



PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURE ON THE SUPERVISION OF MASTERS' DISSERTATIONS AND DOCTORAL THESES

General principles

1. This document outlines the principles to be adopted by supervisors in guiding students through masters' dissertations and doctoral theses. It is anticipated that more detailed guidelines will be drawn up for use within individual faculties/institutes/centres and that these may vary somewhat depending on the subject area provided they remain concordant with these Principles of Procedure.

2. The role of the supervisor, or the supervisory team when one is appointed according to the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, is to provide guidance and advice to the student on projects leading to the writing of a dissertation or thesis; such guidance shall be provided during the origination, planning, execution and bringing to completion of the project and the writing of the dissertation or thesis.

3. In order to avoid potential ethical or other conflicts that could compromise the supervisory relationship, a supervisor may not have a dual relationship with the student. It is the responsibility of the University staff member to identify and declare this relationship. A dual relationship may be based on consanguinity or affinity or be of any kind that could raise suspicion on the supervisor's right intentions and the student's freedom.

4. A supervisor cannot be part of the Board of Examiners for a doctoral thesis and shall not normally be part of the Board of Examiners for a master's dissertation, provided that a faculty/institute/centre may request special permission from Senate to allow a supervisor to

form part of the Board of Examiners for a master's dissertation with justification for the request. The Chairman of the Board shall normally invite the Principal Supervisor to attend as an observer during the *viva voce* examination conducted by the Board of Examiners but the Principal Supervisor must withdraw prior to the final deliberations of the Board of Examiners.

5. The supervisory role ceases when the dissertation/thesis is submitted for examination. The supervisor will signify formally in writing ([specimen form attached](#)) that s/he knows that the student is submitting the work for examination by the Board of Examiners. A supervisory role may be re-assumed on the advice of the Board of Examiners in order to provide guidance to a student whose dissertation/thesis is referred back for significant correction pending final acceptance.

6. Supervisors are not responsible for approving parts or the whole of a dissertation/thesis although they are expected to give constructive feedback on drafts intended to improve the quality of the work; feedback is to be given in a reasonable time, normally within four weeks of receipt. Supervisors may guide students on the development of chapters.

7. Supervisors are to ensure that students are aware of the manner in which research results are reported and that students understand the implications of plagiarism and other unbecoming academic practices.

8. Feedback to students on the first draft should be regarded as formative and it does not predetermine the examination of the submitted dissertation by the Board of Examiners.

9. Supervisors are not responsible for proof-reading the dissertation/thesis and it is not the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the work presented for examination (the finished dissertation/thesis) does not contain plagiarised parts.

10. In the event that a supervisor establishes that plagiarism appears to exist in submitted work, including a first draft of a chapter or set of chapters or the whole work comprising the dissertation/thesis, s/he shall use discretion as to whether to admonish the student and demand corrective action or report the matter to the University Assessment Disciplinary Board, depending on the gravity of the offence. In any case, a record of this finding shall be kept by the supervisor. A supervisor is obliged to report the matter for discipline if s/he establishes that a second, even if minor, case of plagiarism is again present in work later submitted by the student.

Specific procedures

11. The supervisor is to be consulted by the student when choosing a research topic and the supervisor should give advice regarding the scope and feasibility of the work given the available timeframe. It is expected that the supervisor guides the student during the writing of a project proposal and the selection of a title for the dissertation/thesis.

12. The supervisor should give advice and guidance regarding the elaboration of the research question/s, the design of the research methodology and its fitness for purpose as well as consideration of any ethical issues. The student shall be guided to discover the appropriate research literature and also helped in managing time on the project, in identifying any health and safety requirements and in conducting appropriate risk assessments when these are required.

13. If the supervisor determines that progress on the execution of the project is below standard or has fallen behind schedule, it is his/her duty to inform the student accordingly and to offer guidance as to how the problem could be corrected.

14. The supervisor should inform and support students who require additional help with skills in language, information technology, mathematics or statistics about the need, although it is not normally the responsibility of the supervisor to provide the service.

15. Supervisors should keep a brief written record of supervision meetings, including dates, and any critical agreed actions and deadlines. Accessibility to students may be provided by personal meetings in the office or laboratory or similar or by email or other electronic contact.

Applicable from 18 June 2010.

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