

A Guide to Research Advising

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Fanshawe College BComm Capstone

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About This Guide

This guide is intended to serve as a general resource for faculty members acting as research advisors within the Fanshawe College BComm Capstone independent research project.

The guide provides an overview of advising practices, student support strategies, and research mentorship considerations relevant to Level 8 Independent Research Projects, and connects faculty advisors to useful academic and research resources. Research on undergraduate supervision and inquiry-based learning has emphasized the importance of faculty mentorship, structured guidance, and opportunities for independent research in supporting student engagement and skill development (Brew, 2013; Healey & Jenkins, 2009).

The guide is intended to support faculty members serving as research advisors. The role of the faculty advisor is to mentor, guide, and support students throughout the research process while encouraging independence, academic integrity, critical thinking, and professional development. Faculty advisors evaluate assessments and provide feedback on student work throughout the term. Faculty advisors play an essential role in helping students navigate project planning, research design, communication, problem-solving, and project completion.



How to Navigate this Book

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Navigating this Webbook

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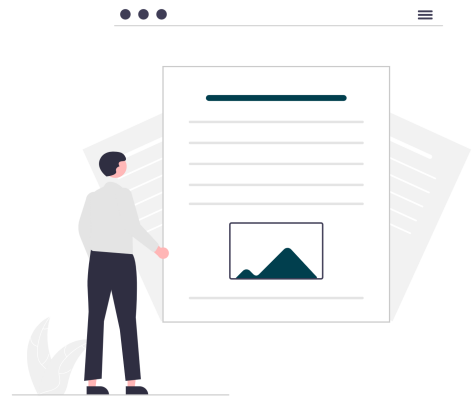
The Independent Research Project

Background Information

The capstone is a component of a Level 8 course in which students complete both a group client project and an independent research project. This guide focuses specifically on the independent research project.

In Level 7, students are provided with an opportunity to develop their research topic and research question in preparation for the independent research project. Although some students may choose to revise or significantly change their topic, the majority will likely continue with the general research idea previously developed.

Advisors are encouraged to help students avoid spending excessive time in the initial stages of redefining or rebuilding a project unless substantial revisions are necessary. Instead, advisors can support students in refining, strengthening, and advancing their existing research direction in a manageable and achievable manner.



Role of the Faculty Research Advisor

Faculty research advisors act primarily as mentors and guides rather than project managers.

Advisors:

- Support students in revising or refining research questions and project scope when necessary
- Encourage critical thinking and independent learning
- Offer constructive feedback and evaluation on research progress and deliverables
- Help students maintain realistic timelines and expectations
- Promote ethical, professional, and respectful conduct
- Facilitate connections to relevant resources where appropriate

Advisor Best Practices

Step 1: Initial Project Development

It is recommended that advisors:

- Meet with assigned students individually
- Clarify project goals, scope, and expectations
- Review timelines, milestones, and course deliverables
- Discuss communication norms and availability
- Encourage students to develop achievable and well-defined objectives
- Identify potential risks or challenges early in the process

Step 2: Supporting Research and Inquiry

Advisors should encourage students to engage in thoughtful and evidence-informed inquiry. This may include:

- Helping students refine research question(s)
- Reviewing research methodology and design
- Encouraging use of credible academic and professional sources, including support for conducting literature reviews
- Discussing ethical considerations
- Challenging assumptions and encouraging analytical depth
- Providing direction on professional standards within the discipline or assisting in obtaining resources to provide direction

Faculty are encouraged to guide students toward independent problem-solving. The literature on inquiry-based learning and undergraduate research supervision suggests that students benefit from greater autonomy throughout the research process while continuing to receive structured academic support and mentorship (Healey & Jenkins, 2009).

Advisors are encouraged to focus on helping students develop autonomy, accountability, and independent scholarly inquiry. Research on self-directed learning and motivation suggests that autonomy-supportive mentorship practices can positively influence student engagement, confidence, and ownership over the research process (Deci & Ryan, 2000).



Resources for Developing a Research Topic

Students entering the Independent Research Project may be at different stages of topic development and research readiness. While many students will continue with a topic initially explored in Level 7, some students may still require additional support in narrowing or refining their area of interest.

It is noteworthy that the topic assigned may not align with the faculty member's specific research expertise. This is due to limitations associated with student enrolment, the diversity of research interests represented in the course, and faculty teaching assignments.

Faculty advisors may encourage students to:

- Identify topics connected to academic or professional interests
- Consider feasibility and scope within the course timeline
- Explore current issues, trends, or gaps within the discipline
- Review preliminary literature to assess available research
- Develop research questions that are clear, focused, and manageable

Students may also benefit from reviewing research topic development resources, such as:

- Fanshawe College Library

Students are encouraged to connect with Fanshawe Library staff to arrange individual research support appointments. Library staff are available to assist students with literature searches, database navigation, source evaluation, citation support, and research strategy development.



Completing a Literature Review and Useful Resources

Literature reviews are an important component of most student projects. Students should be encouraged to select a review approach that fits the research question and to describe the process clearly enough that the reader can understand how literature was identified, selected, analyzed, and synthesized (Snyder, 2019). The following resources are useful.

- Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines: The guide distinguishes different review approaches and emphasizes that rigorous literature reviews should use a clear methodology rather than an ad hoc search-and-summary process (Snyder, 2019).
How to conduct systematic literature reviews in management research: A guide in 6 steps and 14 decisions
: The resource organizes a systematic literature review around six broad stages: defining the research question, determining study characteristics, retrieving literature, selecting relevant literature, synthesizing findings, and reporting results. It also emphasizes transparent methodological decisions that support rigour and replicability (Sauer & Seuring, 2023).
- SAIT Literature Review Guide: General support for planning and conducting literature reviews.

Supplemental Video Resource:

- Literature Review Videos



Research Design and Methodology Resources

The following resources can be used to help students make informed choices about research design, data collection, analysis, and academic writing. Advisors can use them as discussion points rather than as a single prescribed methodology.

- A No-Nonsense Guide to Academic Writing: A useful guide for supporting clear academic writing, organization, argument development, and communicating research effectively (Swatridge, 2024).
- Data Analysis and Methods of Qualitative Research: Emerging Research and Opportunities: A resource for students working with qualitative approaches and considering how qualitative data can be analyzed and interpreted, with particular attention to research ethics and qualitative research practice (Madondo, 2021).
- Handbook of Research on Advancements in Organizational Data Collection and Measurements: Relevant for projects examining organizational attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, measurement choices, and data-collection strategies (Bocarnea et al., 2021).
- Qualitative Research Design and Methods: An Introduction: A general resource for thinking through qualitative research design, methodological choices, implementation, ethics, and representation of findings.
- Research Methodology: A general methodology resource that can support decisions about research questions, methods, data, analysis, and research design.
- Research Methods and Statistics for Cross-Cutting Research: Handbook for Multidisciplinary Research
 - : Useful where a project crosses disciplinary boundaries or requires students to consider both research methods and statistical approaches (Matanda & Mawere, 2022).
- Survey Structure Best Practices: A practical resource for students designing surveys and considering question order, avoiding bias, screening respondents, and overall survey structure (Baskin, 2024).
- Making Data in Qualitative Research: Engagements, Ethics, and Entanglements: The resource encourages students to think critically about qualitative data as produced through interactions among researchers, participants, methods, contexts, and ethical choices rather than as information that is simply collected (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020).

Supplemental Video Resources:

- Likert Scale Videos
- Secondary Research
- Study Design Videos
- Survey Design and Questions

Step 3. Supporting Progress

Regular communication can support accountability while recognizing that Level 8 students are

expected to demonstrate increasing independence. Regular check-ins are strongly recommended throughout the semester. Suggested practices include:

- Scheduling periodic meetings or progress updates
- Encouraging students to maintain timelines and action plans
- Documenting major concerns or recommendations when necessary

Advisors should encourage accountability while recognizing that Level 8 students are expected to demonstrate increasing independence. Research on effective supervision practices highlights the importance of regular communication, structured support, and clear expectations in promoting student engagement and project completion (Wisker, 2012).

Step 4. Assessment, Feedback, and Presentations

Providing Feedback

Constructive feedback is one of the most valuable contributions an advisor can make. There are specific deliverables throughout the term that faculty advisors are responsible for evaluating and providing feedback on. In addition, students participate in a live presentation at the end of the term as part of the Research Colloquium. These presentations are evaluated and may occur either in person or online, depending on the student's delivery format.

Best practices for effective feedback include:

- Being timely and specific
- Focusing on both strengths and areas for improvement
- Encouraging revision and reflection
- Promoting academic rigour and clarity
- Supporting student growth and confidence

Faculty are encouraged to avoid rewriting student work directly whenever possible. Instead, feedback should guide students toward making their own revisions. Research on formative assessment and feedback practices suggests that timely, constructive, and developmental feedback contributes positively to student learning, self-reflection, and self-regulated learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Boud & Molloy, 2013).

Final Deliverables and Presentations

Toward the end of the course, advisors support students in preparing for the two major project deliverables:

- Research paper(s)

- Presentation(s)

Advisors may provide feedback on:

- Clarity and organization
- Professional presentation standards
- Strength of analysis
- Practical recommendations
- Alignment with project objectives

Faculty should also encourage students to:

- Practice presentations
- Anticipate audience question
- Demonstrate professionalism and preparedness
- Reflect on lessons learned during the project process

Advising Practices and Student Support

Communication Best Practices

Clear communication expectations are essential for successful advising relationships. Research on effective supervision and mentorship practices suggests that regular communication, clear expectations, and accessible faculty support contribute positively to student engagement, accountability, and successful project completion (Wisker, 2012; Brew, 2013).

Suggested communication practices include:

- Establish preferred methods of communication early
- Clarify expected response times
- Set reasonable meeting availability
- Encourage professional email etiquette
- Request advance notice for document review

Research on supervisory relationships in higher education has emphasized that establishing clear communication norms and expectations early in the advising relationship can help support professional boundaries, improve responsiveness, and contribute to more effective student-faculty collaboration (Wisker, 2012).



Ethical and Professional Considerations

Faculty advisors should reinforce ethical and professional conduct throughout the course.

Topics may include:

- Fanshawe College Academic Integrity Resources: The resources support conversations about academic integrity expectations.
- University of Windsor Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT Resources for Students: The resource may assist in informing conversations with students about the influence and appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools in academic work.
- Fanshawe Library Citation Help and Information Sheets: The resource provides citation and attribution support.
- SAIT Citation Software Guide: Introduces citation-management tools that can help students organize sources and references.
- Fanshawe College Data Management Resources: Supports responsible planning, handling, organization, storage, and management of research data.

All projects within the Independent Research Project are approved under the Fanshawe College Research Ethics Board framework. Faculty advisors should continue to encourage general compliance with ethical research practices, professional standards, and institutional expectations throughout the research process.

Any questions regarding ethics processes or requirements should be directed to the Fanshawe College Research Ethics Board.

Faculty advisors are encouraged to complete the TCPS 2: CORE-2022 tutorial to support ongoing understanding of research ethics principles and compliance expectations.

If projects involve human participants or sensitive information, students should be reminded to follow institutional ethics policies and approval processes where applicable. Scholarship on academic integrity and ethical scholarship also highlights the importance of clear guidance regarding responsible research practices, attribution, and academic honesty within higher education settings (Bretag, 2016).

Resources & Publication

Open and Collaborative Research Resources

Students may also benefit from exploring open and collaborative research resources that support access to scholarly materials, research sharing, and broader academic engagement. Exposure to open research practices can help students better understand knowledge sharing, accessibility, and responsible scholarly communication. Faculty advisors may encourage students to explore resources related to open research, open-access publishing, and collaborative scholarship, where appropriate to the discipline and research topic.

Additional information can be found through the SAIT Open Research Guide

Publishing and Knowledge Mobilization

Students may also wish to consider how their research could contribute to future academic or professional dissemination opportunities. While the primary goal of the Independent Research Project is successful completion of the Level 8 course requirements, some projects may have potential for continued development beyond the course.

Students are encouraged to consider inclusion within the Fanshawe First Repository or participation in research showcases at Fanshawe College, where appropriate.

In some cases, projects may also provide a foundation for future conference presentations, professional publications, or eventual submission to an academic journal.

Conclusion

Serving as a faculty research advisor provides an opportunity to support students as they transition into more independent academic and professional work. Throughout the research process, faculty advisors help students strengthen their critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and research skills while encouraging accountability and academic integrity.

The Independent Research Project can be both challenging and rewarding for students and faculty alike, and the support provided by faculty advisors plays an important role in helping students successfully complete the experience.



Appendix: Open Access & Open Publishing

Open Access

Open Access refers to an alternative academic publishing model in which research outputs (including peer-reviewed academic journal articles, theses, book chapters, and monographs) are made freely available to the general public for viewing, and often for reuse. This is unlike the traditional scholarly publishing model under which publishers require institutions or individuals to pay for access to these materials.

Why go Open Access?

Open Access is founded on the principle that research, which is supported in large part by government subsidy, should be made available to the public in order to ensure it has the largest possible impact. This makes your research available to everyone, without price and publisher paywall barriers. It means your research is available to everyone, including:

- Other researchers and professionals
- Health care and education workers
- Policy makers
- The general public
- Global audiences

Open Access leads to research that is cited more quickly and more often. It accelerates the rate of scholarly exchange and promotes better reproducibility of research results.

Best Practices in Open Research

Open sharing of research results, methods and data is central to scientific practice and stimulates new forms of communication and collaboration. Today, many funding agencies are mandating open access to the products of scholarship, accelerating research and learning and increasing the impact universities can have beyond their walls.

Benefits to Researchers

- Open research practices increase exposure to your publications, which can help secure your next grant and build your scholarly network.
- Open sharing of scientific outputs, data, and methodology promotes wider evaluation and scrutiny by the scientific community, encouraging greater reproducibility and integrity of research results. In this sense, openness contributes to maintaining science's self-correcting principle.
- Open access to research outputs improves the efficiency of the scientific system by reducing dupli-

cation and costs of creating and reusing data; allowing more research from the same data; and multiplying opportunities for public participation in the research process.

- Global impact results from addressing challenges that require coordinated international actions, such as climate change or disease outbreaks. Solutions are identified more rapidly, and access to knowledge is democratized.
- Innovation and knowledge transfer: Open science reduces delays in the re-use of the results of scientific discovery, promoting a swifter path from research to producing new products and services. It enables connectivity between researchers and policy-makers to improve outcomes in public organizations.
- Demonstrating impacts beyond the academy can build institutional funding and recruitment power.

How can I make my research practice more open?

Researchers should regularly evaluate their practices to make them more open and transparent. Consider to what degree you:

- Stay informed about funding agency requirements for making research results (publications, data) openly accessible
- Keep current on emerging standards for reproducible research, such as the Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) Guidelines, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Principles and Guidelines for Reporting Preclinical Research, the American Statistical Association (ASA) Recommendations to Funding Agencies for Supporting Reproducible Research, CONSORT-SPIRIT guidelines for reporting randomized trials, among others
- Consider pre-registering your study. This helps to claim your idea, differentiate it from related inquiries, and identify potential collaborators. Platforms such as the Open Science Framework (OSF) , [Clinicaltrials.gov/](https://clinicaltrials.gov/) and [AsPredicted](https://aspredicted.org/) all support pre-registration.
- Document your research protocols using tools such as [Protocols.io](https://protocols.io/)
- Communicate through effective public engagement and knowledge translation, e.g., narrative impact summaries
- Maintain a robust online profile, using tools such as ORCID, DOIs and social platforms such as ResearchGate
- Incorporate open science tools and open educational resources (OERs) in your classroom teaching
- Use local institutional supports for making publications, data, code, and other research outputs publicly available
- Advocate at your institution and in your discipline for recognition of open scholarship in promotion and tenure
- Explore alternative research metrics, e.g.,
Next Generation Metrics: Responsible Metrics and Evaluation for Open Science [PDF]

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Version History

This page provides a record of changes made to the open textbook since its initial publication. If the change is minor, the version number increases by 0.1. If the change involves substantial updates, the version number increases to the next full number.

Version	Date	Change	Affected Web Page
1.0	August 31, 2026	Publication	N/A