How to Survive……
Choosing a Research Supervisor

This is a choice that should be made with great care, because the effectiveness of the candidate-supervisor relationship has a large effect on your experience.

The role of the supervisors is to advise, guide and provide constructive feedback to you through the processes of choosing a realistic topic, designing a viable project, doing the research and interpreting the findings and writing the dissertation.

Things to do before deciding on a supervisor:

- read the University's Code of Good Practice for Graduate Research and Supervision (http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies/good_practice)
- visit the University's Research Specialist Interests website (http://directory.uwa.edu.au/specialists) This is a list of the research interests of academic staff. You will find that many areas of research cross departmental/school boundaries, and there may be various possible supervisors in your area of interest.
- read some literature about research supervision;
- talk with a few prospective supervisors about their styles of supervision and what they expect of their candidates;
- talk with your prospective supervisors' current and former graduate candidates about their experiences; and
- talk with prospective supervisors about their research interests and prospective topics.

Select a supervisor who you expect will:

- maintain an interested, professional, mutually respectful and supportive supervisory relationship with you
- meet with you regularly to discuss your research;
- provide on-going clear, adequate, good-quality advice on the planning and execution of your research;
- provide you with timely and constructive feedback on all aspects of your work; and
- guide you through the completion of your degree and into the next stage of your career.
Things to discuss and negotiate early:

- your and your supervisor's preferred styles of supervision. A useful resource is the University's Student Perceptions of Research Supervision (SPORS) questionnaire. This is designed to help candidates and supervisors discuss and negotiate important matters related to supervision (http://www.catl.uwa.edu.au/etu/spors);
- how you and your supervisor will resolve issues of intellectual property, authorship of publications and so on. Read the University's Intellectual Property Policy (http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au/policies/confidentiality_ip);
- the regularity, timing and format of your meetings;

- the type and level of assistance that you would like, and your supervisor is prepared to give, with respect to:
  - choosing a topic and refining the project;
  - planning a schedule;
  - setting goals;
  - finding appropriate literature;
  - collecting the data and information;
  - analysing and interpreting your findings;
  - planning the dissertation;
  - and writing and reviewing the dissertation; and
  - a schedule for the research and preparation of the dissertation, including target deadlines for key elements of the process.

Other useful resources:

Resource Area Section:

PR100: Liz Hampson (1994) How's Your Dissertation Going?

http://www.lass.soton.ac.uk/students/researchskills/Research_Topic/