



Supervision of Doctoral Students: A Checklist for Supervisors

The supervisor's primary task consists of guiding and inspiring students to realize their scholarly potential. At the same time, the supervisor must ensure (to the best of his/her ability) that the rules and regulations of the university are met.

Good supervisory practice will be fostered by attending to the following checklist:

- Are you careful to limit the number of students you accept for supervision to a manageable number? Thesis supervision is demanding of time and effort, and it is far worse for students to be cheated out of their legitimate expectations of their supervisor than to be turned down at the start.
- Have you developed an understanding with your doctoral students concerning the mechanics of supervision, the kind and amount of advice you are able and willing to offer, the frequency and regularity with which you expect to see them, a "plan of campaign" (e.g., the timing of submission of a dissertation outline, of draft chapters), and your mutual expectations concerning the quality and originality of the completed dissertation?
- Has the topic of research been refined in the initial stages of work? Is the scope of the dissertation project excessively ambitious? Too narrow? Are you satisfied with the student's progress and background knowledge of the subject?
- Do you inform your students when you plan to be on research leave or absent for an extended period of time from the university? Have you made satisfactory arrangements for supervision of the student during this time?
- Is your student aware of university, faculty, and program requirements and standards to which the dissertation is expected to conform?
- Do you support your students in their effort to acquire external funding, to publish scholarly articles, or to present conference papers?
- Do you give top priority to returning work swiftly and commenting on it thoroughly? (A turnaround time of a couple of weeks for a chapter is usually reasonable unless a different understanding exists; a turnaround time of two months is professional negligence.)
- When your students' dissertations are complete or nearly complete, do you actively support their efforts to get a job, advise them on how best to sell themselves, and use your professional contacts to provide what help you can?