



SUPERVISOR NON-AVAILABILITY

Relevant Literature

Inadequate supervision, characterised by limited availability of the supervisor, was identified as an ethical problem by Goodyear, Crego and Johnston (1992) and as an abuse of power by Grant and Graham (1999).

Supervisor availability may be influenced by the level of program, with honours students preferred over undergraduate dissertation students. The problem may be compounded by increasing supervisory workloads. As early as 1993, Geffen noted that in the discipline of psychology increasing numbers of honours and fourth year undergraduate dissertation students led to an 'overwhelming' supervision load that contributed to fourth year (non-honours) students experiencing difficulties in completing research project due to lack of supervision. Honours students were favoured over fourth year students as they were better prepared in research methods and their projects were more likely to lead to publications

In doctoral studies, "sufficient time to provide appropriate guidance and support" has been identified as a core component of supervisory best practice (Australian Council Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies, 2012).

Grant and Graham (1999) conducted workshops for students to encourage them to take a more active role in managing the supervisory relationship. This included role-playing exercises where the student practiced asking for more regular meetings. At six months follow-up some students reported success in approaching their supervisors while others had not felt able to do so through fear of repercussions. Grant and Graham (1999) have also run workshops for student and supervisor dyads at the start of the supervisory relationship, where each dyad prepares a supervision agreement.





References:

Australian Council Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies (2012). *Outcomes from a workshop to explore approaches to quality doctoral research training in our region*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Geffen, G. M. (1993). The scientist-practitioner model: What is the role of the fourth year in psychology? *Australian Psychologist*, 28, 35-38. doi:10.1080/00050069308258863

Goodyear, R. K., Crego, C. A., & Johnston, M. W. (1992). Ethical issues in the supervision of student research A study of critical incidents. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23, 203-210.

Grant, B., & Graham, A. (1999). Naming the game: Reconstructing graduate supervision. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 4, 77-89. doi:10.1080/1356251990040105

