The University of Alberta acknowledges that we are located on Treaty 6 territory, and respects the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and all First Peoples of Canada, whose presence continues to enrich our institution.
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Ice Breaker Activity

• Organize yourselves by areas of research
• Organize yourselves by “passions”
Welcome from the Dean

Dr. Brooke Milne
Vice-Provost and Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
Session 1:
How to Talk to Your Supervisor

Dr. Victoria Ruétalo
Associate Dean (Supervisor Training & Mentorship & Student Academic Affairs)
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
MEETING OF THE MINDS...

He's totally on to me. He knows I've done nothing this week!

I can see it in his disapproving eyes. He thinks I'm worthless!

Uh, so... uh...

Hmmm.

I see.

Interesting.

Hmm, squash game with Prof. Jones today. That old bugger.

Which reminds me, gotta pick up the dry cleaning.

And what's this guy's name again?
7 Suggestions for Success
Take yourself seriously, but not too seriously
TWO

Convey openness to guidance, but also show self-direction and reliability
THREE

Communicate working style and time management strategies
FOUR

Have an agenda and goal for your meetings
FIVE

Ask for what you need; ask when you are certain; be brave, but polite
**SIX**

Be proactive; anticipate potential problems; provide solutions
SEVEN

When there is tension, be brave to ask questions, say how are you feeling without blame, and suggest solutions
BREAK
15 minutes
Session 2: What is Expected of a PhD Student

Dr. Bryan Hogeveen
Vice-Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
How to be Successful in Graduate School
or
The 7 Habits of the Highly Effective PhD Student
Introduction
Becoming a PhD student

- First: Congratulations! Welcome!
- A PhD is not something you do (the PhD)
- It is something you become (a PhD student)
- Tendency for it to become all consuming
7 Habits of the ‘Highly Effective’ PhD Student

- Establishing/Understanding expectations
- Dealing with the Impostor Syndrome
- Establishing a healthy work/life balance
- Understanding that the PhD is about growth (personal and professional)
- Developing grit
- Finding/Developing a network of support
- Understanding that the PhD is a privileged time
• Vice-Dean in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR)
• Former Associate Dean, FGSR
• PhD from the University of Toronto
• Home Department: Sociology
• My PhD Journey / My students
Work/Life Balance

READ.  WRITE.  RINSE.  REPEAT.

THE RESEARCH CYCLE.

PHDCOMICS.COM
Tips for Finding Work/Life Balance

• Find/continue hobbies (students/golf)
  – Stick to them!
• Plan your day/set manageable goals
• Take breaks (it is okay!)
• Find/develop a community

Anything else?
You are more than your research...

Grad School
New Year’s Resolutions:

- Eat better
- Sleep more
- Get more exercise
- See friends

or

Graduate.

pick one

My resolutions need a better solution.
Benefits?

- Mental health
- Quality of life
- Feelings of belonging

Dangers?
- Could lead to isolation...
Case Study One

Bernadetta knew from her previous degree that her first year was going to be busy. During her first university degrees, she had lived at home eventually moving in with friends but still in the same city. This was her first time moving away from her long-time friends and family. It was both exciting and stressful getting set up in Edmonton.

During the first few months, Bernadetta buried herself into her studies, wanting to stay on top of her reading, and being prepared for her teaching duties. Yes, she went out every couple of weeks with people from her classes, but she missed her kickboxing friends and felt guilty when she was not working on her research proposal. She felt that she needed to have a good draft ready when the next term started and she was still struggling with her research question. The days were getting colder, the daylight shorter, and since she did not have the family dog to walk, it was easier to just keep working at her desk. Besides, how else would she stay on top of everything that needed to get done.

What opportunities are Bernadette missing? What would help Bernadette with her mountain of work?
Mauricio’s Tips

1) Find a research topic you feel motivated to work with.
2) You are capable, always remember that.
3) Engage in activities on campus. Later on, think about volunteering.
4) Organize yourself. There is time for work and for your personal life.
5) There are always resources to overcome problems. Just ask!
Case Study Two: Isolation

Hossein will be a new doctoral student with Dr. Ling in Political Sciences who is a relatively recent hire to the faculty. Dr. Ling has one other student, a Master's student who is in her second year. Emily will be a new doctoral student with Dr. Yagorsky in Chemical Engineering who has a team of 10 students and 2 postdoctoral fellows. Both Emily and Hossein found themselves immersed in classes for the first few months with little connection to their supervisor or people in their research group. Everyone in Ling’s and Yagorksky’s research group seemed like they were immersed in their own research.

What strategies would you suggest for Emily and Hossein to build a network of support for themselves? How could they get more engaged within their respective groups or department?
Isolation
Isolation

- Write me a book! Independence!
  - PhD is a different animal
- Friends just don’t get me anymore!
- Competition
Benjamin’s Tips

• Stragmatism
• Prioritization
• Volunteerism
• Humility and resilience
• Adventure and friendships
Your Expectations

- What do you expect from your supervisor?
- What does your supervisor expect from you?
Key Problems that Come to FGSR

- **Neglect**: lack of communication, lack of an annual supervisory committee meeting;

- **Lack of direction given for the student’s research and/or writing**: student feels like they are on a wild goose chase (bring in the supervisory committee);

- **Micromanaging**: encourage respectful work environments, regular lab meetings, regular work hours [where possible], allowing autonomy where appropriate;

- **Intimidating or disrespectful behavior**: yelling, threats, ostracizing a group member, toxic work and learning environments;

- **Issues over assigning credit/authorship/ownership of data**; and

- **Inappropriate expectations**: personal favours for the professor.

How can (many of) these be avoided?
Your Expectations

• How often do you want to meet?
• What is your preferred method of communication?
• How often/how many hours am I expected to be in the lab?
• How is authorship determined?
• How/Is conference travel funded?
• How will my research project be determined (Collaboratively? Independently?)
• What are my career goals? (Plan your program backwards)
• Turnaround times?
• Others?
Advice

• Write up a list of expectations and discuss this with your supervisor... *early!*
• FGSR Resource: 1st Meeting Checklist
• Resource: Oxford Expectations Survey
Others’ Expectations

• What does your supervisor expect?
• What does your department expect? (i.e., attend Orientations, be physically present)
• What does your family/friends expect?
• What should I be doing at conferences?
Why is this important?

- In 2016, 278 cases came to the attention of FGSR Associate Deans
- In 22%, student/supervisor conflict was the primary rationale for seeking advice/redress
Research is hard...

OK, writing shouldn't be so hard.

Everything I want to say is in my head...

I just have to transfer it from my brain to this computer.

Writing: the most impossible short distance in the history of humanity.
Grit

- What is grit?
• Why were you accepted into your PhD program?
• How many people have been told?
Impostor Syndrome

• Impostor syndrome (AKA impostor phenomenon, impostorism, fraud syndrome or the impostor experience) is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a "fraud". (Wikipedia)

• Basically: “I am a fraud and everyone is about to find out.”
Dealing with Impostor Syndrome

• “I still think people will find out that I’m really not very talented. I’m really not very good. It’s all been a big sham.”
  – Michelle Pfeiffer, interview

• “I have written eleven books, but each time I think, ‘uh oh, they’re going to find out now. I’ve run a game on everybody, and they’re going to find me out.’”
  – Maya Angelou

• “The beauty of the impostor syndrome is you vacillate between extreme egomania and a complete feeling of: 'I'm a fraud! Oh God, they’re on to me! I'm a fraud!' So you just try to ride the egomania when it comes and enjoy it, and then slide through the idea of fraud.”
  – Tina Fey (Bossy Pants)
Dealing with Impostor Syndrome

• Accept that you have worked hard to get where you are (there is a reason you are here)
  ─ Tell yourself that you belong here!
• Stop comparing yourself! Everyone works at their own pace and has their strengths
• Understand that the PhD is a process of becoming (don’t worry about being wrong)
• Know that (almost) everyone is in the same boat
• Find someone/group to discuss
Impostor Syndrome

YOU'RE NOT AN IMPOSTOR, CECILIA!
YEAH, RIGHT.

LOOK HOW FAR YOU'VE COME!
LUCK!
THINK OF EVERYTHING YOU'VE DONE!
IT WASN'T THAT HARD!

CONSIDER YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!
ANYONE COULD HAVE DONE THEM!
ALL THE AWARDS YOU'VE WON!
IF ONLY THEY KNEW!

WELL, AT LEAST YOU'RE GOOD AT FEELING LIKE AN IMPOSTOR.
I'M JUST "OK" AT IT.

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM
Ling had just learned she would be a teaching assistant for the Department of Physics. She had taken many physics courses during her undergraduate and Master’s degrees but had no idea what students in first year Physics would know. She had never had to teach before.

What will be expected of her? Will she measure up to her student’s and department’s expectations? What if she doesn’t know the answer to the student questions? How would you advise Ling so that she could be more comfortable and confident for her first class?
Case Study Four

Bernadetta knew from her previous degree that her first year was going to be busy. During her first university degrees, she had lived at home eventually moving in with friends but still in the same city. This was her first time moving away from her long-time friends and family. It was both exciting and stressful getting set up in Edmonton. During the first few months, Bernadetta buried herself into her studies, wanting to stay on top of her reading, and being prepared for her teaching duties. Yes, she went out every couple of weeks with people from her classes, but she missed her kick boxing friends and felt guilty when she was not working on her research proposal. She felt that she needed to have a good draft ready when the next term started and she was still struggling with her research question. The days were getting colder, the daylight shorter, and since she did not have the family dog to walk, it was easier to just keep working at her desk. Besides, how else would she stay on top of everything that needed to get done. What opportunities are Bernadette missing? What would help Bernadette with her mountain of work?
7 Habits of the Successful PhD Student

- *Establishing/Understanding* expectations
- *Dealing* with the Impostor Syndrome
- *Establishing* a healthy work/life balance
- *Understanding* that the PhD is about growth (personal and professional)
- *Developing* grit
- *Finding/Developing* a network of support
- *Understanding* that the PhD is a privileged time
FINAL WORDS

Please write an encouraging note to yourself in reflection of today.

Dear Self...
LUNCH

A chance to continue the conversation...
(Furry) Friends of FGSR

Woof! Woof!