



Ethical guidelines for supervisors at VID Specialized University

Adopted by the Rector on 13 October 2016

Introduction

The Ethical guidelines for supervisors at VID Specialized University apply to academic supervisors and students on bachelor's, master's and PhD programmes (hereinafter called students). The guidelines primarily address individual supervision.

VID expects each supervisor to perform his/her work in a professional, supportive and ethically sound manner.

VID has overall responsibility for students receiving high-quality supervision. The faculties and each supervisor are also responsible for the administration of this supervision and its execution. Management at every level has a special responsibility if it becomes aware of an unwanted incident occurring within the supervisory relationship.

The supervision must meet the academic and personal needs of each student in the best way possible.

Students are expected to do their part to ensure that the supervision functions well, see also the supervision agreements between students and supervisors.

An appendix is enclosed, containing remarks regarding each guideline.

I. VID and the supervisor's obligations towards students

- A. VID is responsible for providing quality assurance of the supervision through training and/or raising awareness about supervision.
- B. Supervisors must be respectful of supervision as a field of knowledge. This means respect for the unique challenges faced in supervision, and an obligation to develop their expertise in this field.

- C. Supervisors must endeavour to be a good role model for their students.
- D. Supervisors must set aside time in the supervision to discuss the organization of the work. The form of work should be evaluated regularly and adjusted in accordance with the results of the evaluation.

II. Respect for students' personal and academic integrity

- A. Supervisors must respect students' personal and academic integrity, and refrain from any action or statement that may constitute an attack on their dignity.
- B. Supervisors must work systematically to develop attitudes and language that are in line with the students' right to respect and personal integrity, and take a reflective approach to gender, ethnic affiliation, beliefs, sexual orientation, circumstances, etc.
- C. Supervisors must not make remarks or behave in ways that students can perceive as offensive or sexually challenging.
- D. Supervisors must be open to feedback from students who point out unprofessional statements, unfortunate language or undue conduct, and focus on changing any unfavourable behaviour.

III. Asymmetry in the supervisory relationship

Supervisors must be cognizant of the asymmetry that exists in a supervisory relationship. Scientific knowledge and authority must not be exploited for academic/personal gain at the expense of others or used to violate or oppress others.

IV. Double relationships

Supervisors must make sure that they maintain a professional distance from students, and have special responsibility for not entering into any relationship that places the student in a vulnerable position. This type of duality must not occur in a supervisory relationship. If the supervisor has any doubts concerning their impartiality or the risk of a double relationship, he/she must bring up this matter with his/her immediate superior.

V. Trust and confidentiality

- A. Supervisors must not prioritize their own needs in the supervision, for example confide their own academic or personal problems, unless they are of significance to the student's work.
- B. Supervisors must be open and sensitive to personal matters on the part of the student that impact on their work/dissertation.
- C. Supervisors should exercise caution and discretion when mentioning colleagues in the supervision.

VI. Academic integrity

If supervisors want to use the student's data or research results in their own publications or research, they must obtain permission from the student in advance. Supervisors must follow

the custom for citing sources and crediting other people's work in their field if they use the material.

VII. Gifts and fees

Supervisors must not accept any kind of fee for supervision other than that which has been agreed with VID. Supervisors must carefully consider the potential consequences of accepting gifts or other benefits from their students.

VIII. Third-party involvement in conflicts

If a supervisor or student finds a supervisory relationship so difficult that further collaboration seems impossible, either the supervisor or student should bring in a third party to determine whether the supervisory relationship should end or be renegotiated (for doctoral students, see the Admission Agreement for the Organized PhD Programme at VID. Responsibility lies with the centre head and the pro-rector for research.)

IX. Information to students

VID is responsible for informing supervisors and students about the content of the Ethical guidelines for supervisors when a supervisory relationship is established. See also the supervision agreements between students and supervisors.

Appendix

The remarks below provide clarification of each guideline and examples. These remarks are not exhaustive. They follow the structure of the guidelines, and each letter corresponds to the same section in the guidelines.

I. VID's and the supervisor's obligations towards students

- A. In order to increase competence in supervision, this work must be made more public and open. VID should, for example, organize regular seminars that address professional, educational and ethical issues regarding the supervision.
- B. Being respectful of supervision as a field of competence means that supervisors constantly acquire knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to be able to perform their duty as academic support for students' work in the best way possible. Providing good academic support also means being well-prepared, attending scheduled appointments and avoiding interruptions and disruption during supervision sessions.
- C. It is equally important for supervisors to be aware of their function as a role model for students as it is to check that students also live up to the standards that govern researchers. A supervisory relationship is a professional relationship that works best when two people have agreed to collaborate. Throughout the supervisory process, the supervisor must take the initiative to maintain an open dialogue on how the supervision should be organized and

carried out, so that the two parties have a shared understanding of the work and there is a reasonable balance between any conflicting interests and needs. See also the supervision agreements between students and supervisors.

II. Respect for students' personal and academic integrity

- A. The collaboration with students must be based on consideration, respect and mutual trust, and in a manner that protects his/her right to self-determination.
- B. It is important to be constantly aware of underlying attitudes and habitual beliefs that are expressed indirectly through language. Supervisors must ensure that they avoid behaviour that seems excluding, hurtful or offensive to individuals and groups, and which are contrary to VID's desire for openness, freedom from prejudice and impartiality. Any frivolous remarks about personal, physical or gender aspects of the student's appearance that are hurtful are unacceptable, even if meant innocently, said in a friendly manner and/or in jest.
- C. Offensive remarks must be considered according to how the recipient perceives them. They can be words or actions of an erotic/sexual nature, which lead to the person on the receiving end feeling violated, afraid or uncomfortable. They can be seemingly humorous inferences or gestures, remarks about their body or private life, private/intimate or sexual touching or suggestions or demands for sexual favours, possibly linked to a threat of punishment or promise of reward.
See also VID's *Guidelines regarding unwanted sexual attention*.
- D. Supervisors should invite candidates to inform them if they react negatively to their language or conduct, either at the time or later.

III. Asymmetry in the supervisory relationship

Supervision is based on formal, academic and personal authority, and neither party benefits from an attempt to erase the asymmetry in the supervisory relationship. At the same time, the authority imbues the person with power, and supervisors must therefore take great care not to abuse it.

IV. Double relationships

- A. A double relationship means that the supervisor undertakes at least one other role in addition to his/her professional one. An example of such a relationship is where the supervisor has a romantic/familial relationship with the student, in addition to his/her professional role. There may also be cases where a supervisor has a financial interest in the relationship with the student.
- B. Among the examples above, it is the cases where the supervisor and the student have entered into a romantic relationship that are particularly problematic. Supervisors and students must not enter into romantic relationships. In such an event, the supervisory relationship must end.
- C. The supervisor's impartiality in the adjudication of the student's work may be questioned in the wake of a double relationship. It is not only the integrity of the student that must be

protected. No one should be able to raise any doubts about the boundaries between the private and the professional spheres, nor the supervisor's impartiality and propriety.

V. Trust and confidentiality

- A. Supervisors must consider themselves the occupant of a professional role, and the relationship with the student must be a professional relationship. This means that supervisors must distinguish between any private interests and the professional focus of a supervisory relationship.
- B. Written work can be mentally taxing for students at times. Many students arrive at a point where they lose heart, and want to give up. Supervisors should be aware of such signals, and initiate a discussion. A supervisor's support and encouragement are generally valuable. Nonetheless, such conversations should not considerably exceed the time allocated for professional discussion. If the supervisor determines that a student needs help with their personal problems, the supervisor should encourage the student to seek help from relevant sources. It is self-evident that confidential information that may be disclosed by the student during the supervision must not be passed on to other parties.
- C. Supervisors have a special responsibility not to disclose information about internal collegial matters. Supervisors cannot assume that students will exercise the same discretion regarding confidential information that a supervisor is bound by.

VI. Academic integrity

Supervisors must exercise the same degree of academic integrity towards students as towards other research colleagues. There should be open, clear lines between the supervisor and the student in relation to a supervisor's use of the student's data or research results and the citation practice that applies to unpublished and published bachelor's and master's dissertations and doctoral theses.

VII. Gifts and fees

Supervision is part of the employees' required duties at VID. In some cases, there will be other sources of funding. In such cases, clear agreements must be in place with VID regarding the remuneration of supervision, so that no questions can be asked regarding the legitimacy of the remuneration and/or the impartiality. If a student wants to express friendship or gratitude for good supervision by giving the supervisor one or more gifts during the supervision period, the supervisor must consider whether accepting the gift will have unfortunate consequences.

VIII. Third-party involvement in conflicts

Both parties to a supervisory relationship should be prepared to continue the collaboration, despite any difficulties that may arise, and take responsibility for making the collaboration work. Contacting a third party who may help the parties resolve any conflicts and arrive at an agreement regarding the form and content of the continued collaboration may be critical. Conflict mediation may prevent the breakdown of the supervisory relationship, and any

problematic repercussions. In cases where such efforts are unsuccessful or the parties basically agree to end the supervisory relationship, undramatic procedures should be in place for ending the relationship/changing the supervisor.

IX. Information to students

It is in the interest of both the student and the supervisor that the student is acquainted with the guidelines. VID is therefore responsible for making the guidelines known to supervisors and students.

VID's ethical guidelines are based on the Ethical guidelines for supervisors at the University of Oslo, adopted by the University Senate on 10 June 1997.