

## STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING POTENTIAL PHD SUPERVISORS

Some strategies students might use when beginning to look for a supervisor may include:

- a) **Departmental Information:** The departmental website or handbook is a valuable source of information on potential supervisors. Many departments have developed websites that profile each faculty member, describing the faculty member's area of research, recent publications, and other academic activities. The Director/Graduate Coordinator and administrative staff at the department can also provide valuable advice on potential supervisors and can help students to become familiar with any specific departmental policies on supervision.
- b) **Presentations and Literature:** Students may get to know the potential supervisors whose research interests parallel their own by attending seminars at which the faculty member is speaking. Students may also conduct literature searches to assess potential supervisor's publications and preferred journals.
- c) **Other Graduate Students:** Graduate students who are working with a specific supervisor are an invaluable source of information as they can be asked about their experience with that supervisor and about the supervisor's expectations and working methods.
- d) **Speaking Directly with the Faculty Member:** Students should make an appointment to see or speak with potential supervisors. Meeting a potential supervisor is an essential step in determining whether a faculty member would be a good fit for a student's area of interests, and for learning about that faculty member's approach to work and study in general.

The following is a list of issues that you might be covered:

- ☐ Have you ever supervised a graduate student before?
- ☐ How many graduate students do you supervise? (Students may not want to pick a supervisor that has too many graduate students already.)
- ☐ How long does it take a typical student to graduate under your supervision? How much time do you expect students to take to complete their thesis?
- ☐ How will we agree upon my research topic?
- ☐ Are there sufficient funds available for the research project?
- ☐ What are your expectations regarding funding of your graduate students? Is there a research assistantship available? What will be the sources of my stipend? What is the amount of my stipend? How long will my stipend last? (This information should also be available through the graduate coordinator)
- ☐ What level of independence is expected of your graduate students?
- ☐ Is there any specific knowledge I need to have before starting to work with you?
- ☐ How often do you typically meet with your students?
- ☐ Are you planning a sabbatical leave soon? If so, what arrangements for continued supervision will be made during your absence?
- ☐ How soon will a supervisory committee be set up and how often will it meet?
- ☐ What opportunities would I have in this area of research when I graduate?
- ☐ What qualities are you looking for in a person you are supervising?
- ☐ Will guidelines be drawn up for working together?

These questions are designed to help the student and the potential supervisor determine whether a good match exists. Where appropriate, the student may also want to ask about the order of authorship on publications and intellectual property issues. In posing such questions, it should be clear that graduate students have the right to own the copyright for their own written or artistic works or computer software and to own the patent rights to inventions they might create, unless they have signed an agreement stating otherwise. Discussion of the topics above will also give faculty members a sense of what students expect in terms of meetings, feedback, turn-around time on submitted work, etc. Taking time to explore these issues should result in a productive relationship for both student and supervisor.