Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Next review
2.0	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)	18 September 2018	18 September 2018	September 2021

Guideline Statement		
Purpose	The purpose of these guidelines is to outline good practices for Higher Degree Research (HDR) Supervision to support the highest quality HDR candidate experience and outcomes.	
Scope	These guidelines apply to all University appointed HDR supervisors and all currently enrolled HDR candidates.	
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	☒ Yes, however Local Documents must be consistent with this University-wide Document.	☐ No
Guideline		

1. Preamble

UNSW is committed to ensuring excellence in Higher Degree Research (HDR) supervision to promote a research culture that is based on an intellectual and collegiate community and develops HDR candidates that are independent researchers capable of producing original research.

The purpose of these Guidelines is to provide guidance to HDR supervisors on good practices for supervision to support the highest quality HDR candidate experience and outcomes. These guidelines complement the University's *Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy* and *Procedure*.

2. Selection and Admission of Candidates

2.1. Selection

2.1.1.   The selection of high quality HDR candidates is an essential part of the admission process as it helps ensure that candidates have the capacity to meet the academic, ethical and time requirements of a higher degree research program. Good selection results from extensive communication between supervisor and HDR applicant.

2.1.2.   Pre-admission interview functions to evaluate the applicant's research potential. Further recommendations regarding the conduct of the review is available in the *Higher Degree Research Admissions and Pathways Guideline*. The interview is designed to evaluate whether there are compatible research interests and working styles, whether appropriate resources, space and infrastructure will be available for the project, and to provide feedback on the quality of the applicant's proposed area of research. The *Facilities and Resources to Support HDR Candidates Guideline* outlines the minimum infrastructure and resources required for admission of HDR candidates. Sample interview questions are provided in Appendix A.

2.1.3.   As part of the selection process, supervisors may be required to conduct a reference check. Supervisors should consider the most important questions to ask a referee, as well the key criteria that may indicate that the candidate may not be suitable for the program.

2.2. Admission

2.2.1.   Supervisors need to understand the selection criteria requirements, policies and procedures regarding admission to higher degree research programs. The *Admissions Policy*, *HDR Admissions Procedures* and the *Conditions for Award of PhD*, *Masters by Research* and *Masters of Philosophy* outline the minimum requirements for entry into HDR programs. If research experience and potential are not clear, supervisors can recommend admission to a Masters by Research or Masters of Philosophy rather than direct entry to a PhD Program, or consult the *HDR Admissions and Pathway guideline* for guidance. If there is uncertainty

regarding the suitability of the candidate after consulting these documents they may also seek advice from the School Postgraduate Coordinator and /or Faculty Associate Dean Research Training or equivalent.

2.2.2.   Supervision is conducted according to the fundamental principles outlined in the *HDR Supervision Policy* and supervisor eligibility requirements are outlined in the UNSW *HDR Supervision Procedure*. Supervisors should have a thorough understanding of these policy documents which outline the eligibility criteria for supervision at UNSW as well as the different roles and responsibilities of each of the supervisory team members.

3.   Responsible Conduct of Research

3.1. Responsible Research Practice Policy Framework

3.1.1.   All researchers at UNSW are expected to practice responsible research conduct and supervisors are required to maintain a research environment which promotes the responsible conduct of research. This includes ensuring that HDR candidates understand and meet their obligations under relevant UNSW policies related to Research Integrity as well as the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

3.1.2.   Supervisors should seek guidance relating to clarification of policy from key contacts to provide the best possible advice and support to candidates regarding the conduct of their research project.

3.2. Research Integrity Training

3.2.1.   Online training in Research Integrity is a key requirement for all supervisors and HDR candidates. Giving guidance and being a role model of research integrity are essential aspects of a supervisor's responsibilities.

3.3. Research Ethics

3.3.1.   Supervisors should encourage candidates to read the *UNSW Research Code of Conduct* and other related policies regarding the ethical practice of research.

3.3.2.   Supervisors should discuss with their candidates whether their research will require ethical and other related approvals and ensure they are in place prior to research commencing, particularly with relation to:

- Human research

- Animal research

- Values and ethical research conduct for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research and Indigenous Studies

- Community participation

- Permits and other approvals

- Privacy and Confidentiality

3.4. Research Data Management

3.4.1.   It is recommended that all UNSW researchers including HDR candidates have an up to date Research Data Management Plan (RDMP) to ensure that research data, including statistics, interview transcripts, video and manuscripts, are stored appropriately. Information about research data management including key contacts and resources can be accessed from the data management website.

3.4.2.   Supervisors are expected to guide their HDR candidates to develop a RDMP to plan how the data and materials generated from the research project will be collected, stored and used.

3.5. Research Authorship and Plagiarism

3.5.1.   Supervisors should be familiar with the policies and procedures regarding authorship and best practice at UNSW. Supervisors should discuss with their candidates any authorship and publication strategies early in the candidature and recognition of contributions that are expected to apply to the candidate's project, subject to discipline norms.

3.5.2. Supervisors should discuss appropriate practices of referencing and how to avoid plagiarism with their candidates. Supervisors are expected to use iThenticate, a software tool to detect plagiarism and similarity checks for candidates writing throughout the candidature and prior to any publications and provide guidance and feedback as needed. Supervisors should be aware of the requirements in the *Thesis Examination Procedure* regarding the use of iThenticate to check the thesis before submitting the Supervisor's Certificate.

4. Expectations, Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Expectations framework

4.1.1. Supervisors are expected to ensure that a clear framework for the supervisory relationship and management of the project is formulated and agreed upon at the commencement of candidature. This involves understanding the candidate's expectations, and ways of working and managing and considering these in relation to the University's expectations and those of the supervisor. See Appendix B for an example of *Statement of Supervisory Expectations* that can be used to assist this process.

4.1.2. The success of the supervisory-candidate relationship can depend on working styles and approaches to conducting research and study. Supervisors will have their own approach towards teaching, facilitating and guiding their HDR candidates through the degree and this has a significant impact on the success of the working relationship and the outcome of the higher degree research program. Each candidate will also have their own style and approach to their research and will bring a diverse range of experiences, expectations and commitments to the program

4.1.3. Supervisors should discuss at the start of the candidature the institutional expectations related to the following in the conduct of research.

- Research Code of Conduct
- Ethics
- Intellectual Property
- Health and Safety requirements
- Authorship
- Plagiarism
- Grievance resolution processes
- School-specific support
- Resources available to the candidate

4.2. Feedback and communication

4.2.1. Supervisors should establish a communication plan with the HDR candidate which includes meeting schedules, a suggested agenda and note taking at the meeting. Notes from key meetings can avoid potential misunderstandings occurring. Agreement on availability of candidate and supervisor, and arrangements for when the supervisor is on leave is also part of this plan. Candidates and Supervisors should agree the principles and deadlines for providing drafts and feedback on these drafts.

5. Candidature Management and Progress Reviews

5.1. Maximum time to complete

5.1.1. Supervisors need to be aware of the maximum time to complete for HDR programs in order to support candidates in the timely completion of their degree. The expectation for timely completion is particularly significant for candidates in receipt of a scholarship, as funding typically expires at 3.5 years for doctoral candidates. Candidates whose funding has expired may not be able to support themselves financially during the final stages of the doctorate.

Candidates who return to their home country or seek paid employment often experience significant delays to completion of their HDR program.

5.1.2. Maximum time for programs are outlined in the *Conditions for Award for Doctor of Philosophy Policy*, *Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Policy*, Masters by Research, and Professional Doctorate award rules.

5.2. Setting milestones to manage timely progress

5.2.1. Setting milestones throughout the candidature is essential for progress to be made. Supervisors play a key role in guiding their candidates in setting milestones which include key tasks and realistic timeframes. These should reflect the stage of candidature and research and development goals that need to be achieved. Milestones are an important component of the Research Progress Review process.

5.2.2. Within the first 3 months of candidature, supervisors and candidates should agree milestones for the project and Confirmation review.

5.3. Confirmation Review (Doctoral candidates only)

5.3.1. Supervisors should guide the candidate in preparing, managing, and meeting the Confirmation expectations. A doctoral candidate's continuing enrolment is subject to successful completion of a Confirmation Review.

5.3.2. Confirmation is a formal review through which the candidate demonstrates to the panel that requirements have been met to have their candidature confirmed. Supervisors should familiarise themselves with the requirements for confirmation outlined in the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure,* and any additional discipline-specific expectations for doctoral candidates at confirmation.

5.4. Research Progress Reviews

5.4.1. Supervisors should be familiar with the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure* which sets out the requirements for the conduct of progress reviews and the possible outcomes of a review. The Research Progress Reviews are the primary academic management process for HDR candidates and are conducted annually. Re-enrolment each year is conditional upon undergoing a Research Progress Review prior to the term end date.

5.4.2. The Research Progress Review is intended to provide candidates with an opportunity to have their research and supervision arrangements reviewed by an independent panel. It should provide the candidate with affirmation of their progress, where satisfactory progress has been achieved. It should also provide a safe environment in which the candidate can raise any issues they feel are impacting on research progress, and provide support in developing a research plan and milestones for the period up to the next review.

5.4.3. Supervisors should guide their candidates in preparing for the Research Progress Review, including development of an outline of achievements for the past 12 months, a list of key objectives for the next 12 months, an up-to-date timeline and milestones for completion of the thesis, and any additional documentation required by the School or Faculty.

5.4.4. Supervisors should provide formal advice to the Review Panel, by providing written responses in the Research Progress Review form and by attending the Research Progress Review meeting to provide any further input as requested by the Review Panel.

5.4.5. Supervisors should provide their candidate with guidance addressing the outcome of a Research Progress Review, including what to expect if the candidate is enrolled overtime. Review panel recommendations are outlined in the *Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure*.

5.5. Mentoring and Professional Development

5.5.1. Supervisors promote a research culture and environment based on an intellectual and collegiate research community. This includes providing active mentorship to the candidate to facilitate the development of research, technical and professional skills. These will be dependent on a candidate's existing skills, experiences and needs and will change at each

stage of the candidature. Resources for supervisors are available from the Researcher Development Unit website.

5.5.2. Supervisors should be aware of the resources to help HDR candidates develop a wide range of skills throughout their higher degree research program, including those provided by the Researcher Development Unit and Graduate Research School. Supervisors should encourage their candidates to access these resources when appropriate.

5.5.3. Supervisors should support the candidate in skills required for careers either in academia or industry, including encouraging candidates to take up opportunities for researcher and career development where appropriate.

5.6. Variations to Candidature

5.6.1. Supervisors are required to provide guidance and support about managing variations to candidature when issues arise. Supervisors can seek advice and guidance from the Candidature Management Officers in the Graduate Research School about resolving such issues. Supervisors need to be aware of the relevant procedures which govern variations to candidature.

5.7. Candidature challenges

5.7.1. Good practice supervision involves providing helpful and timely advice and referral when challenges arise throughout a candidature. Excellent supervisors recognise and respond to varying candidate circumstances (illness, personal issues, caring responsibilities etc) which may arise and are able to establish processes to manage these issues.

5.7.2. Supervisors should be prepared for the various issues that can arise throughout a higher degree research program. Supervisors should offer guidance to candidates in reducing the impact of any issues they encounter on the timely completion of their HDR program.

5.7.3. Challenges faced by candidates may include physical and mental ill-health, relationship issues with partners and families, responsibility for childcare and/or ageing parents, and financial difficulties. It is also common for candidates to experience crises of confidence, motivation and progress at various points in their studies.

5.7.4. Supervisors should be vigilant for warning signs including a lack of response to emails, changes in behaviour such as displays of aggression or emotion, missed meetings, and failure to hand in written work at agreed times. A number of strategies may be used to support candidates experiencing difficulties, such as reviewing obstacles to continued progress with the candidate, and considering alternatives. Where appropriate, encourage the candidate to seek confidential professional help from the UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS). In serious cases it may become necessary to notify the University of concerns regarding the candidate's wellbeing in accordance with the Student At Risk Procedure and the Student Critical Incident Procedure.

5.7.5. Supervisors may also need support in order to manage the issues that may arise at various points in the supervisor-candidate relationship. Supervisors can seek support from the following:

- School Postgraduate Coordinator (PGC) and/or Director of Postgraduate Research

- Fellow supervisors and/or mentors

- Faculty Associate Dean (Research Training) or Equivalent

- Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

- Employee Relations Program (EAP), which provides confidential counselling and advice for staff members free of charge. Counselling may occur over the phone or in person in a location off campus.

5.8. Conflict of Interest

5.8.1. In some instances, problems arise during candidature that directly relate to the candidate–supervisor relationship. Given the power relationship between supervisors and candidates, it is important that supervisors are not conflicted in deciding on what advice to give. Where a supervisor has a potential conflict of interest it must be declared to their Head of School or a person with appropriate authority within UNSW in accordance with the *Conflict of Interest*

Policy. Supervisors must declare any potential conflicts of interest and advise candidates to seek appropriate independent advice where relevant.

5.9. Diversity of candidates

5.9.1.   *International candidates.* Supervisors need to be aware of the particular challenges that may be faced by international candidates and sensitive to the social, academic and intellectual transition issues that international candidates moving to Australia for the first time may experience. Supervisors should also be aware of visa restrictions and the provisions of the *ESOS National Code* and seek advice from the Graduate Research School when issues may arise.

5.9.2.   *Part time candidates*. Supervisors need to be aware of the challenges faced by part-time candidates and that their needs may differ from the needs of full-time candidates.

5.9.3.   *Candidates with health issues.* Supervisors should encourage candidates with health issues to seek professional assistance and be prepared to discuss the various candidature options available. For example, sick leave, an approved leave of absence or a move from full-time to part-time may assist a candidate to better cope with health problems. Supervisors can seek advice from the UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services if managing a candidate who has mental health issues.

6.   Thesis preparation and examination

6.1. Thesis Preparation and Feedback

6.1.1.   Supervisors should be familiar with submission and examination processes and timelines and should support candidates in meeting the requirements of UNSW.

6.1.2.   An essential aspect of supervision is developing strategies for feedback that helps the candidate progress in a timely manner. Supervisors should agree a fair and equitable approach to providing both written and verbal feedback and should be available at critical times during preparation of thesis drafts. Candidates need to ensure that they have an agreed timeline with their supervisors for submission of drafts and feedback on these drafts.

6.2. Selecting examiners

6.2.1.   Supervisors should have a thorough understanding of the *Thesis Examination Procedures*.

6.2.2.   In order for the thesis to be examined independently and free from the perception of bias or preferential treatment, supervisors need to read and understand the *UNSW policy on conflict of interest* to ensure the correct advice is given to candidates about potential examiners for their thesis

7.   Framework for Supervisor Support

7.1. Supervisor Professional Development

7.1.1.   There is a wide range of professional development opportunities for supervisors to enhance their supervisory practice and knowledge of HDR supervision at UNSW. The Researcher Development Unit provides a framework for support, including workshops, training and resources.

7.1.2.   Supervisors new to supervising are required to complete the *Essentials of Supervision* training program which is delivered through faculties. This program is designed to introduce supervisors to the research training context at UNSW, including policy and procedural frameworks and developing good practices for successful supervision.

7.1.3.   HDR supervision is an important part of progressing a research career. The Extend your Career framework is a resource that assists researchers and academics irrespective of career stage to assess their development needs, identify potential development options and source them and includes a section on HDR supervision.

7.1.4.   Supervisors who have candidates enrolled in structured PhD programs, such as Industry PhDs and Scientia PhDs may have additional roles and responsibilities related to those particular schemes. Specific professional development activities will be provided for supervisors undertaking roles in those programs.

7.2. Supervisor Support

7.2.1. There are several support services across UNSW that supervisors can access to assist with complex cases, potential grievances, mental health and wellbeing and developing professional skills in managing complexities that may arise through supervision.

7.2.2. Supervisors should seek advice, guidance and support from the Postgraduate Research Coordinator , the Associate Dean Research Training/Director of Postgraduate Research or the Graduate Research School about how to navigate complex candidatures.

7.2.3. Supervisors can access the Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for complex cases related to HDR Candidate mental health and wellbeing. Dealing with these matters can be stressful, and supervisors can access CAPS for support and resources.

7.2.4. CAPS provide a range of mental health resources and workshops aimed at staff to develop skills in identifying when a student is in distress or at risk. Mental health staff support website will have up to date information on when mental health training workshops are held throughout the year.

7.2.5. Supervisors can access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), provided through Human Resources. The EAP is a confidential coaching and counselling service, which can help with work related or personal issues and is free to UNSW staff.

7.2.6. Additional training and resources for staff are available from UNSW People and Culture.

Accountabilities	
Responsible Officer	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training) & Dean of Graduate Research
Contact Officer	Director, Graduate Research School
Supporting Information	
Legislative Compliance	This Guideline supports the University's compliance with the following legislation: *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* *Higher Education Support Act 2003* *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (updated May 2015)* *Animal Research Act 1985* *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*
Parent Document (Policy and Procedure)	*Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy* *Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure*
Supporting Documents	

Related Documents	***UNSW wide:*** Admissions Policy English Language Proficiency Requirements Student Code Policy Student Complaint Procedure Student Critical Incident Procedure Student Misconduct Procedure Student at Risk Procedure ***Higher Degree Research:*** Admission to Higher Degree Research Programs Procedure Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Students Guideline Higher Degree Research Admissions and Pathways Guideline Higher Degree Research Scholarships Policy and Procedure Progress Review and Confirmation of research Candidatures Procedure Thesis Examination Procedures Variation of Candidature Procedure ***Research policies and procedures:*** Animal Research Ethics Procedure Conflict of Interest Policy Human Research Ethics Procedure Intellectual Property Policy Plagiarism Policy Statement and Procedure Research – Procedure for Authorship and for Resolving Disputes Between authors Research - Procedure for Handling Allegations of Research Misconduct Research - Procedure for Handling Research Material and Data Research Code of Conduct
Superseded Documents	Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines v1.0
File Number	2018/26929

Definitions and Acronyms

Applicant	A person applying for admission to a higher degree research program
Candidature	The total period of active student enrolment in a higher degree research program
CAPS	UNSW Counselling and Psychological Services
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
ESOS	Education Services for Overseas Students

FTE	Full-time equivalent
Higher Degree Research (HDR) Candidate/ Candidate	A person enrolled in a higher degree research program
RDMP	Research data management plan
Supervisor	An academic staff member in a supervisory role of HDR candidates including primary supervisors, joint supervisors, secondary supervisors and co supervisors

Revision History

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Deputy Vice Chancellor Research	9 October 2010	9 October 2010	New guideline
2.0	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)	18 September 2018	18 September 2018	Full review

Supervising Research: Initial Questions for Assessment of "fit"

Possible questions to ask a **prospective candidate** during the selection process including F2F or Skype Interview	Comments Possible rating scale	✔ ✘ #
1. Why "ME"?		
2. Why do they want to do a PhD?		
3. Why do they want to study the particular topic they have chosen?		
4. What research methodology training have they had?		
5. Why do they want to come to UNSW?		
6. How will they fund their studies & support themselves?		
7. What are their expectations of a supervisor?		
8. What are their study habits?		
9. What do they think the responsibilities of a PhD candidate are?		
10. What are their career aspirations post-PhD?		
11. How well do they see themselves meeting your expectations of a PhD candidate? (you may wish to provide them with your list of expectations from HDR Supervision Guidelines)		
12. What resources will be needed for the research project? (you will need to be clear about what resources the University can and cannot provide)		

Possible topics for academic referees to comment on during F2F or Skype Interview	Comments Possible rating scale	✓ ✗ #
13. **The candidate's academic record**		
14. **The candidate's ability to work at PhD level**		
15. **The quality, scope and nature of the candidate's research thesis**		
16. **The candidate's motivation**		
17. **The candidate's ability to work independently and in a team**		
18. **Any particular issues they'd like to bring to your attention as the prospective supervisor of the candidate**		
19. **The candidate's English ability (extremely important if English is not the candidate's first language). Be careful about evaluating their English ability by how well they talk on the phone (or similar)**		
Next steps / recommendations:		

Appendix B: Statement of Supervisory Expectations

Setting the scene
Statement of Supervisory Expectations

Take some time to reflect on your own role as a supervisor and using your understanding of your expectations, write your Statement of Supervisory Expectations.

Supervisor Name (please complete):

Statement of Supervisory Expectations: Your ideas		
Areas of Supervisory Practice	**Some points to consider? Others you would include?**	**Expectations of you and your role / actions to ensure?**
Choice of topic	Who might identify the topic? How?	
Individual or team supervision	What are your expectations of working as a supervisory team? What are your expectations of a more 1:1 approach? How might this work?	
Meetings	How often? Where? Who organises? Do you expect to meet with individual candidates, or in a group or both?	
Reading drafts	How might you provide feedback, e.g. track changes, recorded comments? Do you want rough drafts or more developed work? Do you want to read every draft or are there other people you think should read some versions?	
Milestones	Are they there to use as a fairly firm timeline or as a rough guide?	
Coursework	Are there specific requirements or will you suggest opportunities as candidature develops?	
Writing	Do you expect candidates to start writing from day one or wait until the 'writing up phase'?	
Writing in a scholarly style	Do you want candidates to seek help from university support services, writing groups and partners, or will	

	you guide?	
Publication	Do you have an expectation of two or three papers, or would you rather save all publishable work for the book to follow the doctorate?	
Expectations	What do you expect of a candidate if they choose to work with you and what they can expect of you?	

Researcher Development Unit, UNSW:
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Appendix C:

The Supervisory Relationship: The Role Perception Scale

Read each pair of statements below and then estimate your position on each. For example with statement 1 if you believe very strongly that it is the supervisor's responsibility to select a good topic you would put a ring around '1'. If you think that both the supervisor and student should equally be involved you should put a ring round '3' and if you think it is definitely the student's responsibility to select a topic, put a ring round '5'.

1.	It is the supervisor's responsibility to select a research topic	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic
2.	The supervisor should insist on regular meetings with the student	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when she/he wants to meet with the supervisor
3.	It is the supervisor who decides which theoretical framework or methodology is most appropriate	1 2 3 4 5	Students should decide which theoretical framework or methodology they wish to use
4.	The supervisor should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task	1 2 3 4 5	The student should work independently and not have to account for how and where time is spent
5.	The supervisor should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student	1 2 3 4 5	The supervisor should leave the development of the program of study to the student
6.	The supervisor is responsible for providing emotional support & encouragement to the student	1 2 3 4 5	Students should have their own support networks and this is not the responsibility of the supervisor
7.	The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the student is introduced to the appropriate services and facilities of the department and University	1 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to ensure that she/he has located and accessed all relevant services and facilities for research
8.	The supervisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track	1 2 3 4 5	Students should submit drafts of work only when they want constructive criticism from the supervisor
9.	Supervisors should only accept students when they have specific knowledge of the student's chosen topic	1 2 3 4 5	Supervisors should feel free to accept students, even if they do not have specific knowledge of the student's topic
10.	The supervisor should assist in the writing of the thesis if necessary	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the thesis should only ever be the student's own work
11.	A warm, friendly relationship between supervisor and student is critical for successful candidature	1 2 3 4 5	A warm, friendly relationship is inadvisable because it may obstruct objectivity for both student and supervisor during candidature
12.	The supervisor is responsible for decisions regarding the standard of the thesis	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for decisions concerning the standard of the thesis