Good Practice guidelines for Higher Degree Research Studies and Supervision

The following Good Practice guidelines are a mechanism for assuring quality in higher degree research courses at QUT. The guidelines are based on the principles that society, the University, faculties and institutes, supervisors and candidates all have valid expectations from higher degree studies, and that each party has responsibilities. These guidelines set out the responsibilities of the University, faculties, institutes, supervisors and candidates.

Elements of these guidelines will be applicable to all higher degree research courses. Some aspects of the guidelines also apply to coursework components of higher degree research courses.

1. Responsibilities of QUT

QUT has the responsibility to establish a policy framework within which faculty policies can be developed. It is therefore the University's responsibility to ensure that:

- requirements and standards for the particular degree are clearly described;
- entry standards are clearly specified, which apply regardless of discipline, and which are set to ensure registering candidates are likely to have the capacity to succeed given adequate commitment;
- candidates have access to adequate physical facilities and resources for their studies;
- the intellectual property rights of all parties including candidates are protected and commercial considerations do not override the University's policies on conduct of higher degree research courses, or prevent candidates from meeting all the requirements of the higher degree research courses, or unduly restrict a candidate's freedom to publish;
- minimum regular reporting requirements are set and adhered to;
- there are procedures by which either the candidate or the supervisor may raise and seek resolution of grievances;
- standards exist for qualifications, training and support of academic staff who are undertaking supervision, and that a process exists by which assistance may be sought (either by the supervisor or the candidate) should it be required;
- there are explicit procedures for the examination process, including clear guidelines for examiners (and supervisors and candidates) outlining the institution's expectations for the particular degree and any requirements for confidentiality;
- there are appeals procedures setting out the grounds on which, and means whereby, candidates may appeal against the conduct and outcome of the examination and evaluation of their candidature;
- there are explicit expectations for the capabilities which higher degree research graduates will demonstrate.

2. Responsibilities of faculties

It is the responsibility of the faculty to ensure that:

- mechanisms for the provision of quality assurance are determined and implemented;
- the candidate meets minimum University entry criteria, and further criteria as considered appropriate for the course and appears to have the time, motivation, maturity and capacity to complete the course successfully and on time;
- the proposed research project is of sufficient scope and appropriate nature to allow reasonable expectation that a diligent candidate will satisfy requirements of the degree within the approved maximum candidate time;
- due recognition is given to the research interests and ability of the candidate in determining the project;

- the institute, school or research centre or other research partner is appropriate for the research to be undertaken, and has the necessary time, space, facilities, equipment, technical and resource staff, source material and funding for the work;
- the proposed supervisors are sufficiently expert and interested in the area of research to be able to offer the candidate proper supervision, and complies with the HDR Supervisor Accreditation framework;
- the workload of the supervisor, in research, teaching, supervision and any other duties, is such as to allow sufficient time to give the candidate proper supervision;
- proper supervision is provided and maintained throughout the research period;
- if the supervisor is to be absent for six weeks or more, a substitute supervisor is appointed;
- supervisors are appointed according to policy (D/5.3 Higher degree research candidates) and guidelines as appropriate for interdisciplinary or highly specialised research projects, as soon as practicable in the development of the candidate's research plan, and supervisory responsibility is clearly designated and understood by both supervisors and candidates;
- an academic staff member within a faculty is appointed to act as a coordinator of higher degree research studies, to monitor the general progress and welfare of higher degree research candidates, including those who are members of an Institute and those undertaking their research in external locations, to monitor compliance with administrative requirements such as reporting, and to facilitate resolution of grievances where necessary;
- the University's requirements for reporting on the candidature are met, and supported by faculty procedures appropriate to the discipline, and that both candidate and supervisors have the opportunity to read and comment on each other's reports;
- information is produced and distributed to all higher degree research candidates by the faculty with details on requirements and procedures relating to all higher degree research matters administered at faculty level including:
    - grievance procedures, whereby candidates may make representation to the appropriate person or body, if they believe that their work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside their control, especially in situations involving problems of supervision or unresolved conflicts between candidates and supervisors;
    - a statement on the facilities and resources available to higher degree research candidates within the faculty and within the University (eg. library, computing and technical facilities, word processing and computing training, statistical advice, English language tuition, health care, personal and career counselling) incorporating, where relevant, advice on Institute-based provision;
    - guidelines on appeals procedures at faculty level, consistent with University policy on appeals procedures;
    - policies and guidelines on authorship and intellectual property and the procedures for monitoring them within the faculty consistent with University policy;
    - University/faculty policy on the timing and mode of presentation of those reports by which a candidate's progress is assessed;
    - mechanisms are in place to promote regular consultation and development of profitable intellectual relationships between faculty staff and candidates and among candidates including those who are Institute members, and which include:
        - orientation programs at the faculty or appropriate level for higher degree research candidates and their supervisors, to clarify procedures, give advice and discuss the expectations of candidates, staff and the University;
        - seminars on research procedures relevant to higher degree research-level research;
        - a regular program of graduate seminars in the faculty's research area;
        - training workshops on occupational health and safety procedures;
        - seminars or appropriate training in ethical issues and procedures;
- higher degree research candidates are encouraged to make submissions regarding the provision of adequate human and physical resources within the faculty;
- conflicts of interest between researchers (staff and higher degree research students) are managed appropriately (refer to MOPP B/8.7 and D/2.6).

3. Responsibilities of the supervisor

Both the Principal and Associate Supervisors and any external supervisors have responsibilities to:

- give guidance about the nature of research, requirements of the degree including the nature and extent of an "original contribution", standards expected, choice of research topic, planning of the research program, presentation of a research proposal, literature and sources, attendance at taught classes, where appropriate, and requisite techniques (including arranging for or providing instruction where necessary);
- advise the candidate on, and ensure, productive use of the candidate's time especially in the first year of candidature;
- give detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of work, so that the thesis may be submitted on time;
- establish at the outset, through discussion with the candidate, and maintain, a schedule of regular (at least monthly) meetings with the candidate in accordance with faculty policy;
- request written work from the candidate on a pre-arranged, regular and agreed basis and return such work with constructive criticism within one month or less as appropriate;
- monitor carefully the performance of the candidate relative to the standard required for the degree, and ensure that the candidate promptly is made aware of inadequate progress or of standards of work below that generally expected, by specifying the problems and suggesting and discussing ways of addressing them. Notes should be kept of such discussions and actions taken. If the problem is not resolved, action should be taken according to faculty and University policy;
- monitor the development of the candidate's generic capabilities as described in QUT policy and advise the candidate on opportunities for the enhancement of such capabilities;
- maintain currency in the knowledge and skills required for supervision through staff development activities as laid out in the HDR Supervisor Accreditation framework;
- comment critically and constructively and in reasonable time on the content and the drafts of the thesis and, at the time of submission, certify that the thesis is properly presented, conforms to the policy and course requirements and is, therefore, prima facie, worthy of examination;
- advise the Faculty Research Committee (or equivalent), preferably after general discussion with the candidate, of the names and credentials of examiners, who are free from bias, active and knowledgeable in the field, and empathetic with the theoretical framework of the thesis;
- comply with faculty and University policies on reporting on the candidate's progress and provide frank and timely comment;
- advise and provide support to the candidate on preparation for and performance in reports and reviews required by the University and faculty;
- ensure that the candidate is adequately trained in safe working practices relevant to the field of research and adheres to the guidelines established by the Health, Safety and Environment Department and any relevant authority in places of study and work, including Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) and local health and safety committees (A/9.1);
- to remain vigilant to the possibility of conflicts of interest involving higher degree research students;
- ensure that the candidate is fully aware of the need to follow ethical practices as laid down in
    - national and state legislation
    - national guidelines, and
    - University policy;
- follow ethical practices as laid down in
    - national and state legislation
    - national guidelines, and
    - University policy

and as appropriate to the particular discipline and relevant profession, and as specified by any relevant funding body:

- arrange as appropriate for candidates to make presentations of their research work in faculty seminars and support them in their preparations;
- arrange as appropriate for the candidate to meet other researchers in the field, and to attend meetings or conferences;
- ensure that a candidate whose major work is being conducted away from the University or faculty, or in a joint project with a commercial or industrial partner, plays a full and active role in the intellectual life of the faculty;
- ensure that candidates have adequate access to the necessary human and physical resources, and participates as far as possible in the intellectual life of the faculty;
- oversee the candidate's work to ensure that the design of experiments, and the processes of acquiring, recording, storing, examining and interpreting data and preparing material for publication have been undertaken by the candidate;
- ensure that the direction of the work is entirely under the control of the University and candidate in accordance with University policy, particularly where funds are externally provided or there is a commercial dimension to the research;
- ensure that agreement is reached between the candidate and supervisor concerning authorship of publications and acknowledgement of contributions during and after candidature. There should be open and mutual recognition of the candidate's and supervisor's contribution on all published work arising from the project. It should not be automatically assumed that the supervisor's name or candidate's name will appear on all such published work;
- ensure adherence to the University policy and faculty guidelines on intellectual property, and fully inform the candidate, preferably prior to commencement of the candidature or in any case as soon as possible, of any implications of the project with respect to intellectual property. Where there are commercial implications, there may be a need to develop a formal agreement on participation in the project (through the Office of Commercial Services), and may be restrictions on communication or publication of results or access to the thesis;
- ensure that original data are recorded in a durable and appropriately referenced form and stored safely for a period appropriate to the discipline.

4. Responsibilities of the candidate

It is the responsibility of the candidate to:

- become familiar and comply with course requirements governing the degree, and with any other relevant University and faculty policies;
- discuss with the supervisor the type of guidance and comment considered most helpful, and agree to and maintain a schedule of meetings which will ensure regular contact ;
- take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties (however elementary they seem) and sharing responsibility for seeking solutions;
- maintain the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor, including in particular the presentation of any required written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussions before proceeding to the next stage, and discuss with the supervisor any impediments to progress
- provide formal reports to the Faculty Research Committee (or equivalent), through the supervisor, at times required by the University, faculty or supervisor
- follow, at all times, safe working practices relevant to the field of research, and adhere to the guidelines established by the Health, Safety and Environment Department and any relevant authority in places of study and work, including Health and Safety Representative (HSRs) and local health and safety committees (A/9.1);
- notify the university if there is any real or perceived conflicts of interest (as per MOPP B/8.7 and MOPP D/2.6);
- follow ethical practices as laid down in
  - o national and state legislation
  - o national guidelines, and
  - o University policy

and as appropriate to the particular discipline and relevant profession, and as specified by any relevant funding body

- follow University policy on intellectual property and observe any limitations on communication, publication or access to the thesis which have been agreed with the University and any commercial partner or collaborator;
- utilise the resources, facilities and opportunities provided by the faculty to facilitate progress in the research, integrate into the intellectual community provided by the faculty, and acquire or improve the skills and knowledge required for completion of the project;
- ensure that original data are recorded in a durable and appropriately referenced form and stored safely for a period appropriate to the discipline but in any case not less than 5 years;
- prepare the thesis for examination, including arranging for its typing, proof-reading and binding and, where appropriate, consulting the supervisor regarding matters of style and presentation, according to policy MOPP policy D/5.3 Higher degree research candidates and course requirements;
- independently and with the assistance of supervisors and others, seek to develop the generic capabilities as described in QUT policy.

Related Documents

MOPP A/9.1 Health and Safety
MOPP B/8.7 Conflict of interest
MOPP C/4.3 Graduate capabilities
MOPP D/2.6 QUT Code of Conduct for Research
MOPP D/3.1 Intellectual property policy
MOPP D/5.3 Higher degree research candidates

Approval & modification history

DATE	AUTHORITY	DETAILS
6 June 2016	QUT Research Degrees Committee	Inclusion of responsibilities for Conflicts of Interest
2015	QUT Research Degrees Committee	Guideline established following rescinding of MOPP D/5.5

Responsible Officer: Secretary, Research Degrees Committee