

### **Guidelines for effective remote supervision<sup>1</sup>**

In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario Tech University research supervisors and students should explore appropriate ways to continue research and scholarly activities. Discuss and act on everyone's preferences for working in a virtual collaborative space. Consider how information will be shared, create clear guidelines for when responses are expected and if working in teams, find a way to ensure that information threads do not get lost.

Beyond making arrangements to ensure continuity of research, it is important to remember that these are exceptional times calling for mutual support and understanding, and may require continuous adjustment and accommodation.

#### **Keep the following in mind as we transition to a Work from Home (WfH) environment.**

1. Designate a home space and establish a daily work schedule.
2. In consultation with your supervisor, make sure you have transferred or have remote access to appropriate resources from your study or research spaces on campus.
3. Ensure IT supports are in place to access data/resources.
4. Ensure any data or information related to your research is safely stored and not easily accessed by others.
5. Ensure that your supervisor has an up to date contact list for all members of their research group.
6. Make yourself accessible to safe and secure telecommunications via Google Meet, Google Chat, Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or telephone.
7. Make sure your connection is safe and secure.
8. Communicate your work schedule to people staying with you at home, and adhere to it.
9. Take breaks.
10. When WfH, take care not to isolate yourself and try to maintain personal interactions with friends from within the university and outside beyond strict research related work.

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines have been adapted from the University of Calgary, with thanks.

11. International students may be especially vulnerable given their distance from family members. Please keep this in mind and reach out and support them.

### **Guidelines for effective supervision of students working remotely:**

1. Ask what resources and support are needed to WfH.
2. Maintain as much as possible the forms of interactions you had before switching to WfH (e.g., research discussion meeting, regular reports, presentations). Maintaining contact and interactions with other research team members can be useful not only from a research productivity perspective but also for morale and social support. Consider more regular group meetings via Google Meets/Skype/Zoom/teleconference.
3. Be transparent. If you have limited availability due to other obligations, let your students know when you will be available and can respond to questions.
4. Schedule regular and frequent check-ins with each student individually.
5. Respect students' time and availability and try to stick to business hours for deadlines and meetings. Be understanding of time constraints of students caring for children.
6. Take into consideration that remote communication is not always a perfect substitute to in-person meetings. Feedback, enquiries and answers should be formulated very clearly.
7. Time away from the University under these circumstances is not to be counted towards students' vacation. Ensure that students continue to receive their regular level of funding/scholarship support.
8. Be clear about expectations and be willing to adapt as the situation changes.
9. Be understanding about decreased productivity - there is a lot of anxiety, people are caring for family, might have a lack of resources, and need time to adapt to this new way of doing things.
10. Create smaller, manageable deliverables rather than focusing on big projects that don't require regular check-ins, so that communication can be regularly scheduled.
11. Create opportunities for lab/team members to engage with each other virtually to help maintain social contact.
12. Do not just focus on research and productivity, ask each other about health and wellness.

13. Know what resources are available to students and faculty who are feeling anxious or stressed. Should students or faculty require any support or have any questions, the [university's webpage](#) has provided COVID-19 related health recommendations, including mental and physical wellness tips. There are also other supports and services available to graduate students, offered by the Office of Student Life, these can be found [here](#).
14. These are tough times. However, be cognizant of your emotional leadership as negativity is infectious and can lead to increased anxiety and stress in students. Try to be positive in your interactions with students. Focus on opportunities and making "lemonade from lemons".
15. It doesn't have to be all about work. WFH can be isolating and dispiriting. Make it fun! Start and encourage activities that will lift the spirits of your group and encourage remote social interactions (e.g. custom crossword puzzles or bingo, generate memes/videos, create chat groups, play common ice-breaker games). Ensure that all activities are appropriate and inclusive.

### **Practical Research Considerations:**

1. Supervisors and students should work together to develop a personalized plan that allows each person to conduct research remotely to the fullest extent possible (e.g., performing data analysis, literature review, modeling and computation, writing manuscripts and applications, and planning).
2. Prioritize activities, and discuss which activities can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed and possible alternatives that can limit potential research interruptions.
3. Discuss possible impacts on activities and deadlines involving external collaborators or partners as well as planned research-related trips. Develop strategies to deal with these while WFH.
4. Review Ontario Tech University [Research Ethics Board FAQ's](#) for more information on your research involving humans and/or animals and how it may be impacted.

Find additional information on the university's [webpage for more information on research related questions, information for graduate students and for information for international students](#).

Please note that Ontario Tech University Research Supervisor and Student responsibilities as outlined in the [graduate academic calendar](#), includes other important points to keep in mind while we transition to work from home.

Sources:

Grosse, C.U. (2002). Managing communication within virtual intercultural teams. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 65(4), 22-38.

The University of Calgary, Guidelines for effective remote supervision.