STEPS AND PRINCIPLES IN RESEARCH SUPERVISION

A HANDBOOK FOR ACU STAFF

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1. Before you make a commitment to supervise the student.

First

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<tr>
<th>THINGS TO CONSIDER</th>
<th>THINGS TO DO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is the content of the potential topic within your academic expertise?</td>
<td>If necessary meet with the student to discuss the proposed content and methodology before you make a commitment to the supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the methodology of the potential topic within your expertise?</td>
<td>If necessary, discuss the potential topic with someone who could be a co-supervisor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you answered no to one of these questions is there someone who could co-supervise with you who could provide the expertise you lack?</td>
<td>If necessary recommend this co-supervisor to your Head of School, or Associate Dean (Research) and to the Research Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you answered no to both of the above questions, should you take on this supervision?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have room within your workload to take on the supervision?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any other reservations about taking on the supervision and if so what are they?</td>
<td></td>
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Second: Read:

1. Research and Professional Doctorate Degree Regulations

2. Other policy documents that relate to Research Supervision are available at:
   - Policy and Procedures for the Accreditation of Research Supervisors
   - Policy on Professional Doctorate Degrees
   - Higher Degree Supervision Policy
   - Policy on the Preparation and Presentation of a Research or Professional Doctoral Thesis for Examination
   - Policy on the Appointment of Examiners and the Conduct of the Examination Process
   - Standards of Scholarly Integrity
   - Code of Conduct of Research
3. Other useful general policy documents are available at:
- Commercial Research Policy
- Computer Use Policy
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Research Data Retention Policy and Guidelines

It is in your own interest and that of your students to know the regulations that pertain to the research degree you are supervising.

2. Establishing a protocol with the co-supervisor

After you have agreed to supervise the student and a co-supervisor has been appointed, meet with the co-supervisor to decide how you will work together. There are a number of models for this.

Model 1. The co-supervisor is more of a joint supervisor, being present at every meeting, receiving every item of written work, giving advice to the same extent as the principal supervisor.

Model 2. The co-supervisor has been chosen for his or her expertise in an area of content or methodology. In this model the co-supervisor is called upon when their expertise is required.

Model 3. The co-supervisor is in the background, only reading work and giving feedback when a full chapter draft has been completed.

There is no one or right way for supervisors to work together. The way that you will work together needs to be made explicit, both between yourselves and to the student. It needs to be established that if there are differences of opinion between the supervisors about the student’s work, the supervisors will discuss this and resolve it together, thus avoiding causing confusion for the student by giving conflicting advice.

Co-supervision needs to be actively managed with co-supervisors approaching it in the right frame of mind, starting off on common ground, agreeing expectations of the research project and of their own roles and responsibilities and thus of the student’s, and keeping their relationships with each other and with the candidate under regular review as the project proceeds (Taylor and Beasley, 2005, p. 77).
3. The first meeting with the student.

There are two goals for the first meeting.
To establish the research focus
To diagnose the areas where the student needs additional help.

The research focus

Establishing the focus involves identifying what it is that the student will gather information about. Until this is established, nothing else is possible. Usually the student has some idea of what the research focus is to be, but sometimes students will have no particular focus. In this case you will need to find out what the students’ interest and background are, and help them to arrive at an area they would like to research. On the other hand, there may be research priorities of which you are aware, that you could suggest to the student. At the first meeting ask the student to write up to 500 words on the research focus and to have this ready for the next meeting.

Go to the ACU library page, section for researchers, on beginning research. This will help with the definition of a research focus.

Appraising the student’s needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student’s need</th>
<th>Some ways forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student does not have much knowledge in the area of the research focus.</td>
<td>Set some seminal reading to guide the student’s thinking. The ACU library’s page for researchers on finding resources will help. <a href="http://www.acu.edu.au/library/use/researchers/">http://www.acu.edu.au/library/use/researchers/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student does not have any previous expertise of conducting research.</td>
<td>Direct the student to the university’s on-line research methodology unit, and require that they complete this unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Have word processing skills. | Microsoft Word 2007  
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The student is not familiar with the library. | Have the student make an appointment with a librarian for a tour of the library.  
Have the student complete the on-line module on using the library.  
Show the student the ACU library site and take them through it on line.  
Make sure the student knows all the procedures for borrowing, intercampus and interlibrary loans, requesting books and other resources on-line. All of this information is on the ACU library page, for researchers;  
| The student is not familiar with the campus, | Ensure that the student:  
• Knows what facilities there are on campus for postgraduate research students.  
• Has access to these facilities.  
• Knows what opportunities there are for conference funding and how to access this.  
• Knows what student seminars are available.  
• Knows how to contact the relevant co-ordinators for issues than the supervisors cannot address.  
Ensure that the student’s e-mail address is given to the relevant co-ordinators so that he or she will receive information about student seminars and other opportunities. |
| The student lacks skills in academic writing, | Direct the student to ACU’s academic skills unit.  
Direct the student to one of the books on academic writing that is listed in Appendix 3.  
Direct the student to:  
Direct the student to the ACU on-line information on Academic Referencing:  

### 4. The second meeting with the student.

This meeting should be held quite quickly after the first meeting and it has two goals.

1. To establish agreement between supervisor(s) and student about common expectations.
2. To introduce the student to an outline for a research proposal.

**Establishing common expectations.**

At the very least the student and supervisor should discuss and come to agreement on the following. It is beneficial to record these agreements, in the understanding that they may be reviewed as the research process goes forward.
Setting meetings

- Supervision is more efficient if it is established that there are to be regular formal meeting times, rather than the student “dropping in” when they want the supervisor’s attention.

Frequency of meetings:

- Meetings at least every two weeks are most likely to result in a thesis being completed and the student’s satisfaction with supervision. (The meetings often became somewhat less frequent in the middle of the candidature in contrast to the beginning and the end). It is also important to ensure that the student has the supervisor(s) undivided attention during the meetings

The role of the student and the role of the supervisor

- It should be established early the responsibility for the thesis rests with the students and that the role of the supervisor is as facilitator, advisor, critical friend and teacher. Is the student prepared to take this responsibility?

Expectations about submitting written work

- Students required to submit written work from early in their candidature, are most satisfied with their supervision. Writing early and often helps the student to develop good academic writing skills. In the early stages they will need to draft a research proposal, and later to draft chapters, reports on parts of the data collection and analysis, the development of conference papers and publications. Students and supervisor need to agree about how written work will be submitted, and how much time before the meeting the supervisor needs in order to read and give feedback on the work during the meeting.

Supervisor feedback

- Students sometimes complain that supervisors are slow to read their work, that their comments are non-existent or inadequate, or unduly destructive. The supervisor needs to give prompt and detailed feedback, noting the strengths of the work and providing advice for its development. A general timeframe for feedback should be negotiated.

What will be recorded from the supervisory meetings?

- It is a good idea to keep brief notes of each meeting. The supervisor and student can decide together how this may be done.

A timeline for the project

- The timetable for completion needs to be agreed upon and regularly monitored. This can be set out as a series of stages, with general agreement being made about when each stage may be completed. These stages may be reviewed as the work progresses.

Defining the boundaries of the supervisory relationship

- There are often differences between the expectations of students and those of supervisors. In general, supervisors are concerned with the intellectual aspects of their student’s research, while students tend to emphasise the interpersonal aspects. They sometimes expect the provision of advice, sympathy and encouragement outside the strict academic boundaries of the project. Supervisors need to approach this with care, and to discuss with the student the professional boundaries of the relationship. This discussion will also include establishing expectations about the extent and nature of direction from the supervisor, the level of independence of the student, the supervisor’s attitude to editing and proof reading of written work. There should also be discussion of any ideological differences between supervisor and student. This need not be problematic. It should be possible for a supervisor to have students working from a range of assumptions.

5. An outline for a research proposal

At this stage it is important to inform the student about the requirement of developing and defending a research proposal. Developing this proposal will constitute a large part of the work that will be undertaken in the next stages.

Every student in a research degree at ACU is required to formally present and defend a research proposal. For full time PhD students this should be completed in the first year of full-time candidature, with an equivalent time allowance for part-time students. In a professional doctorate, the thesis proposal is developed and defended as part of the required course work for the fourth unit. A student in the Master of Philosophy degree or a Masters by Research Degree should present a formal thesis proposal at a research seminar by the end of the first semester of full-time enrolment (or second semester of part-time enrolment).

The ACU Research degree regulations set out briefly the requirements for a research proposal. However, the outline given here has been used successfully by both supervisors and research students, and may be adapted to any discipline.
Research Proposal

Your aim is to present a research proposal of 8000 words or approximately 20 pages, which outlines the research that you would like to undertake for your thesis. The proposal is a plan detailing the area of research interest, identifying the research question(s) and describing the ways in which the research question(s) will be investigated.

The proposal should include;

A front cover, including title, candidate's name and student number, the name of the degree and the title of the research proposal.

A contents page.

An abstract of less than one page. This should be a succinct summary of the details of the proposal.

The introduction and context. All research questions come from a particular context, therefore the introduction gives the context and background of the study. It may include relevant aspects of the candidate's background that have led to the choice of this research. It should indicate why the problem is relevant for the discipline, along with its significance and potential contribution to knowledge in the discipline.

The purpose of the study is indicated against this background Clear definitions of relevant terms are given and there should be a listing of the precise research questions. [NB Some supervisors may prefer that this section follows the literature review].

A review of the literature. The literature review brings together the work of key authors in the field, or fields, related to the study, and provides further background for the research question(s). You do not need to provide a full literature review, but rather need to indicate the areas in which you will have to read for this thesis, and why these areas of reading are essential. You will need to indicate the key authors and ideas in each of the fields in which you will be reading, and show the connections between the fields. Finally you will need to show where your research fits into this bigger picture, what gaps it fills or how it will extend this literature.

Research design. This will include a description and justification of your research design or methodology and if a study in the social sciences may also address the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings or framework of your study or methodology. A description of proposed methods of data collection and analysis should also be included. methods and mode of data analysis. You need to describe: from whom
or what you will be collecting data (be specific); the data collection techniques or instruments you will use; the stages of your data collection.
Interview schedules, focus group questions, survey forms or any other instruments you will be using; how you will analysis the data you collect.

**Ethical considerations**

You need also address potential ethical issues.

**Limitations and delimitations.**

What is the scope of this project, what are its limitations and boundaries?

**References.** The proposal needs to be written with attention to the appropriate academic standards.

**Timeline.** There should be a clear timeline for the completion of the thesis. (as an appendix)

**Budget:** Estimate the costs involved in undertaking your research and writing your thesis. Include costs for travel, paying for transcriptions of interviews, postage, printing of surveys, etc. (optional)
6. The third and subsequent meetings with the student

Adequate time needs to be given to the development of the research proposal. For some students this will just take a semester (especially in the case of professional doctorate students who have already completed course work and are developing the proposal as their fourth unit). For others it will take a year or more. The following six principles should guide this period:

1. **Supervision is teaching**. The supervisor needs to approach supervision at this stage as intense teaching. The student will need to be shown many things, such as how to develop a literature map, perhaps how to use the library databases (this should largely be covered in the orientation and library module at the beginning of candidature), how to put together an outline for a literature review, how to construct a research design. If the student has little experience or knowledge in these areas, the principle of supervision as teaching is even more important. Supervisors should not assume that students have the knowledge and skills they need to produce a research proposal. Teaching is usually quite intense at this early stage, but its intensity will reduce as the student grows in knowledge, skills and confidence. Areas where the student may need intense teaching are:

- Articulating and writing about the remote and more immediate context of the research focus. In a social science proposal, this will include its historical, social and contemporary dimensions.
- Deciding on the kind of research to be undertaken, i.e. exploration? description? explanation? theory development? experimental? Survey/ etc. (In reality, most social science research studies are not just exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, theory building or replicative. Usually they are a mixture of one or more of these).
- Breaking the research focus down into a research hypothesis or research questions that are clear, specific, answerable, interconnected and substantively relevant.
- Constructing a literature map that will become the foundation of the literature review.
- Using the library (catalogues and databases) to locate key literature.
- Constructing a research design which may line epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods in a way that has the potential to address the research questions. (Students who have no background or experience in research design should be required to complete an on-line module in this area, eg, meta-theoretical perspectives and research design).
- Developing data collection instruments.
- Articulating the significance and potential contribution to knowledge of the research, as well as its limitations and delimitations.
- Developing a realistic time-line for the completion of the research and the thesis.
2. Regular and effective meetings are essential.

During this first stage, as the research proposal is being developed, it is essential to have regular meetings, and to ensure that the meetings are effective. The effectiveness of supervisory meeting is assured if the student and supervisor have prepared for it, if they have a common goal for the meeting, if the student has completed written work and submitted it to the supervisor in time for it to be read and then discussed at the meeting, and if the students knows that he or she has the undivided attention of the supervisor.

3. The student should submit written work towards the proposal from the earliest stage.

Students learn to write well by writing and by receiving constructive feedback on the writing they submit. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Unless the student is producing written work towards the proposal, the supervisor cannot know what progress is being made, and the supervisory meetings may be wasted. The necessity of submitting written work should be agreed to by both student and supervisor. The written work submitted during this stage will build up to the research proposal.

The importance of early writing cannot be over-emphasized. Students may not be used to academic writing, or they may be daunted by having to produce long pieces of work. The secret at the early stage is to break the writing up into manageable pieces. Some of these may be:

- 800 words on the historical background of your research focus;
- A similar number of words on the immediate context of your research focus;
- A potential outline of a literature review.
- Gradually filling out the sections of the literature review one by one.
- Each aspect of the research design, from epistemology to methods, can be the focus of brief writing activities, until finally all of these sections can be put together in a first draft of a research proposal.

4. There should be an agreed timeframe for the completion and presentation of the research proposal.

In the case of a full time PhD student, the normal time frame is for the research proposal to be presented within the first year, and in the second year for a part-time student. In a professional doctorate, taking into account the course work that has been completed, it should be competed in the fourth semester of candidature, while for the Master of Philosophy the research proposal should be completed in the first semester of candidature for a full-time student and in the first year of candidature for a part-time student.
5. The supervisor is a responsible and accountable manager of the research/thesis process.
The supervisor has professional and legal responsibilities towards the student. Not only must he/she provide academic teaching and leadership, but must also guide the student through the stages and requirements of the degree. Progress reports and other documentation are an important way in which the university monitors the student’s progress, and the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that this and other necessary reporting are carried out.

Successful supervisors are alert to the warning signs that a student may be floundering and can intervene in sensitive ways to help the student to make progress. Warning signs may be: constant changing of the research focus; avoiding contact with the supervisor; not keeping appointments; not answering messages; avoiding writing; procrastination; self denigration; difficulty in making decisions; an exaggerated need for structure, and over perfectionism. These factors can be used by supervisors and universities to identify students at risk and to develop interventions focused on completion.

If the supervisor deems that a student’s progress is unsatisfactory even after honest discussion and renewed goal-setting with the student, he/she should seek the advice of the co-ordinator of the degree, or of the Associate Dean (Research) in the faculty, and the relevant candidature officer in the Research Office.

Whenever the Principal Supervisor or the Associate Dean (Research) considers that a candidate is not making satisfactory progress or is not complying with the requirements of these Regulations, the URC may, after seeking clarification (if necessary) from the Principal Supervisor and the Associate Dean (Research), require the candidate to show cause why candidature should not be terminated on the grounds of unsatisfactory progress. (See Academic Progress regulations, 15.5.4)

6. The supervisor should induct the student into the research culture.
Every university should develop a research culture and community in which research students may be supported. Lunch time or early evening seminars where students can present their work; seminars by visiting scholars; beginning and end-of-year functions and regular newsletters are just some ways in which this research culture can be developed. While it is not the sole responsibility of the individual supervisor to develop this culture, it is their role to assist their students to take advantage of what is on offer.
7. Presentation and defence of the research proposal and confirmation of candidature.

What follows is a summary of ACU’s regulations regarding confirmation of candidature.

As the basis for confirmation of candidature, all research degree candidates shall attend postgraduate seminars in their respective School/Faculty/Campus, as appropriate, and present a formal thesis proposal at a research seminar within the first twelve (12) months of full-time thesis candidature, or part-time equivalent (PhD), in the fourth semester of enrolment (Professional doctorates) and by the end of the first semester of full-time enrolment (or second semester of part-time enrolment) in the thesis unit of a Masters degree. In the formal thesis proposal, candidates must present:

(a) their intended area of research;
(b) clearly defined and described aims and purposes of the study and the identification and elaboration of the problems and/or hypotheses being investigated;
(c) the results of their literature review;
(d) the proposed research design and methodology and the rationale for their selection, including potential ethical issues;
(e) intended data sources, and
(f) timeline for completing the degree within the period of candidature.

The Principal Supervisor via the Head of School and Associate Dean (Research) shall advise the URC of the result of the proposal seminar and shall recommend to that Committee whether candidature is to be confirmed or the candidate is to be required to re-present their thesis proposal seminar within three months. When the URC is satisfied that the candidate has met the requirements for the initial seminar, the candidate will be permitted to proceed.

What happens at a research proposal defence?
First, the supervisor needs to arrange a day and time for the Confirmation of Candidature seminar. *

Next, a panel is drawn up. According to different degrees the panel has differing structures. For PhD, Master of Philosophy, and MMidR and MMR degrees it consists of the Head of School or the Associate Dean (Research) who chairs the panel, the principal and co-supervisor, a senior academic from the School of enrolment, and a senior academic from another ACU School who has the necessary knowledge and skills. In the case of a professional doctorate, a member of the relevant profession may also be asked to participate. Other interested academics and students may also be invited. Supervisors should check with the Associate Dean (Research) for their faculties, to determine the structure of the panel that applies for the particular degree.
The outcome of the proposal presentation needs to be recorded and lodged with the URC. The form for doing this again may be obtained from the Research Office, or there may be a particular faculty form that is required (Doctor of Education). Supervisors should check with Associate Dean (Research) and the Research Office to ensure that they have the most up to date form. [http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_and_documents/]

Normally the candidate will present the proposal for no more than 30 minutes, with the remaining time (30-45 minutes) being given to questions and discussion. At the correct time the panel chair will ask the candidate to leave the room. In some cases all academic staff and students who are there join in the discussion of the proposal, and then the panel has the responsibility for the decision and the preparation of the report on the seminar. In other cases, those who are not on the panel leave the room when the presenting student leaves (Panel chairs need to check the protocol for the particular faculty). Usually there will be some matters for amendment, which are then communicated to the student, who is then required to present a final draft of the proposal for submission to the panel chair. From there the proposal is sent to the Associate Dean (Research) and finally to the URC and the candidature is confirmed.

*For the education faculty these forms are found at http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_schools_institutes/faculties/education/faculty_research_support/forms/#f1. For other faculties they are available on request from the Research Office or visit Research Services http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/ and follow the links.

8. Seeking ethics approval

No data gathering can proceed until ethics approval has been given for the conduct of the research. Seeking ethics approval should begin as soon as candidature has been formally confirmed by the URC. All the necessary forms can be found at the website http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/for_researchers/research_ethics/. First the student should read the Guidelines for Applicants which provide information about the ethics approval process. Then, with the help of the supervisor(s) the student needs to complete the ethics application form, and to prepare any additions such as letters of information, consent forms, letters to governing bodies that will be required in the course of the research. All such items need to be submitted and there are guidelines for preparing them in the appendices section of the website given above. In some instances ethics approval may need to be submitted prior to the confirmation of candidature. However, it is worth noting that the Confirmation of Candidature process operates as a peer review process, a requirement of the ACU HREC Committee.
9. Working towards the thesis

The usual structure of a thesis is as follows: *

Introduction (usually a short section which presents the research focus, discusses its significance and introduces the research aims or hypothesis)
Ch 1. Context of the research problem,
Ch 2. The literature review.
Ch 3. The research design
Ch s 4-6. Findings and discussion chapters
Ch 7. Conclusions and recommendations.

*This outline presumes there is only one study. It is increasingly common within disciplines such as psychology to have 2 3, or even 4 pieces of research to constitute the PhD. Thus the structure is somewhat different. There is often considerable debate and discussion about how much "literature" is needed before each of the studies.

Once ethics approval has been obtained, it is important to return to the timeline for thesis completion that was originally decided upon, to review and if necessary re-draw it. Proposed dates for completion should be assigned to each chapter, in the understanding that these will be subject to review. In general, before data collection commences, the context chapter and literature review should be in a complete first draft. Having this background and knowledge of the literature helps the student to make connections with the literature as the data is gathered. The student has already drawn up a research design for the proposal, so the research gathering can proceed when these chapters are in draft. The research design chapter can be written after the data gathering, or can be an ongoing process throughout data gathering since a great deal of learning about methodology takes place during data gathering and analysis.

10. Write, read, discuss, plan

Now a pattern of a) the student writing and submitting work, b) the supervisor reading and giving detailed and constructive feedback, c) discussion of the work and looking to the next work to be completed- can be established. While the student must do the work, an important part of the role of the supervisor is to help to keep the research project on track. Regular meetings with detailed, constructive and prompt feedback, as well as attention to what still needs to be done, will ensure this. A regular protocol of writing, meeting, discussing and planning needs to be established, and both supervisor and student need to make a commitment to this. The role of the co-supervisor too also needs to be considered at this stage, depending on the model of co-supervision that was decided upon at the beginning of the project.
11. Some common problems that may de-rail the student’s project, and how to address them.

One of the secrets of success in a research project is perseverance. However, very often during the middle of candidature, motivation drops and students stop making progress. They report boredom or frustration with their project, lack of time, or lack of enthusiasm. The role of the supervisor here is particularly important and somewhat complex. They must try to affirm, encourage, listen to and understand the student, while bearing in mind the need for timely completion of the thesis. Ahern and Manathunga (2004) have identified particular problems encountered by students and some interventions which may help the student to get back on track. The following tables have been developed from their work.

An overall term, for a common problem is academic procrastination. This is the tendency on the part of the student to avoid academic work and to grow increasingly anxious as a result of this avoidance. Faced with this problem, the supervisor needs to investigate whether the origin of the problem is cognitive, social, emotional or whether it is just part of the research process.

<p>| Cognitive origins of procrastination may be | The supervisor should direct the student to computing or library skills courses, or to an academic writing course. Another way to approach a block in writing is to require frequent short pieces of writing until confidence builds up. |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| Concerned with academic skills such as using information technology, using the library, or writing skills. | The supervisor should direct the student to computing or library skills courses, or to an academic writing course. Another way to approach a block in writing is to require frequent short pieces of writing until confidence builds up. | --- |
| Concerned with conceptualization of the thesis. | Here the supervisor needs to be a teacher. Using diagrams, concept maps, lists of headings the student and supervisor together need to work on the conceptualization of the research, until it is clear and well formulated. | --- |
| Arising from a particular learning disability | Draw on student support services and discuss options with the student. | --- |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional origins of procrastination may be</th>
<th>Performance anxiety</th>
<th>Personality clash with supervisor</th>
<th>Continued procrastination after a number of measures have been tried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The supervisor should check, as noted above, for any gaps in knowledge and skills in the cognitive domain, and address them in the ways already suggested. There may need to be a re-framing of the project if the present conceptualisation is not satisfactory. Again setting small tasks rather than large ones can often reduce anxiety.</td>
<td>There needs to be a frank and open discussion between supervisor and student to resolve differences and establish mutual expectations. If this is not effective, it may be advisable for the student to seek another supervisor. Find the correct form for this at <a href="http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_and_documents/">http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_and_documents/</a> under “Candidature Matters”.</td>
<td>The supervisor needs to present the student with options and to set an ultimatum. It may be necessary, following consultation with the HoS and the Associate Dean (Research) to send the student a letter asking the student to show cause why their enrolment should not be terminated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social origins of procrastination may be</th>
<th>The student feels isolated</th>
<th>The student finds that they do not have the time to do the study, or they need to take on further employment for financial reasons, thus reducing the time they can give to it.</th>
<th>Factors in the student’s family life are interfering with the research project.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Link the student with colloquium evenings, seminars, reading groups, or other students who are working on similar topics.</td>
<td>Discuss the reasons for lack of time, and perhaps set new goals, discuss time management, suggest that the student go part time, seek leave of absence or if necessary withdraw.</td>
<td>Sometimes this just needs patience. The problem may be resolved, allowing the student to continue with the research. Patience, understanding and encouragement is required from the supervisor. If the problem is not resolved and continues to detract from the student’s study, the options are again to set new goals, discuss time management, suggest that the student go part time, seek leave of absence or if necessary withdraw.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Work in progress seminars

In addition to the probationary and final seminar, the student must give a work in progress seminar, annually. The work in progress paper may be given to fellow students, to a panel of academics, or at a Conference. The work in progress seminar gives the student the opportunity to put their work before a wider audience, to receive feedback and critical review and if necessary to make some adjustments as a result of this review.

13. Gathering and analyzing the data

The research design chapter can “make or break” a thesis. * For a supervisor or student who needs further help with understanding research design or a particular approach to research, the books listed in appendix 4 are available from ACU campus libraries. Also available are on-line modules that deal with quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

* This section assumes a social science approach to research. It may not be relevant for more text based studies such as those often found in the disciplines of theology and philosophy

Here are some foundational questions that will guide the discussion between supervisor and student, and that will inform the research design chapter.

1) What is your **ontology** (The position one takes on the nature of reality)?
2) What is your **epistemology** (What is knowledge and how is it gained )?
3) What is your **theoretical perspective** (Through what “eyes” or lens will you interpret the data)?
4) What is your **methodology** (This is the general framework within which data will be collected).
5) What **methods** will you use. (Specifically how will you collect the data, from whom and using what instruments)?

Here are some questions that will help you to justify your research design.

1) Why do you adopt a subjectivist or objectivity ontology?
2) How do you justify your epistemology?
3) Why is the particular methodology you have chosen the right one for this project?
4) Why choose these methods for gathering data?
5) How will the methods you’ve chosen work together to proved the data you need?
6) Why did you not choose other methodologies or methods?

Here are some questions to help you to focus the gathering of data.

1) From whom will you be gathering data and why?
2) How will these people be selected?
3) What time will you be asking the participant to give?
4) How will you record the data?
5) What is your time-frame for gathering the data.
Here are some questions that will help you to establish the method of analyzing the data.

1) What methodology are you using and how will this influence the analysis of data?
2) What stages will there be in your analysis of the data?
3) How will you establish that your analysis of the data is trustworthy?
4) How will you display your data in order for it to be analyzed?
5) How will the final analysis of data be presented?

**NB:** Go to the ACU on-line completed theses and see how others have gathered and analysed data. Note the use of diagrams.  

### 14. Managing the writing process.

In a research thesis) writing is an exercise in marketing. Thus, clear writing comes from having a clear understanding of the benefit that a reader can expect to gain from reading a document. This means that a skillful writer crafts each document so that a reader cannot fail to see the benefit of reading it. The role of the academic supervisor becomes one of guiding the student to a distillation of what ever the benefit to the reader might be. The key thing the supervisor needs to manage is clarity, but to do this the supervisor often needs to manage fear, because fear is often the root cause of missed deadlines and turgid writing styles. (Brown, 1995, p.90)

**Some principles to guide thesis writing.**

1) The writing process must be managed, not haphazard. Don’t assume that the student knows how to write or that writing is just a matter of putting sentences together.
2) Show the student examples of good writing and discuss why they are good.
3) Be certain about the purpose of writing, that is to crystallize original ideas and present them in a way that others can understand.
4) Clarity is everything. Examine the way a chapter is ordered so that a clear argument is built up.
5) Use headings to break up long sections of text.
6) Begin a section with the most important point and work through to the least important.
7) Read paragraphs and sentences over and over until you are sure that they say what you want them to say.
8) Read the work aloud. This helps us to know whether or not what we have written sounds natural and logical.
9) Writing is not something to be done when the research is finished, it is an integral part of the research itself.
10) Keep to writing and feedback deadlines.
Questions for the supervisor to ask when reading a student’s work.

1) Is there an overall coherence and focus to the work?
2) Does the work analyse and argue rather than just report?
3) Is there a logical flow of information within each section and between sections?
4) Do tables, graphs, figures match the text?
5) Are the links between paragraphs clearly made?
6) Do sentences flow from and into each other?
7) Are headings used correctly to delineate parts of the text?

Questions to apply to the context chapter and literature review.

1) What is the purpose of the chapter?
2) How and why did you select the material to go in the chapter?
3) How did you put the material together and why?
4) What does each section and the chapter as a whole mean?
5) What arguments do you build up by the way you have used the material?
6) What does this mean for your research project?
7) Where will you go from here?

Questions to apply to the method chapter.

1) What was your research design and why did you develop this design for this project?
2) What did you actually do and why?
3) What facts does the reader need to know about your population, timeframe, location of your research and your reason for choosing any of these?
4) What difficulties did you face and how did you deal with them?
5) Did you make any changes to your research design and why?
6) What may be the implications of these changes to the project overall?

Questions to apply to the findings, analysis and conclusions chapter.

1) What did you do?
2) Why did you do it this way?
3) What did you find out?
4) What does this mean in theory?
5) What does this mean in practice?
6) What is the key benefit for the person reading this?
7) What remains unresolved?
15. Putting the thesis together

It is the responsibility of the student with the guidance of the supervisor to make sure that
the thesis is worthy of the degree. It should not be submitted until this is the case.
Sometimes students can be in a rush to submit, because they have lost energy and interest
after the long thesis writing process, but time spent polishing the work in the last stages
will pay off. Attention must be given to presentation, so that there are no errors or
spelling, punctuation or grammatical mistakes to irritate the examiners. (Examiners often
mention poor presentation as a first impression that disposes them negatively towards a
students’ work).

In addition the correct referencing style needs to be used consistently throughout, and
heading styles and styles for tables, figures and graphs should be consistent with the style
that has been adopted.

Finally the ACU requirements for presenting theses need to be rigorously applied. These
can be found at:
http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_-_and-
documents/, under the heading Thesis Submission and Examination. It is the
responsibility of the supervisor to ensure and ultimately to sign that the thesis
corresponds with the requirements listed in this document.

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Criteria of a good thesis

**Authenticity**: The thesis should be the candidate’s own work and not plagiarised from
the work of others, published and unpublished. All sources used should be appropriately
acknowledged using a recognized form of referencing.

**Scholarship**: The thesis should conform to the normal canons of scholarship in the
discipline, displaying critical discrimination, and a sense of proportion in evaluating
evidence and the opinion of others. Sources should be cited accurately, consistently and
correctly in the text and the bibliography.

**Professionalism**-the thesis should demonstrate that the candidate has acquired or
extended a repertoire of research skills appropriate to a professional researcher in his or
her field, and has a clear understanding of the role of a researcher.

**Structure, writing and presentation**-the thesis should be clearly structured and orderly
in content, and well written and presented. Similarly any composition, exhibition,
artifacts or other products of practice arising from the research should be arranged and
presented in an orderly and coherent way. (Taylor and Beasley, 2005, p. 179).
16. Notice of intention to submit and final seminar

Approximately three months before submission, the supervisor and student need to complete the Notice of Intention to Submit a Higher Degree Thesis for Examination form. [http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_-and-_documents/]

At this time the student should present the final paper in an oral presentation to staff and other students. This paper summarizes the purpose, methodology and findings of the research project. The purpose of the presentation is to ensure that there is consistency between methodology and findings, and to give the student an opportunity to explain and justify their research. (Check individual Faculty requirements regarding final seminar.)

Before submission, the supervisor needs to carefully read the thesis from beginning to end taking the view of an examiner. Final corrections will be made as a result of this reading.

17. Choosing the examiners.

When the Research Office receives the Notice of Intention to Submit a Higher Degree Thesis for Examination form, the supervisor will be sent a form on which to list potential examiners. The supervisor is asked to provide the names and details of four potential examiners, at least one of whom should be an academic in an overseas university. Students are able to suggest potential examiners, but they should not be told those that are finally recommended. Examiners should be selected for their expertise in the discipline of the thesis or in its methodology. The supervisor should establish the availability of the examiners before entering their names on the form. This form is then sent to the Associate Dean (Research) and then on to the Research Office, from where the examiners will be contacted and the thesis sent out for examination.

18. Regulations regarding examination.

All regulations regarding the examination of thesis are contained in Research and Professional Doctorate Degree Regulations, of the University Handbook 2010, [http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/publications/handbooks/handbook_2010/general_information/research_and_professional_doctorate_degree_regulations/]

When the thesis is ready, the student submits four copies (spiral bound) to the Research Office from where it is sent out for examination. At this stage the supervisor following a final check signs a form to say that they approve the thesis being submitted, and completes a checklist. (See Submission Checklist form (Form C) where this checklist can be found) [http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/research_higher_degrees/forms_-and-_documents/]. When the examiner’s reports are received, the URC makes a decision
about the result and this is communicated to the principal supervisor, who is given copies of the examiners’ reports as well as copies for the student. The principal supervisor communicates the result to the student.

19. Supporting the student after the examination of the thesis

Usually the student will have some amendments to made to the thesis (only about 20% of students have their thesis passed with three” top boxes”, that is two examiners saying that there are no changes to be made). These may range from small presentation errors such as spelling, punctuation and referencing, or they may be larger issues such as a more detailed explanation of the methodology, particular attention to a concept used in the study, adding to the literature review, or any other number of amendments that may be required by examiners. It is the role of the supervisor to work through the examiners’ reports with the candidate, to explain to the candidate what needs to be done, draw up an agreed on list of amendments, require the candidate to make the amendments and provide the supervisor with evidence the amendments have been made before the final bound copy is submitted. The supervisor then signs the list provided by the student, as well as the form which releases a thesis for public use (available from the Research Office). Finally the student must submit to the Research Office one bound copy of the thesis and three copies of the thesis on CD. The student should also provide the supervisors with a copy of the thesis.

20. If the student is told to re-submit.

Sometimes a student is required to undertake very substantial re-writing and to re-submit the thesis for re-examination within 12 months. Problems may centre on the conceptual framework of the thesis, on gaps in the literature review, on arguments that are unsupported by evidence, or on the methodology. This of course is very discouraging, but the student should be supported to persevere with revisions... Supervisor and student should work together to:

- List all of the examiners’ requirements.
- Work from that list to a list or summary of what needs to be done.
- Make all of the small changes, that is spelling, punctuation and referencing first.
- Draw up a new outline for the thesis incorporating the new work
- Set timeframes for each of the relevant sections of the thesis to be re-written.
- Agree on a date for re-submission.

The examiners’ requirements need to be strictly adhered to. When the thesis has been re-written the examiner needs to check the thesis against the examiners’ requirements. Moreover, the re-writing should be attended to carefully and slowly, not in a superficial manner. The requirement to resubmit really does mean substantial re-writing so it can’t be rushed. The work towards re-submission may take up to a year and it is important that
the necessary time is taken. Upon re-submission the student should provide a detailed list of changes that have been made and this should be signed by the supervisor.

21. If the thesis is failed?

If the thesis was likely to fail it should not have been submitted, so an outright fail as opposed to a requirement to re-submit is quite rare. However, if it happens the supervisor needs to continue to support the student. The first decision to be made is whether to accept defeat and abandon the degree. If this decision is taken it must be accepted by both student and supervisor. If however, the student wants to try again another decision must be made. Is the failed thesis able to be salvaged? This can be decided by going through the steps listed in section 19 above, and re-conceptualizing or re-writing the thesis according to the examiners’ critique. If the thesis cannot be rescued the decision may be made to start again with a new project.

22. Maintaining the scholarly relationship after graduation

The relationship between supervisor and student can become a satisfying and fulfilling friendship between two academics. There are many ways that they can continue to collaborate after the thesis has been successfully examined and the student has graduated.

Some of these are:

- Writing ands submitting scholarly papers together based on the methodology or findings of the thesis. This is very common practice and there should be at least one jointly authored paper to disseminate the results of the research.
- Developing parts of the thesis for chapters in edited collections.
- Presenting together at Conferences or workshops.
- Supervisor helping the student to set goals for their academic life in the future.
- Undertaking further research projects together.
- Presenting to continuing research students about methodology, data analysis or other topics.
- Joint supervision of other research students.
References used in this Handbook


Appendix 1. Books on research methods (the call numbers refer to the Raheen library at Melbourne campus).

  Call number: 362.10723 ABR
  Call number: 001.42 AND
  Call number: 142.7 PHE
  Call number: 001.4 BEN
  Call number: 300.72 SEL
  Call number: 362.1072 HEA
  Call number: 001.42 BLA
  Call number: 300.72 FOC
  Call number: 300.72 BOU
Brink, P.J. and Wood, M.J. *Basic steps in planning nursing research: from question to proposal*. 5th ed. 2001. Call number: 610.73072 BRI
  Call number: 320.072 RES
Cheek, J. *Postmodern and poststructural approaches to nursing research*. c2000.
  Call number: 610.73072 CHE
  Call number: 370.72 CLA
  Call number: 618.2007 PRI
  Call number: 300.72 COG
Czarniawska-Joerges, B. *Narratives in social science research*. 2004. Call number: 300.72 CZA
Emmison, M. and Smith, P. *Researching the visual: images, objects, contexts and Interactions in social and cultural inquiry*. 2000. Call number: 300.72 EMM
Franck, Robert (ed.) *The explanatory power of models: bridging the gap between empirical and theoretical research in the social sciences*. 2002. Call number: 300.72 EXP
Fraser, S. (ed.) *Doing research with children and young people*. 2004. Call number: 305.23072 DOI
Gillham, B. *The research interview*. 2000. Call number: 001.433 GIL
Gillham, B. *Case study research methods*. 2000. Call number: 300.722 GIL
Gorard, S. *Quantitative methods in educational research: the role of numbers made easy*. 2001. Call number: 370.72 GOR
Gorard, S. *Quantitative methods in social science*. 2003. Call number: 300.72 GOR
Gray, D. *Doing research in the real world*. 2004. Call number: 300.72 GRA
Hammersley, M. *What’s wrong with ethnography?* 2002. Call number: 306.072 HAM
Hayes, N. *Doing psychological research: gathering and analyzing data*. 2000. Call number: 150.72 HAY
Holosko, M. **Primer for critiquing social research: a student guide.** 2005. Call number: 300.72 HOL
Hopkins, D. **A teacher’s guide to classroom research.** 2002. Call number: 370.72 HOP
Howitt, D. and Cramer, D. **First steps in research and statistics: a practical workbook for psychology students.** 2000. Call number: 150.72 HOW
Johnson, B. **Educational research: quantitative and qualitative approaches.** 2000. Call number: 370.72 JOH
Jones, I. & Gratton, C. **Research methods for sport studies.** 2004. Call number: 796.072 JON
Kaye, C. **Research in organisations and communities: tales from the real world.** 2005. Call number: 300.72 KAY
Kember, David. **Action learning and action research: improving the quality of teaching and learning.** 2000. Call number: 378.17 KEM
Krippendorff, K. **Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology.** 2nd ed. 2004. Call number: 401.41 KRI
Langford, R.W. **Navigating the maze of nursing research: an interactive learning adventure.** c2001. Call number: 610.73072 LAN
Lankshear, C. **A handbook for teacher research: from design to implementation.** 2004. Call number: 370.72 LAN
Lee, A. and Poynton, C. **Culture & text: discourse and methodology in social research and cultural studies.** 2000. Call number: 306.072 CUL
Leedy, P.D. and Ormrod, J.E. **Practical research: planning and design.** 7th ed. 2002. Call number: 001.4 LEE
Lepper, G. & Riding, N. **Researching the ps: a practical guide to transcript-based methods ychotherapy process.** 2006. Call number: 616.8914 LEP
Litoseliti, I. **Using focus groups in research.** 2003. Call number: 001.433 LIT
Locke, L. **Reading and understanding research.** 2nd ed. 2004. Call number: 001.42 LOC
Ludwig, T. and Varnhagen, C. **Psychinquiry: focus on research.** 2002. Call number: CD 150.72 LUD
Mann, B.L. **Selected styles in web-based educational research.** 2005. Call number: 370.72 SEL
McCulloch, G. **Documentary research: in education, history and the social sciences.** 2004. Call number: 300.72 MCC
McCulloch, G. and Richardson, W. **Historical research in educational settings.** 2000. Call number: 370.72 MCC
McKernan, J. **Curriculum action research: a handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner.** 1996. Call number: 375.001 MCK
McNiff, J. **Action research: principles and practice.** 2nd ed. 2002. Call number: 370.72 MCN
McNiff, J. *You and your action research project*. 2003. Call number: 370.72 MCN
Call number: 616.890072 RES
Moore, N. *How to do research: the complete guide to designing and managing research projects*. 3rd ed. 2000. Call number: 001.42 MOO
Morse, J.M. and Richards, L. *Readme first for a user’s guide to qualitative methods*. c2002. Call number: 300.72 MOR
Naples, N. *Feminism and method: ethnography, discourse analysis and activist research*. 2003. Call number: 305.420072 NAP
Call number: 301.072 NEU
Call number: 370.72 OPI
O’Reilly, K. *Ethnographic method*. 2004. Call number: 305.8001 ORE
Call number: 370.72 OZG
Call number: 155.40723 PEL
Pring, R. *Philosophy of educational research*. 2000. Call number: 370.72 PRI
Punch, K.F. *Developing effective research proposals*. 2000. Call number: 300.72 PUN
Robson, C. *Real world research: a resource for social scientists and practitioner-researchers*. 2nd ed. 2002. Call number: 300.72 ROB
Roper, J. & Shapira, J. *Ethnography in nursing research*. c2000. Call number: 610.73072 ROP
Sarantakos, S. Social research. 3rd ed. 2005. Call number: 300.72 SAR
Schneider, Z. [et al.] Nursing research : methods, critical appraisal & utilization. 2nd ed. 2003. Call number: 610.73072 NUR
Sands, R.R. Sport ethnography. c2002. Call number: 306.483 SAN
Sommer, R. and Sommer, B. A practical guide to behavioral research : tools and techniques. 5th ed. 2002. Call number: 150.72 SOM
Tashakkori, A. & Teddlie, C. Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research. 2003. Call number: 300.72 HAN
Thomas, R.M. Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations. 2003. Call number: 001.42 THO
Wisker, G. The postgraduate research handbook : succeed with your MA, MPhil, EdD and PhD. 2001. Call number: 001.42 WIS
Wilkinson, D. The researcher's toolkit : the complete guide to practitioner research. 2000. Call number: 001.42 RES
Wooffitt, R. Conversation analysis and discourse analysis. 2005. Call number: 401.41 WOO
Yin, R. Applications of case study research. 2nd ed. 2003. Call number: 300.722 YIN
Yin, R. The case study anthology. 2004. Call number: 300.72 CAS
Yin, R. Case study research : design and methods. 3rd ed. 2003. Call number: 300.722 YIN
Appendix 2: Books on academic writing

Call number: 808.02 AND

Call number: 808.042 BAR

Bate, D. and Sharpe, P. Writer’s handbook for university students. 1996.
Call number: 808.042 BAT

Call number: 808.02 BEA

Behrens, L. A sequence for academic writing. 2nd ed. c2005.
Call number: 808.042 BEH

Betts, K. and Seitz, A. Writing essays and research reports in the social sciences. 2nd ed. 1994. Call number: 808.042 BET

Bolker, J. Writing your dissertation in fifteen minutes a day: a guide to starting, revising, and finishing your doctoral thesis. 1998.
Call number: 808.066378 BOL

Call number: 808.066378 BRY

Call number: 808.042 COY

Call number: 808.066 CRA

Call number: 808.0663 CUB

Davis, L. Structures and strategies: an introduction to academic writing. 1996.
Call number: 808.042 DAV

De la Harpe, B. Enhancing writing: a guide to integrating writing support across the disciplines. c2000. Call number: 808.06 DEL

Dietsch, B. Reasoning and writing well: a rhetoric, research guide, reader and handbook. 3rd ed. 2002. Call number: 808.042 DIE

Call number: 808.042 DUP

Call number: 808.06615 ELL

Call number: 371.30281 WRI

Eunson, B. Writing and presenting reports. 1994.
Call number: 808.042 EUN

Eunson, B. Writing skills. 1994.
Call number: 808.042 EUN

Evans, D.G. How to write a better thesis. 2nd ed. 2002.
Call number: 808.066 EVA

Call number: 808.042 FEE
Feng-Checkett, G. & Checkett, L. The write start with readings: paragraphs to essays. 2nd ed. 2004. Call number: 808.0427 FEN
Findlay, B. How to write psychology laboratory reports and essays. 3rd ed. 2003.
Call number: 808.06615 FIN
Glatthorn, A.A. Writing the winning thesis or dissertation: a step-by-step guide. 2nd ed. c2005. Call number: 808.066 GLA
Call number: 808.042 GLA
Lester, J. D. The essential guide: research writing across the disciplines. 3rd ed. c2005. Call number: 808.042 LES
Meloy, J. Writing the qualitative dissertation: understanding by doing. 2nd ed. 2002.
Call number: 808.02 MEL
Murray, R. How to write a thesis. 2002.
Call number: 808.042 MUR
Call number: 808.066378 OLI
Oshima, A. Writing academic English. 3rd ed. c1999.
Call number: 808.042 OSH
Call number: 808.066378 ROB
Rudestam, K.E. Surviving your dissertation: a comprehensive guide to content and process. 2nd ed. c2001. Call number: 808.02 RUD
Call number: 808.0666 SID
Call number: 808.06615 SMY
Swetnam, D. Writing your dissertation: how to plan, prepare and present successful work. 2000. Call number: 808.066 SWE
Thomas, S.A. How to write health sciences papers, dissertations and theses. 2000.
Call number: 808.06661 THO
Wolcott, H.F. Writing up qualitative research. 2nd ed. 2001.
Call number: 808.0666 WOL
Zilm, G. and Entwistle, C. The smart way: an introduction to writing for nurses. 2nd ed. c2002. Call number: 808.06661 ZIL
Appendix 3. Style manuals

   Call number: R 808.027 GIB
   Call number: R 808.027 SBL
Clines, D.J.A. *The Sheffield manual for authors and editors in Biblical studies*. 1997.
   Call number: 808.06622 CLI
   Call number: R 808.0662 MCI
   Call number: R 808.06615 PUB
   Call number: R 808.027 OXF
   Call number: 808.027 STY