

Swinburne University of Technology

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH SUPERVISION PRACTICE

Supervision Statement

This statement of practice supports the Higher Degree Policies and Procedures of Swinburne University, and aims to provide a generic set of guidelines for research supervision. It is anticipated that each faculty will develop a more detailed statement describing in full their respective set of practices with respect to research supervision. An effective, positive and successful research degree experience for the candidate depends on the expertise of the appointed supervisors but also on their approaches with regard to quality research supervision.

Research Supervision

Research supervision is a crucial role that encompasses research and development as well teaching and learning. The practices surrounding research supervision vary across the university according to discipline areas, traditions and ways of conducting research. A generic statement of research supervision practice, therefore, can provide an overview of roles. However, details with respect to:

- work plan recognition for supervision
- classification of research supervision and
- models of supervision

are faculty specific and need to be documented at the local level. Each enrolled research candidate must have a team of supervisors consisting of at least two active supervisors (Principal Coordinating/ Coordinating; Principal Coordinating/ Associate; with, where appropriate, additional supervisors/ consultants). Irrespective of the model adopted, it is expected that the arrangements for each candidate will clearly state the supervisor who is taking responsibility for the administrative aspects of the role (that is, the Principal coordinating supervisor).

Supervision Cohort

Swinburne university research students tally approximately 700 in number. The range of research degree offerings include the PhD, professional doctorates (DBA, Doctor of Design, Doctor of Psychology: Clinical, Doctor of Psychology: Counselling), and Masters programs. Alternate forms of doctorates include PhD by publication but this is uncommon.

Roles and Responsibilities

The research supervisor has the following responsibilities:

- Be familiar with the University's Higher Degree Policies and Procedures and other relevant university rules (Occupational Health and Safety; University's Code of Conduct for Research Ethics, National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, Code of Conduct for Research).
- Comply with the Ethical Codes and the Code of Conduct for Research.
- Discuss with the candidate the type of guidance and comment considered most helpful, and agreeing to a schedule of meetings (or an appropriate alternative) which ensures regular contact. (Refer to terms of engagement below)
- Assist in the development of a research plan with stated goals, justification, scope, methods, timelines and so on.
- Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the candidate.
- Facilitate the candidature by offering expert guidance, direction and constructive criticism to the candidate at all stages.
- Refer the candidate to relevant research support where needed.
- Ensure the candidate complies with the university's ethics requirements.
- Help the candidate to maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the accredited program.
- Read/review and return drafts of the examinable outcome promptly.
- Encourage the candidate to participate in the research culture of the university and the faculty through involvement in seminars, opportunities for writing and the submission of student support opportunities.
- Prepare supervisors' reports on the progress in keeping with both university and faculty practices.
- Take appropriate action in the event of the acute or persistent difficulties by the candidate in terms of performance, such that the candidate is unlikely to meet the requirements of the degree at the end of the prescribed period.
- Advise the candidate on applications for leave of absence.
- Be cognisant of the Swinburne Graduate Capabilities statement.
- External supervisors are expected to bring experience to the research project that is not available at Swinburne.
- Prepare the student for examination and judge when the examinable outcome is fit for submission for examination.
- Submit a nomination of examiners' form at least two months prior to the submission of the work for the given research degree.
- Sign off the intention to submit form upon completion.

Terms of Engagement

It is expected that all candidates and supervisors will negotiate the ways in which they work together. This should take place at the beginning of the supervisory relationship and should be reviewed regularly. Changes should be made where appropriate. If a dispute arises, it should be dealt with at the local faculty level through the Associate Dean of Research. If this is not possible, the individual parties may contact the Director, Graduate Studies from Swinburne Research.

Candidates and supervisors are expected to negotiate and document the following:

- The frequency, location, and duration of meetings (or equivalent ways of working).
- The time allocated for feedback on written work.
- The different roles within the supervisory team or panel.
- Authoring of research publications and related intellectual property issues.

Changes to modes of engagement should be made according to need and should be documented. A copy kept by supervisors and the research candidate.

Practices of Effective Supervisors

According to James and Baldwin (1999), effective supervisors engage in the following eleven practices:

1. Ensure the partnership is right for the project;
 2. Get to know students and carefully assess their needs;
 3. Establish reasonable, agreed expectations;
 4. Work with students to establish a strong conceptual structure and research plan;
 5. Encourage students to write early and often;
 6. Initiate regular contact and provide high quality feedback;
 7. Get students involved in the life of the faculty (or school);
 8. Inspire and motivate;
 9. Help if academic and personal crises crop up;
 10. Take an active interest in students' future careers;
 11. Carefully monitor the final production and presentation of the research.
- [From James, R., & Baldwin, G., (1999). *Eleven practices of effective postgraduate supervisors*. Melbourne: CSHE.]