



The University of
South Wales
College of Sciences & Technology

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH TRAINING PROTOCOLS: OPTIMISING CANDIDATURE OUTCOMES

As you are already aware, there will be dramatic changes to the funding of research training in 2002 with the implementation of the new research funding models foreshadowed in the 1999 Research White Paper, '*Knowledge and Innovation*'. Of special importance will be the emphasis placed in future funding allocations on both the total numbers of domestic postgraduate research students and on the completions of all such research students (including international students) within the allotted time for candidature.

It is not too great an exaggeration to say that departments that fail to conform to the requirements of the White Paper will find that the sources of APA and UPA funded students that were available to them in the past will dry up in the near future. The allocation of funds for research training will no longer be student centred; it will be performance based. Failure to perform will lead to the loss of DETYA/University funding for research training. Fortunately, the College has one year to put its house in order.

The following protocols were drawn up to ensure that all supervisors and Heads of Departments, as well as Deans and Faculties, know exactly what is the minimum required of them in terms of postgraduate research supervision. They were developed by the Chair of the CST Research Advisory Committee, Professor Les Field, FAA and the College Research Development Manager, Ms Bronwyn Greene. The protocols are based on best practice within the College of Sciences & Technology in the context of the new research and research training funding formulae. Development was facilitated by consultation with the College Deans, who in turn consulted with their Faculty Advisory Committees. Two CST staff forums were also held.

It is important to stress that the protocols presented below represent the minimum that is required of supervisors, Heads of Departments, Deans and Faculties. It is expected that there will be local variations of the protocols that will improve the research experience of postgraduate students in that particular area. Thus, eg, the review of the performance of commencing postgraduate students in some disciplines may be made earlier than at the end of the first year. Seminar presentations by students to departments could usefully be more frequent than annually. A course on research methodology at the start of a candidature may be advantageous for students in disciplines that do not require significant research experience prior to the commencement of postgraduate studies,

There are several different administrative structures for postgraduate students within the College so that in the protocols '*Department*' should be

read to imply 'School' and also 'Faculty'. Deans and Heads of Department should make the local interpretation of what is within the spirit of the protocols.

I will be checking regularly with Deans as to the progress of the implementation of the protocols. The effectiveness of the protocols will also be reviewed regularly.

DHN

(Protocols:¶18:10:00)

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH TRAINING PROTOCOLS:

TEN STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: **To develop timely & reliable management data at all levels so that postgraduate student numbers and completions are optimised.**

Recommendations:

Create a single Web-based database for all postgraduate candidatures across the College of Sciences & Technology and preferably, the University. This should provide all mechanical administrative data on the candidature, as well as an up-to-date status and history of the candidature. **[Action: PVC]**

Develop an electronic version of the Annual Report forms: mechanical data (details of commencement and maximum candidatures, supervisors, status of the candidature etc) should be automatically entered. **[Action: PVC]**

Strategy 2: **To ensure that all Departments/Faculties have effective Postgraduate Coordinators**

Recommendations:

Each Department/School/Faculty (for small Faculties) must have an active Postgraduate Coordinator who is responsible for all postgraduate research matters. **[Action: Dean, HOD]**

This is an important position and a deputy/backup/alternate Postgraduate Coordinator should be nominated in each Department/Faculty. **[Action: Dean, HOD]**

When a review of candidature takes place, it would be desirable that a minimum of two staff be present, neither of whom are the supervisor. It would be ideal if one of the minimum two was a staff member external to the Department. **[Action: Postgraduate Coordinator]**

There should be regular meetings of postgraduate coordinators, where appropriate, in each Faculty to establish a network and promote consistent best practice. **[Action: Dean, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Postgraduate coordinators must have adequate and reliable support from the Faculty staff concerned with postgraduate matters. **[Action: Dean, HOD]**

There should be much stronger links between the Faculty Postgraduate Committees and the Faculty Research Committees, eg the Chair of the Faculty Postgraduate Committee should also be a member of the Faculty Research Committee. **[Action: Dean, Chairs of relevant Faculty Committees]**

Strategy 3: To ensure that Departments/Faculties have effective Postgraduate Student Committees

Recommendations:

Each Department/Faculty should have an active Postgraduate Student Committee. This should be student driven and promote student awareness of issues concerning candidatures. It should be provided with access to the Head of Department/Dean and the Postgraduate Coordinators. **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Strategy 4: To ensure that all postgraduate research candidates are optimally supervised

Recommendations:

Acknowledge the principle that supervision forms an important part of a staff workload. **[Action: Dean, HOD]**

Every candidature should have a Principal and Associate Supervisor from day 1 of the candidature. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

The Principal Supervisor must ensure that the Associate Supervisor is kept up to date on the candidate's progress; regular meetings of all three parties (Principal Supervisor, Associate Supervisor and Postgraduate student) are essential, with a minimum of one meeting per semester. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

The Head of Department through the Postgraduate Coordinator must monitor the performance of each supervisor in the Department. Supervisory performance of each staff member should be assessed annually along with postgraduate performance. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Each Department/Faculty should implement a formal Induction Program related to research student supervision for each incoming staff member. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Each new supervisor should complete the ITL Postgraduate Supervisors Development Program training before commencing to supervise postgraduate candidates. **[Action: HOD]**

The track record of staff with respect to postgraduate supervision must be taken into account in the allocation of postgraduate research students to potential supervisors. **[Action: HOD]**

Deans should monitor postgraduate supervision data in each Department/Faculty (at the census date of each semester) through staff numbers, enrolments, completions, separations (transfers, suspensions, withdrawals). The performance of supervisors who exceed the nominal maximum number of postgraduate supervisions must also be monitored. **[Action: Dean]**

Deans should report postgraduate candidature performance indicators to the College PVC each semester via the College of Sciences & Technology Research Development Manager (Ms Greene). A memo detailing postgraduate candidature performance indicators was sent to the PVC and Deans on 12 October 2000. **[Action: Dean, College Research Development Manager]**

Strategy 5: To improve student progress rate during their candidature and thus to ensure timely completions

Recommendations:

There should be a mutually agreeable arrangement for ongoing periodic assessment and feedback to the postgraduate student on the progress of each candidature by the Principal Supervisor/Associate Supervisor. There should be an average minimum of one meeting per fortnight and the Principal Supervisor should provide the candidate with the agreed arrangement in writing. **[Action: Principal Supervisor/Associate Supervisor]**

It is expected that internal examiners will provide timely assessment of thesis. **[Action: Internal Examiners]**

Students should set 3-6 month goals and in the latter part of their candidature plan appropriately for their job/postdoctoral position that will follow the submission of their thesis. **[Action: Principal Supervisor/Associate Supervisor]**

Supervisors must ensure that each student presents a formal written research proposal as early as possible in the candidature but certainly no later than at the end of the first 12 months. This proposal should form part

of the first year review of candidature. The viability of the proposal should be assessed independently (ie, *not* by the supervisor) within the Department by either a Review Committee and/or the Postgraduate Coordinator. **[Action: Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

The Postgraduate Coordinator must formally interview all first year students and those who have been enrolled for more than 7 semesters (3.5 years full-time) and their supervisors. At least part of the interview must be done in the absence of the supervisor. The Postgraduate Coordinator is required to consider and where appropriate act upon all concerns expressed during the interview. Students should be notified as to what action, if any, has been taken by the Coordinator and the Head of Department/Dean provided with a written report **[Action: Postgraduate Coordinator]**

The Postgraduate Coordinator should closely monitor the progress of candidates in their 3rd semester (Research Masters) and 6th Semester (PhD) to ensure that a timely completion will follow. **[Action: Postgraduate Coordinator]**

All research students should present their work by seminar to the Department/School/Faculty at least once a year during their candidature and more often in research group meetings. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

All supervisors should ensure that students write regular reports and produce publications as work proceeds. This assists students in preparing work for writing up, as well as providing identifiable progressive achievements throughout the candidature.

All supervisors must ensure that written submissions from postgraduate students are returned promptly (usually within two weeks) to the students with appropriate written comments and timely advice from the supervisor. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

Research students should participate in Departmental or interest group seminars on a weekly or fortnightly basis. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

Students should be encouraged to write the initial chapters of their thesis as early as possible. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

Better advice needs to be provided by Faculties (through the covering material sent to external examiners) as to what is expected as a satisfactory standard for PhD and Masters degrees at this University. **[Action: Deans]**

Strategy 6: To improve the quality of the experience of postgraduate research students

Recommendations:

Supervisors should acknowledge postgraduate research students as an integral part of the academic team or research group and postgraduates should be provided with a flow of relevant information on matters that affect the group and the supervision. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

Supervisors should provide a working environment that is conducive to interaction between postgraduates and supervisors on a formal and informal level. Social cohesion within the research cohort is an important component of the graduate student experience. **[Action: Principal Supervisor]**

Strategy 7: To ensure that students are provided with adequate appropriate infrastructure***Recommendations:***

Students should be provided (at no charge and as a minimum) with access to appropriate laboratory space, computer with Internet/email access, desk, lock-up cupboard, fax, postage, stationery, conference travel, access to extended hours for photocopying and printing, phone (for research purposes only) and appropriate maintenance, as required by their candidature. Access to facilities outside of normal working hours should be provided wherever possible consistent always with OH&S requirements. **[Action: HOD, Supervisor]**

Each Department/Faculty should provide students at the beginning of their candidature with a statement of the facilities available in the Department/Faculty and the procedures for accessing these facilities. **[Action: HOD]**

Strategy 8: To provide better advice to postgraduate research students at the commencement of their candidature***Recommendations:***

Each Department/Faculty should implement a formal Induction Program for all research students in the Department/Faculty. The program should include details of the postgraduate studies handbook, the roles and responsibilities of the candidate, how progress will be assessed, the roles and responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor/Associate Supervisor, Departmental facilities/resources, any relevant OH&S issues and contact details of where to seek further help and advice. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

The financial support and appropriate opportunities to support candidatures available for students need to be advertised and marketed within Departments/Schools/Faculties. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Strategy 9: To improve the selection criteria for entry to postgraduate research programs

Recommendations:

Minimum admission requirements should be established for each Department/Faculty. The minimum requirement across the College of Sciences & Technology as a prerequisite for direct entry into a PhD should normally be a Research Masters or 1st Class Honours degree that is research based. Second Class Honours students should normally be admitted into the Masters by Research degree and if their performance proves to be adequate, transferred to a PhD degree. **[Action: HOD]**

Departments/Faculties may develop alternative criteria for entry that will ensure that there is every likelihood that the candidate will complete in the given time. All alternative criteria must have the approval of the Dean and the PVC. **[Action: HOD, Dean]**

All first year postgraduate research candidates must be placed on probation for a minimum of 2 semesters. **[Action: HOD, Supervisor, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

If candidates intend to enrol in an overseas institution before completing their PhD degree, they should be advised to enrol and to complete a Masters by Research degree. **[Action: HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator, Supervisor]**

Deans should develop strategies for admission to postgraduate research degree candidature that will ensure that there is every likelihood that every potential candidate will complete the relevant thesis in the given time. Candidatures should not be commenced if it seems that completion in the maximum time is unlikely. Strategies for improving recruitment procedures could include interviews with potential students, especially those not well known to the Department/Faculty from outside the department &/or the University. **[Action: Dean]**

Deans should ensure that the Head of Department/Postgraduate Coordinator undertake an exit interview with all separating students who have withdrawn from candidature and provide reports to the Deans on the reasons for withdrawal. Exit interviews with selected successfully completing PhD students could also prove advantageous. **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Strategy 10: To market postgraduate opportunities better

Recommendations:

Postgraduate advertising/information should be focussed on the Web. **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

There is a need to provide effective information on the Web to potential postgraduate students. This should include information on scholarships,

facilities, research areas, faculty/dept web links, useful contacts in faculties, departments and postgraduate offices, administrative procedures and forms, etc. **[Action: PVC, Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

College research successes and triumphs must be acknowledged better and promoted via the Web. **[Action: PVC, Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Heads of Departments/Deans should ensure that better advice is provided on how to respond to potential fee-paying overseas students, with Deans ensuring that best practice is followed across all Departments in the Faculty. This requires a plain-English, professional, corporate and coordinated response to every enquiry. **[Action: Dean, HOD]**

Establish a campaign to target final year undergraduate students to promote the benefits of a research degrees **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

Supplementary scholarships could be offered from Departments to postgraduates and marketed on the Web. **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator]**

ARC funds can be used for research student stipends. Foundations could provide supplementation for scholarships. **[Action: Dean, HOD, Postgraduate Coordinator, Foundations]**