

IRES policy on handling student-supervisor issues

This policy was developed upon the advice of G+PS and Faculty Relations, and based on past ad-hoc procedures at IRES to handle and resolve student-supervisor issues. This policy was approved at the IRES faculty meeting on October 18, 2022 via a unanimous vote.

Figure 1 depicts how the policy works. In this policy, **supervisor** includes any IRES core faculty or Faculty Associate; **students** include both IRES Master’s and PhD students, undergraduate students from other departments, and visiting scholars under the supervision, mentorship, or sponsorship of the supervisor.

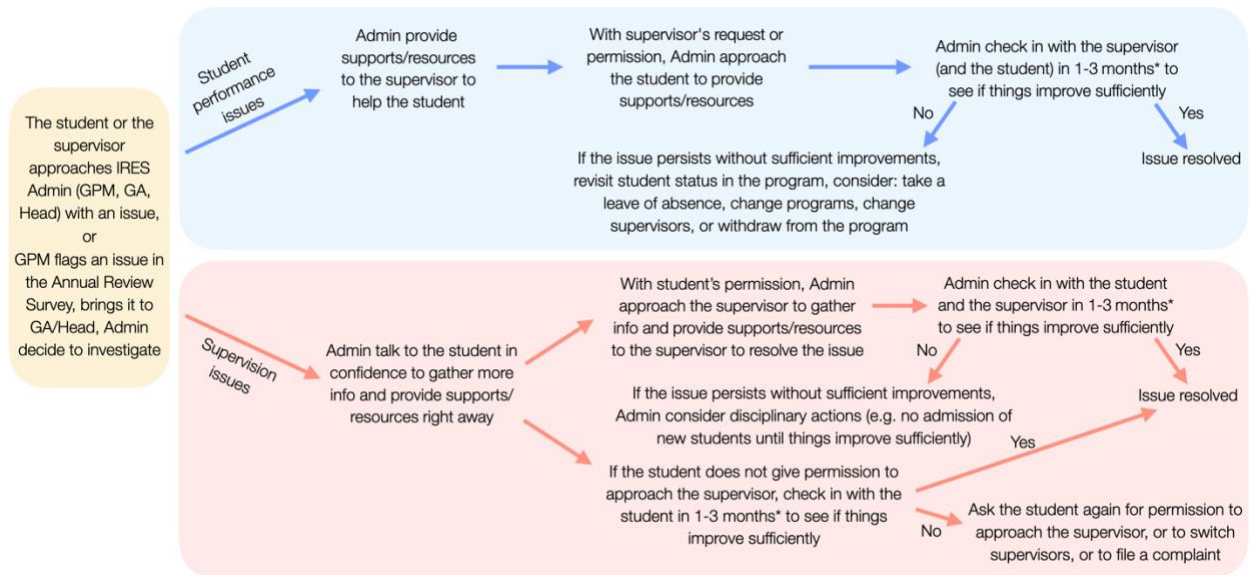


Figure 1. This flowchart depicts our policy to handle student-supervisor issues.

The student or the supervisor can approach IRES Admin (Graduate Program Manager, GA, Head) with an issue. Alternatively, GPM can flag an issue in the Annual Review Survey or from interactions with the students, and bring it to GA. The Admin need to first make a decision on whether to investigate or not. If the decision is to investigate, then the GA and GPM need to make a determination on the nature of the issue, whether it is student performance issue, supervision issue, or both.

Student performance issues

If the issue is about student performance, then Admin provide support and resources to the supervisor to help the student. With supervisor’s request and permission, Admin approach the student to provide support and resources to help the student. Admin should check in with the supervisor (and the student) in 1-3 months* to see if things improve sufficiently. If yes, the issue is considered resolved. If no (the issue persists without sufficient improvements), Admin and the supervisor should revisit student status in the program, and consider the following recommendations to the student: take a leave of absence, change programs, change supervisors, or withdraw from the program.

Supervision issues

If it's a supervision issue, Admin should talk to the student in confidence to gather more info and provide support and resources to the student right away. With student's permission, Admin approach the supervisor to gather info and provide support and resources to the supervisor to help resolve the issue. Admin should check in with the student and the supervisor in 1-3 months* to see if things improve sufficiently. If yes, the issue is considered resolved. If no (the issue persists without sufficient improvements), Admin should consider disciplinary actions (e.g., no admission of new students until things improve sufficiently). If the student does not give permission to approach the supervisor, then Admin should check in with the student in 1-3 months* to see if things improve sufficiently. If yes, the issue is considered resolved. If no (the issue persists without sufficient improvements), Admin should ask the student again for permission to approach the supervisor, or to switch supervisors, or to file a complaint.

GA and Head can set up an ad-hoc committee at any time in this process with 2 other core IRES faculty members adjacent to the issue to help make decisions. The ad-hoc committee is needed to discuss and decide on any disciplinary actions against the supervisor. The ad-hoc committee can also discuss any misinterpretation between the student and faculty (e.g., student vilifying the faculty), determine the nature of the issue (e.g., if the supervisor denies the claim), or decide on any next steps.

If the student is concerned about future reference letters from the supervisor, then GA/Head can write a letter for the student instead of the supervisor. If the student is concerned about potential retaliation from the supervisor, then GA/Head should put in measures to monitor and prevent any retaliation from the supervisor. If retaliation behaviors are found, Admin and the ad-hoc committee can take disciplinary actions against the supervisor, and/or file a complaint to UBC.

If GA or Head is the supervisor in question, then another faculty member may need to step in to make decisions. If multiple supervision issues come up with the same supervisor that are unresolved, Admin and the ad-hoc committee can increase the extent of disciplinary actions in consultation with Faculty Relations and Faculty Association. Admin will keep internal documentation of every case. Documentation needs actual evidence (e.g., emails, documents, student testimony), not personal judgments from the Admin. The department can provide financial backup to the students who switch supervisors. This will be the Head's decision.

*The exact time frame will be jointly discussed and decided with the faculty/student and Admin.

UBC offices and resources

UBC Equity and Inclusion Office: <https://equity.ubc.ca>

Office of the Ombudsperson for Students: <https://ombudsoffice.ubc.ca>

Bullying and Harassment Prevention at UBC: <https://bullyingandharassment.ubc.ca>

UBC VPRI office: <https://research.ubc.ca/about-vpri/staff-directory/vpri-team-profiles>

UBC Investigations Office: <https://io.ubc.ca>

G+PS Graduate Supervision Workshops: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/information-supervisors/graduate-supervision-workshops>

Centre for Accessibility: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>

SVPRO: <https://svpro.ubc.ca>

SASC: <https://www.ams.ubc.ca/support-services/sasc>

Early Alert: <https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert>