

SPPH SUPERVISION FRAMEWORK

Updated October 3, 2025

Principles guiding the development of these guidelines

At the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH), our goal is to support graduate students through thoughtful, high quality supervision. These guidelines clarify how supervisory roles are approached, with a focus on fostering student success within a collaborative academic environment.

- *Responsibility for Supervision* – SPPH takes responsibility for ensuring that student supervision is carried out in a way that supports learning, fosters accountability, and reflect the School’s academic standards.
- *Connection to Teaching and Learning* – Within SPPH supervisory roles are typically held by faculty who are actively engaged in SPPH’s teaching mission (for example, through the delivery of a 3-credit course per calendar year).
- *Approval Processes in Alignment with University Requirements*– Supervisory arrangements are expected to follow Faculty of Medicine (FoM) and Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS) procedures, including any required prior approvals. This helps ensure a coordinated and transparent process that benefits both students and supervisors.

Introduction

This document provides guidance on how supervisory privileges for MSc and PhD students as well as post-doctoral trainees are granted within the School of Population and Public Health (SPPH) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). The SPPH supervision guidelines reflect the unique faculty appointment structure of the Faculty of Medicine (FoM) and align with the FoM’s graduate supervision approval process (see <https://mednet.med.ubc.ca/research/graduate-postdoctoral-education/graduate-supervision>). While SPPH may adopt supervisory requirements that differ from than those of the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS); they remain consistent with the minimum standards set by G+PS) (<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/policies/supervision>).

SECTION 1: Updates to 2018 SPPH Supervisory Framework

Definitions of Supervisory Roles at SPPH

Supervisor: A core SPPH Faculty member (i.e., research stream tenure-track faculty (grant & non-grant-tenured, joint faculty, and partner faculty in SPPH)) who holds the primary responsibility of guiding and supporting an MSc and PhD student at SPPH throughout the course of their degree program. Provides experience, expertise, resources, and mentorship to student, and develops the student's academic, research, and leadership potential. When working with a co-supervisor, the supervisor holds the primary responsibility for guiding the student's research project.

Co-Supervisor: Faculty member who provides guidance and support an MSc and PhD student at SPPH in addition to the Supervisor. Works with the Supervisor to provide experience, expertise, resources, and mentorship to student, and develop the student's academic, research, and leadership potential.

Supervisory Mentor: A core SPPH Faculty member ((i.e., research stream tenure-track faculty (grant & non-grant-tenured, joint faculty, and partner faculty in SPPH)) who provides guidance to a junior faculty member who has not yet had experience supervising students at SPPH at the PhD level. Provides support to junior faculty member, assists in developing supervisory, mentorship, and leadership skills of the faculty member. Also serves as a Committee Member.

Committee Member^a: Faculty member who provides additional input and guidance on a student's program for any SPPH PhD or MSc student.

^a The framework clarifies supervisory and co-supervisory privileges. For committee composition, please refer to SPPH Committee Structure Guidelines for MSc and PhD requirements. Nomination of a committee member without G+PS status at UBC requires approval from the MSc/PhD Program Director and for PhD committees, also from G+PS.

Framework for SPPH PhD supervisory membership

Faculty Role	SPPH Research Tenure or Grant Tenure Stream – Assistant, Associate & Full Professors		SPPH Faculty with Partner Appointment – Assistant, Associate & Full Professors		Other UBC or UBCO Faculty	
	Previously supervised - yes	Previously supervised - no	Previously supervised - yes	Previously supervised - no	Member of G+PS	Non-member of G+PS
Examples					Most Associate Professors of SPPH Professors in other departments	Affiliate, Adjunct, or Clinical Professors of SPPH Professors in other departments
Supervisor	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges with Faculty Mentor ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges with Faculty Mentor ²	Not eligible	Not eligible
Co-Supervisor	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ³	Eligible ^{3,5}
Supervisory Mentor	Full privileges ¹	N/A	Full privileges	N/A	Not eligible	Not eligible
Committee Member	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ²	Full privileges	Eligible ^{4,5}

¹ Approval voted by ARPT upon appointment

² Approval voted by ARPT upon appointment but G+PS form completed to get a one-time approval to be listed on UBC calendar of approved supervisors

³ Eligible for full privileges pending approval by SPPH ARPT committee

⁴ Approval by SPPH MSc and PhD Program Director

⁵ Approval by G+PS

Framework for SPPH MSc supervisory membership

Faculty Role	SPPH Research Tenure or Grant Tenure Stream – Assistant, Associate & Full Professors		SPPH Faculty with Partner Appointment – Assistant, Associate & Full Professors		Other UBC or UBCO Faculty	
	Previously supervised - yes	Previously supervised - no	Previously supervised - yes	Previously supervised - no	Member of G+PS	Non-member of G+PS
Examples					Most Associate Professors of SPPH Professors in other departments	Affiliate, Adjunct, or Clinical Professors of SPPH Professors in other departments
Supervisor	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ²	Not eligible	Not eligible
Co-Supervisor	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ³	Eligible ^{3,5}
Committee Member	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ¹	Full privileges ²	Full privileges ²	Full privileges	Eligible ^{4,5}

¹ Approval voted by ARPT upon appointment

² Approval voted by ARPT upon appointment but G+PS form completed to get a one-time approval to be listed on UBC calendar of approved supervisors

³ Eligible for full privileges pending approval by SPPH ARPT committee

⁴ Approval by SPPH MSc and PhD Program Director

⁵ Approval by G+PS – currently G+PS has delegated this authority to SPPH so not required for MSc students

SPPH Committee Structure Guidelines

PhD Committee:

1. Committees must have a minimum of 3 members. It is not recommended to have more than 4 members. (Additional information may be requested for committees of 5 or more to help ensure that the program director understands the role of each committee member in supporting the student.)
2. The Committee is chaired by the Supervisor.
3. At least half of the committee members (inclusive of Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor) must also be members of G+PS.
4. Should any member of the committee require G+PS approval, such approval should be sought before the student presents to the Thesis Screening Panel. It is the joint responsibility of the student and supervisor to ensure that approval is confirmed.

MSc Committee:

1. Committees must have a minimum of 3 members. It is not recommended to have more than 4 members.
2. The Committee is chaired by the Supervisor.
3. At least half of the committee members must also be members of G+PS (inclusive of Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor).
4. At least two members of the committee (inclusive of Supervisor, and Co-Supervisor) must be SPPH Faculty (Research or Grant Tenure Track; Partner Appointments) or SPPH Associate Faculty (Associate Members of SPPH with appointments in other departments).
5. Full committees should be confirmed with the program as soon as they are formed. It is the joint responsibility of the student and supervisor to ensure that approval is confirmed.

SECTION 2: Processes to implement the SPPH Framework

Change in appointment type (leaving UBC, retiring, or changing appointment)

When a faculty member's appointment type changes, such as leaving UBC, retiring, or transitioning to a new appointment within UBC, their supervisory privileges will be reviewed and may be changed or reduced accordingly.

Leaving UBC - Faculty who leave UBC can no longer serve as supervisors for SPPH student as they are no longer member of G+PS, as per UBC policy. In such cases, a core SPPH faculty member (i.e., research stream tenure-track faculty (grant & non-grant-tenured, joint faculty, and partner faculty in SPPH)) must assume supervisory responsibility and the role of the former supervisor will align with the SPPH supervisory framework.

Retirement – Retired core SPPH faculty, who are granted emeritus status, may retain their G+PS supervisory privileges. For academic continuity and accountability, SPPH students benefit from having a supervisor who remains actively engaged in the School and at the University. As such, emeritus faculty may continue to serve in a co-supervisory and committee roles, provided a current core SPPH faculty member takes the role of supervisor. This aligns with G+PS, suggesting that faculty nearing retirement who accept supervisory privileges identify an alternate supervisor in advance as a way to ensure continuity and ongoing connection with the School upon retirement (see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/policies/supervision> - changes to supervision section). Continued supervisory involvement by emeritus faculty requires: 1) demonstrated ongoing research activity; and 2) approval from the SPPH ARPT committee and G+PS as applicable.

Changing appointment within UBC. Faculty members who change to a new appointment within UBC, such as moving to a role with different supervisory qualifications, will have their privileges reflected in their new status. This may result in a reduction of supervisory privileges.

When a faculty member change appointment type, a transition period may allow for exceptions for students who are about to complete their MSc and PhD degrees (i.e., expected to defend their work), but any such exceptions require careful consideration, including whether a SPPH faculty member should be appointed as supervisor to ensure SPPH maintains accountability of its students.

Gaining supervision approval within SPPH

As outlined by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (G+PS), the first step in obtaining approval to supervise and co-supervise MSc and PhD students within SPPH is securing approval from SPPH. Final supervisory approval is granted by G+PS (see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/policies/supervision>) unless G+PS has delegated this authority to SPPH.

In accordance with the FoM's procedure for approving graduate supervisors ([FoM Procedurehttps://med-fom-grad-postdoc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2021/11/Procedure-for-Approving-Faculty-as-Supervisors-in-FoM-Nov24updated.pdf](https://med-fom-grad-postdoc.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2021/11/Procedure-for-Approving-Faculty-as-Supervisors-in-FoM-Nov24updated.pdf)), each program must designate a committee responsible for recommending supervisory privileges. At SPPH, the MSc and PhD Program Director may recommend supervisory privileges, which are voted on by the Appointment, Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure (ARPT) Committee as part of the faculty appointment process. Approval to supervise students in one UBCV or UBCO graduate program does not confer supervisory privileges in another program. Each program has its own requirements, and separate approval is required.

Supervisory privileges, once granted, are subject to periodic review and may be re-evaluated to ensure continued alignment with SPPH's standards for graduate supervision.

Supervision of Postdoctoral Trainee

At UBC, postdoctoral fellows are typically supervised by faculty who are members of G+PS. When a postdoctoral fellow is appointed through SPPH, the School serves as the host academic unit. Therefore, the School becomes accountable for the fellow's academic experience, supervision quality, funding, and conflict resolution. To ensure appropriate oversight and institutional accountability, all SPPH postdoctoral fellows must be supervised or co-supervised by a core SPPH faculty member who is a G+PS member. This ensures continuity of support and the ability to address issues related to academic conduct, miscommunication, or funding disruptions.

Admission and recruitment of students

To ensure SPPH retains full accountability for its students in alignment with its supervisory framework, only core SPPH faculty who have received supervisory approval can recruit and support student applications. Faculty without approval from the ARPT committee or G+PS are not permitted to submit applications to supervise SPPH students. For admissions under a co-supervision model, prior approval is required to ensure both SPPH and G+PS retain final supervisory authority, in accordance with G+PS policy

(<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/policies/supervision>) and the FoM supervisory guidelines

(<https://mednet.med.ubc.ca/research/graduate-postdoctoral-education/graduate-supervision>). At the time of admission, students must identify a supervisor who already holds approved SPPH supervisory privileges (note that G+PS maintains a list of faculty who have such approval (<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/supervisor-search>)).

While co-supervision may be proposed, students may not be admitted under this model without prior approval as required by the SPPH framework which aligns with the FoM and G+PS policies.

Harmonizing supervisory privileges

While the SPPH supervision policy has been edited on October 3, 2025 the core supervisory privileges remain largely unchanged. The SPPH supervisory framework will be widely disseminated to help ensure alignment and eliminate deviations over time. Implementation will begin with the admission process, where all supervisory privileges moving forward will align with the SPPH policy framework.