

TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

Developed by members of the
QUT Postgraduate Supervision Evaluation Project Team

Helen Edwards (*Project Coordinator, Nursing*)

Tania Aspland (*Professional Studies*)

Jane O'Leary (*Senior Research Assistant*)

Yoni Ryan (*Academic Staff Development Unit*)

Greg Southey (*Management, Human Resources and Industrial
Relations*)

Peter Timms (*Life Science*)

(in association with the Postgraduate Supervision [PGS]
Teaching, Reflection and Collaboration [TRAC] group,
Queensland University of Technology)

ISSN 1326-2904

Published by
Academic Staff Development Unit
Queensland University of Technology
GPO Box 2434
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Fax: (07) 3864 1805

© Queensland University of Technology, Australia, 1995

CONTENTS

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | ABOUT THE BOOKLET | 1 |
| 2. | HOW TO USE THE BOOKLET | 1 |
| | 2.1 Acknowledgments | 2 |
| 3. | TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION THROUGH ONGOING DISCUSSION | 3 |
| | 3.1 Setting the scene | 3 |
| | 3.1.1 Student background | 3 |
| | 3.1.2 Supervisor background | 3 |
| | 3.1.3 Consensus seeking..... | 4 |
| | 3.1.4 Choosing a supervisor | 4 |
| | 3.2 Sharing role expectations | 5 |
| | 3.2.1 Responsibilities and expectations: Key questions..... | 5 |
| | 3.2.2 Timelines..... | 6 |
| | 3.3 Setting goals collaboratively | 6 |
| | 3.3.1 Long term goals | 6 |
| | 3.3.2 Short term goals..... | 8 |
| | 3.4 Supporting the student | 8 |
| | 3.4.1 Resource support..... | 8 |
| | 3.4.2 Emotional and psychological support..... | 9 |
| | 3.4.3 Support services | 9 |
| | 3.5 Review of progress | 10 |
| | 3.5.1 Student/supervisor relationship..... | 10 |
| | 3.5.2 Thesis progression..... | 10 |
| | 3.6 Resolving conflict | 11 |
| | 3.7 Preparing for examination | 11 |
| 4. | TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: ROLE PERCEPTION RATING SCALE (RPRS) | 13 |
| 5. | TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: STUDENT PROFILE PROFORMA (SPP) | 15 |
| 6. | TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: STUDENT EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION (SEPS) | 19 |
| 7. | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 23 |
| 8. | APPENDIX 1: QUT SUPPORT SERVICES | 25 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 8.1 | Counselling Services | 25 |
| 8.2 | Postgraduate Students Association | 25 |
| 8.3 | International Students Association..... | 26 |
| 8.4 | International Student Services | 26 |
| 8.5 | Office of Research | 26 |

1. ABOUT THE BOOKLET

This booklet of resource material is designed to assist supervisors and students through the process of postgraduate supervision. It is based on the assumption that some basic issues underpin effective supervision and that discussion of these issues will lay the foundations for a good working relationship. At various stages throughout the candidature, some issues may need to be renegotiated and therefore, both supervisor and student are encouraged to review the process at regular intervals or as the need arises.

The resources presented in this booklet have been developed in response to findings from focus group discussions which were held with supervisors and postgraduate students from the Queensland University of Technology. From these focus groups, it emerged that the expectations of a student and supervisor were commonly mismatched or mistakenly assumed. Both parties expressed a preference for sharing understandings about supervision and reaching agreement over fundamental expectations and responsibilities with one another early in the candidature. The participants of the focus groups offered many suggestions for sharing student/supervisor expectations and for reviewing the supervisory process in general. These suggestions are compiled in this booklet.

2. HOW TO USE THE BOOKLET

In using the material presented in this booklet we would like you to consider the following points.

- The document is not intended to be prescriptive. Supervisors and students are encouraged to choose resource materials appropriate to their supervisory needs and practices.
- Although the resource material is presented as a total package, students and supervisors may choose to delete, or add, elements to suit their needs. It is recognised that the supervisory process differs across disciplines, and therefore some resource materials will be more appropriate for some disciplines.
- Regardless of which elements of the booklet are used, it is important that a cyclical or feedback process is employed. This is important as it ensures that decisions and agreements can be reviewed and renegotiated, if needed. It will be more useful if the resource materials are used as a stimulus for ongoing discussion between student and supervisor and not just used 'once off'. Keeping the booklet in the student's file and revisiting it before the six monthly report may be a useful strategy.
- The resource materials can be used formally, with negotiations resulting in written agreements, or informally, as prompts for discussion. Some documentation of the process and expectations, however, is advisable as it will assist with feedback and may be useful for dealing with conflicts, if they arise.

- Supervisor or student may like to initiate discussion about using this booklet. However, its use needs to involve both parties, as its main objective is to share understandings.
- Finally, this booklet has been designed with PhD and Masters by Research students and supervisors in mind. However, we believe parts of the process are equally applicable to Honours and Independent Studies students.

We hope you find this booklet useful and we wish you well with your ***"tracking....."***

2.1 Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to:

- QUT's Teaching and Learning Development Small Grants Scheme for its funding of the project
- All staff and students who participated in focus groups and provided feedback on initial drafts of this booklet
- Adele Graham and Barbara Grant of the Higher Education Research Office, the University of Auckland for permission to adapt some of the content and ideas from their booklet *Postgraduate Supervision — Guidelines for Discussion*
- Don Litster (Academic Staff Development Unit) and Robert Schweitzer and Leonie Elphinstone (Counselling Services, QUT) for their advice and support
- Elissa Volling (Academic Staff Development Unit, QUT) for the typesetting and formatting of this manuscript.

3. TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION THROUGH ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Setting the Scene

Research evidence suggests that the development of relationships between students and their supervisors needs to become the focus of **ongoing discussions** throughout the candidature. There is convincing evidence that, without ongoing discussions, unnecessary problems may arise which may impact adversely upon students' progress.

The following framework is therefore **suggested** to highlight key factors that may form the basis of fruitful discussions and the development of positive relationships within the complex processes of supervision.

The sharing of each participant's professional and educational background forms a positive starting point for opening up a discussion that identifies shared interests and, at the same time, acknowledges individual differences.

3.1.1 Student background

- What are your previous work experiences, research interests, career goals, educational background?
- Where have you been?
- Why are you here now?
- Where are you hoping to go?

3.1.2 Supervisor background

- What are your previous research projects and interests?
- What are your emerging professional and research interests?
- What are your most recent publications?
- What are your reasons for supervising this student?
- How many students do you currently supervise?
- How much time do you have available to supervise another student?

3.1.3 Consensus seeking

Some students come to higher degree study with a specific research topic, while others have only a relatively broad topic in mind. Other students are allocated a topic as part of a research team. Regardless, the questions and issues raised above are useful for enabling the student and supervisor to brainstorm a list of shared interest areas or possible projects that could be pursued. From this list, a topic or potential topics could be selected. If the student has a well-established topic in mind, careful and honest consideration needs to be given as to whether the supervisor is the best person available to supervise in this area.

3.1.4 Choosing a supervisor

One of the most crucial steps in successful higher degree study is the selection of a supervisor. This step is made difficult, however, by the fact that there are as many models of good supervision as there are students. For example, one student may work best in an autonomous situation while another may work best under close supervision. The process of selecting a supervisor is also made difficult by the diversity of factors (for example, personal, professional and organisational) which impact upon the success of supervision.

Collectively, the three evaluation processes included in this booklet (RPRS, SPP and SEPS) provide a comprehensive list of criteria for 'good' supervision. A quick perusal of these evaluation forms may prove helpful to students trying to identify such criteria.

The process of choosing a supervisor is an important one and warrants more than the fleeting attention it has received here. Accordingly, for those students still involved in this important process, we recommend a look at one or more of the following publications. The second of these, *Getting started with the end in mind*, is particularly informative, having an entire chapter devoted to the topic.

Berger, G.E. & Schweitzer, R. (1995). *Issues in postgraduate study: A workshop handbook for postgraduate students*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Student Guild, QUT Postgraduate Students Association & QUT Counselling Services.

Elphinstone, L., Schweitzer, R. & Jackson, P. (1995). *Getting started with the end in mind*. Brisbane: Counselling and Health Services, Queensland University of Technology.

Pugh, D.S. & Phillips, E.M. (1994). *How to get a PhD: A handbook for students and their supervisors*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Queensland University of Technology Postgraduate Students Association (1995). *Postgraduate Handbook*. Brisbane: QUT.

3.2 Sharing Role Expectations

3.2.1 Responsibilities and expectations: Key questions

Approaches to the supervisory process vary from individual to individual. Conflicts within the supervisory process often arise due to misunderstandings about the differing roles of supervisor or student. Continuous discussion about key questions listed below may be a way of limiting unnecessary conflict.

As a student/supervisor, what is my **responsibility** regarding:

- setting the research topic
- writing the proposal
- calling meetings and setting meeting agendas
- setting timelines and tasks
- monitoring progress
- dealing with conflict
- generating publications
- authorship of publications.

As a student, what are your **expectations** of me?

As a supervisor, what are your **expectations** of me?

What **differences** exist in the sharing of expectations? Which of these differences need to be **addressed** if the relationship is to succeed?

In discussing these questions, students and supervisors may benefit from consulting the Code of Good Practice for Postgraduate Research Studies and Supervision included in QUT's *PhD Handbook* which outlines the responsibilities of QUT, faculties, supervisors and students.

To further assist in this process the student and supervisor may wish to individually complete the **Role Perceptions Rating Scale (RPRS)** (page 14). Each item could then form the basis of further discussion and consensus seeking.

It is important to note that both shared and individual expectations are continually undergoing change so that the **RPRS** may need to be revisited, with a view to renegotiating expectations.

If necessary, the ongoing redevelopment of these expectations can be documented. Such documentation may be useful if conflict arises. It is advisable to document

changing expectations in the student's file.

3.2.2 Timelines

Student and supervisor may like to develop a **timeline** that is designed to review these expectations. It is recommended that this is done at least once every twelve months.

3.3 Setting Goals Collaboratively

There are a number of goals, both short and long term, that need to be negotiated, and possibly documented, over the life of the candidature.

3.3.1 Long term goals

Long term goals relate to the following:

- Length of candidature:
What are the key phases?
- Articulation of topic and setting research questions:
Is this dependent on the winning of funds?
Does your topic need to articulate with others within a larger project?
What is the standing of your topic in the field?
Can you clearly justify this project?
- Project methodology:
Is this the best way of pursuing the research questions?
Do you have a personal commitment to this methodology?
Have you articulated a theoretical framework that underpins your methodology?
Have you fully explored all of your methodological options?

- Literature review:
 - Do you understand the purpose of this component?
 - How does it relate to the research questions?
 - Have you explored the various formats for presentation?
 - Have you gained the necessary library support to enhance your work?
 - Have you accessed international resources as well as local?
 - When should it be finished?
 - Does it require regular revisiting?

- Project design and implementation:
 - Have you consulted with the appropriate people and literature to ensure the best design?
 - Is the design congruent with the research questions and methodology?

- Writing of the thesis:
 - Have you a vision of the various components of the thesis and the best ways in which they should be developed?
 - Do you have a sound understanding of the nature of a thesis and its contribution to existing knowledge?
 - Have you considered a number of format options that are most appropriate in this field?
 - Are you fully aware of other work in this area?
 - Do you fully understand what is meant by originality?
 - Have you discussed the various forms of evolving drafts and appropriate structures for each chapter?
 - Have you identified the most suitable referencing conventions?

- Publications emerging from the thesis:
 - Should you be taking 'time out' to write articles for ongoing publication, or concentrating on the writing of the thesis?
 - Is co-authorship with supervisor conventional in your discipline?

Each of these areas could be taken in turn as the basis for discussion between supervisor and student in order to **set a number of goals** in relation to timelines, the nature of the various tasks required, the relationship of each task to the thesis and resources necessary for completion. This is a suggested format.

| Goal | Tasks | Completion date | Resources |
|------|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

3.3.2 Short term goals

Short term goals may need to be set in the following areas:

- processes of monitoring student progress
- regularity and nature of meetings — formal/informal
- purpose and agenda of meetings
- membership of meetings — all/some of supervisory team
- processes of monitoring the effectiveness of meetings
- ethical clearances
- university requirements (paper presentation, reports, regulations, confirmation, oral defence)
- departmental requirements.

3.4 Supporting the Student

3.4.1 Resource support

In the early stages of the candidature the supervisor may wish to provide details of **resources** available to each student including the following:

- office space and computing facilities
- telephone
- mailing provisions and administrative assistance
- technical, photocopying and library assistance
- staff room facilities
- access to funding, research grants and part-time employment.

Other forms of support that may be discussed include support mechanisms that are available through student forums, writing development workshops, research training opportunities, conference presentations and joint publications.

3.4.2 Emotional and psychological support

Students commonly experience a range of emotions throughout their candidature including boredom, enthusiasm, frustration and/or isolation. It is understandable, therefore, that students feel the need for some degree of emotional or psychological support from time to time.

Accordingly, consideration should be given to the student's **personal support network**:

- How extensive is the student's personal support network?
- Has the student recently moved from overseas or another state to study at this institution?
- If so, did the student move with family or alone?
- What stage of the candidature is the student at? (Many students, for example, experience greater motivational and emotional support needs in the early stages of candidature).

Student and supervisor also need to discuss the **balance of demands** upon the student:

- Does the student have family, parental, partner or other relationship responsibilities?
- How will the student's paid and/or unpaid work responsibilities impact upon the progression and successful completion of the thesis?

Students and/or supervisors may wish to discuss any issues or concerns they have with Counselling Services staff who are experienced in both the relational and process issues of the supervisory role.

3.4.3 Support services

A range of other (QUT-based) support services are available to students and supervisors. Some of these include:

- Postgraduate Students Association (PSA)
- International Students Association (ISA)
- International Student Services
- Office of Research.

A summary of the support these services and associations offer is provided in Appendix 1 (see page 25).

3.5 Review of Progress

It has been found that if a regular review of progress takes place both during and at the conclusion of the supervisory process the student is more highly motivated to finish. Such a review could take the form of self-assessment and a collaborative assessment with the supervisor. In both formal and informal review processes, the following questions could be useful.

3.5.1 Student/supervisor relationship

Is the relationship between the supervisor and student satisfactory in relation to:

- effective communication
- degree of encouragement
- level of expertise
- degree of interdependence?

3.5.2 Thesis progression

Is the student critically reflecting on the quality of their work?

Is the level of challenge for the student appropriate to the level of candidature?

Is the thesis progressing through the articulation of

- clear and appropriate tasks
- adherence to appropriate timelines
- achievement of short term goals
- production of work at or above the required quality
- productive meetings
- regular and constructive written and oral feedback?

Are each of these progression components coming together to make a positive contribution to the thesis?

At times students can express frustration concerning a number of issues implicit in the review process such as inappropriate (or lack of) feedback or unsatisfactory relations with their supervisor. **It is important for the student and supervisor to articulate principles of procedure that can be followed if and when such issues arise.** If such principles are agreed upon early in the candidature, many difficult situations can be systematically addressed, thus avoiding conflict and confusion.

To more fully pursue the interim review process, the student and supervisor may wish to complete the Student Profile Proforma (SPP) or the Student Evaluation of Postgraduate Supervision (SEPS) (pages 15 and 19 respectively).

3.6 Resolving Conflict

An outcome of the review process may be the need to confront and resolve a conflict or tension that has emerged. The following approach may be useful.

- Each party should undertake a process of problem definition. Here, both student and supervisor articulate their individual perception of the tension or problem in a written paragraph. This is an essential first step — without being able to share individual understandings of the problem, no resolution is available.
- Once the perceptions of the problem have been shared, each participant should identify the factors that are contributing to the problem. At this stage, it is important to avoid laying blame or using language which could be perceived as aggressive or attacking. It is advisable to document these perceptions of contributing factors in the student's file.
- This identification of problem factors will then form the basis of the next exchange as each participant comes to better understand the position of the other.
- Finally, the two or more parties should come together to identify ways of overcoming each of the contributing/inhibiting factors with a view to ultimately resolving the conflict.
- It has been suggested that this process may be better facilitated through a third independent party in the form of a mediator. This person is best appointed from a position that most adequately represents the interests of **both** parties. Just as importantly, **both** parties should consent to this person's appointment. This mediator could be the school's postgraduate student coordinator or someone from outside the school or faculty.

This is a difficult issue and one that warrants extensive coverage — possibly a booklet in itself. Some resources which may prove useful in dealing with and resolving conflict include QUT's *PhD Handbook* which outlines 'Policies and Procedures for Grievances' and the QUT publication *Getting started with the end in mind* (Elphinstone, Schweitzer & Jackson, 1995).

Staff at Counselling Services regularly advise postgraduate students and supervisory staff who wish to resolve areas of conflict.

3.7 Preparing for Examination

The purposes and processes of examination need to be discussed early in the candidature as well as towards the closing phases. The following points could be considered:

- publications prior to examination
- format of the team of examiners (University requirements)
- links between examiners, supervisor and student
- supervisor's responsibilities in relation to examiners
- student responsibilities in relation to examiners
- University requirements about submission, re-submission, selection of examiners etc.

You may also find it useful to refer to QUT's *Handbook* which covers many of these issues, including oral examinations, nomination of examiners, the examination process, results, re-submission and failing.

The remainder of this booklet provides examples of three processes which may prove useful when tracking your postgraduate supervision experiences. The processes are not intended to be prescriptive — feel free to use (and adapt, if necessary) any that appeal to you. It is important however, to remember that, regardless of which process you choose now, the tracking process should be an ongoing one — not merely something tacked onto the beginning or the end of the degree.

4. TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: ROLE PERCEPTION RATING SCALE (RPRS)

Read each pair of statements listed on this sheet. Each expresses a standpoint supervisors and students may take. However, you may not agree fully with either of the statements. Please estimate your position and mark it on the scale. For example, if you believe very strongly that supervisors should select the research topic you would circle '1' on scale 1; if you believe that is a student prerogative, you would circle '5'. If you think it is a shared negotiated responsibility, circle '3'. You should be particularly looking for patterns (e.g. a tendency to 1s or 5s) which indicate strong disagreement between student and supervisor. This would form the basis for negotiation. However, it is important to remember that there is no 'right' answer — these are expectations!

Student name:

Supervisor/s names:

Stage of Candidature:

| Topic/course of study | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|---|
| 1. | It is a supervisor's responsibility to select a promising topic | 1 2 3 4 5 | It is a student's responsibility to select a promising topic |
| 2. | In the end, it is up to the supervisor to decide which theoretical frame of reference is most appropriate | 1 2 3 4 5 | A student has a right to choose a theoretical standpoint even if it conflicts with that of the supervisor |
| 3. | A supervisor should direct a student in the development of an appropriate program of research and study | 1 2 3 4 5 | A student should be able to work out a schedule and research program appropriate to his/her needs |
| 4. | A supervisor should ensure that a student has access to all necessary facilities | 1 2 3 4 5 | Ultimately, the student must find the necessary facilities to complete his/her research |

| Contact/Involvement | | | |
|----------------------------|---|-----------|--|
| 5. | Supervisor-student relationships are purely professional and personal relationships should not develop | 1 2 3 4 5 | Close personal relationships are essential for successful supervision |
| 6. | A supervisor should initiate frequent meetings with a student | 1 2 3 4 5 | A student should initiate meetings |
| 7. | A supervisor should check constantly that a student is on track and working consistently | 1 2 3 4 5 | Students should work independently and not have to account for how they spend their time |
| 8. | A supervisor should terminate the candidature if she/he thinks a student will not succeed | 1 2 3 4 5 | A supervisor should support the student regardless of his/her opinion of the student's capability |
| The Thesis | | | |
| 9. | A supervisor should ensure that the thesis is finished not much later than the minimum period | 1 2 3 4 5 | As long as a student works steadily she/he can take as long as she/he needs to finish the work |
| 10. | A supervisor has direct responsibility for the methodology and content of the thesis | 1 2 3 4 5 | A student has total responsibility for ensuring that the methodology and content are appropriate to the discipline |
| 11. | A supervisor should assist in the actual writing of the thesis if the student has difficulties, and should ensure that the presentation is flawless | 1 2 3 4 5 | A student must take full responsibility for presentation of the thesis, including grammar and spelling |
| 12. | A supervisor should insist on seeing drafts of every section of the thesis in order to review them in a timely fashion | 1 2 3 4 5 | It is up to a student to ask for constructive criticism from a supervisor |

(Ryan & Whittle, 1995, adapted from Moses, 1985)

5. TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: STUDENT PROFILE PROFORMA (SPP)

As you progress through the various stages of your research degree, your needs and interactions with your supervisor/s will change. The following 'Student Profile' aims to help you 'plot your course' and discuss your progress with your supervisor at regular intervals throughout your research degree period. The Profile should assist you with more clearly defining:

- what you expect from yourself and from your supervisor
- how you are progressing
- how well your supervisor is meeting your needs.

The Student Profile consists of a bank of questions/criteria from which you should choose those that most relate to your particular area of research or personal background. At regular intervals (suggested six monthly) you and your supervisor should 'set targets' and independently assess how each of you is progressing towards those goals. This exercise should promote useful discussion between you and your supervisor and enable both of you to achieve more.

For each six monthly meeting, each question should have three numbers circled:

- the 'agreed' objective
- the student's answer
- the supervisor's answer.

An important difference with this approach to postgraduate supervision evaluation is that both student and supervisor set targets, then assess each other in an effort to achieve those targets.

| Expertise | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 1. | The student's current research planning skills are | (1=poor 10=outstanding) Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 2. | The student's current research laboratory skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3 | The student's current literature review skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4 | The student's current information literacy skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | The student's current data interpretation skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | The student's current writing skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | The student's current oral presentation skills are | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | The student is expert in this area of research | (1=never 10=always) Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 9 | Other relevant skills | |

Adminstrative matters and work environment

| Adminstrative matters and work environment | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. | The supervisor provides the student with the necessary information regarding administrative matters | (1=never 10=always) Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | The supervisor provides the student with or helps obtain the necessary support (for example, suitable work space, office equipment, photocopying, computer facilities, library access, consumables) | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | The supervisor assists the student to interact with others in the research area | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 4. | The supervisor ensures that the student is part of a group | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

Guidance and interpersonal communication

| Guidance and interpersonal communication | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. | The supervisor is available when the student needs to discuss the project with him/her | (1=never 10=always) Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 2. | The supervisor makes himself/herself available for significant uninterrupted periods of time to discuss the student's project | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 3. | The supervisor provides the student with guidance to find the relevant literature | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 4. | The supervisor encourages the student to plan and work independently | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 5. | The supervisor ensures that the student meets all deadlines | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 6. | The supervisor provides critical feed-back on the student's written 'reports' | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 7. | The supervisor is friendly, supportive and approachable | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| 8. | The supervisor is interested in, and committed to, the student's research | Student response 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Supervisor 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Consensus 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

6. TRACKING POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION: STUDENT EVALUATION OF POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION (SEPS)

The following survey is designed to provide some feedback to your supervisor about your experiences of the supervision process. Please read each statement in the survey and indicate your answers by circling the number of the response which corresponds most closely to your experiences as a higher degree student.

| A. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS AND WORK ENVIRONMENT | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|----------------|
| Beginning higher degree study | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| When I began my higher degree I was provided with: | | | | | | | |
| A1. | Sufficient information about the research interests of possible supervisors in the Faculty/School | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A2. | An adequate introduction to the Faculty/School and its facilities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A3. | A clear statement of the responsibilities of supervisors | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A4. | A clear statement of the responsibilities of postgraduate students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A5. | Procedural/administrative guidelines for higher degree study (e.g. procedures concerning university regulations, enrolment, grants and awards, travel, assessment and reporting, thesis submission etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A6. | An induction into postgraduate research in the Faculty | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A7. | A clear statement of the resources and facilities available to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Research culture | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| My Faculty/School ensures that: | | | | | | | |
| A8. | Students do not feel isolated | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A9. | Research students have opportunities to meet as a group | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A10. | A research seminar program is organised for postgraduate students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A11. | Cultural and gender equity are dealt with positively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

| Resources and facilities | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
|---|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|----------------|
| I have been provided with adequate resources for research, including: | | | | | | | |
| A12. | A suitable work space | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A13. | Office equipment (e.g. filing cabinets, bookshelves, telephone, mailbox/pigeon hole) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A14. | Photocopying | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A15. | PC, specialist hardware etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A16. | Travel (e.g. opportunities to attend conferences) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A17. | Consumables (e.g. stationery) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A18. | Access to library resources | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A19. | Access to help/advice on using English as a written language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A20. | Access to help/advice on academic writing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| A21. | Help with developing skills for communicating ideas orally to the community at large | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B. SUPERVISORY PROCESS | | | | | | | |
| Guidance | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| My supervisor provides me with appropriate guidance with respect to: | | | | | | | |
| B1. | Refining topic selection and clarification | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B2. | The literature in my research area | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B3. | Planning my research, identifying important goals and meeting deadlines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B4. | Encouraging me to research in a self directed or independent manner | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B5. | Ethical questions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Interpersonal communication | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| B6. | My supervisor is friendly, supportive and helpful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B7. | My supervisor is affirming and encouraging | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B8. | My supervisor is interested in, and committed to, my research | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B9. | My supervisor motivates me to do my best work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B10. | My supervisor provides an atmosphere in which I feel comfortable raising issues that concern me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|----------------|
| B11. | I am happy with the degree to which my supervisor challenges me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B12. | My supervisor consults with me on my preferred way of working | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B13. | We have worked out the degree to which he/she will be involved | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Feedback I am satisfied with the degree to which my supervisor: | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| B14. | Is available for discussions/ consultations when needed | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B15. | Sets aside uninterrupted time for us to discuss my research progress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B16. | Reads my work in a timely manner and in advance of meetings with me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B17. | Engages in constructive discussions with me about my progress | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B18. | Regularly provides me with prompt, comprehensive and constructive feedback on submitted written work | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B19. | Is a source of new ideas for my research | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B20. | Assists with writing skills (e.g. expression of ideas, grammar, structure of thesis etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Expertise I am satisfied with my supervisor's expertise with regard to: | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| B21. | My research topic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B22. | My research methodology | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B23. | The process of supervising research students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B24. | Assisting me to consult other people for expertise in areas outside his/her area of expertise | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Professional Development I am satisfied with the degree to which my supervisor: | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| B25. | Helps me network with other researchers in my area | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B26. | Assists with publication of my research | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B27. | Encourages me to present my work at appropriate seminars and conferences | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B28. | Discusses issues of authorship with me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B29. | Helps with extra-research problems including employment and technical training | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|----------------|
| B30. | Treats me as an adult learner and as a collaborative colleague | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| Miscellaneous | | Disagree Strongly | Disagree | Uncertain | Agree | Agree Strongly | Does not apply |
| B31. | My supervisor gives me sufficient notice when he/she takes leave, goes overseas, will not be available etc. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B32. | My supervisor has helped me make the necessary links between undergraduate and postgraduate study | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B33. | My supervisor has made his/her expectations of me clear | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B34. | My supervisor distributes his/her time and energy equitably between postgraduate students | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| B35. | My supervisor exploits me as an unpaid research assistant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 |

C. GENERAL

C1. What do you consider to be the most positive aspects of the supervision you have experienced?

C2. How would you like the supervision you have experienced to be improved?

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

This booklet intends to complement the literature concerning postgraduate supervision which already exists. We advise that it be read in conjunction with one or more of the following publications. This is not an exhaustive list. However, it does include those references which have proven useful in our exploration of the supervision process.

7.1 QUT publications

Berger, G.E. & Schweitzer, R. (1995). *Issues in postgraduate study: A workshop handbook for postgraduate students*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Student Guild, QUT Postgraduate Students Association & QUT Counselling Services.

Elphinstone, L., Schweitzer, R. & Jackson, P. (1995). *Getting started with the end in mind*. Brisbane: Counselling and Health Services, Queensland University of Technology.

Queensland University of Technology (1995). *PhD handbook*. Brisbane: QUT.

Queensland University of Technology Postgraduate Students Association (1995). *Postgraduate handbook*. Brisbane: QUT.

Queensland University of Technology Student Guild (1995). *Postgraduate handbook*. Brisbane: QUT.

7.2 External publications

Cone, J.D. & Foster, S.L. (1993). *Dissertations and theses from start to finish: Psychology and related fields*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Connell, R.W. (1985). How to supervise a PhD. *Vestis*, 2, 38-41.

Cullen, D., Pearson, M., Saha, L.J. & Spear, R.H. (1994). *Establishing effective PhD supervision*. Canberra: AGPS.

Cullen, D. (Ed.). (1993). *Quality in PhD education*. Canberra: ANU.

McDowell, L., Race, P. & Brown, S. (1995). *500 tips for research students*. London: Kogan Page.

Moses, I. (1985). *Supervising postgraduates*, HERDSA Green Guide No. 3. Sydney: HERDSA.

- Parry, S. & Hayden, M. (1994). *Supervising higher degree research students: An investigation of practices across a range of academic departments*, Higher Education Division, Evaluations and Investigations Program, Department of Employment, Education and Training. Canberra: AGPS.
- Powles, M. (1988). *Know your PhD students and how to help them*. Melbourne: Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.
- Phillips, E.M. & Pugh, D.S. (1994). *How to get a PhD: A handbook for students and their supervisors*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O. & Ryan, Y. (Eds.). (1994). *Quality in postgraduate education*. London: Kogan Page.
- Zuber-Skerritt, O. (Ed.) (1992). *Starting research: Supervision and training*. Brisbane: The Tertiary Education Institute, The University of Queensland.

8. APPENDIX 1: QUT SUPPORT SERVICES

Since staff and phone numbers change, you should consult a current QUT phonebook for contact numbers.

8.1 Counselling Services

Postgraduate students and supervisors can utilise Counselling Services for managing personal and academic issues. Students may seek confidential individual counselling to deal with workload, time management or role conflict issues, as well as issues related to supervision. Supervisors may wish to consult with a counsellor to discuss supervision issues in relation to a particular student or broader issues relating to their role. Counselling Services has also produced a Handbook for Postgraduate Students which should be available through your school. The Service also offers departmental workshops.

The Counselling Service can be contacted at each QUT campus.

8.2 Postgraduate Students' Association (PSA)

The PSA represents postgraduates. Its members sit on boards and committees at all levels throughout the University and the PSA executive meets regularly with University officials to discuss matters of immediate concern to postgraduates. The PSA also advises the Student Guild on all matters relating to postgraduate students and it has links to the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations which lobbies for postgraduates on a national level.

The PSA is a valuable information resource. It encourages all students with any queries or problems to contact them. If they can't help you they will direct you to people who can. The PSA publishes a regular newsletter and is committed to building support networks for students in all faculties. It runs general meetings, hosting social events and promoting University facilities available to most postgraduate students.

Every year the PSA publishes a handbook for postgraduate students which covers topics such as resources for postgraduates (e.g. part-time student services, library facilities, computing services etc), issues for postgraduate study (e.g. supervision, coursework, fees for degrees, intellectual property, employment etc), and information about relevant workshops and seminars.

PSA representatives are elected to the Student Guild annually. If you would like to speak to someone from the PSA, contact the Student Guild for the current phone number.

8.3 International Students' Association (ISA)

The ISA is a student body formed to provide a voice for international students on all QUT campuses. Its primary focus is the welfare and well-being of QUT international students. The ISA assists international students to look for accommodation, organises social activities and, in cooperation with International Students Services, holds cultural exchange forums to identify and address the special needs of international students.

ISA representatives are elected to the Student Guild annually. If you would like to speak to someone from the ISA, contact the Student Guild for the current phone number.

8.4 International Student Services

International Student Services provides language and learning assistance to non-English speaking background postgraduate students on both a group and an individual basis. Group sessions are held at Gardens Point campus for two hours once a week in first semester. Individual one hour sessions are available on appointment throughout the year.

Any editing and grammatical correction of theses and research papers is done in a teaching context with the aim of helping students to become independent learners and self-editors.

The aim of the postgraduate workshops is to provide a forum for discussion and analysis of issues relevant to research students. Topics covered in these weekly workshops include:

- writing the research paper/thesis
- the proposal
- literature review
- time management
- relationship with supervisors
- preparing for oral examination/presentations
- administrative requirements.

8.5 Office of Research

The Office of Research liaises with the Academic Staff Development Unit (ASDU) in running workshops for students and supervisors on topics of interest e.g. intellectual property, research ethics, postdoctoral opportunities, supervision etc. The Office also administers the University's Research Budget, from which scholarship and travel awards (amongst other initiatives) are funded. Application kits for the PhD program and for many scholarships are available from the Research Students Centre.

The Research Students Centre is responsible for the administration of the admission, progress and examination of PhD candidates at QUT. In fulfilling this role, staff provide administrative advice about University regulations and policies and inform students and staff of scholarship opportunities available to assist candidates. In addition, staff attempt to keep research degree candidates informed of changes in regulations and of coming events which may be of interest. The Centre is also generally first port of call for most enquiries about the thesis examination process. Finally, staff are happy to answer general concerns about supervision and candidature.

The staff comprises a Research Students' Coordinator, an Administrator of thesis examinations and progress reports, an Administrator of scholarships and fellowships and an Administrator of scholarship database and awards appointments.