

# Postgraduate Supervision: Mutual Expectations Agreement (MEA)

This document is designed to aid students in early discussions with their supervisor(s).

Student provided with MEA: \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yr)

Initial meeting held between student and supervisor(s) \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yr)

Final agreement reached re MEA \_\_\_\_\_ (dd/mm/yr)

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Associate supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **1. What is a Thesis?**

What does 'thesis' mean?

How many pages/chapters have been the usual pattern in our Group recently?

What form should a thesis proposal have? Will the postgraduate student have to give a seminar. If so, when, where and organised by whom?

What is the appropriate structure of a thesis? Discussion section in each chapter, or only at the end? A 'Conclusions' section? What referencing conventions should be followed?

What is the difference between a thesis that passes and one that is of first class quality?

What are the titles and authors of some good theses in the student's field and which are available in the Group/Division/University library, or on the supervisor's bookshelf? The advisor's own thesis?

What is meant by 'originality'?

What do Lincoln's Masters and PhD 'House Rules' say about a thesis built wholly or partly on manuscripts submitted to journals? Do Divisions/disciplines differ in their attitude to this?

What should be the policy on co-authorship, (supervisor(s), collaborators, etc) of publications derived from thesis work? Does your Group/Division have a policy on this?

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## **2. Meetings**

What should be the frequency and duration of meetings and will all or some of the advisory team be present?

What will be the postgraduate's access to the supervisor(s) outside scheduled meeting times?

Who has responsibility to initiate meetings (if not scheduled regularly)?

What is the policy during meetings with respect to 'Do Not Disturb' notices on the door, phone calls, interruptions etc? Will the discussions take place in a room away from such potential interruptions?

What is the protocol for a person not being able to make an arranged meeting, or if another urgent appointment may shorten it, or delay to its start?

What is the advisor's expectation in terms of the student attending Group/Division seminars?

What level of collegiate responsibility/activity will the student engage in with other postgraduates?

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### **3. Advice and Support**

Development of the research proposal: how much input is expected from the advisor(s) and how will this proceed?

Comments on final draft, second draft, etc?

What are the expectations of feedback on research, writing etc: how much, how often, in what form, with how much notice and with what typical return-times?

Support with theoretical background, resources, contacts: how much can be expected, given the advisory team's knowledge of the research area? (This will depend on the novelty of the research questions being asked).

How 'hands on' should the advisor be? How often should he/she leave the office and actually take part in developing/carrying out techniques, data collection etc?

Who should be contacted for access to facilities/equipment at the Group or Divisional level?

What other kinds of knowledge are needed by the students e.g., of the research process, of academic writing etc - what resources (such as statistical, computing help) does the supervisor know of, on and off campus, and how much help can she/he give?

Teaching and Learning Services run specific postgraduate programmes and these should be accessed (see <http://oldlearn.lincoln.ac.nz/tls//slc/postgrad.htm>).

Are there Intellectual Property (IP) issues that I need to know about/discuss (see the new guidelines, i.e., Management of Intellectual Property Rights: A Guide for Postgraduate Students and Supervisors, accessible at:

<http://www2.lincoln.ac.nz/staff/vc/ManagementofIPRightsMay06.pdf>)

Are there relevant personal circumstances that might make the supervision or completion of the thesis difficult e.g., the student's suffering financial hardship or experiencing relationship difficulties or the supervisor going on sabbatical leave, having taken on extra Lincoln University duties, expecting a baby, etc?

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### **4. Time Frame**

How long should the different stages of the research take, i.e., background reading and discussions, preparing the thesis proposal, thesis completion date, draft manuscript(s) produced, etc?

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## **5. Joint Supervisors, Co-supervisors, Associate Supervisors**

What roles will be taken by each advisor e.g., main and associate, different theoretical inputs, attendance at scheduled or un-scheduled meetings etc?

If there is disagreement about methods etc between joint advisors, how is this to be resolved?

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## **6. Other Issues Relating to Advisor/Student Understanding/Expectations?**

Dealing with the media. Should all contacts be through the advisor first, etc?  
Advance notice of periods of absence given by all team members?

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# **Group and Divisional Expectations and Resources**

## **1. Written Information and Facilities to Help a New Postgraduate Student**

What Group, Division and School handbooks or other documents are relevant for postgraduate students and where can they be obtained?

What access does the student have to:

A study place, a mail box, laboratory space, equipment etc, as appropriate?

Tea/coffee facilities?

Photocopying, interloan facilities and how are these charged?

Paid work e.g. tutoring, marking?

Computer access? How many computers/postgraduate in the Group? What software and how many printers are available?

Funding for scholarships/research consumables/travel/conference attendance, etc. How to apply? Deadlines? Availability of more information? How much can be bid for? Any reporting requirements and associated deadlines? Whose responsibility is it to make sure

that these deadlines are met?

Support services e.g. technical, secretarial? What can be expected?

Who provides charge codes for project materials, library costs, etc and what is the procedure for spending allocated budgets?

Who are the key people in the Group/Division who can offer help e.g., postgraduate representatives, technical officers, etc.

## **2. What Expectations Does the Group/Division Have of the Student?**

Seminar presentation of thesis proposal?

Six-monthly report forms?

Thesis completion time?

Publications submitted/accepted during the thesis time?

Final seminar presentation?

## **3. Monitoring Progress and Resolving Conflict**

What are the Group, Divisional and Postgraduate and Research School procedures in the event that one or more members of the team (including the student) are not happy with progress/procedures?

### **4. Other Group/Divisional Issues?**

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# **University Expectations and Resources**

## **1. University Guidelines**

What University documents are available for Honours, Masters, Postgraduate Diploma and PhD students e.g. Lincoln University House Rules, Postgraduate Handbook, etc?

## **2. Thesis Assessment**

How is the assessment of the thesis conducted?

Who will be the external examiner(s)? When is this decided? Who decides? Can the student have a say?

### **3. Extension / or Suspension of a Course of Study**

What are the protocols for extensions and suspension, including fees? Who makes the decision?

### **4. Ethics**

What ethical issues need to be considered in the research project?

Is consent needed from an appropriate University committee?

### **5. What Services can be Expected from the Postgraduate and Research School?**

### **6. Other University-level Issues?**