Response from a Potential Supervisor and Eventually Get Scholarship: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Auitkak4f-c>

**You'll Testify**

*Victor Ola*