

## *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](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](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: Lucinda Becker (2004) *How to Manage Your Postgraduate Course*.

PR100: Norman Graves & Ved Varma, eds. (1997) *Working for a Doctorate*.

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

[http://www.lass.soton.ac.uk/students/researchskills/Research\\_Topic/](http://www.lass.soton.ac.uk/students/researchskills/Research_Topic/)

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