

SUPERVISION OF GRADUATE STUDENTS PROCEDURE

Section	Research
Contact	Office of AVC Research
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Purpose:

- To establish principles for supervised graduate research at sub PhD level.
- To raise staff and student awareness of some basic issues and conditions that are integral to a quality supervised graduate research culture.

Compliance:

Each College is to ensure that the principles and procedures outlined in this document are implemented across Departments, Institutes and Schools. These procedures both inform and complement University, College, and sub-College regulations, guidelines and good practices for supervised graduate research.

Audience:

All University Staff
All University Students

Procedures:

Preamble

Supervised graduate research is a major and critical activity at Massey University. The University is committed to developing effective principles and procedures to foster excellence in research and a supportive research ethos.

These protocols are designed to establish principles and procedures for supervised graduate research at the sub-PhD level, for example, for Masters, Bachelors with Honours, and Postgraduate Diplomas.

Whereas the administration of PhD study is organised centrally within the University, through the Doctoral Research Committee, (for information on the nature and administration of PhD activities consult the *Handbook for Doctoral Study* <http://students.massey.ac.nz/doctoralhandbook.htm>), supervised graduate research at sub-PhD level is decentralised within each of the University's five Colleges.

Expectations in a supervised graduate research culture

A supervised graduate research culture ultimately depends on both staff and students being aware of their respective expectations and responsibilities. These should be discussed and made clear to all parties at the beginning of a supervised research project.

In general, students should expect:

- clear written information about graduate entry standards and enrolment processes
- clear written information about the rules, regulations, administrative and academic requirements for their supervised research activity
- appropriately qualified, informed, helpful and accessible supervisor/s
- provision of appropriate and reasonable resources for the agreed-upon project
- regular monitoring and feedback on progress
- to be accepted into a supportive academic culture of their unit¹.

In general, supervisory staff should expect research students:

- to be committed to their studies
- to be in regular contact with their supervisor/s
- to listen to advice
- to discuss problems immediately they arise
- to meet agreed deadlines during research, writings, drafts and submission
- to participate, where appropriate, in the research culture of their unit

Basic responsibilities in a supervised graduate research culture

It is the responsibility of supervisors:

- to be the first port of call for guidance in all matters of sound research practice.
- to have research interests and expertise appropriate for the student's research, and an ability to involve other relevant professionals, from inside or outside the University, in the supervisory process as required.
- to be aware of and provide students with any University, College, or unit information booklets or other printed material relevant to the administrative and academic requirements for their research project.
- to be knowledgeable about the appropriate rules and regulations for the research. This would cover such issues as word limits, formats, production matters, submission dates, number of copies required for submission, examination procedures and criteria. Supervisors should also provide clear assessment criteria and marking schedules.
- to be knowledgeable about resource requirements for the project, such as technical and financial.
- to be aware of, assist and support their research students in applying for any relevant University research funding, as well as to any relevant government and other external research funding agency. The various application dates and format should be known.
- to be informed about any legal, professional, ethical and safety issues that may concern the research. Supervisors should be aware of the University's Intellectual Property Policy and Code of Research Conduct as it applies to research students, and, as relevant, the procedures for Human Ethics, Inter-ethnic Research, Animal Ethics, Genetic Technology, and Safety. Supervisors should be able to advise students on whether ethical or other approval is required, and how to make an application to the appropriate committee.
- to discuss with their students, at the beginning of their programme, their mutual expectations of the supervisory relationship. Some supervisors and students may decide on a fairly informal interaction. Others may wish to draw up a more formal 'contract'.

¹ Throughout this document, the term 'unit' is used in a generic sense to refer to the component parts of a College. Depending on the nomenclature and structure within each College, a 'unit' can refer to a Department, an Institute, a School, and/or the various components of these entities.

- to have regular communication with their research students so that supervisor and candidate can give each other their prepared attention. Even if there may be no matter of actual academic substance to discuss at any particular pre-arranged time, the communication itself is often very important.
- to develop with their students an overall plan/timetable for the research. This typically covers such issues as planning the project, research, analysis, preparation of draft chapters, revision, physical production and submission.
- to encourage research students to submit written notes, ideas, and draft chapters for comment at agreed times during the project. Any comment on submitted work should be prompt, encouraging, and helpful.
- to monitor student progress and to make sure that students are performing adequately. In general, supervisors should help to keep their research students on track and on time, and develop an expectation of timely completion.
- to report regularly on student progress in a formal way according to the procedures of their unit. Students should be involved in this process and receive feedback.
- to be aware of any significant problems, either academic or personal, that may adversely affect a student's progress. Staff should be aware of, and able to advise students about the range of support offered by Student Services.
- to encourage research students to participate in the social and academic culture of their unit.

It is the responsibility of units:

- to encourage graduate students to participate in both the social and academic culture of the unit. As part of this process, students should have an introduction to the unit and its facilities (such as the common room and office equipment), to secretarial staff, to academic staff responsible for graduate programmes overall, and to other academic staff members working in similar or related research fields.
- to develop a supportive research culture for research students, both as individuals and, as appropriate, as members of a group. Staff-student forums, and support groups for students can be very effective. In general, units need to encourage feedback from their graduate students to enhance a constructive and supportive relationship.
- to encourage graduate seminar presentations and attendance at unit seminars, and to participate in other activities (such as conferences and publication) where appropriate.
- to provide information and support for the supervisor(s).
- to cover a supervisor's absence such that the student is never left unsupervised.
- to consider the supervisor(s) overall workload and ensure that a supervisor does not have too many research students.
- to have a 'graduate committee' or at least a 'graduate contact person' to inform students about matters of interest in the unit and to support and enhance the graduate study environment.
- to develop overall monitoring procedures whereby a supervisor is required to report formally several times a year on the progress of a student. Students should be involved in this process and receive feedback.

It is the responsibility of graduate research students:

- to be committed to their studies.
- to accept that graduate research is about developing intellectual independence and learning, not dependence and being taught. Thus research students should be 'active' with their research and within the supervisory relationship, and not passively wait to be told what to do. Research and related activities should be worked out with supervisors such that both supervisor and student contribute to the overall strategy adopted.
- to be in regular and pre-arranged communication with their supervisor.

- to seek and accept advice. This does not mean a slavish adherence to a supervisor's ideas, but to accept that supervisors do have expertise in research and related matters and that their advice should be given the most careful consideration.
- to discuss problems (such as personal and conflict of interest) immediately they arise. A supervisor should be informed of significant problems that affect the quality of a student's research. This does not mean that a student is required to tell a supervisor the details of personal/family problems, but the student should at least inform a supervisor there are events hindering the research programme. The supervisor(s) is then in a position to suggest possible avenues for assistance (such as through Student Services) and to make application, if appropriate, for the suspension of a project to protect the student's interests with regard to time limits for completion.
- to discuss any academic problems immediately they arise. Supervisors can then assist as appropriate. In some cases this may mean seeking some academic assistance/tuition from elsewhere on campus, for example, with use of statistics.
- to meet agreed deadlines during research, writing drafts, submission. A timetable/plan for completing the project should be developed with the supervisor at the beginning of the project, and continually updated as required.
- to participate in the research culture of their unit. This means keeping in touch with the unit, being aware of and attending appropriate seminars by staff and visiting speakers, and student functions. The unit should keep students informed about such activities, but students should also make the effort to find out what is happening, especially if they spend periods of time off the campus. Units should also arrange for research students to give seminars on their research at an appropriate time.

Supervision at a Distance

- Students writing postgraduate research reports at a distance are due the equivalence of supervision and assistance to that available to students on campus. This means they receive the same information, instruction and guidance.
- Since on-campus supervisory meetings cannot usually be held, supervisors and students should be in regular contact, as with on-campus students, with scheduled meetings via telephone, fax and/or email as appropriate.
- Students writing a thesis should make a presentation to their peers and staff at an appropriate occasion. Students need to be informed of this requirement so as to build this potential travel cost into their programme.
- Students are to have the same access as on-campus students to any financial support for research and production that their unit has available.

Relevant Legislation:

None

Legal Compliance:

None

Related Procedures:

- [Policy on Resource Minima for Postgraduate Students](#)
- [Procedures for Graduate Management and Administration](#)
- [Handbook for Doctoral Study](#)



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