

**SUPERVISION GUIDE**

**Negotiating and sustaining the supervision process**

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This Guide is a collection of pointers that may help you, the supervisor, to negotiate the process of helping your student to discover new insights and to write these up in a systematic and rigorous way. No one can claim to “know” how to be a successful supervisor, so much of that knowledge is tacit knowledge built up over years of experience, ever changing, ever vulnerable. This Guide therefore does not try to prescribe ways in which to supervise. It does however try to provide some sort of advice you as supervisor might find useful. The supervision process is often different in the various disciplines, so the guidelines offered here are wide-ranging and in many cases might not be appropriate for your subject specific purposes.

There is, however, one central idea that underlies this Guide: it is the idea that successful, pleasurable supervision is based on both supervisor and student clearly understanding and making explicit to themselves what the processes and issues are. The Guide tries to help you in doing this. It draws on “good practice” developed by various supervisors in different disciplinary areas and hopes to give some pragmatic advice to new supervisors. A successful supervisor can maximize the student’s chances of completing a thesis quickly and efficiently. Much of this Guide draws on the book by Delamont, S., Atkinson, P., and Parry, O. (1997). *Supervising the PhD*. Buckingham: Open University Press. This is well worth a read, especially for Doctoral supervisors. The thrust of the book is that higher degree work should not be based on *ad hoc* criteria, “approached casually in the interstices of the working week. It demands and deserves to be treated seriously as a set of commitments and demands on a par with other teaching and scholarly activity.” (1997:13)

The usefulness of the Guide depends much on you the supervisor giving feedback on ways to improve or add to the Guide. Please contact me (PET, tel 959 2451 or on email lholtman@uwc.ac.za) if:

- you have a difficult issue to deal with in your supervision which this Guide does not address
- you have some pragmatic advice or pointers you think would be useful to share with other supervisors
- there is some part of this Guide which is obscure

The Guide is organized so that it follows the stages of the supervision process. Of course, these stages do not necessarily proceed in a linear fashion, but it works for the structure of this Guide. Very few supervision processes happen without a hitch or without disagreements. Working relationships develop over time, in a non-linear fashion, and cover many facets of academic work. The Guide hopes to offer a starting point in developing personal and intellectual pleasures to be had from the supervision experience.

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By Lorna Holtman with inputs from supervisors who participated in the interviews and survey for supervisors as part of the CHE commissioned study (February 2009):

Holtman, L.B and Mukwada, G. (2009) *Research into the supervision of Masters and Doctoral students at UWC and capacity development needs of research supervisors.*

A research report to the CHE, Bellville: UWC.

Note: This updated version is accompanied by a CD which contains useful information to the supervisor and facilitators of supervision training workshops ( will be updated annually):

1. UWC Policy with regard to postgraduate studies – UWC Calendar 2009  
~~1.2.~~ UWC Prospectus 2009

~~1.3.~~ Research publication information

~~1.4.~~ Research guidebooks and style guides and other resources for students and supervisors

~~1.5.~~ An example of forms and guidelines from the Science Faculty – useful as a template for other faculties. E.g. MOU form, appointment of examiners forms

6. examples of good proposals – Law Faculty

7. The workshop programmes for PET semester 1 2009 and for the Office of Staff Development 2009

~~0.8.~~ The Powerpoint presentation used for the pilot supervision workshop held in June 2008 – Dentistry Faculty- compiled by Lorna Holtman

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# 1 GETTING OFF TO A GOOD START

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## *THE MOVE TO MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL STUDIES*

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As supervisors we may tend to forget how unsettling it could be to start off with the new status of a “Master’s” or “Doctoral” student. It seemed as though everyone else knew what to do and what was expected and we were often too shy to ask in case we showed our ignorance. The growth in structured Master’s degrees, made up in part by coursework, can clarify what constitutes “academic work” at this level, but there is still a lot of uncertainty about the expectation of a thesis or even minithesis. The Doctoral thesis with its additional requirement of “original work” and of “making a contribution to knowledge” can be scary and perplexing. The undergraduate learns fairly standard ways of reading and writing or following a set of standard experiments designed to work. The transition from mainly discursive writing to critical commentary or engaging in original theorizing is a major one. Similarly, the move from doing laboratory work with experiments that are designed to work (that’s why they are chosen) to designing and conducting experiments that encounter novel experiences, is one that can leave post-graduates feeling insecure and uncertain of how to proceed (or even wondering whether it is worth proceeding at all).

As a novice supervisor you too might feel uncertain about what is expected of a supervisor and what the requirements of a Master’s minithesis, full thesis or Doctoral thesis are. Like most knowledge, understanding the supervision process and knowing how to make judgments about the academic worth of a thesis are skills that take time to develop. Some of these skills are generic or transferable skills which your protégés will benefit from in lifelong experiences beyond campus life. There is no substitute for experience, but there are some ways in which the new post-graduate as well as the novice supervisor can acquaint themselves with particular requirements and in doing so, reduce uncertainty.

### *Novice supervisors and new post-graduates should:*

- locate sources of advice and support (e.g. completed Master’s or Doctoral students, other supervisors, University Guidelines, books on how to write - or supervise - a thesis, Internet sites, training sessions in specific methodologies, and summer school courses).
- take out theses in the disciplinary field from the UWC library and see what a “successful” thesis entails.
- take out theses from other universities and develop a sense of the shared academic standards that govern thesis work.

- consult books on how to complete a PhD or on how to succeed in your Master's studies. (There are numerous copies of such guides in most university libraries.)
- consult UWC's *Guidelines for examiners* - the list of criteria that examiners of theses are asked to consider. (*See Appendix 1.*)
- read through the *UWC Thesis Guide* as well as specific Faculty regulations pertaining to theses. (Copies of the *Thesis Guide* are available from the Faculty Officer or from Nelleke Bak.)
- novice supervisors can ask to work with more experienced supervisors in the department or even in another Faculty. In this way, there is an opportunity to learn from and lean on the more experienced supervisor. (A letter requesting the appointment of a co-supervisor must go to Senate Higher Degrees Committee via the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee.). Co-supervision can be an enriching experience which can also determine the chances that your students will pass or fail.
- novice supervisors may also benefit from consulting their more experienced colleagues, while their students can benefit from seminars, group discussions, workshops and conferences where views and opinions are shared about their research subject.
- to be effective, supervisors may need to switch roles, between mentoring, coaching, guiding, quality assessor, trainer, role model, project manager, critical interlocutor, counselor and offering pastoral care, depending on situations. The supervisor therefore needs to be a flexible leader and visionary.
- new post-graduates and novice supervisors may ask colleagues who have examined theses whether they may read the examined copy of the thesis and the examiner's comments or report on it.
- new post-graduate students may ask to work with students who are reaching the final stages of their theses.

*See Appendix 1 for copy of UWC Guidelines for Examiners*

## ***MATCHING STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR***

The relationship between student and supervisor is sometimes an intense one in which both parties invest time and energy. It is therefore important to select a student with whom you can work productively. Supervisors choose students by their marks, their writing, their originality, their proven work capacity and determination, in a word, ability. And students should do likewise. They should be encouraged to choose the toughest, brightest supervisor in their field. Many departments are steering towards

supervision committees, i.e. groups of academics who collectively take responsibility for direction, support and feedback. However, most departments operate on an individual supervisor-student basis. In the case of a Master's minithesis, co-supervisors are not usually appointed, but for a Master's full thesis or a PhD, co-supervisors may be appointed where necessary. The matching of student and supervisor is usually based on the following considerations:

- which supervisor is an expert in the field that the student wants to work in?
- which supervisor is the toughest, brightest supervisor in that field?
- which supervisor is available (not on sabbatical)?
- which supervisor is willing (i.e. has the space and time to take on a new student)?
- whether there is an existing research project that the student can slot into (many supervisors employ post-graduate students to assist with research in a larger project).
- whether the student has expressed a strong request to work with a particular supervisor.
- whether the proposed thesis that the student wants to work on fits with other theses that the supervisor is supervising.
- whether the supervisor and student get on with each other.
- whether the supervisor's workload, in terms of other responsibilities will not undermine the progress of the student under consideration.

The Senate Higher Degrees Committee (SHD) officially appoints supervisors. A letter from the Chairperson of Department recommending the appointment of a particular supervisor of a student is tabled via the Faculty Higher Degrees committee to SHD. Similarly, changes in supervisors and appointment of a co-supervisor follow the same administrative route.

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### ***TELLING THE THESIS STUDENT WHAT IS TO BE DONE***

Many of the problems in the supervision process can be avoided by setting out clearly the expectations, roles and responsibilities both parties have in the supervisory relationship. This should be done right at the start and as the needs of the student change over time, the agreed rules of the relationship need to be renegotiated periodically. Seemingly the supervision process entails just you and the student, but many more parties are involved, albeit not as overtly.

### ***Supervisors and the department/university***

Supervisors and the university are in an accountable relationship - what does UWC expect from its supervisors? What are the Faculty's or Department's expectations? In turn, what support can you as supervisor expect from the Department, the Faculty and the university? These are important issues that need to be clearly understood by both parties. It must be remembered, always, that student-faculty collaborative research promotes the professional development of both graduate students and the faculty. While this *Supervision Guide* seeks to clarify some of these issues, further clarification can be pursued through the Faculty Higher Degrees committee.

### ***Supervisors and the disciplinary field***

On a broader spectrum, as a supervisor you are also accountable to the discipline. What does the discipline expect from supervisors? What criteria does the discipline have for academic work? (The British Research Council has tried to spell out the various disciplinary criteria - see website: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ptd/guidelns/ptgc01>, or get a copy from your post-graduate programme co-ordinator in the department, or from Nelleke Bak.)

### ***Supervisors and students***

At the first sessions you have with your student, discuss how the two of you will work, separately and together. Explain how you like to work with your students and see if s/he will be able to fit in. Ground rules must be set regarding shared and negotiated expectations related to supervision meetings, in terms of regularity, duration, venue, formality, topics, confidentiality, convening and termination of meetings (Blunt and Conolly, 2006; Emilsson and Johnsson, 2007). The following need to be agreed on:

#### **The best time of day to meet**

Decide on a time that fits into both your workloads. Part-time students can usually meet only after a full day's work, which is not always good for clear, focused thinking. Explore possibilities of the student being able to take time off from work or even to meet over weekends every now and then.

#### **Where to meet**

Some places might be more conducive for meeting than others. Agree on a place with which you are both comfortable, be it in another office or suitable venue off campus.

#### **How often to meet**

It is important to schedule *regular* meetings, but the frequency of them might vary depending on the stage of the thesis, or depending on the nature of the research or the student involved. Some students need to be guided more frequently than others. Initially it might be fruitful to schedule weekly meetings, even if they are short, because it is easy for the student to drift

during the beginning phases of the thesis. Thereafter, a meeting could be arranged every second or third week. As a guideline, about 30 supervisions a year is a sensible target (Delamonte et al, 1997:18). Set up all these meetings at the beginning of the process, so that you can both plan “around” these dates, rather than trying to fit them in at a later stage. Be realistic and bear in mind your busy times (e.g. exam times for the supervisor or job related peak-times for the student) or when there are other commitments (e.g. the due date of a baby, planned conference trip or holiday). Regular meetings serve to keep the momentum. They signal that the process has stages and deadlines by which they measure progress, or lack thereof. Regular meetings also help to identify problem areas early on, before these become major obstacles to the completion of the thesis. However, frequency of meetings alone does not necessarily contribute to successful completion of thesis since the usefulness of meetings is attributable to their quality (Heath, 2002). The quality of meetings depends on what is covered in them.

### **Setting an agenda**

At the end of each meeting it is very important that a clear agenda for the next meeting is set. Both of you will contribute to the agenda, with the supervisor saying one time, “Next week, please bring X and we’ll discuss it”. At other times the student needs to set it so the supervisor needs to ask “What do you want to focus on next time?”

### **The mechanics of cancellation**

One of the most maddening things is for one of the parties not to show up for the meeting. Make sure that you are both clear on the mechanics of cancelling a meeting (telephone you at home? What number? How long in advance?) for those times when it is unavoidable. Re-schedule immediately.

### **Keeping a record**

Keep a record of the dates of your meetings, the key issues discussed and the agreed tasks for the next meeting. Keeping a record signals that you have high expectations of the process. In cases where other supervisors take over, or where there are accusations of non-delivery, an objective record will be valuable.

### **Reasonable and mutual expectations**

Be explicit what you are able to provide for the student, e.g. advice on the literature search, methodological help, practical help, limited funding, loan of equipment like a tape recorder, gaining permission to access certain sites, honest and timely feedback, tea and sympathy. And be very clear about what you cannot provide, e.g. language editing (correction of grammar and spelling), advice on how to use certain software (like SPSS), literature advice

on a certain aspect of the topic, etc. If you cannot help, for example, with statistical analysis, then arrange for the student to meet with someone who can assist. Foreign students might need more help (which you might not be able to provide directly), but be sure to direct them to sources and people who can (e.g. where to hire equipment, who to approach for permission to gain access, etc). It is especially important to set clear expectations about the student's writing; the form in which it should be and the times when written work is expected. Be very clear about when students can expect feedback and the form it will take. If you are going to give harsh feedback, make sure that the student realizes in advance that this is not a personal affront. Also, if you are not going to correct their grammar and spelling, make sure that students know that they have to submit copies to you in which the language has already been corrected. This is especially important for students whose first language is not English. Make sure you direct them to sources that can help them with this. At UWC the *Writing Centre* employs writing consultants especially to advise post-graduate students in developing a better grip on language. You might want to urge students to employ someone to do the technical correction of grammar and spelling - help them find suitable persons. Urge students to use the spell check and grammar check functions in word-processing software. If students don't know how to use the word-processing packages, insist that they enroll for a course.

The following are some reasonable expectations, taken from Delamonte et al (1997:24).

***Reasonable supervisor expectations - a supervisor can expect a student to:***

- turn up for appointments, prepared for them;
- write regularly, and share the draft material;
- tell the truth about work done and not done;
- deliver texts that have been proofread for spelling and grammar errors;
- keep in touch - practically (inform of holidays, sickness, change of address) and academically; and to
- do the research tasks that have been mutually agreed and scheduled.

***Reasonable student expectations - in turn, a student can expect the supervisor to:***

- give regular supervision;
- give timeous written feedback;
- be reasonably available and approachable;
- respect meeting times (to defer interruptions like the telephone and visits);
- be constructively critical in the feedback;

- to have a good knowledge of the research area and to direct students to sources in areas where the supervisor does not feel qualified to advise; and to
- deliver on the mutually agreed and scheduled tasks.

*See Appendix 2 for a possible exercise in clarifying supervisor and student expectations. On the basis of this, a contract should be drawn up. See Appendix 2 for a sample.*

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## **CO-SUPERVISORS AND OUTSIDE SUPERVISORS**

Some Faculties do not appoint co-supervisors for Master's minitheses. Given the limited scope of a minithesis, a supervisor should be able to deal with the content, focus and methodology. In Doctoral and Master's full theses, co-supervisors are appointed where the content and/or methodology call for specific expertise which the supervisor judges warrants the appointment of a specialist in that area. In cases where students are located at a distance from UWC, co-supervisors located in institutions closer to the student, may be appointed. Appointment of co-supervisors are tabled at the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee and forwarded to SHD.

In order to prevent the supervisor and co-supervisor giving conflicting feedback to the student, a list of division of tasks must be drawn up. Supervisor, co-supervisor and student must be very clear about who will be responsible for what. In cases where supervisor and co-supervisor disagree, a discussion needs to take place and a decision made about how the student should progress. Supervisors and co-supervisors should maintain frequent contact and at least copy each other in on all email with the student.

Sometimes outside supervisors are appointed. This happens, for example, when the original supervisor has left UWC or when the thesis is in an area of specialization for which outside expertise is needed. For any thesis there must, however, be an appointed UWC academic who will take administrative responsibility. So if an outside supervisor is appointed, an internal UWC co-supervisor needs to be appointed. Outside supervisors and co-supervisors are paid by UWC. The official university honoraria are very modest and some Faculties top up payment from Faculty budgets. Exams Office processes the claims.

### ***Supervisors:***

- are ultimately responsible for the overall quality control of the thesis.
- must clarify with co-supervisors the areas of the thesis for which each one will take responsibility.
- must maintain frequent contact with the co-supervisor.

- should liaise with Exams Office for payment of outside supervisors and co-supervisors.

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## ***SUPERVISION OF DISTANCE STUDENTS***

Some Faculties like Dentistry and the School of Public Health have many students who are located outside the Western Cape (some even in other countries). In some cases, where a number of students are grouped in a geographical region, a mentor network has been established. Mentors, appointed by UWC, are located within these regions and they assist students with their written work, and arrange regular group meetings. Mentors and the UWC campus based supervisor, in constant communication with one another, monitor students' progress. A clear contract allocating responsibilities must be drawn up and signed by mentors, supervisors and students. Where a student is closely located to another tertiary institution, a staff member of that institution can be contracted to assist with student support and co-supervision.

Isolation is a key reason for students not progressing on their thesis. It is therefore important that there must be regular communication between supervisor and student. The most fruitful medium of communication is email. This is speedy. Chapters can be sent by the student, commented on and emailed back by the supervisor. Email and internet access allow students to download relevant material. Students and supervisor should set up a list server for regular email discussion. In cases where email is not available, telephone, fax, postal and courier services can be used. Supervisors and students must keep copies of all posted material. Too often packages get lost.

Students located elsewhere should apply for permission to use libraries of other institutions. The procedure is as follows: the department in which the student is registered writes a letter to UWC library. *A standard form with various details of the student must be filled in and sent to UWC library. Forms available from the library.* UWC library will post of letter of permission to the student who must use it to take out books from the designated library. Note that the department is liable for the student returning the books. In cases where students do not return books, the UWC department will have to pay the fine.

UWC is developing on-line administration of students. At present, only the application form can be downloaded from the UWC website. Procedures are being developed to make on-line registration possible. Distance students can make electronic transfers for tuition payment.

Students can write their exams in a suitable venue close to them (arranged by the Faculty Officer and the Exams Office),

***Supervisors:***

- must draw up and sign a written contract with the student, which clearly spells out arrangements for regular communication. Communication can be via email, telephone, fax, or post.
- encourage students to get onto email.
- should draw up a list server for regular email discussions.
- establish a mentor network in areas where a number of students are grouped.
- should arrange set dates for site visits. An agenda and clear instructions to students about the preparation they should do, will help make the contact meeting fruitful and focused.
- should make arrangements with members of other institutions near the students to assist with supervision.
- should arrange via UWC for students to gain access to libraries elsewhere.
- can arrange for students to write exams in suitable venues closer to the students.

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***SETTING UP STRUCTURES***

The Research Proposal is a plan of the research work to be done and of the writing of the eventual text. It is an indication of *what* the student will investigate, *why* it is an interesting issue, *how* it will be investigated, *how* the investigation is going to be funded and *when* various sections are going to be completed. Of course, few final theses mirror exactly the initial Research Proposal since research is substantially investigatory work during which certain things become clear or are discovered. There often are unexpected revelations. Periodically you and the student might need to re-look at the “thread” of the thesis and decide how best to incorporate the new finding, or insight, and to adjust parts of the thesis accordingly. No one compares the final product of the thesis with the initial research proposal - the thesis is judged on its own merits. The research proposal is a necessary tool to get started and to direct the process of investigation. Re-visit the proposal (or thesis outline) every now and then, to refresh the overall layout of the thesis and its main aim.

Repeatedly state two golden rules:

**1 Write early and write often**

because:

- the more you write, the easier it becomes
- if you write every day, it becomes a habit
- tiny bits of writing add up to a lot of writing
- the longer you leave it unwritten the worse the task becomes

**2 Don't first try to get it right, get it written**

because:

- until it is on paper, no-one can help you get it right
- you find out what you think through writing
- drafting is a vital stage in clarifying thought
- as you draft sections, other bits become clearer
- drafting reveals the places where it isn't right yet, in ways that nothing else does.

Every student and supervisor knows of some horror story where drafts of theses got lost, stolen, burnt or destroyed. Encourage your students to work on a safeguard principle from the beginning. Urge your students to make backup copies of their disks (clearly labeled and dated so that they know which version is the final one) and several paper copies of their written work (again, clearly dated). Data needs to be backed-up professionally. Suggest that they keep these backup copies in another place from where the originals are - at home, or in the office or with a friend who will store them safely. Soft copies can be saved to their email accounts.

Ascertain from the start if there are technical skills that the student or you as the supervisor need to develop. If students are expected to write on a computer but feel uncertain about the medium, help them to enrol for a basic word processing course. If students need to use unfamiliar software (e.g. SPSS, or Research Toolbox), they must develop those skills sooner rather than later. Similarly, if you need to familiarize yourself with skills or areas on which you will be supervising, seek advice or enrol for a course as soon as possible. Set a timeline for when you hope these skills to be developed. Ensure that these skills are appropriate and adequate for the thesis. If your student needs to know only word processing in order to complete the thesis, don't encourage her to overextend herself by acquiring sophisticated skills in graphics as well. It's easy to become distracted from the main task, i.e. getting the thesis done.

Organize the practical matters of the project - does the student need access to a computer, need space to work, need specific equipment? If the student can't work at home, find a suitable workspace on campus. Advise the student to set up a schedule of bookings with the computer lab if necessary.

***Supervisors and students should:***

- revisit the layout and sections of the thesis from time to time to remind themselves of the trajectory and main aim of the thesis.
  - get in the habit of making back-up copies of work and storing them in safe places.
  - identify what skills need to be developed, what gaps need to be filled, and set a timeline for acquiring these.
  - set up a suitable physical workstation with the necessary equipment. (I get my students to write their main research question boldly on a large sheet of paper, which is stuck on the wall of their workstation - in this way they are constantly reminded of the thread that runs through their thesis, giving it direction and maintaining focus.)
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***GETTING GOING***

In the early stages, many students flounder. The project seems so daunting that they often don't know where or how to start. Here you as supervisor might want to give some definite tasks, guidelines and activities. You could give a contained list of readings (that you know are readily available in the library), and ask students to review each one in written form. In the beginning, give a certain page length or word count for each review. It helps to set preliminary boundaries, at a time when everything seems very loose and open. Moreover, completing these albeit small tasks gives the student a sense of progress and helps build confidence.

Quite often students have developed a good research proposal and then don't quite know how to "operationalize" it. This can be due to simple things like, where do I go? What do I look at? You as the supervisor need to make pragmatic suggestions, and assist in putting these in place. Help write letters to access certain sites, set up meetings with relevant people, help enroll the student for a computer course, arrange a meeting with a writing consultant at the Writing Centre.

***Supervisors should:***

- set definite, small tasks.
  - supply students with a "start-up" reading list.
  - assist with some very pragmatic arrangements.
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## 2 BALANCING SUPERVISOR INTERVENTION AND STUDENT AUTONOMY

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### *SIZING UP THE STUDENT*

Even the most able of students need reassurance about the quality of their work and the development of the process. If they don't get this, they may not progress. Delamonte et al (1997:31) note that one might divide students into 3 predominant kinds. She calls them the:

- 1 ***cue-seekers*** - who are the fewest in number. These are the ones that deliberately interact with the system, actively seek out information about thesis requirements, engage staff in discussion, and set out to impress lecturers with their ability and level of interest. They are self-motivated, self-disciplined and to a large extent, self-directed. The supervisor plays an important, albeit less interventionist, role.
- 2 ***cue-conscious*** - these students are alert to hints about assessment, understand the requirements, but don't actively seek to acquire additional knowledge to that which the supervisor gives. These students do what is expected of them but need motivation, direction and a clear agenda of how to proceed and what to do. Here the supervisor needs to keep a direct handle on the progress and development of the various stages in the thesis production.
- 3 ***cue-deaf*** - these students often do not "hear" what the supervisor is saying and often want to "revise everything" because they have not picked up on the supervisor's guidance and selectivity. The cue-deaf student is often a hard-working one, but one whose work is not always efficiently focused because of lack of understanding the advice or rules pertaining to the thesis. Cue-deafness in foreign students might also be because of difficulty with English or because of lack of familiarity with social conventions. Criticism from the supervisor does not necessarily mean that the work is entirely useless or that it should be taken personally. Supervisors need to spell out aspects of the supervision process or rules and agendas rather more explicitly than might otherwise be the case.

### ***Supervisors should:***

- identify what kind of student they are supervising.
  - be aware of the different levels of intervention and clarification that might be needed for the different kinds of student types.
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## ***MAINTAINING THE BALANCE***

The level and extent of intervention required is dependent not only on what kind of student you are supervising, but also on what kind of thesis you are supervising. Masters' minitheses are conceived of as modest pieces of work, limited in scope and depth, maintaining the same academically disciplined and systematic writing as a full thesis. Masters' full theses are more substantial in length, scope and depth of discussion. Typically, supervisors direct the thesis development, advising students quite clearly which steps to follow. A Doctoral thesis, however, is expected to make an original contribution to knowledge and the Doctoral student is expected to take a lot more responsibility for the development of the argument. *See the UWC "Guidelines for examiners" which lists the different requirements for the different kind of theses.*

Negotiating and maintaining the balance between "heavy-handed dominance" by you the supervisor and a "hands-off" neglect of your students is a very delicate matter. Different supervisors have different styles, ranging across the spectrum. Questions that supervisors generally ask are: "How much should I be spoon-feeding?", "What is the line between advising students of certain formulations and writing the thesis for them?", "To what extent do I find suitable literature for the student?", "What kind of interventions silence and demotivate the student?", "Is it the supervisor's job to be correcting language errors?", "Should this student aim merely to pass or to go for a distinction? If so, to what extent should I intervene?", "Given the push for completion and throughput rates, to what extent should I control the thesis production?"

These are tricky questions with no clear answers, because the supervision process is a complex and difficult one. There are expectations of the student, the supervisor, the university, the funder of the research, as well as the academic community of the discipline in which the thesis is being written. Juggling all these considerations is too complex a task to capture in a few "tips", but there are some useful guidelines.

### ***Supervisors and students might want to consider the following:***

- In the early stages of supervision, agree on the responsibilities of the supervisor and those of the student, based on the kind of student you are supervising, the kind of supervisor you are, the kind of thesis being written, the academic demands of the discipline, as well as constraints put up by funders. (*See Appendix 2 as a possible discussion document to help you negotiate the boundaries of intervention.*)
- If the student is part of a funded research project with definite deadlines, agree to the limits in which support will be given to meet these deadlines and to what extent the thesis work must cohere with the project demands (or perhaps with the work of the other students on the project).
- Be a little more interventionist in the early stages of the thesis writing. As the student gets more into the subject and starts to develop an expertise, the less

interventionist or directive the supervisor might want to be. (*See section on “Getting Started”.*)

- In the early stages set clear tasks and guidelines. Direct the student’s reading by recommending some key texts.
- In the early stages of the thesis production, help to break the huge project into bite-size bits. Completing small, short tasks engenders a sense of progress, enthusiasm and confidence.

(I often compare learning to write a thesis to learning how to ride a bicycle. You can listen to other people telling how to do it; you can watch how others do it; you can learn from others about the various parts of the bicycle and their functions, you can read “tips” on how to ride a bicycle, but ultimately the only way you really learn to ride is to get on the bicycle, with a steady supporting hand holding the saddle, and to wobble along, at times crashing and getting back on, and proceeding each time with a little more confidence until the steady hand on the saddle lets go and you’re on your own!)

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### ***DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MASTER’S AND DOCTORAL SUPERVISION***

A substantive difference between a Master’s and a Doctoral thesis is that the work done at Doctoral level should show proof of “original work”. That means that the Doctoral student must demonstrate independence of thinking and writing. Whereas at Master’s level the supervisor may be fairly interventionist with regard to thesis topic, research design, and development of argument, at Doctoral level students are expected to take much more responsibility for this themselves. At Doctoral level, the supervisor is a critical discussion partner, rather than a director of thesis production.

*See Appendix 1 for the differences between Master’s and Doctoral theses.*

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## **3 DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL**

Different Faculties have different ways of handling the development of the Research Proposal. Supervisors need to check with their Faculty Higher Degrees committee what the various post-graduate requirements, deadlines and processes are. There is a generic *Research Proposal Guide* that students may want to consult in the absence of any other specific directives. (For copies of this *Research Proposal* which spells out the various required sections, consult the postgraduate portal ([www.uwc.ac.za](http://www.uwc.ac.za)) and

look for postgraduate students link) or contact the PET office. Some Faculties have research proposal modules and students are assigned to supervisors only after the proposal is almost complete; other Faculties assign supervisors to students from the start of the post-graduate studies.

This section will deal with the supervision process during the development of the Research Proposal, rather than with the sections of the Research Proposal itself.

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### ***CHOOSING THE TOPIC***

Very often students do not know what they want to write on. Asking them to “choose” any topic that interests them is to leave many students feeling quite lost and under pressure to find something, anything! Such looseness can result in the student floundering for a long time (not an altogether bad thing in itself perhaps!) and often leads to very ambitious, vague, uncritical approaches to a topic. In cases where students clearly do not know what to write on, you should be quite interventionist with structured suggestions of topics. Especially in the beginning of the proposal development, you should be fairly directive (as a strategy for *strengthening* not silencing struggling students).

This intervention might take various forms: giving the student a list of topics to choose from; inviting students to become part of a research project with a specific brief; or directing the student’s reading by suggesting two or three books that must be read and from which a topic must be chosen. Students doing a Master’s degree by coursework often have an idea of the kind of topic they want to write their minithesis on. The topic usually emerges during engagement with the coursework. Supervisors who teach on the coursework might want to highlight various issues that emerge as fruitful topics to consider for the minithesis. Supervisors should spend a few minutes during class discussing how the same topic can be investigated from different angles and with different emphases.

During coursework classes, supervisors/lecturers and students could begin to draw up a list of possible research topics. Often during class discussions, interesting topics emerge. Start listing these from the beginning of the course so that by the time the student needs to decide on a topic, a list of possible options is available. The advantage of choosing a topic that emerges from the coursework, is that students have the relevant literature base from which to start writing their theses, as well as having written assignments that might be adapted for inclusion in the minithesis. Drawing on one of these topics also gives the student the advantage of being familiar with the kind of debates around this issue.

Getting a group of students all to write on the same topic can be very stimulating. It can serve to highlight the excitement of flexible academic thinking, tackling the same topic from different perspectives. It also creates the sense of a research “group”, supporting one another and sharing readings. A group serves to create a sense of on-going energy and direction. This is extremely helpful for those inevitable times when the student’s motivation flags and focus blurs. A “research group” of post-graduate students is more prevalent in the Natural Sciences, but there is no reason why it should not be encouraged in the Social Sciences and Arts as well.

A group of post-graduate students might form a more structured group by working within a registered or funded research project. This means that the topics students can write on are already articulated as part of a broader framework. The advantage of this is that students again feel part of a research group, sharing resources, readings and findings, speaking the same academic discourse as well as offering and receiving support and guidance to or from group members. Funded research proposals have a pool of money that could assist students with their work. If the supervisor has a National Research Foundation grant, there are usually some available student bursaries attached to it. Registered research projects have deadlines which serve to motivate the student to produce on time. Today many funding bodies are imposing sanctions on institutions whose students do not submit within the time limits.

A PhD programme should really be a marriage of your and the student’s interests. However, it is important not to confuse your enthusiasm for a research topic with a student’s.

***Supervisors might consider:***

- during the teaching of the Honours and Master’s coursework, drawing students’ attention to fruitful topics that emerge during class discussions.
- drawing up a list of stimulating topics (with some research questions and preliminary key texts to consult) from which students could choose.
- directing the students to read 2 or 3 specific books from which they could then choose a topic.
- encouraging a group of students to work on the same topic and get a “research forum” going.
- drawing students into their own research projects. If these projects are not yet registered, supervisors should consider doing so and applying for funding which, in turn, can assist the student.
- inviting students to pursue their own topics of interest (within a designated field).

## ***READINGS AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE***

Your student needs to be prepared to deal with the theoretical perspective within which she will be working, intellectually committed to it and able to demonstrate command of it before the thesis is too far advanced to change it. This is particularly pertinent in the Social Sciences where theoretical and epistemological issues are hotly contested. The choice of theoretical perspective determines the way the problem is interpreted, the approach to it and what counts as a rigorous response. According to Delamonte et al, “graduate students become identified with such theoretical stances too early and too firmly, adopting them as articles of faith rather than subjecting them to critical scrutiny.” (1997:44).

One cannot really speak of a student “choosing” a theoretical perspective. You need to be competent enough to guide the student, bearing in mind that lack of a competent supervisor can lead to numerous problems including delays in thesis completion. For this reason it is not advisable to supervise a student who is working in a research area in which you have no sufficient theoretical grounding. At the stage of post-graduate studies, students have already become initiated into a particular perspective, have become committed to a certain academic style and identify with a particular intellectual tradition. Sometimes, the working relationship between you and your student is based on a commonality of perspectives which does not always make for critical engagement with the fundamental assumptions. Nevertheless, students should be encouraged to work critically within particular paradigms and to resist adopting a given perspective while they remain in ignorance of competing orientations. Here you might have to act as devil’s advocate in helping the student to engage critically with the given perspective, without necessarily undermining the student’s autonomy.

The extent to which a supervisor will force the student to become a critical inquirer of the chosen theoretical perspective and to consider alternative approaches, depends to a large extent on the type of thesis that the student is writing. Masters’ minitheses generally are much more limited in scope and depth (nevertheless demonstrating academic rigour within a limited area) and need not necessarily offer a defensive argument for their choice of theoretical perspective. A minithesis can articulate clearly the assumptions on which it rests and proceed from these as “starting points”. However, in the development of the discussion, gaps or weaknesses or contested parts of the theoretical perspective should be addressed or at least acknowledged. A Master’s full thesis is expected to offer a more extensive discussion, including its choice of theoretical framework. A Doctoral thesis, as “a distinct contribution to knowledge of and insight into the subject” (Rule A 23.3) is expected to be more extensive and penetrating in discussion, including a critical awareness of the theoretical framework within which it is operating.

At most US universities, students (even Doctoral ones) are given reading lists. These enable the student to become engaged with the debates and to start developing the confidence to become a conversant in the field. Students should generally be encouraged to find literature for themselves, especially at Doctoral level where greater student autonomy is appropriate. However, this does not preclude you from being directive in the kind of “core” things your student should read. In order to develop a sound theoretical base. A reading list should also include “supplementary” readings, which aim to enrich the student’s understanding by introducing alternative views or applications of the perspective in different contexts.

***Supervisors:***

- may choose to direct their students’ reading by giving them a list with “core” readings and “supplementary” readings.
- at times will have to play devil’s advocate to encourage the student to become a sceptical inquirer and to reflect on the chosen paradigm. The extent to which the supervisor does this is usually based on the level at which the thesis is being written.

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***METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN***

When your students are designing their thesis projects, you as the supervisor should ensure that they are thinking ahead. Because research designs are very subject specific, there’s little general advice that can be given about how supervisors should do this. However, it is useful for you to remember that most of the students are novices and do not necessarily know how to design and conduct their research. Typically, students tend to be too ambitious in their research design, and often not aware of the time it takes to gain access to certain sites or to do certain kinds of research. With students having to write within funder’s and university deadlines (Master’s students have to complete within three years), these are considerations that you should alert the student to. (*See Appendix 3 on “Access”*)

In order to help your students get clarity about their research designs, you could get the students to argue *against* the particular techniques they are planning on using. Get your students to understand the pros and cons of the methods they have chosen.

If you have a research group going with Master’s and Doctoral students working over a number of years in a particular field, you might want to share with them some of the external examiners’ comments on the theoretical perspective, methods and research design of theses of previous students in the research project.

***Supervisors:***

- help the novice student in designing the research by alerting them to certain pitfalls, conventions, protocols, and formal requirements of accessibility.
- may choose to get students to argue against the techniques they plan to use in order to alert them to the limitations of whatever methods they choose.
- share external examiners' comments on theoretical perspective, methods used and research design of previous students' theses.

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## ***RESEARCH ETHICS***

Research demands ethical behaviour from its participants, i.e. from supervisor and student. The goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no-one is harmed as a result of the research activities.

When designing a research proposal, supervisors must see to it that the student includes an ethics statement where necessary. In short, research that aims to involve people and/or animals as research subjects, must have an ethics statement in the research proposal. Different disciplines have different requirements. Check with the disciplinary Association (websites with the information are usually available). Most Faculties have an ethics committee which checks that the research proposes to follow ethical procedures. These ethics committees, in turn report to the UWC ethics committee.

Herewith some ethical guidelines:

### ***Overall responsibilities of supervisor and student:***

- Design, conduct and report research in accordance with recognized standards of scientific competence and ethical research.
- Comply with national and provincial law and regulations and with professional standards governing conduct of research.
- Minimize the possibility that the result will be misleading.
- No plagiarism. Thesis authors must reflect scientific or professional contributions accurately.
- Ensure that students supervised have appropriate training and preparation for conducting the research.
- Protect appropriately the rights and welfare of humans and the welfare of animals.
- Protect the identities and interests of those involved.
- Guarantee the confidentiality of the information given to the researcher.
- Consult the university Ethics Committee about any unclear ethical issues.

***The following sources may be consulted for further information:***

1. Cooper, D.R. and Schindler, P.S. 2001. *Business Research Methods*. Boston: McGraw-Hill/Irwin. Chapter 5 deals with ethics in business research.
  2. Berg, Z.C. and Theron, A.L. 1999. *Psychology in the Work Context*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. See pp 43-47.
  3. Online ethics center:  
<http://onlineethics.org/edu/instruct.html>
  4. Ethical issues in health sciences:  
<http://www.cwru.edu/med/bioethics/bioethics>
  5. Code of conduct for psychologists:  
<http://www.apa.org/ethics/>
  6. Human subjects and research ethics:  
<http://www.msu.edu/user/respeck1/HumanResearch.html>
  7. National Academy of Sciences' booklet on research ethics:  
<http://books.nap.edu/catalog/4917.html>
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## 4 WORKING WITH FOCUS

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If you were to talk with students who have completed their theses, many will admit that it is all too easy to drift and for valuable time to pass unproductively. If students start to feel aimless, or feel that their work is not progressing, then their self-confidence and enthusiasm can wane seriously. If, on the other hand, students are encouraged to make a “flying start”, confidence and enthusiasm will grow, and both you and your student will feel positive about the research process.

### ***THE LITERATURE SEARCH***

Whatever the discipline, the student has to come to grips with the literature - this means learning how to find it, read it, assimilate it, make informed judgments about it write about it and acknowledge its sources. The literature search remains a headache. The infinite possibilities of extending the thesis in various ways means that it is very difficult to know when to stop. Often the most difficult decision about planning one's research is not the decision about what to include, but rather what to *exclude*. So the question about what a reasonable literature search is, depends upon the topic and the problem. A supervisor at UWC once supervised a minithesis that had only 8 references in the bibliography - the student did an in-depth analysis of a particular philosopher's concept of ethnocentricity. You need to keep a balance between encouraging your student to read widely and keeping to the central purpose of the thesis.

Some theses have a Literature Review chapter; other theses develop an argument and draw on appropriate literature throughout the thesis (these are usually analytical, philosophical, conceptual or literary studies). In the case where there is a Literature Review chapter, this usually comes early on in the thesis. You as supervisor might have to assist the student in accessing fruitful sites and finding relevant literature. As the thesis progresses, (or in the case where the discussion in the thesis draws on the literature throughout), students often develop familiarity with certain sites (libraries, journals, online sites) and need less intervention from you about what to read or where to find it. However, it is important to remember to assist your student, especially in the beginning, with accessing sites and finding relevant literature.

One of the first things you should advise your student is to keep records of all the texts consulted. Most academics can tell stories of quotes with “lost references” and spending days trying to track down details of a specific article or book. Keeping full, clear records from the start can help to eliminate such occurrences. I often advise my students to keep a stack of blank (8 x 12cm or larger) library cards with them, and, whenever they have found a useful text, to write down the full details on the card, including where they found it. If they should have to refer to it again at a later stage, at least they will know where to go. Alternatively, they can use **the Research Toolbox** software, available on a multi-site licence to all UWC students. It is a very useful software programme that keeps track of (and suitably formats!) all your references. (For information on how to download this, go to UWC S:/ drive or phone Mandy Samuels on x3920. CD installation disks are available for you to install the programme on your home computer. Training sessions on how to use this programme can be arranged - phone Nelleke Bak on x 2451).

Librarians can be extremely helpful in finding suitable literature. Encourage your student to meet with the specialist librarian who looks after your specific Faculty’s library needs. Or you might organize sessions with the librarian on library and information use. Not only can students find out about inter-library loans and other services, the library also has numerous information search engines online, and computer databases of research. Librarians can show students how to use these most effectively. Liaise with your Faculty specialist librarian to find out what is on offer. Librarians are able to show students lists of abstracts (like in the ERIC retrieval system) and where past theses are kept. Consulting successful theses is very useful for finding out the kind of scope and depth required for a thesis, as well as for “piggy-backing” on the bibliography of a thesis on a similar topic. Moreover, once a good working relationship is established with the librarian, the student can be informed about new books or journal articles that have arrived that might be relevant to the student’s topic.

Once students have appropriate literature, they need to read and make notes. We often talk glibly about “critical discussion” but we don’t always spell out clearly what we

mean by that. Do we expect students to analyze the logical links in the argument? To place the issue in its context? To trace its historical development? To assess the validity of the argument? To ascertain the truth of the claims? To compare or contrast the issue with other kinds of developments? To trace the possible implications of the findings? To analyze the underlying meanings of the author's concepts? To articulate the assumptions made? And so on. It seems a long and varied list of some very sophisticated academic skills. So what do we mean when we ask of our students to be critical? Different disciplines will have different emphases, so it is necessary for you to spell out for the student the kind of expectations the discipline has of "critical reading and writing". Research students, especially at Doctoral level, are first and foremost readers, who need to know *how* to read and *how* to write coherent accounts of what they have read. Help your students know what adequate note taking involves, from analytical summaries to short précis.

For theses that have a Literature Review chapter, you need to explain to your student that the literature review has the following requirements:

- (a) it should show the reader that the student is capable of searching for relevant material, summarizing it, arranging it by some theme and relating it to his or her own work;
- (b) and in the case of a Doctoral study, it should show that the thesis is original *or* is a principled, conscious replication of a previous one.

Alert your student to the following:

- (i) the literature review should not leave out important key texts,
- (ii) if appropriate, the review should include current texts, and
- (iii) the review should avoid being boring.

In order to write a review that fulfills the above requirements, you and your students should be in constant dialogue with other colleagues and with the specialist librarian. Scan bibliographies of published authors, and the contents pages of new editions of the key journals in the field. In order to avoid being boring, reviews should not just be long lists or sequences, but should be arranged by theme, and form a coherent base for the particular issue the thesis is investigating. Most importantly, you as the supervisor have to train the student to be critical of the literature, not just to report it. The thesis must illustrate that it *uses* the literature to highlight and inform the specific issues the thesis addresses - it must show that it can derive and explore ideas through the literature rather than passively report on it.

Demonstrating familiarity with referencing and citation conventions is a crucial aspect of the thesis. There are many different conventions, some disciplines prefer certain conventions, other disciplines again follow other conventions. Ensure that your student adopts an appropriate one for the discipline and then to be *consistent* in its use. *Research Toolbox* is an excellent software package with a choice of numerous

referencing conventions. The student types in the relevant details of the reference and the software package automatically formats it according to the chosen convention! Very handy and timesaving.

As supervisor, you need to clarify the balance between “informed own voice” and plagiarism. Explain the notion of intellectual ownership to your students and ensure that substantive claims and contested premises are properly acknowledged. Just to what extent one must acknowledge is often a discipline specific issue - e.g. the fact that van Riebeeck landed in the Cape in 1652 is now part of the “common knowledge” and as such need not be substantiated with a reference, but the “fact” that apartheid South Africa had a capitalist economy clearly is a contested claim and as such would have to be substantiated or shown to be false.

Occasionally students will complain that they cannot find any literature on their topic. This may be because UWC library is understocked, or because the student lacks vision and is defining the topic too narrowly. In the case of UWC library stocks, steer the student to other libraries, interlibrary loans and to the Internet. In the case of a too narrowly confined topic, you might have to show how reading *against* and *around* the topic can be creative in bringing to light some interesting aspects, or help the student re-think the topic and perhaps foreground different things on which there is more literature. Of course, a genuine lack of literature on the topic might be a creative opportunity for the thesis to highlight gaps in the research field, to give information of biases, preoccupations and blind spots in the research community and to try and offer an explanation for these. The thesis itself can become a principled criticism of the state of the field.

***Supervisors may choose to:***

- give students advice on how to keep records of literature read (filling in library cards or using software like *Research Toolbox*).
- as a start, supply students with a reading list of easily available books.
- encourage the student to meet with the Faculty specialist librarian.
- articulate clearly what is meant by “critical reading and writing” (*See Appendix 4 for some suggestions.*)
- make sure the student knows what it means to write coherent accounts of what they have read - supply examples.
- decide on a referencing convention - be sure that the student has clear examples of it.
- discuss the issue of plagiarism and spell out when citations are necessary and when not.
- keep their eyes open for relevant literature on the issue the student is writing on.
- scan current journals for new literature and urge their students to do the same.

- help the student to arrange their reviews by themes.

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## ***DATA COLLECTION***

In theses that pursue empirical research, the supervision of data collection is a key feature of the research process and may be one of the most problematic areas of the project. You need to see that your student puts good quality data on the bones of the initial research design. Data collection is unpredictable and it is therefore important that both you and the student remain flexible in your general approach to the project. Data collection, at the best of times, can be a protracted process. It is often labour-intensive and time-consuming. Students in general, unless they are part of a research team, have limited time and restricted resources. You assist your student by guarding against a plan for data collection that is too ambitious. All too often students plan to collect data that would take a medium-sized research team, with funded support, a fair time to complete! As Delamonte et al note (1997:69), “Ambition is commendable, but over-optimistic estimates of time and effort are not to be encouraged.” You should help your student think realistically and pragmatically about the scope of the data collection. Putting realistic limits on it can prevent your student from “drowning” in data later on. Very often over-ambitious data collection is a result of the student (and supervisors!) not feeling *confident* to know when enough is enough. You both perhaps want to err on the side of over-collection, but this can lead to significant problems later on when the data must be analyzed. Frame the plan for the data collection, bearing in mind the significance of the research questions to be addressed, the resources available and the student’s analytical capacities. Help your student plan to collect the right kinds of data with an appropriate research design.

Students often ask “How many informants should I interview?”. There is, of course, no one answer to this, but a useful response to bear in mind is, “It depends on what you want to do”. A modest volume of high-quality data analyzed in considerable depth and with methodological precision will often be far better than a lot of data superficially analyzed. Delamonte (1997:70) tells the story of Harry Wolcott, an American anthropologist whose approach was to study only one of anything at any given time: one village, or one school, or one community leader. People would often ask, “But Harry, what can you learn from just one?” to which Harry replied, “As much as I can.” However, it is difficult to know “just the right amount or right number” if the research is mainly exploratory and open-ended. The more data, the messier it will be.

Especially during the early period of empirical work it is important for you to maintain your student’s enthusiasm and confidence. If things were easy and research questions soluble as soon as we approached them, then research would be a lot easier than it is. But almost always, research is hard and messy. For social sciences students, there is

often disappointment that the social worlds they study do not readily yield up to research problems and analytical concepts. Often they will look in vain for their cherished ideas (such as “hegemony”, “empowerment”, “patriarchy”, etc) only to discover that social worlds do not come neatly packaged in such terms. They collect data, but cannot “see” a pattern or problem emerging and become insecure and fretful. Students doing laboratory work also often encounter experiments that do not yield their expected results, equipment that goes wrong, and failures of replicating findings. This is usually in contrast with their undergraduate laboratory experience when the experiments followed well-trodden paths and yielded consistent results. That’s why the experiments were chosen. The realization that the outcomes of laboratory work are by no means certain, accompanies a growing anxiety among post-graduates that they might not be able to meet their Master’s or Doctoral degree requirements. When this happens, one of your tasks as supervisor is to keep up their enthusiasm and confidence (not unrealistically so, of course). There are a number of strategies in which your students can learn to rationalize initial failure: help your students understand that failure is not personal; it happens to everyone. Moreover, you can help your students come to terms with failure by seeing it as a fundamental component in scientific research training which is ultimately resolvable. As one experienced researcher expressed it: “Everything goes wrong but you have to remember that it’s not all the time.”

If necessary, in the face of persistent failure, you and your student might want to undertake a realistic appraisal of the situation, review what has been learned from the project to date, and apply those insights into a reformulation of the research question and research design.

The accumulation of lots of data can provide the student with a kind of “security blanket” - the idea that more data is better, that nothing will be left out, and that while the collection is going on, the dreaded analysis part is deferred. The student creates the sense of being very busy with the research, but it can often hamper the ultimate completion of the thesis. Too much data to analyze might become so difficult a task that the student loses heart. Your role as supervisor at this point is to help the student achieve some sense of judgment of when enough is enough. In the case of “over-collection”, you will have to advise on what is important and what can be discarded. Data, especially after hard collecting work can become very precious to the student who might be reluctant to discard some of it. Suggest that once the thesis is safely in the hands of the examiners, the student could revisit the data and aim perhaps for a journal publication. In order to help the student “step back” from the process every now and then, you might want to organize for the student to give a seminar presentation, or write a conference paper, in order to refocus again on what is important for the thesis. Stepping back also helps the student to see emerging patterns or trends which, while being immersed in the details, can escape the student’s notice.

### ***Supervisors should:***

- maintain a flexible approach to the data collection process.
  - caution against over-ambitious, time-consuming data collection projects.
  - advise the student when enough is enough.
  - maintain a productive balance between optimism and realism.
  - keep the student's spirits up during "data collection blues".
  - remind students that perseverance carries rewards.
  - maintain the impetus.
  - recognize when ongoing data collection becomes a delay tactic for completing the thesis.
  - help the student step back every now and then from the day-to-day data collection slog.
  - discern between pertinent and other data - put "surplus" data on the back-burner for the time being.
- 

### ***WRITING***

Remind students of the two "golden rules": "*Write early and write often*" and "*Don't first try to get it right; get it written*". As academics, we tend often to overestimate our students' familiarity and fluency with academic language and writing. (See *Appendix 5* and the *Thesis Guide: Section C* for some hints about academic writing.) Impress on students that even the most successful authors don't work out everything in their heads first and then write it all down lucidly and fluently. Almost everyone discovers what she thinks only through articulating it in words (preferably in written form). Also, reading can become the thief of writing. Reading can easily become a displacement activity, giving the notion of being busy with the thesis, but not really producing anything concrete. The belief that one should *read first* before writing can put the thesis off indefinitely. Impress on your student that reading and writing are reciprocal activities, the one informing the other. What you read informs what you write; what you write informs what you should read.. Of course, your judgment needs to be exercised here. Some students write copious amounts with no reading of the academic debates; others again read so much that it paralyses them from writing. Your direct intervention as supervisor is necessary in both these cases. In the one case, set a definite reading list for the student to work through and ask for written summaries or commentaries. In the other case, set a specific and modest writing task in order to break the fear of writing.

Writing involves management of time and place. Every person has different rhythms of when they are most alert and motivated. It is important that you help your student establish a *routine* of writing time and place. Thinking that the writing will be slotted into "gaps" of one's general schedule of family and work commitments, is often ill-

founded. More often than not, the writing is postponed and the more it is postponed the more difficult it is to get started again. Like a car that has come to a standstill, more petrol is needed to get it moving again, as opposed to a car that is already chugging along. Get your student to commit to a routine that works best for her. Some prefer working early in the morning, others again prefer late at night; some prefer working from home, others again prefer another place. A colleague of mine wrote her entire thesis in various coffee shops. She said the background bustle and the fact that no one could phone her there were conducive conditions for her writing. Some like working in silence, others again prefer background music or noise. Whatever the conditions, help your student discover what works best for him and help, if appropriate, set up those conditions. (There are some small offices available on campus for Master's and Doctoral students – telephone Nelleke Bak for more details.)

If your student is struggling with language and would benefit from getting some language skills development, urge her to make an appointment with UWC Writing Centre (tel x2390). Two Writing Consultants have been trained specifically to help post-graduate students.

Thinking about the overall thesis can be daunting, so you can help your student by breaking up the writing of the thesis into manageable bits. I have often got my students to frame each chapter topic as an assignment question. If the thesis has 10 chapters, I encourage students to see each chapter as a 10 -15 page assignment with relevant readings to be consulted. Writing assignments is something they have all done in their Honours year at least. Once all the “assignments” have been written, the body of the thesis is there. Then linking paragraphs need to be inserted so that all the “assignments” become one coherent extended argument. And there is the thesis (well, almost).

Many writers at times experience “writer’s block”. If the worst comes to the worst and, despite all your best efforts, your student is not producing, you need to act quickly. Writer’s block is often characterized by the student not turning up for appointments, pleading lack of time, or taking recourse in reading as a displacement strategy. If, despite your enthusiasm, supportive strategies and gentle interventions there is no way through the block, you might think of changing your role from “good cop” to “bad cop”. Perhaps it’s time to get tough. Set some definite deadlines, demand small bits of writing for each one, register the student for a conference, or organize a Faculty seminar at which the student must present something. If the student still fails to produce, it is time to look very closely and honestly at what is holding the student up. It could be fear of failure, a misguided perfectionism, unhelpful working habits, or apprehension of your criticism. Another strategy that might work is for the student to “talk” through the chapter or section with you during your meetings. You can jot down the points the student makes and then present them as a framework for a written piece.

A reminder: insist that your student produces text written on a computer. Urge your student to buy a PC if she doesn't have one. Word processing allows the student to play with the text, and move it around. This loosens the grip of the text becoming too precious to let go.

***Supervisors should:***

- remind their students to write early and to write often.
- dispel the belief that writing is a separate kind of activity that can be left till the end (as in “writing up” the research!).
- help create conducive conditions for writing.
- set clear, modest writing tasks in the early stages.
- refer students to the post-graduate Writing Consultants at the UWC Writing Centre.
- break up the writing of the thesis into manageable bits.
- comment constructively on the student's first writing attempts without undermining the student's confidence by being unduly critical of early efforts.
- deal with writer's block by changing tactics or by an honest appraisal of the reasons holding up the student.
- insist that the student enrolls for a basic computer course if necessary.

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## **5 KEEPING UP THE MOTIVATION**

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Almost every student writing a thesis goes through dips of depression, insecurity about the quality of the writing, anxiety about the thesis requirements and non-thesis related problems that nevertheless impact on the thesis production. Especially in the beginning of the process, students need lots of encouragement when they are still trying to find their “academic feet”. Indeed, at many stages of the thesis supervision, one of your tasks is to reassure and motivate your student. Bear in mind that the main task of a supervisor is, of course, to give clear, crisp and top-level professional academic advice. However, we often tend to underestimate the insecurity many students have about their own potential. It is very easy to destroy their emerging academic self-confidence. Judge when tact and motivation will be more productive than unvarnished realism and harsh criticism. Adopting a more strategic management of advice and criticism might allow the student to move on. Revisit the shaky parts later on when the student has greater confidence and has more invested in the success of the thesis. Of course, you shouldn't blindly encourage students whose work is clearly inadequate or who are heading in quite the wrong direction. Nor should you express approval for work that is obviously below acceptable standard. But advice and criticism should be

managed in such a way as to encourage the (potentially) competent student to develop sufficient motivation and self-confidence to sustain a difficult and demanding project over a number of years.

***Supervisors should:***

- judge when tact and motivation will be more productive than unvarnished criticism.
- 

***STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE THESIS***

Mario Smith, a UWC student, wrote his Master’s thesis in 1995 on the importance of thesis writing support groups. He published a chapter entitled “Support for post-graduate dissertation writing” in Leibowitz, and Mohamed (eds), *Routes to Writing in Southern Africa*, Cape Town: Silk Road, 2000. In this, he notes various student responses to thesis production. (Smith, 2000:240-255). Knowing what these responses are and being able to recognize them should help you, as supervisor, to intervene in an appropriate way:

**Enthusiasm**

In the early stages of thesis writing, this is often revealed in students trying to do too much and developing over-ambitious proposals. However, as time progresses, as the need for rigorous writing becomes pertinent, as the stress of time constraints and the monotony of focusing on a particular issue are more keenly felt, enthusiasm can wane dangerously.

- *Here you as supervisor need to support, encourage and keep the end in sight.*

**Isolation**

Especially for Master’s students who have completed the coursework part and are suddenly on their own with no more structured class meetings, little interaction with fellow students and no given “course outline”, the sudden isolation and lack of structured routine can be very difficult. For many students, including Doctoral ones, the limited intellectual stimulation and exchange of ideas can lead to a loss of interest in the work, coupled with a marked diminishing momentum.

*Here it is important for you as supervisor to use some of the following strategies:*

- *ensure that regular meetings between you and your student take place.*
- *set up a Master’s and Doctoral reading and writing group. Meet regularly.*
- *invite the student to the staff lunches or socials.*
- *set up an email network between all the post-graduate students in the department.*
- *compile a departmental newsletter.*

- *organize for the student to present a paper at the Faculty staff seminar forum.*
- *register the student for a conference.*
- *put the student in touch with someone writing a thesis on the same topic. Consult the library database for a list of current registered Master's and Doctoral titles.*
- *employ the student as a tutor in the department. The Workstudy programme has opportunities for post-graduate student employment.*
- *engage the student to be an advisor to students currently doing the coursework or starting to develop their own research proposals.*

### **Boredom or loss of motivation**

Recognize what the possible origin of this might be: i) a distaste for a specific aspect of the work (e.g. the analysis part, writing, finding a site, etc), ii) a temporary loss of enthusiasm for the whole task, or iii) a serious, perhaps clinical, depression. To work on the same thesis topic for an extended period can become monotonous and repetitive. If the work is proceeding as it should, students often lapse into a sense of the thesis being too predictable. Alternatively, students suffer from the “getting nowhere syndrome”.

*Either way, the supervisor can:*

- *encourage systematic reading, working and writing by setting required tasks that proceed in a logical development.*
- *display enthusiasm about the topic. This can re-inject the student with a measure of enthusiasm as well.*
- *encourage the staff in the department to show interest in the student and enquire supportively about the work. You can perhaps gently remind your colleagues to ask your particular student about her work.*
- *ask a colleague at another university to invite a flagging student to come and do a seminar. This can be motivating, especially if the invitation appears to come “spontaneously”. (You need not always reveal the strings you pull behind the scenes!).*
- *in cases of i), put that section aside for the time being and work on something else until the student is again re-motivated.*
- *get the student to start other parts of the thesis alongside the less preferred one. One reason that students may stall at the “writing up” stage is that they have left themselves no other tasks but writing. If they had written while doing some of the other parts, then it would not be so “all or nothing” at the end.*
- *in case ii), keep in regular contact and display enthusiasm. This might help to recover the student's initial motivation.*
- *consider sending the student to a conference or organizing a Faculty seminar.*

- *put the student in contact with other students working on the same topic. These can be strategies to re-enthuse the student for the task.*
- *in case iii) help the student access professional care. Consulting Student Health could be a fruitful first step.*

## **Frustration**

As the work progresses, there are often new avenues opening up for further exploration. It is very tempting to pursue some of these, but that would mean delaying the completion of the thesis within the allotted time. It becomes important to maintain clarity about the end goal, the main research question and the procedures designed to address it. Keeping a focus and resisting becoming sidetracked can become more and more difficult as the original problem becomes more and more familiar.

*The supervisor needs to:*

- *keep the overall outline and common thread of the thesis clearly in mind.*
- *get the student to step back from the details every now and then..*
- *keep notes of the interesting avenues for potential investigation and suggest to the student that these can be revisited for possible pursuit once the thesis is safely in the hands of the examiners.*

## **A job to be finished**

One of the most pervasive emotional responses to thesis production is that of anxiety. Throughout the various stages of thesis production, anxieties about finishing it are present. Eventually, the thesis is seen as something that they “must finish”. Often towards the final stages, students long to be free from this constant nagging anxiety and tend to do the last parts in an almost matter-of-fact or routine manner.

*Here the supervisor needs to:*

- *help the student go for closure.*
- *keep a close eye on potential lapses in rigour as the student rushes to finish.*

## **Separation anxiety**

Whereas some students can't wait to get rid of the thesis, others close to the completion of the thesis suffer from separation anxiety. Often this manifests itself in the students making numerous unwarranted and insignificant editorial changes, questioning the validity of their work, and wanting to incorporate additional readings.

*Here supervisors need to:*

- *exercise their academic judgments and be firm in getting the student to go for closure if the standard of work is appropriate.*
- *draw the boundaries clearly. By definition, all research is on-going. There are always more books to read and more ideas to consider.*

- *set clear end points, in cases where the student lacks confidence in assessing when the thesis is ready for submission.*

## **Depression**

Graduate students are sometimes prone to depression (Mongrain and Blackburn, 2005). Often, depression is a “post-thesis” syndrome that sets in after the thesis has been submitted for examination and the student awaits the result. After having had the thesis dominate their lives for a number of years, usually accompanied with a frantic work period towards the end, suddenly there is nothing. The loss of the thesis routine and the anxiety while waiting for the results can lead to post-thesis blues.

*Supervisors can stress that:*

- *there is nothing the student can do at this stage about the thesis.*
- *it might be an idea to look at potential parts of the thesis that could be re-worked for publication in a journal. But guard against “filling up” the students’ time altogether, for usually there are some corrections to be made to the thesis once it comes back from the examiners and before the final copies are handed in.*

## **Closure**

Once the changes recommended by the examiners have been received, students can start actively to get closure on the thesis. Ensure that the correct procedures are followed and that the final copies are handed in before the graduation ceremony. (*See Thesis Guide, section B no 2*). The celebration of the completion at the graduation ceremony is an important public acknowledgment of the achievement and should be suitably supported by you.

*As supervisor, you need to:*

- *follow the university procedures very carefully. Not fulfilling the necessary requirements can lead to a delay in the students’ graduation and bitter disappointment.*

*Supervisors should recognize the various stages the student is going through and respond appropriately.*

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## **RECOGNIZING THE STUDENT-AT-RISK**

Supervisors should recognize their students’ various responses and adopt suitable strategies. There might also be other reasons preventing the student from completing

the thesis. You should be able to spot these sooner rather than later so that adequate counter-measures can be taken. Not all the obstacles are of an intellectual kind; they can be social or emotional in nature. (*See Appendix 7 for a list of available support services at UWC to which you might refer your student.*)

As supervisor, you need to address obstacles of an intellectual kind. An intellectual obstacle can take the form of not having the necessary skill to perform the task, not knowing what is expected, over or underestimating the task at hand, or not being proficient in academic reading and writing. In some cases delays in completion are caused by lack of meta-cognitive skills or lack of language skills as well as lack of sufficient command of scientific procedures and tools necessary for the nature of study being undertaken. These obstacles often manifest themselves in the student missing appointments, not delivering the work as agreed on, avoiding a particular section of the thesis, having no self-direction in the research undertaking and waiting for the supervisor to spell out the next step, designing too ambitious or too superficial a proposal, or delivering bits of writing full of language errors. When you recognize that the student cannot manage intellectually, you must intervene. Enrol the student for a course that will develop the skills needed, spell out each task, and assess honestly whether there is potential to continue.

Some theses are structured in such a way that the “writing up” part comes at the end. Most students radically underestimate the time and effort this stage demands. Having surveyed the field, collected the data, analyzed the findings, students may think that the “writing up” is going to be a merely technical undertaking, fairly easily accomplished. Not so. Writing up usually demands the most concentrated effort of the whole thesis production. And it is therefore at this stage that students are at risk. Students may struggle with this stage for a number of reasons: i) they may feel that all the “real” work has been done and there may be little motivation left to go and “revisit” the work again. Moreover, at this stage students often have ambivalent feelings about the whole project and may be tempted to “run away” from it all, now that the data is actually there for others to see. Another reason for students struggling with this phase is that ii) unless everything has gone remarkably smoothly (it overwhelmingly doesn’t!), students will have to make some major adjustments in their arguments or re-interpret some of the findings and re-visit the presentation of the data. This calls for academic competence and professional discipline. And lastly, students at this stage often struggle because iii) most of them have never written anything as long as a thesis before and persevering through the task takes considerable effort.

***Supervisors need to:***

- be alert to signs of the student not coping. This is usually possible only if there are regular meetings with the student and a record is kept of the student’s progress.

- help the student find a suitable course to follow, in cases where the student lacks a particular research skill (e.g. word processing, statistical analysis, research design, etc).
- spell out very clearly the parameters of a thesis, or what is required for a “critical” discussion. Reference to past theses can be of help.
- help the student to make an appointment with the Writing Consultant at the Writing Centre or, in extreme cases, contract in professional proofreaders. (The illwimi Centre on campus offers such a service at a nominal fee.) *See also Appendix 5 on tips for thesis writing.*

Obstacles to thesis completion are not always of an intellectual kind. Sometimes there are obstacles in the social environment of the student. These could include problems such as poverty, poor working habits, not being able to juggle thesis work with family commitments and job demands, or because students take on a new job before the thesis is completed.

### **Poverty**

Many research students, especially full-time ones, try to cope with severe lack of finances. Many live in poor quality housing with inadequate food and clothing, and cannot afford to buy PCs and set up a proper workstation at home. There are at least three consequences: i) a poor diet is likely to make the student tired, sickly and lethargic; ii) inadequate heat, light and facilities make work at home difficult; iii) time can be taken up by many hours spent on low paid, possibly unpleasant, work. All these problems are compounded if the student has dependent children and/or a dependent partner, and even worse if the student is away from home with no family support systems. Possible solutions you as supervisor can offer the student vary. It is, however, important to recognize that there is a problem and that the student will need to earn, rather than to ignore it.

*At its simplest, you might think of:*

- *inviting the student for a square meal every now and then, meeting in a snack bar, or having some biscuits at hand in your office when you meet.*
- *securing a part-time job for the student in the department, (or via Workstudy) or finding some funding from a research project.*
- *helping the student fill in and submit an application for funding to the NRF, MRC or any of the national student bursary/ grant schemes.*
- *finding out whether there are any old PCs for sale on campus (many students need only word processing facilities) or whether it is possible for students to borrow equipment like tape recorders. Getting the proper equipment, either owning it or borrowing it for the duration, can speed up completion considerably.*

## **Poor or inappropriate working habits**

Even where students do have good physical conditions, they may be flagging because they are relying on academic work habits that may have been appropriate for undergraduate studies with fixed deadlines, but which are not suitable for a 3 year stretch of self-directed research. If students hand in work that is poorly presented, if deadlines are missed, or no apparent progress is being made, then it might be an idea to take honest stock with the student about the work habits employed. Students need to experiment and to discover what works best for them. They need to maximize creating conducive conditions for work.

*As supervisor, you might:*

- *relate to the student your own experiments on finding what works for you (students often think that supervisors don't have similar problems!). Sharing these with your student might be quite liberating and allow the student to think afresh about developing particular habits or creating particular conditions.*
- *encourage your students to think about conditions that work best for them: times at which they are most, their location, their posture, silence versus noise, being alone versus being in company, pen and paper versus the keyboard, the kitchen table versus the desk or armchair, home versus the office or other space.*

## **Juggling thesis work and other commitments**

Many post-graduate students, older than the average undergraduate student, have family commitments, dependents, and are often working full-time as well. It becomes extremely difficult to juggle all these responsibilities. One or more usually suffer, with the student feeling increasingly guilty or anxious.

Mario Smith (2000:245-247) lists the following main reasons that students gave for obstacles in completing their theses. These are:

## **Not wanting the Master's or PhD**

As Smith points out, this may seem very strange, given the energy and commitment invested in the project. However, to complete the degree requires dedication, sacrifice (in terms of time and other involvements) and a strong desire that carries the student through the bad patches. (There is the story of the student from a poor background who was the first person of his family to go to university. On the day he registered for his Master's, his grandmother used all her savings to buy an expensive graduation gown which she hung behind the door and constantly referred to the proud day that her grandson would be able to wear it!). There are, however, many students, especially PhDs, who don't have the commitment or desire to see the project through. They registered for it mainly as a career change, but then found that it was not what they wanted after all.

### **Not understanding the nature of a thesis by overestimating what is required**

Very often students think that their thesis needs to solve the problem once and for all, will be a best seller, or will revolutionize policy. Such ambitions are ill-placed. Theses, especially at Master's level, are modest pieces of work, humble in their contribution to the field. (I often remind students that the people who will ultimately read the thesis - as is - are likely to be only themselves, their supervisor, their examiners and their mother!)

### **Not understanding the nature of the thesis by underestimating what is required**

What is meant by "research" and "academic rigour" entails much more than mere description or repetition of popular claims. It demands analysis, explanation, disciplined thinking and writing, commitment and effort. Especially students who come back to university after many years of working in the "real world" might find the academic requirements and conventions difficult to cope with.

### **Not having a supervisor who knows what is required**

Inadequate supervision is often cited as a reason why students drop out of their studies. Penalties for dropping out are much greater for the student than for the supervisor and it is often up to the determined student to insist on adequate supervision. Clarifying the ground rules at the start of the supervision process can eliminate such problems later on.

### **Losing contact with the supervisor**

Thesis work is a reciprocal process, requiring input from both parties. It is therefore important to set up a series of scheduled meetings right at the beginning of the process so that a systematic routine is established and sustained.

### **Students taking on a new job before finishing**

A new job requires a lot of attention and input, making it difficult for the student to juggle all the commitments at the same time. Also, if the studies have been taken mainly for job-related reasons such as promotion, a new job may undermine the very motivation for continuing with the thesis.

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## ***PROGRESS REPORTS***

Some Faculties require progress reports. In the Arts Faculty, students must submit a progress report to the supervisor at the end of the first and third quarter of each academic year. The report should be at least one page in length and should focus

specifically on progress during the past semester. The supervisor submits this report, together with comments, to the Arts Higher Degree Faculty.

In cases where students have exceeded the maximum years for registration, an extension for registration may be applied for. A letter motivating for an extension must be tabled at the Faculty Higher Degrees committee who will forward it to SHD. Where students have not made satisfactory progress, further registration may be refused. Also, where a student has exceeded the maximum period of registration (see rules below), further registration may be refused. The supervisor, on the basis of the student's progress reports (or lack thereof), must motivate why the student should not be allowed to register for the subsequent year. Supervisors should keep a copy of the signed contract, and keep a record of meetings and of work done, or not done, in order to substantiate the refusal to re-register. This is particularly important for cases where the student might contest the decision.

A number of Faculties have registered a Post-graduate Diploma with SAQA. This enables students to gain a Diploma after successful completion of only the Master's coursework component of the degree. Post-graduate Diploma students don't complete the minithesis. It is possible for this qualification to be conferred retrospectively, i.e. students who have dropped out of the system may apply to UWC to have their completed coursework recognized for the post-graduate Diploma. This option is not a viable option currently. Please check with the Quality Assurance office at UWC for the current status of this option.

See Rules A19.3 and A21 for periods of completion of Master's and Doctoral studies. These rules should be read in conjunction with the respective guidelines already in existence at each Faculty.

**Research Master's degree (full thesis) and Coursework Master's degree (minithesis):**

Full-time: 2 years  
Part-time: 3 years

**Career-orientated (2 yrs minimum)**

Full-time 3 years  
Part-time 4 years

**Career-orientated (3 yrs minimum):**

Full-time 4 years  
Part-time 5 years

**Doctoral thesis:**

A degree cannot be conferred unless the student has been enrolled for at least two years. The thesis must be completed within 5 years (full-time and part-time).

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## 6 DEVELOPING ACADEMIC DISCERNMENT

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As the supervisor, you need to guide your student to develop the academic equivalent of “good taste”. The student has to learn, over the three years or so, to judge his or her own work by standards appropriate to post-graduate work and shared by the community of scholars in the specific subject field. This is not a “technical” skill like proper referencing or experiment design. Instead, it is something much more implicit and indeterminate. Learning to “judge” research in the subject field is something that develops over many years through active engagement with participants of that academic community. Students just starting out in their studies as well as new supervisors are often unsure about their own abilities to judge the work, especially whether it is “good enough” to be submitted for examination.

*New supervisors may develop their own confidence through:*

- co-supervision with a more experienced colleague.
- being appointed as an internal examiner of a thesis (with clear criteria of assessment).
- becoming part of a research project .
- working with colleagues on joint publications.
- discussion of the supervised student’s work with colleagues.
- inviting collegial feedback on the student’s seminar presentation.
- reading previous theses and examiners’ reports.
- being a co-referee of journal articles.
- co-presenting papers at conferences.
- volunteering to write book reviews.

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### **ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**

One of the enriching experience of being a post-graduate student is feeling that one is part of an academic community, a body of scholars. During your students’ period of study, you should show them, as explicitly as possible, how the scholarly community exercises its judgments. Involving your students in academic activities helps to motivate and sustain the thesis production. It can also encourage students to think about pursuing an academic career. (Vibrant universities need up and coming scholars in the field to open up and continue areas of exploration.)

Involving students in the department's and the university's academic life is stimulating for them. You can also encourage students to get involved in the broader academic community. Most professional societies or disciplinary associations have special membership rates for students. Help your student join a society, discuss articles in the journal that usually comes with membership, and encourage your student to submit an abstract for a presentation at the society's conference. Attending a conference not only gives the student a deadline by which to produce a presentable text, but also opens up space for fruitful feedback on the presented paper, which can be incorporated into the thesis. Moreover, conferences are ideal opportunities for networking. Encourage your student to get people's email and to set up correspondence with them.

***Supervisors should:***

- share with their students the kinds of academic activities they are involved in: conference papers and book reviews.
- discuss with them university criteria for theses or a journal 's "instructions to authors".
- invite students to meet with visiting scholars in the department.
- encourage students to attend (and participate in) staff seminars.
- offer to co-present a paper with their student at a conference.
- set up "peer review" sessions wherein students read and comment on each other's work in progress.
- involve students in tutoring students in the department.
- help students to join professional associations (and to subscribe to the association's journal).
- encourage students to network with other scholars (via email).

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***DEVELOPING A RESEARCH CULTURE***

The above moves help your student to become part of an academic community, but it is important that the department and university itself develops a research culture. This is, of course, one of the pillars on which the university stands and, as such, has an institutional commitment to promote research. Post-graduate students are drawn to institutions that have a strong research culture in the particular field they are interested in pursuing. Developing this then encourages more post-graduate students to enrol, and the more post-graduate students enrol, the stronger the research culture!

***Ways in which you as an individual might contribute to the development of a research culture:***

- Spend time and energy setting up and sustaining a staff seminar programme.
- Organize student conferences in the department, Faculty or university.

- Present papers at conferences and share these with your colleagues.
  - Re-work conference papers and submit these to journals.
  - Start an “in-house” journal in the department or Faculty. Invite post-graduate student contributions.
  - Make yourself available to serve on a journal’s editorial board.
  - Register a research project (with the NRF, MTC or internally with UWC).
  - Apply for other research funds available.
  - Set up your own “research schedule”. Fence off time specifically for reading, writing and “researching”.
  - “Advertise” your research through radio interviews or newspaper articles.
  - Develop your department’s website, listing the various research activities and publications of each member, including Master’s and Doctoral students.
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## 7 THE END IN SIGHT

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As mentioned earlier, the last stages of the thesis writing are often the most demanding and difficult for the student. Here your support, encouragement and judgment of when “enough is enough” is crucial. Some of the above sections have dealt with this. (*See especially section 5.*)

### **ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS**

Apart from being responsible for seeing to the academic production of the thesis, you are also responsible as supervisor for a number of administrative tasks. There are heartrending tales of students who when ready to submit their theses, discovered that there were problems with their registration, or the appointment of examiners, or missed submission deadlines. It is your responsibility as supervisor to be familiar with the various administrative requirements of thesis production and examination. Herewith a step-by-step list of the administrative tasks you need to do:

- 1 **Appointment of supervisor - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**  
Different Faculties have different stages at which supervisors are appointed. Some appoint supervisors *before* a proposal is submitted so that supervisors are able to work with students in developing a proper proposal; other Faculties appoint supervisors only *after* the proposal has been submitted. Whenever the supervisor is appointed, a letter must be tabled at the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, recommending the appointment of the designated supervisor. This letter should have the student’s name, student number, degree, department/programme and name of recommended supervisor. This letter will be forwarded to SHD and, if accepted, will then have the details entered in the

database. Any change of supervisor or appointment of co-supervisor needs a letter to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, forwarded to SHD, recommending the change.

2 **Registration of thesis title - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**

Once a student's proposal has been accepted, the supervisor must write a letter to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, forwarded to SHD, registering the title of the student's thesis (including 10 key words/phrases). At present the rules read that Master's minithesis/ thesis titles are registered for a maximum period of 3 years. There is no general university rule specifying the maximum number of years for a Doctoral thesis title. Should the title of the thesis change, you need to write a letter to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, recommending the new title (and new key words if necessary). Note the old title and clearly indicate the new one. All recommendations need to be ratified by SHD. An example of a thesis title form is included on the CD under the 'Science' folder.

3 **Progress reports and annual re-registration of student - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**

Some Faculties (e.g. Arts) require students to submit progress reports to their supervisors after the *first* and *third* terms. Supervisors must table these reports and their own comments on the student's progress to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee at the end of the first and third terms.

A General University rule for a Master's degree (A 19.2.1.c) states that: "In each successive year registration shall be subject to the recommendation of the supervisor and the departmental chairperson concerned. Such registration may be refused in any subsequent year of study on grounds of unsatisfactory progress." In all Faculties, therefore, supervisors must table a letter at the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, recommending their student's re-registration or the termination of their student's registration for the subsequent year.

There are no general university rules pertaining to progress reports of Doctoral students, but most Faculties follow the same procedure here as they do for Master's students.

Failure to do this can result in the student not being registered and then not being able to submit the thesis for examination.

*Students must re-register at the beginning of every year of their study.* (Some students and supervisors are under the impression that once a student has registered, s/he need not re-register again.)

4 **Checking that the student is registered - liaison with Faculty Officer**

There is no clarity about who checks whether the student is in fact registered. Some departments discover that they are supervising students who don't

appear on their task allocations, and for whom the department then doesn't get subsidy. A way of tightening up on this is for the Faculty Officer to send to each Head of Department a list of students registered in that department, and to ask that each supervisor checks that their students appear on that list.

5 **Extension (or suspension) of registration - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**

Some students do not finish within the allotted time. For Master's it is 3 years; for a Doctoral there is no stipulated period, but a maximum of 5 years operates in the Arts Faculty. General University rules allow Master's students to register beyond their allotted time (Rule A 19.3.1 b and 19.3.2.b) by permission. "Extensions may be granted by Senate only in exceptional cases on submission of a motivated application by the student and a recommendation of the supervisor and departmental chairperson concerned." Supervisors who want to recommend that a student be allowed to re-register beyond the maximum time must table a letter to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, forwarded to SHD, with the student's motivation.

6 **Notification of intention to submit – letter to Supervisor/ Department**

A student has to submit a letter to the supervisor informing her/him of his/her intention to submit the thesis for examination. If the student wishes to graduate in March, the letter of intention must be submitted to the supervisor by **15 October** and the copies of the thesis must be submitted for examination by 15 November. If the student wishes to graduate in September, the letter of intention must be submitted to the supervisor by **15 April** and the copies of the thesis handed in for examination by 15 May.

7 **Appointment of examiners - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**  
(See Rules A 19.6 and A22.1 of the General Rules)

The University Rule is that for a *Master's* minithesis/ thesis, **two** examiners are appointed, of whom one must be independent (i.e. have had nothing to do with the thesis), and of whom at least one is external (i.e. not working at UWC for at least 7 years). This means that: the supervisor is no longer able to examine the thesis of his/her own student (see 2009 UWC Calendar on the CD pages 92 -94). An additional external examiner is required if the student is a UWC staff member.

For a *Doctoral* thesis **three** examiners are appointed, of whom one can be an internal independent person and two must be external. The supervisor is not allowed to examine the work of his/her own student and cannot therefore be an examiner. If the student is a UWC staff member no additional examiners need to be appointed (i.e. 3 suffice).

When your student is close to submitting for examination, identify suitable examiners, approach them informally and ask whether they would be willing

that you recommend their appointment to SHD. Table a letter to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee **at least one month before the thesis is to be submitted**, forwarded to SHD, stipulating the student's name, student number, registered thesis title, degree, department/ programme, supervisor and the names, titles, institutional affiliations (department and university) of each recommended examiner. Where an examiner has not examined a UWC thesis before, include a short CV of the examiner. For Doctoral theses in particular, scholars with an international reputation should be appointed. If accepted by SHD, the Exams Office will send a formal letter of invitation to the examiner. See "Appointment of Examiners" form on the CD under the "Science" folder.

8 **Submission of thesis - letter to Exams Office**

If students aim to graduate in March, the required number of copies of the thesis must be submitted to the Exams Office by 15 November. For September graduation, the submission date is 15 May. You as supervisor must write a letter addressed to the Exams Office, giving approval for the thesis to be submitted. Note in the letter the student's name, thesis title, and supervisor. If you also note the names of the approved examiners, ensure that the student does not see who they are. Examiners' names should remain confidential at this stage.

9 **Examiners' reports - letter to Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**

Examiners have 4 weeks to examine a Master's thesis and 6 weeks for a Doctoral thesis. (*See Appendix 1 for Guidelines for Examiners.*) Examiners may confer with you the supervisor, but each examiner must come to an independent assessment. All examiners' reports are sent to Exams Office which forwards the reports to the supervisor. As the supervisor you (or your Head of Department) need to make a recommendation based on all examiners' reports. Table the letter with the full examiners' reports to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, who will forward it to SHD. In the case of a Master's full thesis, clearly indicate the mark awarded by each examiner and the recommended overall mark for the degree. In the case of a Master's degree by coursework and minithesis, indicate full completion of the coursework and the overall coursework mark, the marks awarded by each examiner of the minithesis and the overall recommended minithesis mark, as well as the recommended overall mark for the degree (usually a 50-50 average of the coursework and minithesis marks). *Under no circumstances may supervisors advise their students of the outcome until the reports have been accepted by SHD.*

10 **Final corrections - letter to Exams Office**

In almost all cases, examiners recommend that various minor changes be effected before the final copies are submitted. After the reports have been

accepted by SHD, meet with your student, and discuss the list of recommended changes that need to be effected. You may want to give copies of the examiners' reports to the student provided the examiner has agreed to this. As the supervisor, you need to check that the corrections have indeed been done and then you must write a letter to Exams Office, stating that you are satisfied that the recommended changes have been made. The student must have this letter when submitting the final copies to Exams Office. *The student cannot graduate unless Exams Office has received the final copies.*

#### 11. **Graduation - citation to Exams Office**

A draft graduation list is sent to all Faculties. Usually Faculty Officers ensure that all graduates' names, details, titles and names of supervisors are included and correct. However, you might like to double check with the Faculty Officer that your student (and your name) are included and correct.

If your Doctoral student is graduating, you need to write a short citation of 150 words, outlining the student's contribution to the field. Copies of this citation must be sent to the Exams Office in electronic form in good time before the ceremony.

And finally, give yourself and the student a well-deserved pat on the back.

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### ***APPOINTMENT OF EXAMINERS***

See also General Rules 19.6 for Master's students and A 22.1 for Doctoral students.

#### **Rule B12 – Examination Procedures. M and D students**

- 1.3 Supervisors are normally appointed as examiners for the theses or minitheses they supervise.
- 1.4 Two examiners must be appointed for a Master's thesis or minithesis. One of these must not have been involved in the thesis supervision process and at least one must be an external examiner\* (that is, not an employee of UWC). In the case of students who are also staff members, an additional external is needed so that at least two of the examiners must be external examiners. In addition, unless exceptional circumstances demand otherwise, at least one of the examiners must be an employee of UWC.
- 1.5 For a Doctoral thesis, three examiners must be appointed. Of these, one must be independent of the thesis supervision process, and at least two must be external examiners\*. In addition, unless exceptional circumstances demand otherwise, at least one of the examiners must be an employee of UWC

\* SHD interprets an external examiner as one who has not been in the employ of UWC or has not graduated from UWC within the last seven years.

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## ***PUBLICATION RULES***

*(See General Rules A 19.7.3).* For further details consult the Dean of Research.

Students must cede copyright of the thesis to UWC (See Rule A 19.7.3)

If students want to publish their thesis or parts thereof, permission must be obtained from UWC. Published works must adhere to the necessary conditions as set out in Rule 19.7.3.1.

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### ***SOME REMINDERS:***

- Students must re-register at the beginning of every year of study. Students who submit their thesis examination copies before or on 15 November, need not re-register for the subsequent year. Students submitting after this date, must re-register.
- Students who have outstanding fees cannot graduate. Speak to Student Credit Management well in advance should financial problems crop up.
- Students who have not submitted their final, corrected copies of the thesis (two hardcopies), proof of payment for binding, , accompanied by a letter from the supervisor and a CD containing the soft copy of the thesis cannot graduate.
- Students who publish their thesis, or parts thereof, must obtain copyright permission from the university.

## APPENDIX 1

*(Copies of the actual documentation sent to examiners)*

### UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

<b>INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF MASTER'S AND DOCTORAL THESES</b>
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*Please consult Annexure A for information on Master's degrees by coursework and minithesis, Master's degrees by full thesis and Doctoral theses.*

#### 1. Time considerations

Please forward the examiner's form together with your report to the Registrar, Attention: Mr M Appany, University of the Western Cape, Private Bag X 17, Bellville, 7535, preferably within *four* weeks of the date of your confirmation of receipt for Master's theses and within *six* weeks for Doctoral theses. (The deadline for the March graduation is 25 January and for the September graduation 25 July.)

#### 2. Your report

We would value a full report of your critical judgment on the thesis. Please also complete the enclosed examiner's form.

2.1 In reporting on the thesis you are asked to respond to the following and to make any additional comments you think relevant:

- Is the scope of the thesis clearly defined?
- Is the nature of the topic adequately interpreted?
- Is there evidence of sufficient engagement with the relevant literature?
- Is sufficient command of appropriate techniques of research and analysis demonstrated?
- Is the thesis well-structured and coherently argued?
- Does the thesis reveal a command of the formal conventions of scholarship (such as referencing and bibliography)?
- Has the candidate paid adequate attention to linguistic and formal features of presentation such as grammar, style and layout?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis?
- Is the thesis successfully proved or pursued?
- In the case of a Master's thesis, do you think that the candidate should be encouraged to proceed to Doctoral study?
- Do you judge that the thesis, in whole or in part, is suitable for publication? If so, we would be grateful for your opinion on changes which might be necessary before it was presented for publication.

- 2.2 In reporting on a Doctoral thesis, you are asked to comment in addition on the following:
- Does the thesis show proof of original work?
  - Is it a distinct contribution to knowledge of and insight into the subject?
- 3 Before making one of the recommendations listed on the Examiner’s Form, examiners may consult with the supervisor and with one another, but the object of such consultation should be clarification, not reaching consensus. Each examiner should present an independent assessment. Confidentiality is important and on no account may examiners inform the candidate of the result prior to the decision of the UWC Senate Higher Degrees committee.
- 4 We shall notify you of the final result.

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

<b>THESIS AND MINITHESIS EXAMINER’S FORM</b>
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*Please read the “Information and Guidelines for Examiners of Master’s and Doctoral Theses”. We ask that you please complete this form and attach a full report.*

Candidate’s name:.....

Type of thesis (please tick one):

Master’s minithesis	Master’s full thesis	Doctoral thesis
------------------------	-------------------------	--------------------

Please circle ONE of the following recommendations:

- 1 The thesis as it stands provides adequate evidence for passing the candidate.
- 2 Subject to minor corrections being effected as specified in an appendix to my report, the thesis provides adequate evidence for passing the candidate. The corrections must be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor..
- 3 The thesis in its present form does not provide adequate evidence for passing the candidate and should be re-worked substantially as specified in my report. It should then be re-submitted for examination.
- 4 The thesis does not provide adequate evidence for passing the candidate.

5 **For a Master’s minithesis or Master’s full thesis, please indicate a percentage mark.**

(A distinction or *cum laude* mark is 75% or above; a pass mark is 50% or above.)

May a copy of your report be made available to the candidate?

Yes            No

If so, may your name be divulged to the candidate?

Yes            No

Signature of examiner:.....

Date.....

Name of examiner (Please print).....

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**

**ANNEXURE A**

The various Master’s and Doctoral degrees have different structures and weightings. Please read Annexure A before filling in the Examiner’s Form and writing your report.

- 1            Usually candidates are required to submit their theses for examination after obtaining approval from their supervisors. However, students have the right to submit their theses for examination despite having been advised by their supervisors not to do so.
- 2            Theses are sent to at least three examiners of whom at least two are independent (have not been involved with the supervision in any way) and at least one is external (not an employee of UWC). Examiners will appreciate that they may differ in important respects in their recommendations and that these may need to be reconciled. Based on the examiners’ reports, the supervisor or Head of Department is asked to make a recommendation via the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee to the Senate Higher Degrees Committee (SHD). If the examiners make conflicting recommendations, the supervisor or

Head is asked to consult with examiners to see whether agreement can be reached. If no agreement can be reached, the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee may recommend to the SHD that a further examiner be appointed by the SHD. The SHD considers all the examiners' reports and the recommendations of the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee, but is then free to make its own decisions.

- 3 After the reports have been tabled, it is standard procedure to make copies of the reports or extracts thereof available to the candidate, unless examiners make a request to the contrary.
- 4 Each examiner may keep their examination copy of the thesis.
- 5 External examiners will be paid an honorarium and will be re-imbursed for expenses on completion of the examining.

### **Master's minithesis**

- A candidate submitting a Master's minithesis, has usually completed the coursework part of the degree prior to submitting the minithesis.
- The minithesis is therefore only *one* requirement of the coursework Master's degree.
- A minithesis comprises between 7000 - 20 000 words and is limited in scope.

### **Master's full thesis**

- A Master's degree by full thesis usually has no other components. However, an additional examination may be recommended
- A full Master's thesis should range between 20 000 - 45 000 words.
- The scope and depth of a Master's full thesis is more extensive than that of a Master's minithesis.

### **Interpretation of percentage marks for Master's minitheses/theses:**

85% and over

A truly outstanding distinction: masterly coverage demonstrating advanced levels of understanding, originality and analysis or research (theoretically and/or empirically) over and above that required for other distinction categories below. Worthy of publication as is.

80 - 85

A strong distinction without reservations: authoritative coverage of relevant material as well as background literature and/or related issues; outstanding presentation in terms of argument, organization, originality and style.

Demonstrates full understanding of subject matter and at most minor typographical corrections required.

75 - 79

Merits distinction though with some reservations: a more than competent presentation with good organization and sound critical arguments. Evidence of originality / clear insight / solid depth of understanding. Some minor omissions and / or corrections required.

70 – 74

Does not merit a distinction, but there is evidence of some originality and flair. The substantive part of the work is competently covered, well organized and lucidly argued. There are omissions or areas where revisions would improve the work.

60 - 69

Solidly executed, adequate organization, competent methodology and conclusions adequately drawn. Very little originality, if any, but an adequate overall performance. May require some minor revisions.

50 - 59

No originality, but a pedestrian, albeit competent, review of the literature, a basic understanding of the significance of the issue discussed, and a fairly competent methodology. There may be problems of organization and expression, of layout and typographical errors, but the work exhibits the main features of academic work sufficiently to pass. Some major revisions may be required.

49 and less

The work is clearly not adequate. It exhibits such a level of disorganization and incoherence as to be termed incompetent. The work fails to demonstrate familiarity with basic academic conventions of presentation and organization. A failing mark indicates that it clearly does not pass in its present form, but if re-worked substantially and re-submitted it may be brought into a passworthy form.

### **Doctoral theses**

- Unless stated otherwise, the Doctoral thesis comprises the degree. However, an additional examination may be recommended.
- The content of a Doctoral thesis is defined as original work and should make a distinct contribution to knowledge of and insight into the subject.

## APPENDIX 2

### PERCEIVED RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS.

#### ROLE PERCEPTION RATING SCALE FOR THE SUPERVISION PROCESS

Read each pair of statements and circle the number on the scale that most closely reflects your position. For example, if you believe strongly that supervisors should select the research topic, you'd circle scale (1) for the first statement.

<b>Topic/course of study</b>	<b>Scale</b>	
1. It is the supervisor's responsibility to choose a promising topic	1 2 3 4 5	It is a student's responsibility to select a promising topic
2. In the end, it is up to the supervisor to decide which theoretical frame of reference is most appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	A student has the right to choose a theoretical standpoint even if it conflicts with that of the supervisor
3. A supervisor should direct a student in the development of an appropriate programme of research and study	1 2 3 4 5	A student should be able to work out a schedule and research programme appropriate to his/her needs
4. A supervisor should ensure that a student has access to all necessary facilities	1 2 3 4 5	Ultimately, a student must find the necessary facilities to complete the research
<b>Contact/involvement</b>		
5. Staff-student relationships are purely professional and personal relationships should not develop	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful supervision
6. A supervisor should initiate frequent meetings with a student	1 2 3 4 5	A student should initiate meetings
7. A supervisor should check constantly that a student is on track and working consistently	1 2 3 4 5	The student should have the opportunity to find his/her own way without having to account for how the time was spent
8. A supervisor should terminate the registration if s/he thinks that the student will not succeed	1 2 3 4 5	A supervisor should support the student regardless of his/her opinion of a student's capabilities
9. A supervisor should ensure that the thesis is finished not much later than the minimum period	1 2 3 4 5	As long as the student works steadily s/he can take as long as necessary

10. A supervisor has direct responsibility for the methodology and content of the thesis	1 2 3 4 5	A student has total responsibility for ensuring that the methodology and content are appropriate to the discipline
11. A supervisor should assist in the actual writing of the thesis if the student has difficulties and should ensure that the presentation is flawless	1 2 3 4 5	A student must take full responsibility for the presentation of the thesis, including grammar and spelling
12. A supervisor should insist on seeing drafts of every section of the thesis in order to review them in a timely fashion	1 2 3 4 5	It is up to the student to ask for constructive criticism from a supervisor

(After Ingrid Moses, Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Technology, Sydney. And with thanks to Jan Whittle for her suggestions)

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## LIST OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS

(Adapted from a checklist of the Centre of Higher and Adult Education,  
University of Stellenbosch)

### ROLES AND REPONSIBILITY OF SUPERVISORS:

1. **Expert scholar in the particular field**  
Suitably qualified; in command of specialist and related fields; indicate areas in need of research; assist with delimiting the field; allow latitude for student to develop
2. **Selector of students**  
Assess previous work of student; give preparatory work to student; learn more about the student; allow student to continue if there is a reasonable expectation of success.
3. **Research methodologist**  
Give guidance on theory and method; inform student about epistemological frameworks; give proper guidance on specific research methods and techniques.
4. **Provider of infrastructure**  
Provide laboratories and computer facilities where available; provide access to secondary sources; inform student about available support services; create

a safe working environment; ensure that ethical clearance and property rights are covered.

- 5. Providing exposure to leading researchers**  
Interact with contemporary researchers; give guidance to student on contact with scholarly groups (Associations); create opportunities for student to participate in work of the department where appropriate.
- 6. Available for consultation and contact**  
Agree on structure, venue, time and agenda of contact sessions; ensure that commitments are met; assess the student regarding “cue consciousness”; monitor progress within the context of the research plan.
- 7. Discussion partner**  
Stimulate thinking; provide opportunities to discuss their work with peers and other researchers.
- 8. Constructive criticizer (giver of feedback)**  
Give timely and relevant feedback; play devil’s advocate; be honest and straightforward; ensure that student is made aware of inadequate progress.
- 9. Standard setter**  
Give appropriate and timely advice on content, style and presentation requirements; identify degree and other administrative requirements; identify research skills and techniques that will be required; advise on applicable governmental and institutional guidelines.
- 10. Manager of the process**  
Keep written records of contacts, consultations and discussions; ensure that responsibility of co-supervision is understood; ensure that an “acting supervisor” is available during absence of the supervisor.
- 11. Psychological/social role**  
Be sensitive to cultural differences; provide encouragement.
- 12. Editor and publisher**  
Clarify expectations about writing; reach agreement concerning authorship and joint publication; ensure awareness of requirements regarding property rights; prevent plagiarism.
- 13. Quality assurer**  
Ensure the suitability and availability of examiners; certify whether the work is acceptable for examination.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS:**

- 1. Participatory role**  
Ensure an effective working relationship with supervisor and other students; become a participant in a professional network; participate in course and departmental activities.
- 2. Consultation/contact/communication**  
Ensure that a written contract is signed; attend regular meetings and show evidence of progress; assist with the record keeping of meetings; draw

attention to difficulties experienced; keep in touch with your supervisor and group.

**3. Management of the process**

Stick to goals, deadlines and time limits; work out a sufficient and appropriate line allocation; ensure sufficient focused writing time; see that all administrative requirements are met; give timely notification of intention to submit; carry sole responsibility for the content, style, presentation and production of thesis; undertake required coursework where applicable.

**4. Ethics, legal and financial requirements**

. Know what the legislative and administrative requirements; contribute to the safe working environment; ensure that tuition fees and obligations to funders/ sponsors are met; tell the truth about work done and not done.

**5. Evaluation, examination and follow-up**

Demonstrate appropriate level of knowledge and competence; respond to supervisor's feedback and instructions; ensure compliance with assessment criteria; make necessary adjustments after examination.

**6. Publications**

Explore inventions, patents forthcoming from the project; aim for a joint publication with the supervisor in an accredited journal.



**ON THE BASIS OF THE CLARIFICATION OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, A WRITTEN CONTRACT SHOULD BE SIGNED BY BOTH PARTIES.**

**EXAMPLE OF A CONTRACT**

**Agreement between  
(name of student):  
and  
(name of supervisor):**

**Regarding post-graduate research for the degree of:  
In the Faculty of :**

**Signed at:  
On this day of:**

**Student's signature**

**Supervisor's signature:**

1. The candidate has correctly completed an application form and paid the required fees for admission to the programme.
2. The research project will be completed within the time frames allowed for post-graduate study. The candidate will supply necessary progress reports at the required times.
3. Unless otherwise arranged, there will be fixed monthly meetings between candidate and supervisor. More frequent appointments may be made by the candidate as the need arises. These meetings will be arranged by the candidate (the onus is on the candidate to make the appointment).
4. The candidate undertakes to follow the agreed research agenda and to do the specific tasks set by the supervisor.
5. The candidate will ensure that all submitted work is written in an acceptable standard of English (or Afrikaans) and that it has been properly proofread. Written work to be submitted in printed form with ample spacing.
6. The candidate understands what the consequences of plagiarism and fraud are and agrees to ensure that this is prevented at all times.
7. The student undertakes that all research will be ethically conducted.
8. All work submitted by the candidate will be returned within a reasonable time (maximum turnover of one month) by the supervisor, accompanied by written comments on the manuscript.
9. The candidate will strive to prepare an appropriate paper for presentation at a conference.
10. As the work nears completion, the candidate will submit a complete draft of the manuscript. The supervisor reserves the right to suggest changes, even major ones at this stage as it is the first opportunity s/he will have had to develop a total perspective of the thesis.
11. The candidate and supervisor ensure that all administrative requirements have been met and guidelines have been followed.
12. The candidate strives to publish a joint article with the supervisor in an accredited journal.
13. The intellectual property rights of the outcome of the research will be determined by the University policy.

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(Adapted from contract issued by Centre for Higher and Adult Education, University of Stellenbosch)

## APPENDIX 3

### NOTES ON GAINING AND ORGANIZING ACCESS

Getting access to do your research can be time consuming, needs care, must be discussed with your supervisor and must be documented. It should be written up as you go along.

#### *Basic points to bear in mind:*

- 1 Does your study need to go to an ethics committee or into any bureaucracy? This needs *checking out* - you need to discover what the rules are, and what procedures have to be followed.  
*Then* you need to allow time to go through such hoops.  
*And* you need to discuss with your supervisor how to present yourself to that bureaucracy.
- 2 Who are the “gatekeepers” for your research? Ask around to see if particular named people will make the decisions, and see if anyone you already know has connections to them. If someone in the department was at school with the gatekeepers, or your old head teacher knows them, or the gatekeeper’s spouse was in the same soccer team as your supervisor’s cousin ... use the network.
- 3 Think carefully about how letters are written. Should they be hand-written or word-processed? From home or from the university? (Make sure there are no spelling mistakes!) How much should you say about your project in the initial letter?
- 4 If you are going to *meet* a gatekeeper, think carefully about how you dress for it. Your self-presentation *could* lose you the access.
- 5 Don’t make promises you can’t/won’t keep.
- 6 Remember that access is a process, not a single event.
- 7 Keep a diary of the process; keep copies of all documents.
- 8 Write up the access negotiations as you go along while they are fresh.

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Taken from Delamonte et al (1997:47)

## APPENDIX 4

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “CRITICAL READING, THINKING AND WRITING”?

How often have you come across the following instruction: “Critically discuss....”? It is a phrase used often, but not always with a clear understanding of what it means to discuss something critically. More often than not, our initial response to such an instruction is to think that we must find fault, or highlight the weakness in the argument, or reject certain claims. Although this might at times be part of a critical discussion, it is by no means the *only* or even *most appropriate* way to engage with the claims expressed.

#### What critical reasoning is not

- it is not the same as disagreement
- it does not aim to embarrass, humiliate or seek to dominate
- it does not mean nitpicking

So, what does it mean to read, or think or write critically? The following are some pointers to help you both in your reading of others’ texts as well as in constructing your own writing for assignments and your minithesis.

I’ve noted that critical reasoning (which incorporates critical reading, thinking and writing) is *not* merely rejecting or finding fault with someone’s argument or position. Rather, it is a *rational reflection on one’s own and other’s ideas in order to get a clearer understanding of an issue*. The main things to remember when engaged in critical reasoning is that:

1. you must first have a clear understanding of *what* the author is saying (see the section below on “analysis”) before
2. you can critically engage with the ideas expressed.

#### What critical reasoning is:

- it entails determining and assessing the *support* for a certain claim you or others have made in order to get a clearer understanding of an issue;
- it entails clarifying and analyzing the *language* used;
- it entails discussing the *context* in which the ideas are developed;
- it involves a discussion of the possible *implications* the ideas or claims could have;
- it demands *informed thinking* and *creativity*.

That sounds all rather grand, but how do you actually do so? The following are some points that may help you develop systematically the task of first clarifying the author's ideas and then to develop your own critical engagement with these ideas.

## ANALYSIS

1. What is the **topic** that the author addresses? What is s/he specifically focusing on? What are the boundaries of the topic?
2. What is said? What is the main idea that is developed? The **main claims**? What is the author's main position with regards to the topic? Where does s/he stand?
3. What **interpretations** are offered of the main concepts? What does the author mean by "x"?
4. How are these main ideas or the position supported? **Support** can be offered in various forms: (See also the notes on "Elements of an analytical summary")
  - references to other authors
  - examples, case studies
  - metaphors - using an image to illustrate a point
  - reasons and development of argument
  - conceptual analysis
  - cause and effect
  - statistics
  - literature review
  - historical contextualization
5. In which **paradigm** is the author located? Through which conceptual lenses is the author looking at the issue? (Remember, there is no such thing as a "neutral" view.)
6. What **methodology** is the author using in order to make sense of the issue or to develop a particular position?
7. In what **context** is the author writing? Place? Date? In what discipline? In response to what?

## CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

1. What is not said? Why not? Is this a serious **omission**? Are the limits of the topic too narrow, too broad? If the limits are too broad is the author in danger of generalizing too much?
2. Are the interpretations of the main concepts offered clear? Does the author rely on "buzz words" or popular rhetoric, or are the **meanings of the key concepts clearly stated**? Words or concepts are not "discovered", they are constructed for particular purposes. What are these purposes? Language

embodies the perspective from which we view a particular issue. It reveals how we order our experiences, what assumptions we make, and reflects what we think. (Since ideas are expressed in language, the analysis of language is extremely important in our critical engagement with these ideas.)

3. Are supports for the main claims:
  - appropriate to the context? (Does the author, for example, use findings from other fields or disciplines and transport them into another context? If so, are these illuminating or distorting? In what way?)
  - true? (Is there counter evidence that might contradict these supports?)
  - valid? (Does the author systematically develop the position or are there logical jumps?)
4. What could be possible **counter-examples**?
5. Does the author make certain **assumptions**? (For example, does the author assume a high literacy rate among the population, a certain level of economic welfare, certain divisions in society? Are these justified assumptions? Of course, no author can spell out all the assumptions on which the ideas s/he develops are based, but you as a critical engager need to be able to judge whether there are assumptions that ought to have been spelt out but aren't)
6. Is the methodology used appropriate? Could the author have followed another methodology? What does the author's methodology (or the other one) bring to light which the other approach doesn't?
7. How would the issue have been interpreted in another paradigm? (Think of the duck/ rabbit example.) Language not only reflects what we think, but it also influences thinking and shapes our perspectives. We see with concepts, rather than with our eyes.
8. The ideas are expressed in a particular context (date, setting, discipline, in response to a particular issue). How can these be **extended** into perhaps another context? (Can the ideas expressed by for example an American author be used fruitfully in a South African context? What are the particular dynamics of SA that will have an impact on these ideas? In other words, what are the possible implications of these ideas in a South African context? Also, can ideas expressed by, for example, a political scientist be used in an educational setting? Are there specific dynamics in an educational context which will impact on these ideas? In other words, what would be the implications of these ideas in, for example, a school setting?)
9. You have selected this particular text (or topic) because it has "spoken" to you. Why? In what way?

## BLOCKS TO CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT

- **cultural conditioning**: often signalled by words such as: "obviously", "of course", "must", ". Ask, what are the "givens" or taken-for-granted assumptions the author makes?

- **reliance on opinion:** this means to accept blindly on the basis of popular opinion. E.g. “It is said that...”, “Everybody knows that...”, “It is a well-known fact that. ....” (Says who?)
- **hasty moral judgment:** to take for granted that something is a good thing. Often signalled by “ought”, “should” or “must”.
- **us-them thinking or either-or thinking:** this makes us believe that there are only two (usually opposing) positions; one is good/true, the other bad/wrong. It often sets up false polarities and ignores other possibilities. (E.g. “Capitalism vs socialism”, learner-centred vs teacher-centred”, “progressive vs conservative”)
- **use of labels:** often encourages simplistic thinking. E.g. “Democratic”. We need to look closely at the assumptions that underlie these labels and the rationale that drives them.
- **resistance to change:** it can be threatening to let go of preconceived and cherished notions, of set ways of doing things and thinking about them.
- **slanting:** there is nothing wrong with using expressive and emotive language, but this in itself cannot be a substitute for argument. Just because someone feels strongly about something doesn’t make her beliefs true. Emotive language needs to be supported by reasons.
- **persuasive definitions:** this is a particular form of slanting which takes the following form: something, x, needs to be criticized (e.g. abortion); choose something most people consider bad (e.g. murder); define x in terms of that (e.g. abortion is murder of a fetus); therefore, x is rejected. Critical analysis is often aimed at the level of how a particular concept is interpreted, because from that particular interpretation other forms of thinking and doing are developed.

## ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

In flowing text, recast the article’s main point and sections for your reader. Remember, your reader has not read the article so you need to give an accurate and honest summary of it first before engaging with it in a critical way. Your analytical summary should have:

### *What is the author saying?*

1. The topic / theme
1. The author’s main claim (find out the author’s attitude to the topic in order to articulate the main claim) and the various subsections in the author’s discussion.
2. The author’s interpretations of the key concepts.
3. The author’s main substantiations/ support of the claims.
4. The author’s conceptual framework / theoretical position.

5. The methods the author employs to illuminate / investigate the topic
6. The context in which the author is writing

***How do I / other thinkers respond to what the author is saying?***

1. Is the topic relevant / interesting / too broad or narrow?
2. Is the main claim controversial / does it add anything new to our understanding?
3. Are the interpretations of the key concepts clear / one-sided?
4. Are the supports offered appropriate / true / valid?
5. What are the assumptions of the theoretical framework? Is there another way we can approach the topic that will give us a different insight?
6. Is the methodology used appropriate and representative?
7. Is the context relevant? Can the main claim be extended to other contexts? What would be the implications?
8. Why do you (or others) consider this an important text?

***Critical engagement might entail:***

- Comparing or contrasting the claims/findings of the author with those of other authors.
  - Placing the author's claims/findings in a different context. (For example, in a different historical context, geographical context, environmental context, institutional context, socio-economic context, discipline context, gender context.)
  - Identifying some of the gaps in the findings/ claims.
  - Looking at what some of the underlying assumptions of the claims/findings are.
  - Exploring what the implications of the claims/findings might be for your investigation.
  - Analyzing the different meanings attached to the key concepts. Spelling out some of the conceptual links made or implied.
  - Checking whether the evidence on which the claims rest is true. (What do other studies bring to light?)
  - Tracing the logic of the argument. Checking whether the steps followed are valid and that no logical jumps are made.
  - Interpreting the claims/findings from a different theoretical perspective (e.g. from a gender perspective, an analysis of power relations, a post-modern stance, a materialist framework).
  - Analyzing the findings in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.
-

## APPENDIX 5

### SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THESIS WRITING

Technical writing does not come easily - as the contents of the university library testify. There is no recipe for success, but there are some rules of thumb you can pass on to your students. See also Section C of the *Thesis Guide*.

- 1 Allow yourself time. No one will believe in advance how long analysis, writing-up and checking take.
- 2 Set yourself deadlines, and hot them with zeal. (And beware the typist who lets you down at the last moment.)
- 3 Give shape to what you write. There are all sorts of usable models: the hypothetic-deductive theory (theory, prediction, verification); the ritualistic (introduction, review of literature, method, results, discussion); the auto-biographic narrative and so on. Pick the one most appropriate for the discipline and for your own inclination.
- 4 Use sub-headings, at the side and/or in the centre of the page, to structure your text, and include lots of sentences that tell readers where they have been and where they are going next.
- 5 Method: just say what you did, in words that a child would understand. Keep your discussion of methodology, the pros and cons of the various possible methods, to a minimum. Don't feel compelled to report in detail on everything you do.
- 6 Avoid clichés. "Situation", "at this moment in time", "in this regard" and anything else said frequently on television should be avoided.
- 7 Decide which of your results are the important ones, and give them prominent place.
- 8 Don't allow technicalities to clog up the main text. Put them in appendices.
- 9 Expect to suffer over the presentation of statistics. Raw data belong at the back, after the references. The right way of summarizing them in the main text may only come to you after weeks of trial and error.
- 10 Tables should speak for themselves. Don't force your reader to grope around in the main text to discover what your tables mean.
- 11 Don't pad out your references with works you haven't read.
- 12 Hack and hack at your own prose. Sentence by sentence, the simplest form is usually the best. At the level of paragraphs and chapters, aim for the sequence which gives you the smoothest flow.
- 13 Re-examine any piece of jargon. As often as not you will find that it disguises sloppiness. Bear in mind too, that the educational sciences are interdisciplinary. What you write should make sense to any intelligent person, irrespective of his or her particular technical skills.
- 14 Proof-reading your typed version is essential. Ideally work with a partner and read it aloud, punctuation and all.

Taken from Delamonte et al (1997:124)

## APPENDIX 6

### SUMMARY OF TIPS FOR SUPERVISORS

See Zuber-Skerritt, O. and Ryan, Y. (eds) (1994) *Quality in Post-graduate Education*. London: Kogan Page. Pp 77-89.

They note (1994:79) the following principles of good supervisory practice. These principles arise from a national survey in Britain and are “intended to improve the traditional single-supervisor model:

- publication of a departmental document on good supervisory practice
- careful matching of supervisor and prospective student
- provision of a student reading guide for the summer holiday prior to commencement of research
- assessment of student’s first year report by academics other than the immediate supervisor
- regular meetings between student and supervisor
- the student’s record keeping to be checked to ensure it is systematic
- a mock viva to be held six to twelve months before submission of the thesis.”

#### **Arising from the Supervision workshops held at UWC, the following tips for supervisors were noted:**

- Clarify the groundrules of the supervision process. (Draw up and sign a written contract.)
- Have regular contact with student. Arrange frequent meetings, especially in the initial stages of the research project. In the case of distance students, ensure regular contact via email or telephone.
- Keep the meeting free from interruptions, e.g. close the door, divert telephone calls.
- When supervising a colleague, ensure that supervision meetings focus on supervision issues and not on departmental discussions.
- Set clear goals for the next step of the process. Agree on specific tasks to be undertaken before the scheduled next meeting.
- Provide the student with examples of good research proposals. Direct students to excellent completed theses.
- Form a group of students to take through the research proposal process together.
- Be consistent with advice and remarks. Record feedback so as to eliminate inconsistencies.
- Ensure that the coherence and overall logical thread of the thesis is maintained.

- Encourage continuous writing.
- Urge students to start thinking and writing about possible research topics from day 2!
- Encourage students to keep diaries or research journals which document the student's development of ideas.
- Remind students to keep accurate and detailed reference records.
- Be available (within limits) and reliable.
- Eliminate contradictory feedback from supervisor and co-supervisor.
- Respond promptly, regularly and in written form.
- Be honest and constructive in your criticism. Don't just say "re-write" – tell the student how s/her must go about re-writing it. When work is inadequate, show clearly why.
- Encourage independence.
- Ensure that as supervisor you have the necessary expertise on the topic or method. If not, arrange for a co-supervisor.
- Establish a regular reading/ writing group of post-graduate students in the department.
- Make sure that the student is aware of the rules and regulations pertaining to the technical aspects of thesis production.
- Maintain good, clear and regular communication.
- Insist that students to use wordprocessing from the start. Help them to enroll for a course if necessary.
- Sustain a supportive relationship. Help student find physical resources, funding. Give emotional support as well through affirmation and concern for the person.
- Keep student motivated. Some felt that a "personal touch" helped to motivate students.
- Establish a climate of focused support and structured regularity.

**List of tips compiled by M.B. Ogunniyi, School of Maths and Science Education, UWC:**

Think about these and adapt them for your supervisory protocol:

1. Your foremost role is academic guidance and support.
2. Assist students regarding scope and novelty of their project.
3. Provide your students access to available facilities and resources (including financial assistance).
4. Stress the importance of commitment to the project.
5. Make them aware of your expectation.
6. Formalize a research plan (including proposal writing.)
7. Explain the crucial role of the literature review.
8. Assist to determine topic and method.

9. Monitor and provide realistic advice about progress.
10. Be friendly but firm about deadlines.
11. Explain the modalities for submitting thesis for examination.
12. Teach necessary research skills when necessary.
13. Suggest timetable for writing up.
14. Provide immediate feedback on submitted manuscripts.
15. Encourage students to make informed decisions.
16. Show interest in your student's work.
17. Give early warning on a "wild goose chase".
18. Have a regular time for consultation.
19. Challenge students' writing style or misconceptions.
20. Alert students of potential difficulties and pitfalls.
21. Encourage your students to interact with other academics.
22. Encourage students to develop a sense of ownership of their work.
23. Encourage students to attend seminars, workshops and conferences.
24. Alert your Head of Department of problems encountered with your students.
25. Encourage rigour, originality and scholarship.
26. Save your students from over-ambition.
27. Appoint capable independent internal and external examiners.
28. Do not tolerate a sloppy write up.
29. Encourage publication of research findings.
30. Never give up!

## **SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES FOR SUPERVISORS**

(John Martin, UCT)

Reflecting on his own postgraduate experiences as a student, he suggests the following:

1. The learning process is more important than the research outputs.
2. Research projects must be formulated as joint projects of the student and supervisor.
3. Post-graduate students should work in a group.
4. The learning process should be based on a core competency.
5. Postgraduate survey courses are an essential component of a postgraduate programme.
6. Where possible, students should be involved in projects funded by commerce or industry.
7. The relationship between supervisor and student should be a close one.

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(Taken from Research training: The importance of process. *Second Postgraduate Experience Conference, 28-30 March 1999, Cape Town.*)

## APPENDIX 7

### SUMMARY OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR SUPERVISORS AND POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS AT UWC

#### **For supervisors:**

##### **1 Seminars/workshops**

The PET project arranges seminars /workshops on topics relevant to students and supervisors. Programmes with activities for the semester are advertised. Additional topics you deem necessary may be suggested. Contact Nelleke Bak (x 2451) for further details.

##### **2. Thesis Guide**

This is a booklet aimed at students, but it lists the various thesis requirements which a supervisor should know. Contact Nelleke Bak for a copy of the Guide.

##### **3 Research Proposal Guide**

A generic guide, spelling out the necessary parts of a Research Proposal is available. Contact Nelleke Bak for copies.

##### **4. Websites**

Some excellent websites are available for supervisors of post-graduates:

*For workbooks and academic resources for post-graduate programmes:*

The Cape Town based Centre for Research and Academic Development:  
[www.radct.co.za](http://www.radct.co.za)

*For post-graduate Training Guidelines:*

[www.esrc.ac.uk/ptd/guidelns](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ptd/guidelns)

*For supervisor training:*

[www.cryer.freeseerve.co.uk/supervisors.htm#2](http://www.cryer.freeseerve.co.uk/supervisors.htm#2)

as well as: [www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk/supervisor\\_training](http://www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk/supervisor_training)

*For thesis writing and practical advice on getting started:*

[www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis](http://www.phys.unsw.edu.au/~jw/thesis)

as well as : [www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis](http://www.sce.carleton.ca/faculty/chinneck/thesis)

*For code of practice for UK supervisors:*

[www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Registrar/TSU/sofgp99](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Registrar/TSU/sofgp99)

*For quality assurance indicators of supervision:*

[www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/cop/annex](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/cop/cop/annex)

(Click on "Supervision" some way down the page)

*For a draft code of practice for post-graduate studies:*

[www.npc.org.uk/publications/guidelines/research](http://www.npc.org.uk/publications/guidelines/research).

(Click on "Responsibilities of the supervisor" some way down the page.)

*For subject specific supervisory requirements:*

[www.research-councils.ac.uk](http://www.research-councils.ac.uk)

*For scientific and technological disciplines*

select “Supervisor (and co-supervisors)” from a report from the University of New South Wales:

[www.chem.unsw.edu.au/postgrad/models/TOC](http://www.chem.unsw.edu.au/postgrad/models/TOC)

*For learned societies:*

Professional bodies and learned societies generally offer a great deal of support to a supervisor in a variety of ways. Their web address should be accessible via a search engine like:

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

## **For students:**

### **1. Study space**

Small Study carrels are available on campus - contact Nelleke Bak

### **2. Computer software**

Research Toolbox software is available to all UWC users. It can be downloaded onto your home PC as well. (Download from UWC S:\Research\Setup.exe or call Mandy Samuels x3920 for an installation disk.)

### **3. Email addresses and intranet**

Groupwise email addresses are available for all M and D students. These can also be accessed via UWC website. Phone Mandy x3920 who will process your application.

### **4. Library assistance**

There are various computer search tools available as well as Faculty specific librarians (on level 6):

Arts - Ms Teresa van Rooyen (x2907) or Mr Francisco MacKenzie (x2296)

CHS - Ms Lilian Mitchell-Kamalie (x2922)

EMS and SoG - Ms Zona Koen (x2931)

Education - Ms Benita de Wet (x2928)

Law - Mr Sulaiman Tarkey (x2906)

Natural Sciences - Ms Valda Knoll (x2296)

### **5. Seminars/workshops on specific academic issues**

A series of seminars on topics identified as important by post-graduate students (e.g. How to construct interviews, How to do a Literature Review, How to negotiate the supervision process, etc) is offered via the PET project. Tel Nelleke Bak on x 2451 for further details.

**6. Language development and academic development workshops**

The UWC Writing Centre offers services free of charge -There are 2 Writing Consultants specifically trained to assist post-graduates with language development. Phone x 2390 for an appointment.

The Writing Centre also offers various academic development workshops on academic writing, interpersonal communication skills, research strategies, etc. Phone x2390 for more details.

The illwimi Centre (2148/ 2666) also offers workshops on learning difficulties, methodologies.

**7. Language acquisition classes and proofreading/editing services**

The illwimi Centre offers language acquisition classes in Afrikaans, Xhosa and English.

Typing, editing, proofreading, translation, transcription services are available from the illwimi Centre on campus. It provides these services *at a fee*.

The Writing Centre also has a list of available typists/ translators who offer these services at a fee.

**8 Computer and Internet access**

Most departments have specific PCs for post-graduate use. Enquire within department re availability.

There is also the Thintana Great Hall walk-in computer lab (Great Hall - open Mon-Thurs from 08:30 - 21:00, Fri from 08:30 - 18:00 and Sat from 09:00 - 15:00)

There is the TLTU Multimedia student walk-in Lab (Anatomy Building - open Mon-Fri from 08:30 - 17:00)

There is the TLTU Docwill student walk-in Lab (Goldfields Building - open Mon-Fri from 08:30 - 17:00)

There is also the Thintana EMS student computer lab.

The Education Faculty has a computer Lab - tel Gasant Gamiet x 2642.

SVE 4 is the postgraduate common room situated at the Alan Boesak hostels. It seats 96.

Level 13 at the main library seats about 30 students.

EMS fourth floor common room

Call the PET project at X3920 for information on the last three lab operatinghours.

**9 Part-time student support**

For various supports like time management of part-time studies and transport lift clubs, tel the Division of Lifelong Learning (DLL) on x3787.

**10 Help with statistical analysis and research design**

A Statistical Consultant to help only Master's and Doc students with their thesis research is available through the PET project. Tel x 3920 to make an appointment. Service is free of charge for postgraduate students only.

11 **Database of past and current research**

The post-graduate website is being developed, with a proposed list of all the past and current research theses undertaken.

12 **Overseas research opportunities available.**

For information on research available opportunities, contact the Dean of Research, Prof Renfrew Christie (x 2949) or the International Relations Committee for exchange linkages with other universities (x 2884).

13 **Financial Aid**

The Workstudy programme and the SANTED project have a number of workstudy employment opportunities for post-graduate students. (Tel x 2119/2294).

The Financial Aid unit also has a booklet listing all the available bursaries/loans for post-graduate study.

Most departments have registered research projects that make provision for post-graduate student involvement and support. Enquire from the Head of Department.

14 **Student Counselling**

For support and help with personal problems, tel Student Counselling on x 2299.

The PET project also has regular support group meetings for students who are feeling de-motivated and isolated. Contact Nelleke Bak (x2451) for details.

15 **Student Health**

At a nominal fee, students can receive medical attention. Tel Student Health on x 2876.

16 **SRC**

The Student Representative Council addresses student issues. Tel x 2738.

A proposed Post-graduate Student Association, affiliated to the SRC, is being considered.

