Responsibilities of Supervisors and Candidates for Undergraduate Honours Degrees

Supervisor's Responsibilities

1.   The responsibility of a supervisor will depend upon the:

    (1)   nature of the research;

    (2)   stage of the research;

    (3)   designation of the supervisor as principal, co- or other supervisor as advised in letter of nomination;

    (4)   knowledge of the supervisor and of the candidate.

2.   Before undertaking the supervision of a candidate, a person proposed as a supervisor is responsible for satisfying themselves that they:

    (1)   are suitably qualified to carry out the supervision;

    (2)   have sufficient time available to carry out the supervision;

    (3)   have a reasonable expectation that they will be available to supervise at least the definition and development stage of the candidacy.

3.   The principal supervisor is responsible for familiarising themselves with relevant University policies and rules.

Clarifying expectations and basic information

4.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

    (1)   clarifying with the candidate, the candidate's expectations about the facilities to be provided and the conditions applicable to the candidacy and informing the candidate about –

        (a)   the facilities to be provided including: access to physical space; the University network and computers; the Library and other resources within the University;

        (b)   any financial support that is likely to be available;

        (c)   the problem-solving mechanisms and the support services for candidates which exist within the University;

        (d)   the various administrative requirements of the degree, such as enrolment and notifying details of changes;

        (e)   all relevant University's policies including Occupational Health and Safety, Ethics and Intellectual Property, acceptable use of IT Resources, Electronic Mail;

(f)   informing the candidate of relevant support services such as disability support and English language available through the University;

(g)   the responsibilities imposed on the candidate as indicated in "Responsibilities of a Candidate";

(2)   ensuring that both the candidate and the principal supervisor have clarified what each expects of the other.

Defining and developing the research project

5.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   assisting the candidate to define and develop the research project, including appropriate methodology by helping the candidate:

(a)   define the general area of research;

(b)   establish the aims of the investigation and prioritisation of the aims;

(c)   propose a plan of work including the relationship to previous work;

(d)   develop a project management plan;

(e)   translate the aims into objectives;

(2)   ensuring that the candidate is aware of the standards expected for the degree concerned;

(3)   identifying with the candidate the particular research skills that need to be acquired and the most appropriate data gathering and analysing techniques including whether the candidate should undertake training in specific research methods;

(4)   being satisfied that, after receiving a research proposal from the candidate:

(a)   the candidate appears capable of undertaking the project proposed;

(b)   the facilities are available to enable the project to succeed; and

(c)   the project can be completed in the time designated for the award;

(5)   if the submission of a research proposal is a provision for admission of the candidate, ensuring that the candidate submits the research proposal;

(6)   ensuring that the candidate has obtained approval for the research proposal from any collaborating researchers.

Monitoring facilities and circumstances of candidate

6.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   monitoring the availability of facilities necessary for the candidate;

(2)   advising on safe working practices for the candidate and ensuring that they are developed and maintained;

(3)   assisting students obtain approvals for their absence from the University and their due entitlements from the Faculty;

(4)   ensuring that the Dean is kept informed if problems which would affect the program occur during a candidature.

Creating a research ethos

7.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   encouraging the candidate to participate in the activities of the Faculty and University such as research activities, presentations, seminars and colloquia;

(2)   encouraging the candidate to participate in appropriate research training activities offered within and outside the University;

(3)   encouraging the candidate to extend professional activities across the Faculty.

Developing the thesis

8.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   assisting in the development of a suitable project management plan within which the thesis can be produced;

(2)   ensuring that they give appropriate and timely advice on requirements regarding content, style, presentation and production of the candidate's thesis;

(3)   encouraging the preparation of draft sections of the thesis in accordance with the project management plan developed, and providing prompt feedback on a reasonable number of submitted drafts;

(4)   nominating to the Dean appropriate examiners in a timely fashion before the thesis is submitted.

Authorship and intellectual property

9.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   ensuring that the candidate has included a declaration of authorship and a statement of authenticity in their thesis;

(2)   reaching agreement with the candidate at the outset of the project, concerning authorship of publications and acknowledgment of contributions. In normal circumstances, it is expected that the candidate will be the senior author on publications that arise directly from their studies except where another arrangement is agreed mutually;

(3)   encouraging open and mutual recognition of the candidate's and supervisor's contribution on all published work arising from the project;

(4)   informing the candidate of any requirements for collaborators to complete a statement of authorship in respect of any paper submitted for publication during the candidature and the final thesis;

(5)   informing the candidate of their rights with respect to intellectual property and encouraging, where appropriate, the exploitation of such intellectual property through the University.

Ethics issues

10. The principal supervisor is responsible for:

    (1)   advising the candidate of applicable:

        (a)   government, institutional and University guidelines for the conduct of research, including requirements relating to ethical approvals for research involving human or animal subjects;

        (b)   guidelines for the use of potentially hazardous agents;

    (2)   informing the candidate of any requirements regarding the retention and confidentiality of data;

    (3)   avoiding pressure on candidates to teach or undertake other duties not directly related to their project. Any such activities should be undertaken only by mutual agreement;

    (4)   avoiding exploitation of the power relationship that exists, whether in matters related directly or indirectly to the progress of the candidate's studies;

    (5)   informing the candidate of issues in the University's Code of Conduct policy.

Supervisor/candidate contact and program management

11. The principal supervisor is responsible for:

    (1)   stimulating, supporting and encouraging the candidate;

        (a)   let the candidate know of relevant publications, seminars, conferences, etc. that may be available in the area of research to help the candidate stay motivated towards their project;

        (b)   always give appropriate and timely praise, suggestions, constructive criticism on work that the candidate has given for reviewing;

    (2)   reaching agreement with the candidate on the contact that will be necessary and negotiating different contact arrangements from time to time as may be necessary;

        (a)   the time given to supervision will vary depending on the stage of the candidate's program. This must be negotiated between the candidate and the supervisor;

    (3)   ensuring that commitments made in respect of availability and conduct are met by the principal supervisor and the candidate;

    (4)   maintaining regular contact with the candidate and any collaborating supervisors or institution where a candidate undertakes a significant proportion of their study under joint supervision or at a host organisation;

    (5)   encouraging the candidate to make productive use of their time;

    (6)   assisting the candidate to establish a work schedule and reaching agreement upon indicators of progress, submission of appropriate work, interim reports or study results;

    (7)   providing a flow of evaluative comment;

(8)   returning written work to the candidate with constructive criticism within one month of submission or as agreed mutually;

(9)   monitoring progress made within the context of the overall research plan and ensuring that sufficient time is left for compiling the thesis;

(10)   assistance in clarifying and resolving emerging problems as the research progresses;

(11)   arranging seminars or other fora for wider audience participation and feedback.

Progress reporting

12.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   evaluating the candidate's progress at the end of each semester;

(2)   completing formal annual progress reports;

(3)   providing feedback on progress to the candidate, and in the event of inadequate progress or of standards of work below that generally expected for the degree, identifying the problems and suggesting ways of addressing them.

Delegation

13.   The principal supervisor is responsible for:

(1)   when any of the above responsibilities are wholly or partly delegated to another supervisor or University staff member, ensuring that all supervisors concerned and the candidate are informed of the delegation;

(b)   notifying the Dean immediately if they are aware of their inability or any inability by any2supervisor to fulfil any of the responsibilities outlined in this document or if there is a breakdown in the candidate-supervisor relationship.

Candidate's Responsibilities

14.   A candidate is particularly responsible for –

(1)   the content, authenticity, acknowledgment, style and presentation, and production of the thesis that is finally presented;

(2)   making any revisions required after examination;

(3)   exploring with the principal supervisor and the University, the possible exploitation of any invention or other intellectual property arising from the research carried out by the candidate.

15.   A candidate also is responsible for:

(1)   playing an informed part in the process of the selection and appointment of supervisors;

(2)   clarifying with supervisors what each expects of the other;

(3)   defining and choosing the research project;

(4)   clarifying with the principal supervisor the facilities and conditions expected by the candidate to complete the proposed research project;

(5)   clarifying Faculty and University policies, financial support, problem-solving mechanisms, administrative requirements, and relevant support services available through the University;

(6)   obtaining approval for research proposals;

(7)   planning and executing the project within the time limits defined for the proposed degree;

(8)   devoting sufficient time to the candidature;

(9)   establishing with their principal supervisor agreed methods of working and fulfilling any requirements for the proposed degree;

(10)   attending agreed consultation and providing evidence of the progress being made including submission of any information required for this process;

(11)   maintaining regular contact with the University and particularly with the principal supervisor when pursuing part of the research program at a host organisation or when on field trips;

(12)   undertaking any coursework, supporting studies, training or other activities required by the supervisors, Faculty or University;

(13)   participating in the opportunities offered by the University to be part of that intellectual community;

(14)   drawing the principal supervisor's attention to any difficulties being experienced and sharing responsibility for seeking solutions;

(15)   acquainting themselves with mechanisms that exist for helping with candidate-supervisor difficulties and taking advantage of them if necessary;

(16)   ensuring that there is sufficient time allocated to write up the thesis and ascertaining what is necessary in terms of content, style and presentation;

(17)   ensuring that a declaration of authorship and a statement of authenticity is included with any papers submitted for publication and with the final thesis;

(18)   familiarising themselves with the administrative requirements for the degree in which they are enrolled and any Faculty or University guidelines relating to that degree and postgraduate work in general;

(19)   familiarising themselves with government and professional codes for the conduct of research and ensuring that the necessary ethical clearances of experiments involving animal or human subjects are obtained before commencement of a study;

(20)   adopting at all times safe working practices relevant to the field of the research and complying with the University's Occupational Health and Safety policy;

(21)   applying for any University or Faculty approvals needed to spend time away from the University, whether as part of the candidature or under suspension;

(22)   ensuring that all the administrative requirements of the Faculty and the University are met, such as –

    (a)   re-enrolling each year;

    (b)   notifying details of any changes to the candidature;

    (c)   if appropriate, notifying Student Administration of any intention to transfer to another institution or to withdraw from the program;

(23)   fair recognition of the candidate's and supervisor's contribution on all published work arising from the project;

(24)   notifying the Dean immediately if they are aware of their inability or any inability by any supervisor to fulfil any of the responsibilities outlined in this document or if there is a breakdown in the candidate-supervisor relationship;

(25)   submitting the thesis by the due date established by the University;

(26)   not initiating contact with the examiners regarding the thesis during the examination period, which includes any period of minor or major revision of the thesis when the examiner will be involved in the re-examination; and

(27)   where there is no principal supervisor specified for a candidature, clarifying the delegations of other supervisors or University staff members.

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