

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

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

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

Supervisors, co-supervisors and advisers

Research masters candidates

All research masters candidates must have an accredited supervisor appointed by the Head of School/Department; in some disciplines students may also have a co-supervisor.

Doctoral candidates

All doctoral students must have an accredited main supervisor and either a co-supervisor or an adviser(s) or an advisory committee. The supervisory team is appointed by the Board of Graduate Studies. For further information about the accreditation of supervisors see [Guidelines on Accreditation of Supervisors](#).

The roles of the members of a doctoral supervisory team are as follows:

Main supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primary responsibility for the provision of academic advice and support and for associated administrative requirements.• Must be a University of Auckland staff member.
Co-supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proactive in providing academic advice and support.• Usually a University of Auckland staff member (in which case, they may substitute for main supervisor in the main supervisor's absence) or, in the case of a doctorate undertaken in collaboration with another institution, a member of staff of the partner institution.
Adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides advice and support when requested.• May be member of University of Auckland staff or another tertiary or research institution.
Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usually no more than 6 members including main and co-supervisors and up to 4 advisers.• Meets with candidate at least once a year to review progress and provide guidance on progress and content of research.

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

Milestones for students and their supervisors

1. Before enrolment

Before enrolment in a masters or doctoral thesis, the student and his/her thesis supervisor(s) should discuss:

- (a) the proposed thesis research project;
- (b) the resources required to carry out the research and their availability;
- (c) the support that will need to be available to bring the research to a successful completion;
- (d) any IP issues that may arise from the research; and
- (e) the respective obligations of supervisor and student in order to avoid possible misunderstandings.

The student and supervisor should also read and discuss the relevant degree regulations so that they are both clear about the requirements for the thesis, including its presentation and timely completion.

2. Beginning of study

At the commencement of the thesis research, students and supervisors should meet to:

- (a) discuss and agree on clear goals and the frequency of supervisory meetings. As a guide these meetings should be at least once a month but in some research areas and/or at some stages of thesis research, they may need to be more frequent. In the case of PhD candidates, the student and supervisor need to discuss when and how the candidate will fulfill all of their provisional goals;
- (b) discuss ethical practice in the research. If the thesis research requires ethics approval before the research can be initiated, the thesis supervisor(s) should give guidance on the ethics approval process. It is the student and (main) supervisor's joint responsibility to ensure that formal ethics approval is obtained. In the case of applications to the University of Auckland Human Participants' Ethics Committee, all applications from students must be submitted by the appropriate supervisor;
- (c) discuss any IP issues that may result from the research, copyright, and authorship of any publications that may be written based on the thesis research; and
- (d) discuss any other commitments that they might have and any anticipated absences of the supervisor(s) that will interrupt normal supervisory contact during the period required for completion of the degree.

3. Progress reviews

The regular reports on progress required by the department or the University should be prepared and submitted by the student and supervisor(s) by the due date.

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

(i) Masters students

At the end the first three months of thesis research, masters students and their supervisors should undertake a substantial review of research activities and achievements and discuss progress towards achieving the identified goals for the thesis research and timely completion of the thesis. A progress report must be submitted to the department/school mid-way through the research programme (e.g. after 6 months full-time, or 12 months part-time, enrolment in a 120 point research thesis).

(ii) Doctoral students

Within six months of enrolment, doctoral candidates and their supervisor should undertake a substantial review of research activities and achievements and discuss progress towards achieving identified goals, including provisional year goals in the case of PhD candidates. The document [Doctoral Supervision Development Guide](#) might assist this discussion. Towards the end of the first year the Provisional Year Review should be completed by the student and main supervisor.

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

4. Dispute Resolution

In the event of a breakdown in relations between the student and the thesis supervisor, recourse is usually to the Head of Department in the first instance. See also [Resolution of Student Academic Complaints and Disputes Statute](#).

5. Responsibilities of supervisors and students

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

- understand and adhere to the relevant regulations, policies and guidelines of the University;
- draw the student's attention to all relevant University policies including, but not limited to, those on the conduct of research, ethical requirements, safe working practices, intellectual property, copyright requirements and authorship;
- give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources, resources and their availability, and about requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary);
- discuss with the student the level of contact needed, for example through meetings, tutorials or seminars and ensure as far as possible that this contact is maintained;
- be accessible to the student at other appropriate times when he or she may need advice;
- inform the student in advance of any proposed periods of absence either on research and study leave or any extended leave of more than 4 weeks, and in these periods of absence, either make alternative arrangements for another staff member to take up temporary supervisory duties or provide contact details so that supervisory contact may be maintained with the student;
- give advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the whole may be submitted within the scheduled time;

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

- discuss the appropriate format for the thesis; if a thesis with publications and/or creative practice is to be presented, discuss and plan accordingly;
- give advice on the timetable for preparation of the thesis and/or publications and, if appropriate, discuss agreement on co-authorship;
- request written work as appropriate, and return that work with constructive feedback and in reasonable time;
- draw the student's attention to any courses or workshops that are offered which will help the student overcome problems identified in written expression or other aspects of the student's work;
- draw the student's attention to any important new results or concepts that may have come to the attention of the supervisor through the supervisor's contacts with other professionals and researchers;
- provide guidance in fieldwork in the case of field based research;
- direct the student to other experts in the discipline, if appropriate, and advise on relevant conferences and organisations;
- arrange as appropriate for the student to talk about his or her work to individual staff or in seminars and to have practice in oral presentation of the research subject;
- monitor, evaluate and report on the student's progress;
- ensure that the student is made aware in writing of any inadequacy of progress or of standards of work which fall below that generally expected;
- keep written records in relation to the supervision, and in particular of any concerns that have been communicated to the student;
- direct the student to appropriate sources of information on "administrative" matters, e.g. the length of the thesis, the recommended style and layout, the number of copies required, regulations regarding extensions, possible sources of research funding;
- establish early on the style and layout to be used in written work (e.g. Modern Languages Association (MLA) Handbook or a source from the Selected Bibliography in: [Guide to Theses and Dissertations](#));
- ensure in the final stages of thesis preparation that they are available to read drafts and provide prompt and appropriate written comments on those drafts;
- help the student understand the examiners' comments and how their requirements might be met.

As a graduate researcher, a **student** should:

- adhere to all University regulations, policies and guidelines, particularly with respect to the conduct of research (including academic integrity, requirements for ethics approval and copyright) and health and safety in the workplace (including research undertaken outside the University e.g. fieldwork);
- maintain clear, open communication with supervisors;
- take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, including difficulties with accessing sources or resources;
- discuss with the supervisor the type of guidance and comments that are most helpful, and agree on a schedule of meetings;

Senate Guidelines on Thesis Supervision

- take the initiative in organising supervisory meetings according to the agreed schedule, and take and circulate notes from meetings;
- maintain contact as agreed with supervisor(s) and attend all arranged meetings with the supervisor(s) fully prepared;
- give serious attention to the guidance and feedback given by the supervisor(s) and negotiate between feedback from the supervisor, co-supervisor and advisers should it differ;
- take responsibility for their learning and show initiative and self-motivation in their research as part of developing their intellectual independence;
- maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor, including, in particular, completing and presenting written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion before proceeding to the next stage;
- negotiate the timing of periods of holiday leave with their supervisor and advise their supervisor if they are unavoidably absent (e.g. due to illness or family obligations);
- participate in and contribute to the research culture of the department/school;
- alert the supervisor to any issues arising that might impact on their ability to progress with the research;
- decide when he or she wishes to submit the thesis, taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, and ensuring that University deadlines are complied with;
- ensure the submitted thesis complies with University requirements.