



INEQUITIES

Relevant Literature

The issue of inequitable treatment of students by supervisors has been raised in the postgraduate student literature as a threat to the ethical principle of justice (Lofstrom & Pyhalto, 2012). Students vary in their research preparation, ability, and motivation, and may have differing supervision needs (Lofstrom & Pyhalto, 2012; Sullivan & Ogloff, 1998). Indeed, Pilcher (2011) goes so far as to argue that “equity of guidance is philosophically impossible given different levels of students and projects” (p. 33). However, it is important that, taking individual differences and needs into account, all students are treated fairly, if not uniformly (Sullivan & Ogloff, 1998), although students may perceive *any* differences as inequitable (Lofstrom & Pyhalto, 2012).

Where a supervisor privileges, in terms of time and support, one student over other students, the preferred student may benefit in terms of research outcomes and later opportunities. However, the preferred student may also face resentment from other students and negative perceptions of the deservingness of resulting outcomes (Sullivan & Ogloff, 1998).

Marshall (2009) recommends that once a supervisor has established how many hours per week they have available for supervision in total, they then calculate the appropriate time allocation per student.

References

- Lofstrom, E., & Pyhalto, K. (2012). The supervisory relationship as an arena for ethical problem solving. *Education Research International*, 1-12. doi:10.1155/2012/961505
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