The following is a list of questions for you to consider when building and navigating your on-going relationship with your supervisor.

- Discuss the extent and nature of direction you will get from your supervisor
- Discuss the degree of independence you will have
- Make clear procedures for ongoing meetings:
  - how frequently you will meet,
  - the nature of pre-meeting preparation,
  - the length of the meeting and
  - the details of each meeting agenda.
- Discuss how you will handle the submission of written work
- Discuss the amount of time the supervisor needs for reading/ feedback
- Determine the range/scope and type of feedback that will be given
- What is the appropriate role of the supervisor in editing;
  - can an editor be hired?
  - If so, what are the limitations?
- How will ideological or academic differences in thinking be handled?
- Who completes and manages formal paperwork?
- What length of lead time is needed for writing a letter of reference
- How will changes to coursework, assignments or other required tasks be handled and by whom? (Supervisor? Graduate advisor? Graduate secretary? Student?)
- Who will take note during the meeting? How will written confirmation of decisions taken in the meeting be communicated?
- The frequency of meetings and role of the other supervisory committee members
- When annual progress report meetings will be scheduled
- List and discuss the general parameters of what a thesis includes, the timetable one should expect in terms of processes of approval, and what will be necessary in terms of final completion
- When the supervisor might not be unavailable, for how long, and who might substitute in the eventuality of a longer absence.
RESOLVING CONFLICT: A 4-STEP METHOD

We are not trying to suggest you’ll have conflicts with your supervisor or your supervisory committee, but here are some thoughts to assist you if you find yourself needing a strategy to help you sort out a problem that may be developing.

This simple 4-step method will help you guide your discussions into a problem-solving mode.

1. **State the facts.** Make sure that you do not let personal feelings get into the way of the discussion. Focus only on work related issues, and state the objective reality that concerns you. Keep your language and tone calm rather than provocative.

2. **Clarify your thoughts about the situation, and why it bothers you.** Be really clear about what the issue is for you. Are you concerned that the feedback comes too late? Why is this a problem? Or the feedback doesn’t have enough detail? Share why this helps you with your editing. Or that you are not meeting frequently enough? What are the consequences for you of long delays?

3. **Explain what your goals are and how you would like the situation to be resolved.** Before the meeting, draft a plan of what you think might solve the situation or be satisfactory to you and to your supervisor. Be as reasonable as you can, taking into account the supervisor’s objectives and your own. If you cannot accommodate everyone who is party to this meeting/discussion, what plan do you think makes the most sense?

4. **Write down the resolution and communicate it formally to confirm.** Confusion can arise if people interpret agreements through different perspectives. Putting it in writing also provides a paper trail in the eventuality the issue remains unresolved.

If none of the above works, then be sure to seek support from other authorities in your department, the Dean’s office, Graduate Studies or the Ombuds Office.