

HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH SUPERVISION

TOPIC 1

YOU AS SUPERVISOR

STUDY GUIDE

YOU AS SUPERVISOR

OVERVIEW

The primary activity is to work through the online module *Perspectives of Supervision* that gives you the opportunity to reflect on what research supervision means to you.

Please use the resources to focus on your current approaches to, and understandings of, the supervision of higher degree research studies.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of this topic, you can expect to have engaged in research and activities that will enable you to:

Articulate a conceptual framework and personal perspective of postgraduate supervision, in the light of knowledge and skills (theory and practice) appropriate to the changing climate of research and teaching in UNE and the broader Australian higher education sector.

READINGS AND RESOURCES

These readings and resources provide a starting point for your research into this topic. Use these resources to identify key terms and issues by which you can research and identify resources relevant to your disciplinary and supervisory context.

for Improving Research Supervision and Training (2009). *The act of supervision*. Online: <http://www.first.edu.au/members/supervision/index.html> [Institutional login required]

Nightingale, P. (2005). *Advising PhD Candidates*. Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia: Sydney (Chapters 1 and 2)

Oxford Learning Institute (nd). Research Supervision. Online: <http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/oli.php?page=289>.

Pearson, M., & Brew, A. (2002). Research training and supervision development. *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(2), 135-150. [eReserve]

Pitt, R. (2008). The PhD in the global knowledge economy: Hypothesising beyond employability, in M. Kiley & G. Mullins (Eds), *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Research Education in the New Global Environment*. Proceedings of the 2008 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference – Refereed Papers. Adelaide (pp 55-64). Online: http://qpr.edu.au/2008/qpr2008_part1.pdf

University of New England (2004). *Context and Quality*. Quality Supervision: Enhancing the Experience. Teaching and Learning Centre. [Accessible as Background Reading from Module Resources]

PERSPECTIVES ON SUPERVISION

OVERVIEW

Within each discipline there will be general consensus as to the nature of research that is appropriate for that discipline. In science programs the focus tends towards research based on quantitative analysis and in the humanities there is often an emphasis on a qualitative paradigm. Alternatively, law programs may focus on case studies of litigation or legislation.

Within the context of your discipline, how do you define research?

How does your definition compare to that of the Macquarie Dictionary?

research n. diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover facts and principles

For your research students, a key element of their research (or inquiry) will be to focus on identifying a gap or issue from the current research literature (the research problem) and developing a research design and methodology to collect and analyse data in order to address that problem and thereby add to the existing knowledge in the field.

In this topic you will have the opportunity to reflect on:

- i. the ways different disciplines view the research process;
- ii. the institutional policies which underpin the research process; and
- iii. the shifts across the academy as to the meaning of higher degree research.

These components will continue to inform your thinking on HDR supervision.

SUPERVISORY STYLE SURVEY

If you consider the background of students who are enrolling in research-degree programs, you will realise they have a diversity of experiences and expectations for the research experience. Given this diversity, it is important to reflect on your particular supervisory style, and the way that style might impact on the relationships you establish with your research students.

To develop your understanding of the research and supervisory style, we have provided you access to a *Supervision Survey* that allows you to reflect on your particular response to twelve components of the research and supervision process.

You should complete the *Supervisory Style Survey* (available from the online Module Resources) and also work through the online *Survey Review* which provides reflective feedback on the possible responses.

Please keep a record of your responses, as they will inform areas of the relationships you establish with your research students.

QUESTIONS TO ADDRESS

In addition to completing the Supervision Survey, please read the follow quote from one of your readings and consider the questions posed.

In a culture of knowledge productivity or performativity, non-completion and/or slow completion of HDR studies constitute a failure to perform. In other words, a university's investment in research training and supervision, that is, the investment of intellectual, social and material capital, has been poorly risk-managed in terms of HDR productivity outcomes. In this performance-driven context, that is, a context of reduced state funding to universities, and increased demands for accessibility, accountability and productivity, academics are being asked to consider the risks associated with enrolling HDR students. These risks materialise when students: (1) do not complete on-time; (2) fail to complete postgraduate work despite substantial investment of intellectual, social and material capital/resources, and/or (3) transfer to another institution during the period of candidature and thus transfer intellectual and social capital, as well as federal government funding awarded to institutions on the basis of HDR completions. (McWilliam & Singh, 2002, p. 10).

- *What implications arise for the management of higher degree research students in the light of the changes in policy and funding?*
- *How might recent changes in higher education policy and funding impact on higher degree research programs of study? What implications arise in terms of how students and research projects are managed?*
- *What strategies can supervisors put into place to assist students to complete their programs in a timely manner, without jeopardising the academic standards of the degree?*

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Harman, G. (2002). Producing PhD graduates in Australia for the knowledge economy. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 21(2), 179-190. [eReserve]

Kiley, M. (2003, July). *Developments in postgraduate education in Australia over the last decade*. Paper presented at the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) annual conference, Auckland, New Zealand. Available at: <http://surveys.canterbury.ac.nz/herdsa03/pdfsref/Y1103.pdf>.

Lee, A. & McKenzie, J. (2008). Evaluating Doctoral Supervision: Qualitative Steps and Emerging Issues, in M. Kiley & G. Mullins (Eds), *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Research Education in the New Global Environment*. Proceedings of the 2008 Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference – Conference Papers. Adelaide (pp 61-73). Online: http://qpr.edu.au/2008/qpr2008_part2.pdf.

McWilliam, E., & Singh, P. (2002). Towards a research training curriculum: What, why, how, who? *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 29(3), 3-18. [eReserve]