



POLICY: STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP

Policy Owner	DVC Research and Internationalisation
Division/ Unit / Department	Postgraduate School
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Related documents

UJ documents (e.g. Policies, Regulations, Guidelines, Contracts)	Other (e.g. Legislation, DoE and HEQC directives and guidelines)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UJ Vision, Mission and Values; • UJ Academic Regulations; • Higher Degrees Policy; • Higher Degrees Administration; • Policy on Authorship; • Policy on Handling of Student Complaints; • UJ Code of Academic and Research Ethics; • Policy on management of Student Sexual Harassment and Rape; • UJ Conditions of Service for Employees; • Guidelines for Student Supervisor Agreement • Guidelines for Postgraduate Student Performance Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 108 of 1996; and • Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework, 2013.
Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions which should be familiar with it):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Deans/Vice Deans; • Researchers; • Heads: Academic Schools and Departments; • Lecturers (Part time and Full Time); • Heads: Faculty Administration; • Executive Directors/Directors; • Heads: Academic and Administrative Support Units; • Students registered for Postgraduate Studies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Johannesburg is committed to the ideal of distinguished scholarship and the provision of credible and innovative research findings that carry international recognition as well as national credibility and legitimacy. Central to the realisation of this vision is the quality of the research produced as the University leads, challenges and explores knowledge. The relationship between supervisor and student is an integral part of the holistic research experience as the student develops and is guided towards mastery of the research process, the research discipline, and the field of specialisation. The relationship between student and supervisor is also an important factor in determining student success as well as the quality of a qualification.

2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

2.1 The focus of this Policy is the student-supervisor relationship and not the general relationship between the University and the student or supervisor. The policy may be supplemented by additional guidelines to cover specific faculty or discipline related practices that have been approved by Senate.

2.2 The policy applies to:

2.2.1 All research degree programmes and programmes with distinct research components;

2.2.2 All academic and research employees as well as postdoctoral fellows in their role as supervisors of master's and doctoral postgraduate students;

2.2.3 All students registered for honours, master's, and doctoral postgraduate qualifications across all faculties and campuses;

2.2.4 The policy extends and does not replace any other agreements between the University and its students or employees.

2.3 The purpose of this policy is to:

2.3.1 Outline the rights and obligations of all honours, master's and doctoral students enrolled at the University as well as those of supervisors and co-supervisors*.

2.3.2 Provide a clear and concise outline of what each party to the student-supervisor relationship may expect from the other, thereby promoting the development and maintenance of a sound and productive relationship between the two parties.\

2.3.3 Serve as a point of departure in the resolution of any disputes that might arise between postgraduate students and their supervisors.

2.4 In addition to the documentation listed on the cover page, this policy should be read in conjunction with the general rules governing the enrolment of students and/or the conditions of employment of academic employees and/or researchers as applicable.

* For the remainder of the document co-supervisors will also be referred to as supervisors since their essential responsibilities are the same in respect of their interaction with the student. Where minor difference may exist, the supervisor and co-supervisor(s) will clarify these between themselves and communicate them to the student.

3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 Excellence in the pursuit of research degrees requires mutual respect between students, supervisors and all other related parties;
- 3.2 The inherent power differential between supervisors and students should be recognised in all interactions between supervisors and students;
- 3.3 It is important that at an early stage of a student's research studies both parties establish their expectations of each other;
- 3.4 Students and supervisors should seek to establish good working relationships by meeting all formal requirements as stated in the *Academic Regulations* and by paying due regard and respect to the codes and norms governing the conduct of relations between student and supervisors as here outlined in this policy and as conventionally accepted in academia;
- 3.5 An essential aspect of achieving excellence within the University's research programmes is the demonstration of integrity. In this respect, students and supervisors should make every effort to ensure that the conduct of research follows the highest ethical and professional standards;
- 3.6 The successful progression of a student through a research degree is dependent upon the time and resource commitments of both supervisors and students. Students, with the support of their supervisors, should endeavour to determine the student's development needs and address this pro-actively.

4. THE STUDENT-SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIP

4.1 Student Responsibilities and Legitimate Supervisor Expectations

The student is responsible to exercise the following responsibilities diligently and sincerely, and where appropriate to consult with his/her supervisor/s to give effect to these responsibilities.

Conversely, the supervisor/s may legitimately expect students to exercise these responsibilities at all times:

- 4.1.1 Engage in the relationship with mutual respect and integrity;
- 4.1.2 Sign a *Student Supervisor Agreement* with their supervisor(s) and ensure that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities;
- 4.1.3 Adhere to the requirement of the *Developmental Plan* agreed to with the supervisor;
- 4.1.4 Discuss expectations of process and outcomes and plan and implement the agreed research programme or project as guided by the supervisor;
- 4.1.5 Ensure that they have understood and incorporate the feedback from their supervisor;
- 4.1.6 Successfully complete all the academic outputs of the study programme;
- 4.1.7 Find/source appropriate literature and obtain information from literature;
- 4.1.8 Write the research proposal in the time stipulated;
- 4.1.9 Prepare all documents required for obtaining ethics clearance, if applicable as guided by the supervisor;
- 4.1.10 Assist in a limited manner in the drafting of funding applications;
- 4.1.11 Plan work schedules;
- 4.1.12 Engage in any required fieldwork or data gathering, laboratory experimentation, data processing and analyses;
- 4.1.13 Write and proofread his/her dissertation or thesis and assume responsibility to learn how to write for an academic audience. This could include, but is not limited to, obtaining

professional assistance with the linguistic editing of the dissertation or thesis;

- 4.1.14 Make regular appointments with the supervisor/s and inform him/her in time if any administrative or academic difficulties are experienced in the study programme in order that the supervisor/s may advise in respect of timely corrective action;
- 4.1.15 Participate in relevant research projects and programmes as determined by the supervisors, including attendance of symposia, seminars and conferences;
- 4.1.16 In the case of research master's or doctoral students, produce at least the number of pieces of work suitable for submission to a peer reviewed publication or accepted by such a publication as required by the specific faculty regulations by the time the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee considers the assessment results;
- 4.1.17 Attend to any amendments or revisions of the dissertation or thesis as required by the supervisor/s or internal or external assessors, and assume responsibility to produce the final bound hard and electronic copies;
- 4.1.18 Always adhere to all general academic ethics regarding academic integrity and plagiarism, and ethics requirements relating to the research work;
- 4.1.19 Assume responsibility for their own emotional wellness and use the university resources for support where needed;
- 4.1.20 Use the appropriate mechanisms for resolving potential areas of conflict or dispute as described in the Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes and the Academic Regulations; and
- 4.1.21 Renew his/her annual registration with the University at the stipulated times.

4.2 Supervisor Responsibilities and Legitimate Student Expectations

All supervisors are responsible to exercise the following responsibilities diligently and sincerely. Conversely, the student may legitimately expect the supervisors to always exercise these responsibilities:

- 4.2.1 Provide academic guidance to the student to ensure the development of research skills and mastery of the research discipline and field of specialization, and ensure that these competencies are demonstrated in the relevant research project (minor) dissertation or thesis;
- 4.2.2 Engage in the relationship with mutual respect, integrity and professional conduct;
- 4.2.3 Regularly discuss expectations of process and outcomes of the research;
- 4.2.4 Clarify the respective roles of the supervisor and co-supervisor(s) (if appointed), and communicate these clearly to the student and sign the *Student Supervisor Agreement*;
- 4.2.5 Ensure that the student is aware of all policies and regulations related to their studies;
- 4.2.6 Identify areas of developmental need of the student and prepare a *Developmental Plan* for the student and then address the needs or direct the student to the appropriate sources of support or development;
- 4.2.7 Where they become aware of concerns regarding the student's emotional wellness, they should direct the student to the appropriate structures for support at the university;
- 4.2.8 Administer and manage matters associated with the student's studies in accordance with the regulations of the University;
- 4.2.9 Cooperate with each other, the postgraduate co-ordinator and or and with the Head of Department and/or Executive Dean of the faculty and/or other responsible University official, to ensure as far as reasonably possible that the student is provided with the basic infrastructure and necessary resources to undertake the research;
- 4.2.10 Co-operate with each other, the postgraduate co-ordinator and or and with the Head of Department and/or Executive Dean, to assist with the arrangements for colloquia or

seminars which the student may present;

- 4.2.11 Ensure that the Faculty Officer and relevant committees are furnished with all relevant documentation at the appropriate time;
- 4.2.12 Facilitate the student's access to necessary research resources, such as the library, laboratories and equipment, or access to chemicals and consumables, while not diminishing the student's duty to take responsibility for his/her own research, including purchasing items that may be required to complete the production of the dissertation or thesis;
- 4.2.13 Introduce the student to the Faculty and discipline related research community to, where possible and practicable, involve him/her in academic activities appropriate to the field of expertise;
- 4.2.14 Meet with the student regularly to provide guidance, monitor progress, and agreed-upon timeframes, and recommend corrective measures if necessary;
- 4.2.15 Keep a written record of progress and output, and provide timely feedback;
- 4.2.16 Provide progress reports as required by the University and its research and/or postgraduate study structures, or by external agencies such as the National Research Foundation;
- 4.2.17 Assess the research project, (minor) dissertation or theses to determine if any ethical violations, including plagiarism, occurred prior to submission of the document for examination;
- 4.2.18 Oversee any changes recommended by the assessors and those that have been stipulated by the appropriate Faculty or University structure;
- 4.2.19 Always adhere to all general academic ethics regarding academic integrity and plagiarism, and the ethics requirements of research work;
- 4.2.20 Encourage the student to seek external financial support for his/her studies; and
- 4.2.21 Address their own continued development as supervisors.

5. FACULTY SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Faculties manage the student-supervisor relationship in accordance with the provisions contained in this Policy, the Higher Degrees Policy, the Handling of Student Complaints Policy and faculty rules and regulations as determined by the Faculty Board, approved by Senate, and contained in the Faculty Rules and Regulations.

6. POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

The Postgraduate School (PGS) functions as a postgraduate development platform, dedicated to support high-level postgraduate scholarship and output in collaboration with Faculties and other related UJ support functions. The PGS page on the UJ website provides the detail on support available.