

## A. What supervisors expect of students

The expectations that a supervisor has of a student will vary somewhat. You may find it helpful at a very early stage to discuss this list with your supervisor.

1. **A student must choose a topic that is within the area of interest, knowledge, and expertise of the supervisor.** Very few supervisors will consider other topics.
2. **Supervisors only sign their agreement to supervise once the Research Proposal is finalised.** Do not expect a supervisor to sign first and then the student writes the proposal.
3. **It takes time and a lot of effort** to first find a topic area, then narrow it down until there are testable questions that can be feasibly answered. **Therefore students need to begin early.** In addition, there is an initial literature review to prepare along with careful plans for how the data will be collected and analysed. All this goes into a Research Proposal, which must be written to a high standard of presentation, English, and referencing.
4. **Students must agree to do any supplementary reading/study in addition to the work directly needed for the research.**
5. **Students must make regular progress.** Failure to do so could result in a refusal of the supervisor to agree to continue supervision. They should organise their lives accordingly. Research must be given top priority. Twenty hours a week would be a minimum, and 40-50 more reasonable.
6. **Students should find out how the supervisor likes to be contacted,** and fit in with their preferences. They should also **not** expect to be able to contact the supervisor during the holidays, (though this may sometimes be possible) and they should plan accordingly.
7. **All students must speak for themselves vis à vis the administration.** They are responsible for finding out what the procedures are: deadlines, papers, signatures, etc. They must do all the work to ensure that these formalities are met.
8. **The appropriate system of references must be used.** It is the responsibility of the student to learn the system. A supervisor will answer questions on the fine points and on difficult examples, but will not expect to explain the basics.
9. **All decisions are the responsibility of the student.** The student is free to accept, modify, or reject, any advice given, and take the consequences.
10. **Students can expect a supervisor to:**
  - a. Insist on testable questions/hypotheses
  - b. Discuss and approve the data collection instruments.
  - c. Advise on the thesis structure, flow of argument, cohesion etc
  - d. Provide other advice at their discretion.
11. **No supervisor expects to tell students what to do.** Instead, students must provide their own ideas, and their own propositions, for evaluation. Research is not following a recipe: it is finding out something new, and writing about it in context and mastering the genre and the language of a thesis.
12. **The MA thesis writing process** is not one where a student follows the directions of the supervisor. Rather, it is **an apprenticeship.** The training involves growing in maturity in:
  - a. **independent thinking**
  - b. **responsibility, and decision making, in particular to:**
    - 1) decide on the topic for study
    - 2) decide what goes into the literature review
    - 3) decide what data to collect, and how to collect it
    - 4) collect and analyse the data
    - 5) show how the data answers the question/tests the hypothesis, and relate this to other published work/theories and arguments.
  - c. **learning the genre of the thesis,** with its conventions and styles
  - d. **writing a thesis,** clearly, accurately, with a coherent argument.

### 13. Students should avoid any project requiring permissions

**Any work needing permissions, needs careful planning.** Permissions cannot always be obtained, and commonly cannot be obtained quickly. Students should avoid planning work that needs them OR they should make alternative plans at the very beginning.

### 14. Students should choose a project where the data collection is easy and quick and be careful of the timing

Collecting data using questionnaires and interviews can be difficult since people are busy, and there are impossible times such as holidays and examinations. Timing can be crucial.

## B. Additional requirements November 2012

### 1. A supervisor does NOT exist to correct your work. This means:

A supervisor may point out a few examples of the basic mistakes, then refuse to read or comment any further until these mistakes are eliminated.

**NB: It is up to the student to learn these basics. The supervisor is only there to arbitrate on the fine points of detail and in difficult cases.** Surprisingly common basic mistakes include:

- ☞ **Punctuation.** A common error I will demonstrate at the end of this sentence .As you can see there is an error that is intolerable.
- ☞ **In text referencing errors:** inadequate referencing, inconsistent referencing style etc
- ☞ **List of references:** incorrect use of italics for books and journals etc
- ☞ **Quotations:** incorrect academic style, etc

### 2. All students will provide outlines for all their chapters. It should be possible to follow your argument just by reading the headlines.

### 3. Do NOT expect a supervisor to read every paragraph in a thesis. It is helpful when students provide alongside a thesis a short list of questions and comments such as::

- a. Please read carefully the data presentation
- b. Please check that I have included every section in the conclusions
- c. What do you think of my argument?

### 4. Do NOT expect a supervisor to read in detail every draft.

When you resubmit your work, provide also a separate commentary, in which you:

- a. take each of the previous comments of the supervisor and explain and justify what you have done
- b. list the changes you have made.

### 4. Writing a thesis is all about re-writing. It is normal to write each chapter at least 4 times.

**You must make regular progress with a thesis.** Re-writing takes 50-70% of the time. Plan accordingly.

### 5. Give supervisors time to comment on your work. All supervisors have busy seasons when they have less time for supervision. Also, near the deadline the number of students submitting work for feedback increases. You cannot expect a supervisor to promptly provide a detailed commentary on your work just before your deadline.

## C. Plagiarism

### 1. Plagiarism: what is it?

All students should understand that:

- a. Copy-paste without full acknowledgement is plagiarism
- b. Rewording without full acknowledgement is plagiarism

### 2. Plagiarism: how serious is it?

Plagiarism is the intellectual equivalent of theft. It is also a form of deception. A thesis must be your own work, expressed in your own words.

### 3. Plagiarism: what documents does it apply to?

- a. Research proposal
- b. Data collection tools
- c. Any work submitted to a supervisor for comment.

### 4. Consequences of plagiarism

Any supervisor who detects plagiarism at any stage has the right to refuse further supervision. In other countries the first time consequences for an essay are a warning and a zero. Subsequent cases of plagiarism usually result in expulsion. The consequences for a thesis are usually expulsion plus loss of references.