

PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISORS AT THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (Misjonshøgskolen)

Adopted by the Bord of The School of Mission and Theology 27 January 2001

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The School of Mission and Theology has a responsibility to provide postgraduate students and research fellows studying for a doctoral degree with high quality supervision. At the same time it is the responsibility of the sections and of the individual supervisor to manage and exercise this supervision. This supervision shall in the best possible manner satisfy the demands of both academic and personal considerations in respect of the individual. The School of Mission and Theology expects the individual supervisor to carry out his or her activity in an academic and kindly way with a high standard of professional ethics. The student¹⁾ is also expected to contribute to making the supervision function optimally²⁾. Finally there is an appendix containing comments on the individual guidelines.

1) The term student is used here as a common designation for master degree students and research fellows/doctoral degree students.

2) See the study agreements for postgraduate students taking a main subject and the standard agreement for research training concerning the obligations of the student who is in receipt of supervision.

I. The obligations of the basic units and the supervisor to the student

- A. The basic units must ensure the quality of supervision through training and/or promotion of an awareness of what supervision is.
- B. The supervisor must show respect for supervision as a field of competence. The supervisor must show respect for the special challenges that supervision represents and feel an obligation to develop his or her own competence in this field.

- C. The supervisor must seek to be a good role model for any student being supervised.
- D. The supervisor should set aside time during supervision to discuss how the work is to be organised. The form of work should be evaluated from time to time and adjusted in keeping with the results of this evaluation.

II. Respect for the personal and academic integrity of the student

- A. The supervisor must show respect for the student's personal and academic integrity and refrain from any act or statement that may imply an affront to his or her dignity.
- B. The supervisor must work systematically with attitudes and use of language that are in conformity with the student's entitlement to respect and personal integrity, and adopt a considered relationship to gender, ethnic background, personal morality, sexual preference, situation in life etc.
- C. The supervisor must not pass remarks or behave in any manner that may seem humiliating and sexually provocative to the student.
- D. The supervisor must be receptive to reactions from students who point out prejudices, unfortunate use of language or unacceptable behaviour, and he or she must make a point of correcting whatever might be unfortunate.

III. Asymmetry in the context of supervision

- A. The supervisor must be aware of the asymmetry that exists in the context of supervision. Knowledge of the subject and authority shall not be exploited in order to gain academic/personal advantages at the expense of others or to humiliate or suppress others.

IV. Double relationships

- A. The supervisor must ensure that he or she keeps a professional distance from the student and the supervisor has a special responsibility not to enter into any relationship that will place the student in a vulnerable situation. Double relationships in the context of supervision should not arise.

V. Trust and confidence

- A. The supervisor must not give priority to his or her own needs in the supervision situation, e.g. by confiding in the student about his or her own academic or personal problems unless this is of significance to the student's work.

- B. The supervisor should be open and willing to listen in respect of any personal circumstances relating to the student of significance to the work on the dissertation.
- C. The supervisor should exercise great care and discretion in any mention of colleagues in the supervision situation.

VI. Academic honesty

- A. If the supervisor wishes to use the student's data or research results in his or her own publications or research, the supervisor must ensure that permission is obtained from the student in advance. The supervisor must follow customary ethical standards of behaviour applying to reference to sources and the crediting of others contributions in his or her subject if the material is used.

VII. Gifts and remuneration

- A. The supervisor shall not receive any form of remuneration for supervision beyond what has been agreed with the School of Mission and Theology. The supervisor must carefully assess the consequences that may arise if he or she accepts any gift or other benefit from the student.

VIII. Involving a third party in the case of any dispute

- A. If the supervisor or the student finds the supervisory relationship so difficult that further co-operation seems impossible, the supervisor/student should consider involving a third party in the clarification of whether the supervisory relationship ought to cease or be renegotiated.

IX. Information to students

- A. The basic unit must inform the student of the content of the professional ethical guidelines for supervisors when a supervisory relationship is established. By signing the supervision agreement the student confirms that he or she has read the guidelines.

Appendix

The following comments provide more precise information and examples relating to the individual guidelines. Attention is drawn to the fact that these comments are not exhaustive. The comments are set out in the same way as the guidelines. The individual paragraphs under each letter correspond with the relevant paragraphs in the guidelines.

1. The obligations of the basic units and the supervisor to the student

(A). In order to increase the degree of competence with which supervision is carried out it is necessary to bring about greater publicity and openness around this activity. The basic units should for example arrange regular seminars at which academic, pedagogical and ethical problems relating to supervision are taken up for discussion.

(B). Showing respect for supervision as a field of competence means that the supervisor continually acquires knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to be able to fulfil in the best possible manner his or her obligations as an academic support in the student's work. Being a good academic support also means being thoroughly prepared, keeping appointments and avoiding interruptions and disturbances during the periods of supervision. (See the study agreements for master degree students and the standard agreement for research training for information concerning the academic requirements imposed on the supervisor.)

(C). It is just as important for the supervisor to be conscious of his or her function as a role model for students as it is to check that students live up to the standards by which researchers are obligated.

(D). A supervisory relationship is a professional relationship that functions best when co-operation between the two parties is agreed between them. Throughout the whole process of supervision the supervisor should take the initiative to bring about a frank discussion about how the supervision is to be designed and carried out so that to the greatest possible extent the work is perceived in the same manner by the two parties and is a reasonable compromise between any conflicting interests and needs.

II. Respect for the personal and academic integrity of the student

(A). Co-operation with the student shall be based on consideration, respect and mutual trust and be of such a nature as to safeguard his/her right to self-determination.

(B). It is important to be continually aware of underlying attitudes and habitual notions that are indirectly expressed through use of language. The supervisor must take pains to avoid any behaviour which may have an excluding, hurtful or humiliating effect on the individual student or groups, and which is in conflict with the idea of The School of Mission and Theology as an institution that is open, unbiased and free of prejudice. Any careless remark about the student's personal, physical or sexual appearance that is hurtful is unacceptable, even if it is meant innocently, amicably and/or humorously.

(C). Humiliating remarks must be judged on the basis of the recipient's perception of them. This may be a matter of words or actions of an erotic or sexual nature that cause the person who is subjected to them to feel humiliated, afraid or embarrassed. It may be a question of seemingly jocular hints or gestures, comments on the student's body or private life, confidential, intimate or sexual physical contact or proposals or demands for sexual services, perhaps linked to threats of punishment or the promise of a reward.

(D). The supervisor should invite students to speak out about any negative reactions to his/her behaviour or use of language, directly in the situation or subsequently at a suitable opportunity.

III. Asymmetry in the context of supervision

(A). Supervision is based on formal, academic and personal authority, and neither of the parties will benefit from any attempt to erase the asymmetry of the supervisory relationship. At the same time this authority confers power, and the individual supervisor must therefore take great care not to misuse it.

IV. Double relationships

(A). By double relationships is meant the fact of the supervisor's entering into at least one other role beside the professional one. An example of such relationships would be that in addition to the professional role the supervisor has a romantic or family relationship with the student. There may also be cases in which the supervisor has a financial interest in the student.

In the case of the above mentioned examples it is especially those relationships in which the supervisor and the student have fallen in love that special problems may arise. A romantic relationship between a supervisor and a student may arise. The main rule in such a situation is that the supervisory relationship is broken off. If for various reasons it is impossible to break off the supervisory relationship, the parties must seek to find other appropriate solutions. The parties must then be conscious of the fact that the main rule is being broken and thus exercise great care in their further co-operation.

In the wake of double relationships the problem of disqualification may arise when it comes to evaluating the student's work. It is not only the student's integrity that is to be protected. It must not be possible for anybody to raise doubts about the border between what is private and what is professional, nor about the supervisor's objectivity and impartiality.

V. Trust and confidence

(A). The supervisor must consider himself/herself as the player of a professional role and the relationship with the student as a professional one. This means that the supervisor must take pains to distinguish between any possible private interests and what is the professional focus in a supervisory relationship.

(B). Work on a dissertation may in periods be psychologically demanding on the student. Many get to a point at which they lose heart and feel a desire to give up. The supervisor should be attentive to such signals on the part of student and take them up for discussion. Support and encouragement from the supervisor is generally valuable. Nevertheless such conversations should not to any great extent impinge on the time that is set aside for academic discussion. If the supervisor forms the opinion that the student needs help on account of problems in his or her private life, the supervisor should as a general rule encourage the student to seek help from the relevant bodies. It is a matter of course that any confidential information that may have been disclosed by the student during supervision is not to be communicated to any outside person.

(C). The supervisor has a particular responsibility to be cautious about openness with respect to internal matters between colleagues. The supervisor cannot simply take for granted that the student will exercise the same degree of caution in the handling of confidential information as the supervisor is obligated to do.

VI. Academic honesty

(A). Academic honesty must be upheld to just as great a degree in respect of the student as in respect of other research colleagues. There should be open and clear lines of communication between the supervisor and the student when it comes to the supervisor's use of the student's data or research results and the practice applying to references to published and unpublished dissertations for a postgraduate degree in a main subject and for a doctoral degree.

VII. Gifts and remuneration

(A). Supervision is part of the working duties of the supervisors at The School of Mission and Theology. In some cases other sources of funding will come into the picture. In such cases there shall be clear agreements on any such remuneration for supervision with the section to which the member of staff concerned is affiliated, so that no doubt can be raised concerning the justification for the remuneration and/or the question of impartiality. If the student wishes to express friendship or gratitude for good supervision in the form of a gift or gifts to the supervisor in the course of the supervision period, the supervisor should consider whether there may be unfortunate effects if any such gift is accepted.

VIII. Involving a third party in the case of any dispute

(A). Both parties to a supervisory relationship should be determined to complete their co-operation notwithstanding any difficulties that might arise, and to take responsibility for ensuring that such co-operation does function. Contacting a third party who can assist the parties in settling any conflict and reaching agreement on the form and content of further Cupertino can have a decisive effect.

Conciliation in a dispute may prevent the supervisory relationship from breaking up with the possible problematic consequences this may involve. In those cases in which such efforts do not succeed or in which the parties are in fundamental agreement to end the supervisory relationship, there should be undramatic procedures for termination or change of supervisor. (Reference is made to the study agreements for postgraduate students taking a main subject and the standard agreement for research training when it comes to procedures relating to termination and change of supervisor.)

IX. Information to students

(A). It is in the interest of both the student and the supervisory relationship that the student should be ensured knowledge of these guidelines.

The basic unit must work out a routine for the manner in which these guidelines shall be made known to students.

These ethical guidelines are adopted from professional Ethical Guidelines for Supervisors at The University of Oslo, adopted by the Senate 10 June 1997.



CONFIRMATION

The undersigned is aquatinted with the content of

**Professional Ethical guidelines for Supervisors at
The School of Mission and Theology**

Stavanger/.....

Supervisor
(signed once by the internal/external supervisor)



CONFIRMATION

The undersigned is aquatinted with the content of

**Professional Ethical guidelines for Supervisors at
The School of Mission and Theology**

Stavanger/.....

Student
(signed once by the internal/external supervisor)