
4JNJMBSMZ TUVEFOUT GSPN &BTU BOE 4PVUI "TJB NB
expected to take initiative in designing their own research paths and research questions, and frequently wait for their supervisor to assign the question they will research. They assume that their research will consist of finding evidence to support the hypotheses the supervisor identifies. Studies on the adaptation of international graduate students found that most students are able to and willing to adapt to the expectation to take initiative in research once this
FYQFDUBUJPO JT NBEF FYQMJDJU GPS UIFN 4NJUI

“In the [North] American system...if you don't know, it's your responsibility to go and ask questions. But in our system, we look at the teacher as someone who has been on that path before you. So he has all the questions and the answers from his experience. He is preparing you to tap into his experience and go forward.”

(West African student, cited in Eland, 2001, p. 100)

The degree of initiative shown by international students here at Western varies
HSFBUMZ *O B TVSWFZ PG NPSF UIBO JODPNJOH 8F
UIF GBMM PG JOUFSOBUJPOBM HSBEVBUF TUVEFO
TPNFXIBU NPSF EJSFDUJPO GSPN UIFJS TVQFSWJTPST

part of the survey, we asked new students to list some of the questions they would ask their graduate supervisors during the first meeting at the beginning of their program. Some of the questions that suggested an expectation of greater direction from the supervisor included: Would you give me a research direction you want me to do? and What is my topic? Questions that indicated an expectation of initiative on the part of the student included: What is your way and method in supervision? Is my topic realistic/doable? Could we develop a Gantt chart for my research – with readings, assignments built in with my research? Who are the people I can get help from? How can I benefit from the research work?

Questions that demonstrate initiative on the part of the student focus on clarifying the supervisor's expectations about the program, research collaboration, and the relationship between student and supervisor.

2VFTUJJPOT UIBU EFNPOBUSBUF JOJUBUJWF BMTU UFO
PSJFOUBUJPO w NFBOJOH UIFZ JORVJSF BCPVU IPX UIF
by the supervisor and gain independence as a scholar. Supervisors may help students take the first step towards demonstrating initiative by asking them to bring three or four good questions to every meeting.

Please see the following page for more mentoring strategies to promote independence and initiative. The suggested mentoring strategies throughout this guide draw on focus group discussions with international graduate students and

PO UIF MJUFSBUVSF PO DSPTT DVMUVSBM TVQFSWJTJF

MENORING STRATEGIES PROMOTE INITIATIVE AND INDEPENDENCE

t Ask students to bring three good questions to every meeting with you.

t Explain the meaning and value of original research as soon as students enter the program.

t Ask students to set goals for themselves for each term of their program. Review their progress towards goals regularly.

Goals may focus on research, professional development, teaching or personal development. For example: "I will give three presentations

UP HBJO DPOmEFODF JO QSFTFOUJOH JO &OHMJTI w i* XJMM
SFTFBSDI GPS QSFTFOUBUJPO BU UIF pÿtU

POWER AND STATUS

“For me, as an international student from a Confucian culture, usually we respect our supervisor as an authority. So if a supervisor or a professor doesn’t say something like ‘Oh, please feel free to say anything or share anything academically or something about your life, your concerns...’ Without supervisors or professors saying that, I wouldn’t say anything to them. And especially if there was a meeting between a supervisor and me, I am always time sensitive. I’m so afraid I’m bothering them too much. Or I’m taking too much of their time. After two years in Canada, I’ve found that my former supervisor and my PhD supervisor, they’re very friendly and they like to hear if you have any concerns about your life or your studies. But at the beginning I had no idea.”

(Chinese PhD student, Science)

(SBEVBUF TUVFYOU TVQFSWJTPS SFMBUJJPOTIJQT BMXBZT imbalance. International graduate students often perceive a greater power imbalance between themselves and their supervisor than Canadian students do, because Canada is what is termed a low power distance culture, in which the difference between the social status of the student and the professor is much less than it is the high power distance cultures. PG "GSJDB 4PVUI "N "TJB)PGTUFEEF *O IJHI QPXFSEJTUBODFD prevents students from openly disagreeing with the professor and makes it almost impossible for them to say ‘no’ to any requests from the supervisor even if the request is unrealistic (overtime work, deadlines they will not be able to meet).

“I think the hierarchy is always there, in every part of the world, but the kind of relationship could be different. For example, you cannot joke with your supervisor if you are back home [in the Middle East]. You cannot joke with them, but here you can. Here you might hear slang words from your supervisor. [In my culture] because the level is quite high and he is kind of an intellectual personality and it is not expected that he would say something which is not good.”

(PhD student, Science)

Students from high power distance cultures such as India, Mexico or Malaysia often behave in ways that seem overly deferential to Canadians.

Low Power Distance Supervisor

t&YQFDUT SFMBUJV
informal communication
with students

t&YQFDUT TUVEFOU
for help when needed

t&YQFDUT JOJUJBU
from students

t4FFT TUVEFOU RVF
as a sign of interest

t0QFO UP JEFBT D

Low Power Distance Student

t 5BLFT JOJUJBUJW JO DMBTT

t&YQFDUT EJSFDUJ O
from supervisor
through discussion

t&YQFDUT SFMBUJW F
independence in
IJT IFS XPSL

t&YQFDUT UP CF D DTVMUFE
about decisions
UIBU JNQBDU IJT S
research or progress

t4FFT RVFTUJPOT E
a sign of interest
and involvement

t&YQFDUT GBDVMU UP
admit if they do not
know the answer

t&YQFDUT UP DPOU JCVUF UP
research direction of the
lab or research group

t1SFGFST UP XPSL JUI
faculty who downplay
their status and power

He2.1251 v.-p0v v.-p2
from supervisor
through discussion

t

from supervisor
through discussion

i 0 1n <</ext (pÿpÿ)>>