

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

The following is intended to provide guidance for appropriate supervision of thesis research students and supervisor-student relationships for masters degrees which have a major research thesis component and all doctoral degrees that have a supervised research component.

Students are reminded that compliance with the degree regulations and the quality of their work is ultimately their responsibility. The role of the supervisor is to assist them to achieve the best research results of which they are capable. A good and co-operative relationship between student and supervisor helps to ensure a rewarding and productive research programme. Information on academic statutes and degree regulations is given in the *Calendar*.

Students and Thesis Supervisors

Before the student enrolls for a masters or doctoral thesis the student and his/her thesis supervisor(s) should discuss the thesis research project, the resources required to carry out the proposed research and their availability, the supervisory expertise and support that will need to be available to bring the research to a successful completion, and clarify the respective obligations of supervisor and student in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. Such discussion is not intended to have any effect on the need for full compliance with regulations for the particular degree and the student and supervisor should also read and discuss the relevant regulations so that they are both clear about the requirements for the presentation of the thesis and completion dates.

At the commencement of the thesis, research students and supervisors should meet to discuss and agree on clear goals and the frequency of supervisory meetings. As a guide these meetings should be at least once a month but in some research areas and/or at some stages of thesis research, they may need to be more frequent. In the case of PhD students, the student and supervisor need to discuss when and how the candidate will fulfil all of their provisional goals.

If the thesis research being undertaken requires ethics approval before the research can be initiated, the thesis supervisor(s) should discuss the ethical issues and give guidance on the ethics approval process. It is the student and (main) supervisor's joint responsibility to ensure that formal ethics approval is obtained. In the case of applications to The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee, all applications from students must be submitted by the appropriate supervisor,

The student and supervisor(s) should discuss any other commitments that they might have and any anticipated absences, which will interrupt normal supervisory contact during the period required for completion of the degree.

At the end of the first semester of thesis research masters students and their supervisors should undertake a substantial review of research activities and achievements and discuss progress towards achieving the identified goals for the thesis research. Within six months of enrolment, doctoral students and their supervisor should undertake a substantial review of research activities and achievements and discuss progress towards achieving identified goals, including provisional year goals in the case of PhD candidates. The document 'Doctoral Supervision Development Guide' might assist this discussion,

Reports on progress required by the Department or the University should be prepared and submitted by the student and supervisor(s) by the due date.

In the case of research degrees that extend beyond a year, the student and supervisor(s) should meet to review progress at the end of each year of registration. They should also discuss research directions, identify any issues that are impeding progress or have/will interrupt the normal supervisory process, establish goals for the coming year, and complete the formal annual report requirements for the particular degree for which the student is enrolled.

In the event of a breakdown in relations between the student and the thesis supervisor, recourse is usually to the Head of Department in the first instance. See also 'Resolution of Research Problems: Postgraduate Research Students'.

As part of the general supervision of a student's thesis research, **thesis supervisors** should:

- (a) give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources, resources and their availability, and about requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary);
- (b) discuss with the student the level of contact needed, for example through meetings, tutorials or seminars and ensure as far as possible that this contact is maintained;
- (c) be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when he or she may need advice;
- (d) inform the student, in advance, of any proposed periods of absence either on research and study leave or any extended leave of more than 4 weeks, and in these periods of absence, either make alternative arrangements for another staff member to take up temporary supervisory duties or provide contact details so that supervisory contact may be maintained with the student;
- (e) give advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time;
- (f) request written work as appropriate, and return that work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time;
- (g) draw the student's attention to any courses or workshops that are offered which will help the student overcome problems identified in written expression or other aspects of the student's work;
- (h) draw to the student's attention to any important new results or concepts that may have come to the attention of the supervisor through the supervisor's contacts with other professionals and researchers;
- (i) provide guidance in fieldwork in the case of field based research;
- (j) direct the student to other experts in the field of research if appropriate;
- (k) arrange as appropriate for the student to talk about his or her work to individual staff or in seminars and to have practice in oral presentation of the research subject;
- (l) ensure that the student is made aware of any inadequacy of progress or of standards of work which fall below that generally expected;
- (m) direct the student to appropriate sources of information on "administrative" matters, e.g. the length of the thesis, the recommended style and layout, the number of copies required, regulations regarding extensions, possible sources of research funding;
- (n) establish early on the style and layout to be used in written work (e.g. Modern Languages Association (MLA) Handbook or a source from the Selected Bibliography in: Guide to Theses and Dissertations, available from the Graduate Centre);
- (o) ensure in the final stages of thesis preparation that they are available to read drafts and provide prompt and appropriate written comments on those drafts.

The responsibilities of the student include:

- (a) taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, including difficulties with accessing sources or resources;
- (b) discussing with the supervisor the type of guidance and comment he or she finds most helpful, and agreeing on a schedule of meetings;
- (c) responding to the arrangements proposed and the advice and instruction given by the supervisor;
- (d) maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor, including, in particular, the presentation of written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
- (e) deciding when he or she wishes to submit the thesis, taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, and ensuring that University deadlines are complied with.