

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISORS/EMPLOYEES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STAVANGER

Administratively amended, December 14, 2018

The University of Stavanger shall provide students, PhD fellows/doctoral candidates, hereinafter referred to as “students”, supervision of a high standard. These guidelines apply to project supervision, supervision of studies and supervision of students while on placement. These guidelines are also relevant for relationships between employees and in the line manager – employee relationship, and some of the guidelines are only applicable in one context. These guidelines are part of the university’s “Plan of action against sexual harassment at the University of Stavanger.”

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to manage and carry out the supervision of students according to these guidelines. Supervision should take into consideration academic as well as personal needs. The university expects the supervisors to perform his/her duties in a professional, empathetic and ethical manner, and that the student and supervisor work together to ensure that supervision is as ideal as possible.

The supervisor is expected to continually acquire knowledge, skills and qualifications in order to fulfil his/her duty as academic support in the student’s learning process. Support also means being well prepared, meeting punctually and avoiding interruptions and disturbance during supervisor-student meetings. Throughout this process, the supervisor should encourage an open dialogue about how the supervision will be planned and carried out. This dialogue will establish a mutual understanding of expectations and provide a reasonable balance of potentially conflicting interests and needs.

The guidelines consist of eight main points. They are followed by examples and clarifications corresponding to these points.

1. Respect for the student's personal and academic integrity

A. The supervisor must show respect for the student's personal and academic integrity and refrain from any action or statement that might involve an attack on the student's dignity.

B. The supervisor must systematically adopt attitudes and language that correspond with the student's right to respect and personal integrity, and have a measured attitude to gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and situation in life. However, this should not prevent the supervisor from discussing undesirable behaviour in relation to third parties (supervision while on placement) with the student.

C. The supervisor must not speak or behave in ways that may be perceived as offensive or sexually provocative by the student.

2. Balance of power

The supervisor must be aware of the uneven balance of power that exists within the supervisory relationship. Academic knowledge and authority must not be used to

obtain academic or personal advantage at the cost of others, or in order to offend or oppress others.

3. Dual role

The supervisor must maintain a professional distance from the student and, in particular, not initiate relationships that can put the student in a vulnerable situation. Dual roles in the supervisory relationship should not take occur.

4. Confidence and trust

A. The supervisor must not promote his own interests in the supervisory relationship, for example by confiding his/her own academic or personal problems, unless this is of any importance to the student's work.

B. The supervisor should be open and attentive to the student's personal situation, which may influence his/her work.

C. The supervisor must exercise great caution and discretion in talking about his/her colleagues, and show loyalty to his/her institution.

5. Professional integrity

If the supervisor wants to make use of a student's data or research results in his/her own publications or research, the supervisor must seek the student's permission beforehand. The supervisor must then adhere to proper scholarly citation practice and acknowledgement of other people's contributions.

6. Gifts and payments

The supervisor must not accept any form of remuneration for supervision beyond what is agreed with the university. The supervisor must carefully consider the consequences if s/he accepts gifts or other favours from students.

7. Involvement of third parties in case of conflicts

If a supervisor or a student finds the supervisory relationship so difficult that further cooperation appears impossible, the supervisor/student should consider involving a third party in order to find out whether the supervisory relationship should be terminated or and whether supervisory duty should be reassigned.

8. Information to students

The faculty must inform the student about the ethical guidelines for supervisors when a supervisory relationship is established.

CLARIFICATIONS AND EXAMPLES

Further explanation and examples of the guidelines are listed below. Each point below corresponds to the clause above numbered accordingly.

1. Respect for the student's personal and academic integrity

A. Collaboration with the student shall be built upon thoughtfulness, respect and mutual trust and ensure his/her right to an equal say in the decision-making process.

B. It is important to be aware of underlying attitudes and routine ideas that are expressed through language. The supervisor must avoid behaviour which may exclude, hurt and offend individuals and groups, and that may contradict academia's ideas of open-mindedness, un-biased attitudes and impartiality. Any remark about the student's personal, physical or sexual presentation that may cause offence is unacceptable, even if it was not intended, or meant as a friendly or funny observation. If the student's behaviour, clothes or language could be perceived as impolite or offensive by a third party, the supervisor must raise the matter with the student. The supervisor should invite the student to react to possible negative effects of his/her language or behaviour immediately or when convenient.

C. Offensive remarks must be understood from the point of view of the offended party. It could be words or acts of sexual or erotic intent that may be experienced as offensive, creepy or unsettling. This could be allegedly teasing hints and gestures, comments on body or personal life, intimate or sexual touching, or demands or proposals of sexual favours linked to threats of punishment or promise of rewards.

2. Balance of power

Supervision is based on formal, academic and personal authority, and neither party benefits from shifting the balance of power within this relationship. Authority confers power, and a supervisor must exercise great caution to not abuse this power.

3. Dual role

A dual role mean that the supervisor plays at least one more role in addition to the professional one. One example of such a role is that a supervisor has a love affair with the student or is related to the student. There may also be situations in which the supervisor has financial interests connected with the student.

Of the examples above, a situation where the supervisor and student have started a romantic relationship is most likely to cause problems. Love may develop between a supervisor and a student. In such circumstances, the main rule is that the supervisory relationship is terminated. If it for some reason is impossible to terminate the professional relationship, the supervisor must find other appropriate solutions. Both parties must be aware that the main rule has been broken and that they must exercise great caution in their continued collaboration.

In the wake of dual roles, a problem of impartiality exists with regards to the evaluation of the student's work. It is not only the student's integrity that must be protected: There must be no doubt about where the line is drawn between private and professional spheres, nor about the impartiality and integrity of the supervisor.

4. Confidence and trust

A. The supervisor must consider him/herself to be occupying a professional role and must view the relationship to the student as professional. This means that the supervisor must endeavour to distinguish between possible private interests and the professional focus in the supervisory relationship.

B. Educational activities/scientific research may be physically demanding for the student. Many may come to a point where they lose motivation and are tempted to quit. The supervisor must be sensitive to such signals from the student and raise the

matter for discussion. Support and encouragement from the supervisor are usually beneficial. Such discussions, however, should not encroach on the time allocated to professional dialogue. If the supervisor thinks that the student needs help because of personal problems, s/he should encourage the student to seek professional help elsewhere. It is a matter of course that any sensitive information, is kept strictly confidential.

C. The supervisor has a special responsibility to be cautious about discussing internal collegial relationships. The supervisor cannot expect the student to show the same discretion concerning sensitive or confidential information as the supervisor is duty-bound to. If a student asks questions concerning a supervisor's colleague, s/he must be referred to the department head.

5. Professional integrity

The supervisor must exercise the same professional integrity towards students as they would towards colleagues. There must be a clear and unequivocal understanding between supervisor and student about the supervisor's use of the student's data or research results and what citation practice is applicable for unpublished and published papers.

6. Gifts and payments

Supervision is part of the supervisor's duties. In some cases, external funding sources will be involved. In such circumstances, clear agreements must exist between the supervisor's department and the external funder detailing any remuneration provided, to avoid any doubt about the appropriateness of payment or impartiality. If the student wants to express friendliness and gratitude for good supervision by presenting gifts to the supervisor, the latter must consider whether there could be undesirable consequences if the gift is accepted. If in doubt, contact the department head.

7. Involvement of third parties in case of conflicts

In a supervisory relationship, both parties should be committed to carrying out the collaboration in spite of difficulties that might occur, and assume responsibility for the mutual relationship. To contact a third party, who can assist the supervisor/student in solving conflicts and achieve agreement about form and content in their work, can have a decisive effect. Mediation may save the supervisory relationship from collapse and the undesirable problems that may follow. In cases where such efforts do not work or that the parties are agreed on terminating the supervisory relationship, there should be simple procedures for the changing of supervisors.

8. Information to students

It is in the student's as well as in the interest of the supervisory relationship that the student is familiar with these guidelines. The faculties must develop routines for how the guidelines will be made available to the students.