

CODE OF SUPERVISORY PRACTICE

The research enterprise is one which involves the candidate, the supervisor and the Sydney College of Divinity. Each of the three has responsibilities and obligations to ensure that the enterprise is fruitful.

The Sydney College of Divinity, through its Research Degree Committee:

1. Determines the eligibility of the candidate to undertake research at MTh(Hons) or doctoral level.
2. Determines that the research project is appropriate for the degree.
3. Ensures that proper supervision can be provided and maintained throughout the research period.
4. Appoints supervisors expert in the areas of research and willing to undertake the obligations of supervision.
5. Establishes and monitors mechanisms whereby conflict between the supervisor and the student may be resolved.
6. Establishes procedures for all stages of the examination process.
7. Establishes procedures whereby staff inexperienced in supervision are assisted with supervision.
8. Establishes minimum reporting procedures.
9. Establishes examination criteria for theses.

POLICY DETERMINATION

In the light of these responsibilities the following Code of Practice governing supervision of research for higher degrees is adopted.

The Supervisor

The supervisors are appointed by the Research Degree Committee after consultation with the candidate.

The Sydney College of Divinity expects that supervisors will:

- Assist the student to identify a thesis topic suitable in scope and intellectual challenge for the particular degree.
- Advise the student on appropriate source material and its availability.
- Monitor the progress of the work by scheduling regular meetings with the student. An average of one per month is suggested. The frequency will probably vary according to stage of development of the thesis.
- Record the outcomes or decisions taken at each meeting with the student.
- Provide critical comment on drafts of sections of the work.
- Read and critically comment on the final draft of the thesis.
- Certify that the thesis meets the requirements of the SCD and is ready to be presented for examination.
- Suggest the names of three possible examiners.
- Encourage the student to become part of the wider academic community by participating in seminars and conferences.

- Advise the successful candidate on possible avenues of publication.
- Provide ongoing assistance to students who have been required to re-write and/or re-submit their theses. (see Section on Rewriting below)
- Report on the student's progress to the Research Degree Committee once a year, on the forms provided, and at other times should the supervisors deem it necessary.
- Alert the Research Degree Committee, through the Dean, to problems encountered in the supervisory relationship.
- Inform the student and the Research Degree Committee of any extended leave so that arrangements may be made for the associate supervisor to take over the supervision.
- Ensure effective communication with the associate supervisor.

The Student

The student will

- Inform themselves of the regulations governing the submission and examination of theses.
- Apply to the Research Degree Committee for the appointment of a supervisor. In most cases, candidates will have previously approached one or more potential supervisors to discuss the proposed area of research.
- Arrange with their supervisors for regular meetings at mutually convenient times, generally once a month.
- At the end of each meeting, students should have a clear idea of what work is to be done before the next scheduled meeting. Difficulties encountered in carrying out the work should be communicated to the supervisor before the date of the scheduled meeting.
- Provide drafts of sections of work at agreed intervals.
- Alert the Research Degree Committee, through the Dean, to serious problems encountered in the supervisory relationship.

Supervision of Students Living Outside Metropolitan Areas

In order to make advanced theological education available to those who wish to benefit from it, the SCD permits some candidates living away from Sydney to pursue higher degrees by research. In order to carry out its responsibility to ensure adequate supervision the SCD requires of such students that they:

1. Arrange for a face to face meeting with their supervisor twice per semester;
2. Communicate with the supervisor by phone or in writing at least once a month, irrespective of the progress which has been made in the month which has elapsed.

In addition, students should be made aware that, in some cases, the Research Degree Committee may require them to devote some extended period to the writing of the thesis under the direction of the supervisor and close to the supervisor's workplace. The costs associated with such a period will be met by the student.

Difficulties in Supervision.

From time to time, students and supervisors may experience difficulties in the supervisory relationship. Disappointment at adverse comments on a draft, increased workload or personal circumstances may cause discouragement or disenchantment with the research task.

In many cases, these setbacks are temporary, resolve themselves or may be overcome by the student and supervisor re-negotiating the thesis timetable, keeping in mind the completion date.

In some cases, difficulties arise which are of a more intractable nature. In these cases, candidates may avail themselves of the informal and formal grievance procedures which are in place.

Examination of Thesis: the Supervisor's Role

When the Research Degree Committee invites the candidate to carry out further work on the thesis, the Dean will forward the examiners' reports to the supervisors, who will be invited to write a response which will include a recommendation on how long the candidate might need to complete the re-write.

The role of the supervisor then will be to assist the candidate to appreciate the shortcomings in the thesis and to implement the recommendations made by the examiners in the time allowed.

Difficulties of Students from a Non-English Speaking Background

Although the presentation of the thesis may be affected by difficulties in English expression, candidates cannot expect the supervisor to write the thesis. Common sense will dictate the difference between proofreading, advice on more felicitous expression and writing the thesis in correct English.

Students experiencing such difficulties could be recommended to seek the assistance of persons competent in English. Any arrangements which may ensue are completely independent of the Sydney College of Divinity.