### Governance Executive Summary

**Advice, Discussion, Information Item**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Agenda Title</th>
<th>FGSR Supervisory Tool: Supervisor-Student Guidelines, Standardized Annual Progress Report</th>
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<th>Item</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed by</td>
<td>Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presenter</td>
<td>Brooke Milne, Vice Provost and Dean</td>
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<th>Details</th>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Office of the Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research</td>
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<td>The Purpose of the Proposal is (please be specific)</td>
<td>The proposal is before the committee because it introduces two new tools to assist in the administration of the supervisor-student relationship and to more consistently monitor student progress in program. The first tool is the Student Supervisor Guidelines. The second tool is a standardized Annual Progress Report form.</td>
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**Supervisor-Student Guidelines:**

All students (Master’s and PhD) who are registered in a thesis-based program, in consultation with their supervisor (assigned at the time of admission or serving as interim), are required to complete the student-supervisor guidelines as soon as possible within the first term of registration but no later than the submission of the annual progress report due in FGSR by June 30.

The aim of the guidelines document is to bring transparency and accountability to both supervisors and students while they are engaged in graduate work at the University of Alberta. Like the previous FGSR “check-list,” which was established in 2015, the guidelines provide a mechanism to engage in discussion around central matters directly involved in a supervisor-student academic relationship. Completion of the guidelines ensures that every student has the opportunity to ask and answer questions with their supervisor, to have clarity on their rights and obligations, and to set appropriate expectations regarding their graduate work and the working relationship with their supervisor for the duration of their program.

Making the completion of the guidelines form mandatory means all supervisors are engaging in these foundational conversations with their student at the start of the student’s program. This will help identify problems/misunderstandings sooner and ideally will foster positive, lasting working relationships for both parties.

If there is a change in supervisor at any point in a student’s program of study, the form will be completed anew in accordance with the timeline noted.

**Standardized Progress Report:**
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<th>Executive Summary (outline the specific item – and remember your audience)</th>
<th>Supervisor-Student Guidelines:</th>
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<td>In 2015, the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) introduced a “check-list” of topics that supervisors and their graduate students were meant to discuss at their first meeting. The check-list was intended to provide a mechanism where both parties could establish clarity and agreement on the respective roles and obligations that would structure the course of their academic relationship at the University of Alberta.</td>
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<td>Departments were encouraged to build on the FGSR check-list to add program and/or discipline specific items. Many departments across campus have done this and administer these lists effectively. However, the completion of the check-list by supervisors and their graduate students has not been consistently met by all, nor has FGSR had oversight to ensure compliance across all programs. As such, some students do not have the opportunity to discuss these topics with their new supervisors and, therefore, do not have clarity on their roles, expectations, and obligations while completing their graduate studies.</td>
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<td>The Supervisor-Student Guidelines formalizes the FGSR check-list and provides a standardized framework for discussion between all supervisors and graduate students who are registered in a thesis program. The resulting document is intended to govern the supervisor-student academic relationship, and to initiate, promote, and sustain a positive, professional, and ultimately successful supervisor-student relationship. This form and the information recorded therein may be revisited at any stage of the student’s graduate program to accommodate changes, should they arise. Should changes arise, they will be recorded on the student’s Annual Progress Report so that it is clear both parties agree to these changes and acknowledge they have been made.</td>
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<td>Annual Progress Report: Students registered in graduate programs are entitled to timely and appropriate feedback on their work and progression. Presently, there is no required progress reporting protocol in place at the U of A, and while some departments have very successful procedures that ensure students receive feedback, others do not. This means students do not always understand what is expected of them by their supervisor’s and committees nor do they have clear direction on how to improve their performance if it is deemed to be unsatisfactory.</td>
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Clear and timely feedback on program performance is key to facilitating the successful completion of graduate programs. It is also important for students to develop critical problem solving skills that incorporate supervisor feedback into their work. Ultimately, receiving timely, positive feedback fosters greater academic independence and intellectual growth as a student moves through their program.

When a student is progressing well, this document will record that and provide opportunity to praise their academic success. When progress is in need of improvement, the document will provide an objective, standardized form for that feedback to be communicated wherein the student and supervisor have met to discuss the issues and together have proposed a plan to improve performance in program. When a student receives two consecutive ratings of “in need of improvement”, the document provides a mechanism to withdraw students from program if they are either unable to meet these expectations or unwilling to consider supervisory and committee feedback in order to improve. A rating of “unsatisfactory” provides a more immediate mechanism to recommend withdrawal from program when there is an acute problem with the student’s academic performance. It is important to understand that a “recommendation” to withdraw from program is not immediate; rather, two consecutive “in need of improvement” or one “unsatisfactory” provides an opportunity for serious reflection on a student’s program of study in consultation with their supervisor and committee where clear plans and goals can be established for the student to work towards. However, if there is no way forward and the department has done all it can to support the student, this provides a clear, transparent mechanism for program termination. Careful consideration of the issues involved would occur prior to a student being required to withdraw.

A link will be included in the form to provide students with the opportunity to submit confidential information to FGSR, should they feel the need to, about their progress report (in the section where the student include comments). This provides an outlet for students to record their concerns in instances when they may feel uncomfortable doing so during the consultation with their supervisor.

Lastly, if there are any changes to the Supervisor-Student Guidelines content during the course of student’s year in program, the supervisor and student can note these changes on the progress report so that both acknowledge the mutually agreed upon changes.

The Annual Progress Report will be due in FGSR by June 30 each year.

**Timeline and Next Steps:** As this document moves through consultation, FGSR continues to work through the specifics of the implementation plan and process map. The goal is to pilot the tool for use with two to three
departments in the Spring of 2020 (one faculty has already volunteered to participate). The outcomes of the pilot will help identify areas that may need to be adjusted so that we can address them, and have the tool approved and ready for implementation for everyone by the 2020-2021 academic year.

Supplementary Notes and context: 

<This section is for use by University Governance only to outline governance process.>

**Engagement and Routing (Include proposed plan)**

| Consultation and Stakeholder Participation | • FGSR Decanal and Executive Team – ongoing  
|                                           | • Graduate Students Association - ongoing  
|                                           | • Policy Review Committee (FGSR) – October 30, 2019  
|                                           | • GEFAC (FGSR) – October 31, 2019  
|                                           | • FGSR Council – October 16, 2019 and November 13, 2019  
|                                           | • Graduate Program Administrators Committee – October 23, 2019  
|                                           | • Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE) – October 30, 2019  
|                                           | • Statutory Deans Council – November 2019  
|                                           | • Provost’s Advisory Committee of Chairs (PACC) – November 19, 2019  
|                                           | • BHRCC – November 26, 2019  
|                                           | • BLRSEC – November 29, 2019 |

**Strategic Alignment**

**Alignment with For the Public Good**

The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) is uniquely positioned to realize Objective 14 v. in *For the Public Good*: “Develop and implement programs and processes to assure high quality, collegial graduate student and post-doctoral fellow supervision and mentorship.”

Also, improvements in the supervisory process and enhancements to positively bolster the student-supervisor relationship will assist with Objective 19, which is to “prioritize and sustain student, faculty, and staff health, wellness, and safety by delivering proactive, relevant, responsive, and accessible services and initiatives”.

**Alignment with Core Risk Area**

Please note below the specific institutional risk(s) this proposal is addressing.

- [ ] Enrolment Management  
- [ ] Faculty and Staff  
- [ ] Funding and Resource Management  
- [ ] IT Services, Software and Hardware  
- [ ] Leadership and Change  
- [ ] Physical Infrastructure  
- [ ] Relationship with Stakeholders  
- [ ] Reputation  
- [ ] Research Enterprise  
- [ ] Safety  
- [ ] Student Success

**Legislative Compliance and jurisdiction**

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act
Attachments

1. Explanatory Memo for the Annual Progress Report
2. Annual Progress Report – DRAFT form
3. Explanatory Memo for the Supervisor-Student Guidelines
4. Supervisor-Student Guidelines – DRAFT form

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