

Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

Chapter 9 - Dissertation or project supervision/tuition for the degree of masters (excluding MPhil programmes): Code of good practice

This code sets out the generic requirements of students, dissertation supervisors/tutors and the Faculty (or delegated School) in the completion of dissertation assessment items. It is supplemented by individual Faculty (or delegated School) codes approved by the Education Board. The University recognises that dissertation practice varies between departments and therefore this Code cannot set out prescriptive requirements for matters such as the level of contact which should be maintained between student and dissertation supervisor/tutor.

This code applies to both part-time and full-time taught postgraduate students completing dissertation or project assessment items.

This code should be read in conjunction with the University Regulations governing Taught Masters programmes and with other codes of good practice affecting postgraduate taught students, particularly those on the Personal Tutor System, the Duration of Taught Modules, the Handbook for Assessment, Progression and Awarding; Taught Programmes.

Where students are not content with any aspect of their tuition, they are encouraged to address problems as soon as possible through discussions with their dissertation supervisor/tutor, personal tutor or programme director. If necessary, they should pursue a complaint through the University's formal [student complaints procedure](#).

During the period of supervision/tuition from the time of the assignment of a dissertation supervisor/tutor until the submission of the dissertation, responsibilities and obligations are as set out below.

1. Responsibilities of dissertation supervisors/tutors

Dissertation supervisors/tutors are responsible for providing students with help and guidance throughout their dissertation assessment.

The responsibilities of the dissertation supervisor/tutor include:

- 1.1 To give guidance about the nature of the dissertation enquiry and the standard of work to be expected.

- 1.2 To advise students about the planning of the dissertation and to discuss a timetable if applicable and to give advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the dissertation may be submitted within the scheduled time.
- 1.3 To direct the student to attend supplementary courses if necessary.
- 1.4 To encourage students to acquire and maintain familiarity with relevant developments in their subject.
- 1.5 To give advice about requisite techniques and arrange for instruction where necessary and, if appropriate, to advise students to undertake instruction in written/spoken English.
- 1.6 To maintain contact through dissertation meetings in accordance with Faculty (or delegated School) policy and in the light of any agreement reached with the student. The frequency and nature of these sessions will vary depending on the characteristics of the topic and the requirements of the discipline.
- 1.7 To be accessible to the student at other appropriate and reasonable times when advice may be needed.
- 1.8 In the event of being granted study leave or absence, proposing adequate arrangements for supervision/tuition of the student.
- 1.9 To arrange as appropriate, for the student to talk about his or her work at internal or external seminars/presentations.
- 1.10 To ensure that the student is made aware if the standard of work is below that expected.
- 1.11 To advise the Programme Director and the student, as soon as it is recognised that there is a problem, if in his or her opinion, there is significant likelihood that the student is likely to fail the dissertation. Dissertation supervisors/tutors are not required to indicate the standard of the work in progress as it is only the final submission which is formally assessed.
- 1.12 To give advice on the preparation of a dissertation and advise the student if the standard of English is inadequate.
- 1.13 To read a draft section of the student's dissertation once only. Further readings are at the discretion of the dissertation supervisor/tutor, (please refer to Faculty (or delegated School) specific guidelines on the size of the section and amount of readings by the supervisor/tutor). The dissertation supervisor/tutor is not, however, expected to undertake substantial editing or revision of a draft.

1.13.1 Dissertation supervisors/tutors would normally comment on the structure of the dissertation, the balance of the sections and the content of various sections.

1.13.2 The dissertation supervisor/tutor will take the opportunity to read through and annotate (with the use of indicative comments), where the student needs to make changes.

1.13.3 Dissertation supervisors/tutors are not responsible for the in-depth checking and criticism of Masters dissertations.

2. Responsibilities of students

Students should note that they, in consultation with the module coordinator and/or prospective supervisor, are responsible for choosing their dissertation topic, carrying out the research and submitting on time. The role of the dissertation supervisor/tutor is to provide guidance and advice; they are not responsible for the quality of the submitted work.

The responsibilities of the student include:

2.1 To agree with the dissertation supervisor/tutor a suitable topic for research and work on that topic.

2.2 To agree with the dissertation supervisor/tutor a schedule of meetings, arrange these meetings, attend these meetings and inform the dissertation supervisor/tutor how they can be contacted.

Supervisors are not responsible for chasing students who fail to arrange or attend meetings. Students should be aware that members of staff may be away from the campus outside of University terms and contact arrangements should be agreed between student and dissertation supervisor/tutor well in advance of this time.

2.3 To undertake work in accordance with a schedule agreed with the dissertation supervisor/tutor before proceeding to the next stage of the project.

2.4 To take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties with the dissertation supervisor/tutor, however elementary they may seem.

2.5 To attend formal instruction or presentations as required.

2.6 To familiarise themselves with guidelines issued by individual Faculty (or delegated School) on dissertation projects.

2.7 To discuss with the dissertation supervisor/tutor the preparation and completion of the dissertation and to take due account of advice from the dissertation supervisor/tutor.

2.8 To keep dissertation supervisors/tutors updated with the progress of their dissertation.

- 2.9 To provide the dissertation supervisor/tutor with an initial draft section (please refer to Faculty (or delegated School) specific guidelines on the size of the section), of their dissertation in good time before the submission date (as determined by the Faculty (or delegated School)). Dissertation supervisors/tutors are only required to look at a draft section of the dissertation once. Therefore, every effort should be made to ensure that the draft section is sufficiently developed. The quality of the final submission rests with the student.
- 2.10 To make necessary amendments to their dissertation as indicated by their dissertation supervisor/tutor before submission and to proof read the final draft.
- 2.11 To submit a dissertation within the time allowed by the regulations. Dissertation supervisors/tutors are not responsible for chasing students to submit on time.

3. Responsibilities of the Faculty (or delegated School)

The responsibility for Faculty (or delegated School) actions lies with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty or nominee.

The responsibilities of the Faculty (or delegated School) include:

- 3.1 To ensure that students are assigned a dissertation supervisor/tutor at the start of their dissertation module (normally at the start of Semester Two for full time students), who will act for the duration of their dissertation.
- 3.2 To provide students with information and guidance on the on the Faculty (or delegated School), and University regulations and to make students aware of relevant regulations and legal issues including, but not limited to, plagiarism, copyright, data protection, health and safety, and any ethical issues that might arise in the course of dissertation research.
- 3.3 To ensure that students are informed of sources of independent advice should the student/dissertation supervisor/tutor relationship breakdown.
- 3.4 To provide students with dissertation module templates which (in addition to other Faculty (or delegated School) guidance), should detail the number of hours of dissertation supervision contact students should expect.
- 3.5 To facilitate extensions to dissertation assessments, noting that the extension length should be commensurate with the reason for the request, with a maximum extension period of three weeks. Any longer periods will require the approval of the Dean for Taught Students.

- 3.6 To monitor workloads for dissertation supervisors/tutors. Programme Directors may find it necessary to reassign students if workloads are excessive.