

# Guidelines for Establishing the Higher Degree by Research Supervisory Relationship

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These guidelines are for assisting supervisors and students in planning the establishment of a productive and professional student/supervisor relationship that suits their particular needs, expectations and circumstances. At all times, the supervision must remain consistent with Curtin's policies, guidelines and rules (see point 3 below).

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## 1.0 Establishing Regular Communication

Regular communication between a supervisor and student is essential, especially in the formative stages of the research project. Formal meetings and other means of communication help to maintain and monitor progress.

### 1.1 Face-to-face Meetings

#### Points to Discuss

- How often will you meet?
- Where will the meetings be held?
- How long will the meetings be?
- Will you have an agenda?
- How will outcomes of the meeting be noted? (e.g. formal record, or informal notes)

*For example, you might agree to meet each Monday for an hour in your supervisor's office. You will bring relevant written material and questions for discussion. Your supervisor will bring feedback on any work submitted in the previous meeting. Outcomes of the meeting will be jointly noted and an agenda outlined for the next meeting.*

Keeping records of supervisory meetings is important for the supervisor and the student so that both are clear on what has been achieved and what is to be the focus of the next meeting. It is preferable to set up the next meeting at the conclusion of the current one as this will allow time to prepare for the agreed focus of the next meeting, and for the supervisor to read any material the student has presented in the interim. The records of meetings should cover briefly what issues were discussed; what progress has been made and how this matches up to expectations; any concerns or issues for clarification raised by either party; when the next meeting will be held; and what sort of progress is expected within that period of time.

The need for formal meetings will change as candidacy progresses, perhaps with more frequent meetings in the early design stages and less frequent meetings during the data collection and analysis phases and into the thesis writing phase. It is important to lay down some clear guidelines specifying what action to take if one party cannot attend a scheduled meeting as well as making provision for ongoing evaluation of the frequency and success of meetings.

If the student disagrees with the advice given by the supervisor, the disagreement needs to be discussed fully so that some course of action can be decided upon. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, you may wish to seek further guidance from other members of your Thesis Committee; particularly your Chairperson.

### 1.2 Other Means of Communication

Email and telephone are important avenues of communication, especially when face-to-face meetings are difficult to arrange.

#### Points to Discuss

- What email address and telephone number(s) will be used?
- What are convenient times for telephone contact?
- How quickly can a response be expected?

### 1.3 Communication for Off-Campus Students

For off-campus students, contact will not usually be face-to-face. Regular contact will be by telephone, email, Skype or other means. The supervisor and student will need to reach agreement on how regular communication is established and maintained.

Section 4(f) of Rule 10: Degree of Doctor by Research and Rule 11: Degree of Master by Research requires that a meeting between the student and a member of the Thesis Committee shall occur on not less than an average of 10 days each academic year over the period of candidature (see [http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes\\_rules.cfm](http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes_rules.cfm)).

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## 2.0 Items for Discussion

### 2.1 Framing the Research Topic

In the early meetings between the supervisor and student it is vital that discussion focuses on the student's proposed research topic to ensure that it is appropriate and feasible. This early clarification can prevent unforeseen future difficulties.

Doctoral students have six months and Master's (by Research) students have three months full-time equivalent to develop their summary of proposed research program and submit their Application for Candidacy. (To download this application form, see point 3 for the link to the *Student forms* webpage.) It is important that the early meetings are designed to frame the research topic and refine it to an achievable and worthwhile piece of research.

#### Points to Discuss

- Development of the research questions
- What literature should be reviewed?
- What research skills/experimental techniques should be developed?
- Will ethics approval be required?
- What other background experience or information is required?
- Establishment of a timeline for conducting the study and thesis writing

### 2.2 Expectations

#### Your supervisor should be expected to:

- give guidance about the nature of research and the academic standards expected, the planning of the research program, access to literature and resources, and the avoidance of plagiarism;
- advise about developing the necessary research method skills and any other relevant training skills to complete the degree;
- ensure that you are made aware of inadequate progress or standards of work below that generally expected, confirming this in writing to the student and arranging any supportive action necessary.

#### The student should be expected to:

- maintain progress of work in accordance with the stages agreed upon with the supervisor;
- present written material as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion, before proceeding to the next stage;
- make appropriate use of any teaching and learning facilities and training opportunities made available by the University, the Graduate Research School, the Faculty and/or School/Department;
- ensure that any circumstances that might require a change of mode of study, or an enrolment to be extended, suspended or withdrawn are brought to the attention of their supervisor(s);
- accept responsibility for their individual research activity and candidacy for the degree.

**Important note:** Authorship of any publication or paper arising from the research should be discussed well in advance of the development of the publication. Such discussion should, where relevant, include acknowledgement of funding, support from others, and so on. *Information Regarding Authorship and Joint Authorship* can be found in the *Authorship/joint authorship* section at <http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/current-research-students/student-policies-and-procedures/>.

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### 3.0 Curtin Policies and Procedures

Supervisors and Students should be aware of the following policies, guidelines and rules.

- Rule 10: Degree of Doctor by Research and Rule 11: Degree of Master by Research ([http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes\\_rules.cfm](http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes_rules.cfm))
- Student Forms (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/current-research-students/student-forms/>)
- Student Policies and Procedures (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/current-research-students/student-policies-and-procedures/>)
- Staff Forms (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/hdr-staff/hdr-staff-forms/>)
- Staff Policies and Procedures (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/hdr-staff/>)
- Information for Thesis Committee Members (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/hdr-staff/thesis-committee-members/>)
- Documents outlining Essential Facilities for Higher Degree by Research Students (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/current-research-students/student-policies-and-procedures/>)
- HDR Students Consumables Allowance – Guidelines for Staff - see *Essential Facilities* Section in *Staff Policies and Procedures*.  
<https://research.curtin.edu.au/staff/policies-procedures/>
- Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/guides/forms/policies.cfm#conduct>)
- Intellectual Property Information (<http://research.curtin.edu.au/commercialisation/information-for-researchers/ip-policy/>)
- Copyright Information (<http://copyright.curtin.edu.au/>)
- Curtin's vision, mission and values  
<http://about.curtin.edu.au/welcome/vision-mission-and-values/>
- Student Charter ([http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/student\\_charter.cfm](http://students.curtin.edu.au/rights/student_charter.cfm))
- Statute No. 10 - Student Disciplinary Statute ([http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes\\_rules.cfm](http://policies.curtin.edu.au/legislation/internallegislation/statutes_rules.cfm))
- Conflict of Interest Procedures (<http://policies.curtin.edu.au/findapolicy/>)
- Occupational Safety and Health Policy and Procedures ([http://healthandsafety.curtin.edu.au/safety\\_management/policies.cfm](http://healthandsafety.curtin.edu.au/safety_management/policies.cfm))
- Complaints Information  
<http://research.curtin.edu.au/postgraduate-research/current-research-students/student-policies-and-procedures/>