



**UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY**

**CODE OF PRACTICE  
FOR  
SUPERVISORS, ADVISORS  
AND  
RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS**

**University Graduate School**

**Ninth Edition  
2007**

## 1. Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the Rules of the University, with particular reference to the rules relating to research degrees (Rule 11.2).

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide both supervisors/advisors and research degree students with a framework in which they can negotiate the actual details of the research and supervision. At the outset it is important to acknowledge that the nature of the student-supervisor relationship cannot be mandated, largely because it needs to be flexible and take into account the particular circumstances of the research project, the student and the supervisor. Notwithstanding this the University acknowledges that research students have a right to effective supervision and research education. An essential part of this is the advice, guidance and critical feedback of the supervisor and other advisors. For their part, students have a responsibility to maintain satisfactory progress, adhere to University rules and procedures, communicate with their supervisors, and respond appropriately to critical feedback received. It is also important for supervisors and students to acknowledge that research education extends beyond any particular supervisor-student relationship.

### 1.2 Selection and composition of Supervisory Panels

So that a research degree student may be guided and supervised properly, a Supervisory Panel will be appointed. The Supervisory Panel comprises the Principal Supervisor, any Joint Supervisor, and other Advisors as appropriate. There is a minimum of two members on each Supervisory Panel.

The Principal Supervisor should be appointed at the time of admission and should be on the Supervisors Register. The University Graduate School appoints supervisors on the recommendation of faculties/institutes.

Advisors should normally be appointed during the first semester of candidature. Advisors can be drawn from outside the faculty of enrolment or the University. An Advisor can be any person with qualifications and/or experience deemed appropriate by the faculty for the provision of advice to research students. Advisors will be appointed/ changed/ replaced at faculty discretion with advice to the UGS – at least one Advisor should be on the Supervisors Register so that he/she may be called upon to substitute for the Principal Supervisor during any absence. This advisor will be known as the 'Alternate Supervisor'.

Joint Supervisors should be appointed at the time of admission and they should be on the Supervisors Register. The UGS appoints joint supervisors on the recommendation of faculties/institutes.

External Principal Supervisor/Advisor-

In some circumstances the Principal Supervisor may be external to the University. For example:

- where an existing member of staff leaves the University and their expertise is not readily available internally;
- where a Memorandum of Understanding or a contract exists with a party external to the University (such as a co-operative research centre);

External Principal Supervisors must be on the Supervisors Register, and it is desirable that they have an Honorary Appointment at UTS.

An External Advisor is appointed in the same way as advisors

Changes to supervision arrangements should be made in consultation with all parties concerned. Ultimately it is the right and responsibility of the University to appoint and change supervisory panels, or to make other supervisory arrangements as it sees fit.

All research degree Principal Supervisors must be able to provide evidence of appropriate and current research experience which satisfies the University Graduate School as being adequate for the purpose of thesis supervision. Normally, a person who is a student for a higher degree cannot be a Principal Supervisor for that degree, but may be an advisor.

## **2. Functions of Principal Supervisors**

- 2.1 encourage broader engagement by the student with the research community;
- 2.2 communicate with the student regularly to discuss, assess and guide the progress of the work;
- 2.3 raise and discuss with the student, early in the candidature and throughout, intellectual property issue arising from the program of research;
- 2.4 read and comment critically on drafts of written work relevant to the thesis;
- 2.5 report on progress and advise on ethical and safety requirements;
- 2.6 liaise with panel members as appropriate and set up an annual panel meeting with the student;
- 2.7 make recommendations to the RAO for the appointment and replacement of panel members;
- 2.8 advise on milestones in the research degree and the supports available in the University;
- 2.9 plan with the student an appropriate program of research and supporting studies and activities;
- 2.10 inform the student as soon as possible, when the case arises, of any expected absence and the alternative arrangements for supervision;
- 2.11 meet the student at frequent intervals to discuss, assess and guide the progress of the work;
- 2.12 advise the student on the scope and presentation of the thesis and on any publication likely to arise from the work;
- 2.13 comment critically on the draft of the completed thesis before it is submitted;
- 2.14 impress upon the student the necessity of care in proof-reading the thesis, so as to reduce the need for minor amendments at a later stage;
- 2.15 liaise with the relevant Faculty/Institute Board.

At any time, should the Principal Supervisor believe the student's progress to be unsatisfactory, they should inform the student of the reasons and subsequently report that in the Progress Report.

## **3. Functions of Advisors**

- 3.1 provide specific advice (appropriate to expertise) to student (and perhaps Principal Supervisor) on request from the Principal Supervisor;
- 3.2 participate in a panel meeting with the student at least once per year (to review progress and advise on future plans);
- 3.3 participate and comment on doctoral/masters assessment;
- 3.4 provide feedback on examiners' comments (where requested by the RAO or Principal Supervisor).

## **4. Functions of Joint Supervisors**

Under the new arrangements there is also provision for the appointment of Joint Supervisors – the respective roles will be subject to an agreement brokered and endorsed by relevant RAO(s).

## **5. Rights of Students**

### **5.1 Selection of Topic**

Applicants have a right to negotiate their own topic within the constraints of the faculty's resources and the expertise of the supervisors, unless their proposed candidature is part of a wider research program in which they are collaborating and/or on which they are engaged. The applicant should formulate the specific problem for research in collaboration with the Principal Supervisor.

The student has the right to receive documentation clearly explaining degree requirements, resources available, and administrative procedures.

### **5.2 Contact with Supervisors**

Students have a right to receive adequate supervision. They should meet the Principal Supervisor at appropriate intervals to discuss the work and any problems associated with it. Students can expect their Principal Supervisor to be accessible in person at appropriate times, when academic advice may be needed. Both student and Principal Supervisor have an obligation to ensure that they confer on the progress of the research at what are agreed by them to be appropriate intervals. An advisor(s) is also available in accordance with (3) above

### **5.3 Change of supervision**

Students are able to negotiate a change in supervision with their supervisor and Responsible Academic Officer. Where there are personality clashes which prevent fruitful co-operation between the student and a supervisor, or any other problems not able to be resolved easily, steps should be taken as soon as possible to seek a resolution of the problems in discussion with the Responsible Academic Officer and, where appropriate, other senior academic staff in the area. If alternative supervision is considered the only solution, then a recommendation to this effect by the Responsible Academic Officer should be made to the University Graduate School. If there is no other staff member at this University who is sufficiently expert in that particular field of research, efforts will be made to find a specialist at another university or institution who could be invited to act as a Principal Supervisor

### **5.4 Disagreements and difficulties**

If at any stage, the student disagrees with assessment of progress made by the supervisor or has other concerns relating to candidature, then the matter can be discussed with the supervisor and/or the relevant Responsible Academic Officer. Any further disagreement can be taken to the University Graduate School.

### **5.5 Resources**

Subject to reasonable regard for the financial situation of the University and the relevant faculty, a student has the right to expect from the faculty adequate basic facilities and services as well as the equipment, funds and other support necessary to support the degree program.

### **5.6 Examination**

Students have the right to advise the Principal Supervisor of the names of persons about whose potential role as examiners they may have some concern

### **5.7 Feedback**

The student has a right to constructive and critical assessment of relevant work submitted. In particular students have a right to know when the Principal Supervisor assesses progress as inadequate or standards of work as being below that generally expected. Principal Supervisors should specify the problems and suggest ways of addressing them. Students are expected to develop, in consultation with their Principal Supervisor, a detailed plan for their research including time-lines. This should initially be done as a plan of the whole thesis but reviewed and developed in detail for each semester. Both the Principal Supervisor and student should be clear about these goals.

While supervisors should give feedback promptly, it is also incumbent on the student to take account of the supervisors other commitments and not to place unreasonable demands on supervisors with respect to time allowed to read a draft section.

## **6. Responsibilities of Students**

Students are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the Rules for Research Degree Studies (University Calendar, Rule 11.2) and the additional rules and procedures in their faculty.

### **6.1 Selection of the supervisor**

As the Principal Supervisor will be the main source of advice and guidance, it is important for students to seek a Principal Supervisor whom they can respect professionally and to whom they can relate personally. Students new to the University may consult the Faculty Postgraduate Handbooks, Faculty Reports or other documentation to ascertain who among the staff in the faculty may be appropriate Principal Supervisors.

### **6.2 Changes**

Students should inform the Principal Supervisor of any significant factors which might affect the program of research, so that leave of absence or other arrangements can be made if necessary, or change in enrolment status.

### **6.3 Resources**

The student should discuss the resources needed and those available with the supervisor and at the time of enrolment and Doctoral/Masters Assessment. Both the student and the Principal Supervisor should reach early agreement that the scope of the research project is feasible in the time available and that the necessary resources are available.

### **6.4 Difficulties**

Any difficulties arising from the research or with supervision should be raised first with the Principal Supervisor but if the issue cannot be resolved, the Responsible Academic Officer should be contacted. The University Graduate School should be contacted if the issue persists.

### **6.5 Academic Progress**

The student has a responsibility to maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the Principal Supervisor, including, in particular, the presentation of written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage.

Continuation of candidature is conditional on maintaining satisfactory progress in all aspects of candidature which may include some or all of: progress on research plans, ethics clearance, safety requirements, coursework components, and doctoral or masters assessment. Supervisors or the Responsible Academic Officer may draw the attention of the University Graduate School to problems with progress of a student at any time.

### **6.6 Intellectual Property**

The University has a policy on intellectual property. Research students should become familiar with its implications for them before their candidature commences. Potential problems should be raised before enrolment so that a conflict of interest between the student, the University and the employer or sponsor does not occur later on. If issues of ethics or fraud arise then the Universities Australia Guidelines should be consulted. They are available from the University's Research and Innovation Office.

### **6.7 Doctoral/Masters Assessment**

Before or at the end of the first year the candidature will be assessed. Minimum requirements are prescribed in Rule 11.14.

### **6.8 Progress Reports**

All students are required to submit a progress report at six monthly intervals, usually at the end of each semester. A Progress Report Form, which describes the process of submission, will be distributed to each student.

Failure to provide the University Graduate School with a progress report may be taken to constitute unsatisfactory progress.

Unsatisfactory progress may result in discontinuation of registration (see progress report package that will be sent to you at the end of each semester).

The process of appeals against discontinuation of registration is covered in Rule 11.21.