



## Guidelines for the Supervision of Postgraduate Students

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University Guidelines for Postgraduate Supervisors (<http://www.gradstudies.unimelb.edu.au/unistaff/policy/>).

### 1. Supervisors

**New Supervisors.** There is a formal approval process for new supervisors. Supervisors who are supervising their first PhD or MD student through the University Department of Paediatrics will need approval by the Paediatrics Research Higher Degrees Committee before applying for enrolment of any students. Approval should be sought as early as possible noting that the Committee meets only monthly. For many lab-based project supervisors this should ideally be sought when submitting projects for the PhD student recruitment process that occurs mid way through each year.

**Co-supervision.** The University Department of Paediatrics and School of Postgraduate Studies require that all students have at least one other supervisor in addition to their principal supervisor. It is a requirement that all first time supervisors work with at least one co-supervisor who is experienced in the supervision of postgraduate students.

**Maximum Number of Students.** Supervising multiple students can be an onerous task. The University Department of Paediatrics Research Higher Degrees Committee will take into account the number of current students for each supervisor, as well as their experience and other workload, when approving new student enrolments. Supervisors should contact the Department of Paediatrics as early as possible when considering supervising a new student.

The University Department of Paediatrics, in liaison with the School of Graduate Studies, has determined that *supervisors will each be allowed to supervise a maximum of seven (full time equivalent) postgraduate (ie PhD, MD or Masters by Research) students, but can be the principal supervisor for no more than four students. This includes students enrolled through other Departments or Universities.* Exceptional circumstances will need discussion with and approval from the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

**Supervision of laboratory-based projects.** For students undertaking predominantly laboratory-based projects, or in which laboratory work is a significant component, the principal supervisor must themselves have completed a laboratory-based PhD. Exceptions to this policy need to be approved on an individual basis by the Research Higher Degrees Committee and will generally be restricted to supervisors who have previously demonstrated successful supervision of students undertaking laboratory-based PhD projects.

## **2. Student Enrolments**

All student enrolments need approval by the University Department of Paediatrics Research Higher Degrees Committee before they are submitted to the School of Graduate Studies or the School of Medicine. Again, bearing in mind the Committee meets on a monthly basis, this approval should be sought as early as possible.

## **3. Supervisor Checklist**

The Supervisor Checklist is designed as an aid to ensure that the expectations of the University Department, the student and the supervisors are discussed by the supervisors and student before enrolment. This Checklist may also be useful for current students and supervisors.

## **4. Supervisors Professional Development**

Attendance at the PG Supervisor's Course run by the School of Graduate Studies is expected of every supervisor. The University Department of Paediatrics also holds seminars within the University Department of Paediatrics/RCH/MCRI campus on a regular basis.

Attendance at these or other similar courses at least every 2 years is a minimum requirement for all supervisors. Other suitable courses would include those on cross cultural, multi-disciplinary supervision etc.

(<http://www.gradstudies.unimelb.edu.au/unistaff/supervisorworkshop/>)

## **5. Documentation of Supervision**

Supervisors should ensure that a system is in place to document the dates and times of all one-to-one supervisions. Supervisors also need to ensure that students document the contents of these meetings using either a diary or, ideally, by emailing a record of the supervision so that both supervisor and student agree on what was discussed and agreed.

## **6. Students' Attendance at Meetings and Courses**

The University Department of Paediatrics expects all students to regularly attend courses on technical aspects of their work as well as Professional Development. Supervisors therefore need to strongly encourage their students to attend and participate in meetings arranged within the University Department of Paediatrics/RCH/MCRI campus. These should be seen as an essential part of student learning and development. Student attendance and presentation at national and international conferences and meetings should be actively encouraged and supported. Similarly it is the supervisor's role to ensure students attend and participate in appropriate courses that are available through the University or elsewhere. Attendance of all meetings should be documented on students' annual reports.

## **7. Space for Students**

The Department of Paediatrics Research Higher Degrees Committee recognises that desk space should be available for all postgraduate students. This space can be either individually allocated or shared space. In the case of students undertaking laboratory projects, desk space should ideally be relatively near to the laboratory area. Supervisors are reminded that part of the obligation in accepting postgraduate students is the commitment to providing suitable desk space. (<http://www.research.unimelb.edu.au/postgraduate/infrastructure.html>).

## **8. Student Community Service**

Involvement of students in community service events will enhance their communication skills and interactions with the public, as well as be of benefit to the community. Supervisors should strongly encourage students to actively participate in such events on an annual basis. Events might include: manning stalls at institutional or society expos held for the public and schools; talks (about science/medical research or careers) for the public, including secondary and tertiary students; assisting at educational activities held for the public, including schools and health professionals. These activities should be indicated within the student's report for annual review.

## 9. Early Recognition of Problems

Where problems with the project or the student's progress are identified early in the first year, supervisors must ensure these are brought to the student's attention as early as possible. When there are major concerns a Review Panel should be convened as soon as possible so that the issues can be discussed and interventions (such as time lines) instigated.

Three to six months after enrolment, a formal meeting should be convened between the student and their supervisors. At this meeting the student's progress to date should be discussed. The requirement for this meeting are further detailed in is the Department of Paediatrics' **Guidelines for the Postgraduate Students' Review Process** document.

Any concerns about the student, and in particular the possibility that the student may not reach the standard required for Confirmation, should be highlighted to the student and to the University Department of Paediatrics by the supervisor.

## 10. Completion of Degrees

There is an increasing emphasis from the University on timely completion. Late submission of theses should now be seen as a rarity. Extensions of 6 months are still acceptable but most students should be strongly encouraged to complete their degree within 3 years.

## 11. Useful links

Summary of University policies and procedures relating to RHD Supervision

<http://www.gradstudies.unimelb.edu.au/supervisors/policy/> (click on first link under "Downloads")

Professional development for supervisors

<http://www.gradstudies.unimelb.edu.au/unistaff/supervisorworkshop>

Professional development for students: "Upskills" courses available through SGS:

<http://www.gradstudies.unimelb.edu.au/services>

SGS "In Detail" information series for students and supervisors

<http://www.sgs.unimelb.edu.au/unistaff/publication/indetails>

Faculty of M,D&HS International Students Support Program

<http://www.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/aboutus/structure/admin/fiu/ssupport.html>

University of Melbourne Postgraduate Association (UMPA)

<http://www.umpa.unimelb.edu.au>

University of Melbourne Language and Learning Skills Unit

<http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/index.html>

Please also refer to the other Department of Paediatrics Guideline documents:

- **Guidelines for the Postgraduate Students' Review Process**
- **Role of the Research Higher Degrees Committee**

A/Prof Nigel Curtis on behalf of the  
**Department of Paediatrics Research Higher Degrees Committee**