THE AOG – PART 4D

ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR HANDBOOK

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CONTENTS

1   Introduction

This handbook gives guidelines and ways of working for an Academic Supervisor (AS) during their supervision of graduation students. An AS is normally a member of the academic staff. They will be allocated according to various criteria including their familiarity with the proposed topic, their knowledge of the relevant methodologies, their experience in conducting and supervising research projects, and their workloads.

This guide covers both bachelor's and master's programmes. In general, both programmes follow the same line; however, there are some differences which will be clearly specified.

1.1   The Graduation Assignment/Final Project

The Graduation Assignment/Final Project (GA/FP) is an individual work that provides students with the opportunity to engage, in depth, with an area or issue of professional or intellectual interest. Writing the GA/FP, a thesis, is a major piece of work that allows students to share that experience and to disseminate the results. Carrying out a GA/FP provides an opportunity to read extensively, with a clear purpose and focus, in order to develop a fresh understanding of a specific question. A thesis must provide evidence of the student's ability to analyse complex data and to evaluate the implications of their results.

A bachelor's thesis is awarded 20 European Credits (ECs) and a master's thesis is awarded 30 ECs. An AS is allocated a maximum of 14 hours per student for supervision.

1.2   Sources of Information

Academic Supervisors should familiarise themselves with the resources below.

- Part 8 of the Education and Examination Guides (EEG) (EEG)

- Academic Supervision online area (ST03 Academic Supervisor Area))

- GA32_FP_All Graduation Assignment (Bachelor) |GA32_FP_All|

- GA43_FP_All Graduation Assignment (Master) |GA43_FP_All|

1.3   Academic Supervising Process

The AS is required to supervise and mark the graduation assignments (as First Marker). This final phase supervision includes the topic selection (bachelor's students only), Research Proposal (RP) and the GA/FP.

Each AS will make themselves available for appropriate supervising times in normal office hours during block times (normally not during the Easter or Summer break period for some who take annual leave at such times). The AS will notify students in advance of any leave they wish to take during block time. If this absence results in the AS being out of the office during term time of more than 5 working days, the AS should make appropriate cover for each student, as well as notifying each student. Discuss supervisory and communication arrangements with your student at your first meeting.

If students choose to complete their project at a distance (i.e. they are unable to come into the university for supervisory meetings), this can impact upon the effectiveness of the support and guidance that an AS will be able to offer. You should explain this to your student.

1.4   *The Allocation of Academic Supervisor*

The supervising process starts when the Head of Academic Supervision allocates a student to an AS.

The start of the graduation phase is closely linked to the Research Methodology and Quantitative Methods (GA31) for bachelor's, and Research Methods (GA41) Module for master's. Preparing the research topic and developing the Research Proposal is part of this module.

Master's students can request an AS when the research topic is approved by the GA41 lecturers. After the approval, the student has to submit the Academic Supervisor Request form available on online areas. Master's students are allowed to find the AS by themselves. After having received confirmation from the preferred AS, they can fill in the name on the Academic Supervisor Request form and allocation will be done accordingly.

Bachelor's students are instructed to request an AS when reaching 180 ECs and at least four teaching blocks before the planned block of graduation. For that, students have to submit the Academic Supervisor Request form that is available on online areas.

Based on this form, the Head of Academic Supervision will allocate an AS to the student. The selection of an AS is done based on the area of interest of the student and on the availability of the AS.

The Head of Academic Supervision informs:
   a.   the allocated AS
   b.   the assigned GA student to approach the allocated AS
   c.   Front desk/Osiris (frontdesk@wittenborg.eu)

In cases where an AS foresees a problem in supervising a student and the marking of a GA/FP that is not in their area of specialisation, then the Head of Academic Supervision should be contacted in time, in order to reallocate the student an AS who is able to supervise the student.

2   The Graduation Assignment/Final Project

2.1   Bachelor's Programme

First meeting/decision on topic

In the email on the allocation of an AS, the student is asked to contact the AS for a first meeting. The content of this meeting is as follows:

Introduction

Although the AS might have met the student in one or more of the modules the AS provides, in most cases this meeting will be the first one-on-one meeting the student has with the AS. This meeting provides an opportunity to get to know each other.

Deadlines and deliverables

The graduation phase is an activity that requires clear planning. The student should share their planning with the AS and acknowledge the deadlines that need to be made in order to complete the GA/FP in time.

Question about fee waiver when failed GA/FP

EEG Part 8 Nr. 9.4 Waiver of Tuition Fee: "A student will be granted a waiver in the tuition fee of one block maximum only once in case of failure in their GA/FP. This waiver is not applicable to incomplete GA/FPs and for those students who missed any of the three deadline submissions for GA/FP."

Discussion on and approving of the topic.

One of the main objectives is to decide on the research topic of the research the student is going to conduct. For that the student must send a topic document to the AS at least two days before the meeting. This document can be the topic template that is available online or the deliverable the student has to hand in for the GA31 module. At the end, there should be clarity about the problem statement and the direction in which the research objectives and questions are going to evolve. Based on these decisions, a student can start developing a research proposal.

Research Proposal (RP)

The research proposal is the founding document for the GA. In the proposal, the direction of the research should be clear in terms of the Problem Statement, Research Objectives, Research Questions, and all choices the student made regarding methodology and methods should be specified.

Students have to upload an RP in Turnitin on the Research Proposal online area. The AS has to evaluate and mark the RP. In case of a fail, the student can reupload the RP in the next teaching block. Often, however, some minor technicalities dissuade the AS from marking the RP with a pass. In those cases, a 'pass with remarks' can be given to the uploaded work, specifying the issues the student should have addressed when uploading the chapter 1-3 upload.

All feedback should be given in Turnitin and a clear remark on the result (fail, pass, pass with remarks) should be in the feedback as well. A student's GA/FP starts only when their RP or feasible analysis is approved by their Academic Supervisor.

Feedback uploads chapter 1-3 and chapter 1-4

After having achieved 180 ECs, passed the GA31 module and the RP, the student can start working on the actual Graduation Assignment. In the process, there are two feedback moments planned. These two moments, chapter 1-3 and chapter 1-4, are the only two moments students are entitled to have in-depth feedback on their work.

As mentioned, these two are feedback moments and no grades need to be given.
Feedback should be provided in Turnitin. Students should upload the documents in the block in which they plan to graduate.

Students are allowed to upload their GAs without having anything uploaded in the chapter 1-3 and/or chapter 1-4 upload point. But this basically means that students chose not to ask for feedback from the AS on their work and this might affect the quality of the uploaded work, unless they have proof (meeting memos, emails, etc.) that they have communicated in other ways with the AS. Moreover, students should be aware that if they choose not to upload for the feedback moments, they cannot apply for a tuition-free block if the work is marked with a fail.

Final upload GA

The deadline for students to upload their final work is on Monday in week 4 at 16:00 (CET) in every teaching block. The role of the AS at that moment changes from 'supervisor' to 'examiner'.
The first step when evaluating the work of the student is the plagiarism and similarity test (see EEG Part 5B). Obviously, plagiarism in not acceptable. In case of plagiarism, the works should not be marked and an academic misconduct form should be sent to the Graduation and Examination Board. Formally, the uploaded theses will not be accepted.

Apart from plagiarism, there are limitations set on the level of similarity as well. If the similarity score is higher than 30%, the thesis will not be accepted. If the similarity score is between 20% and 30% a justification should be given on why this level is acceptable (from students or their AS). This justification should be given when sending in the preliminary results (see below).

Keep in mind that the similarity score that initially appears is not always a realistic score. Similarity can be in the library list, in proper quoted sources or even related to the research proposal or the feedback moments as well. Some checks and modification in the settings of Turnitin might be necessary. For that please check Academic Misconduct Report Instruction. If after that the similarity score is still higher than 30%, because the thesis should not be accepted if the score is above 20%, please add an explanation as to why the GA/FP is accepted. Fill in the new similarity rate generated after the exclusion filter in the results.

Next step is marking the work of the student. For that, the marking forms are available in the Academic Supervision online area. In these marking forms, the rubrics are specified, and the AS is expected to highlight the appropriate boxes of the form and come to a final mark for the work. Next to that a written justification of the mark should be given.

After marking, the marking form needs to be sent to examresults@wittenborg.eu. The deadline for that is the day of the oral defence.

Academic Supervisors are required to submit the names of all students that have submitted their GAs and the preliminary grades to the Exam Coordinator by means of the "GA/FP List Block <X> +-form. The GA/FP that are marked with a pre-moderation score of 60% or higher are sent to the Second Marker. A score between 50 and 60% will be rounded up by the system automatically.

This form should be submitted on **Thursday of week 4 at 16:00 CET** to enable the Exam Coordinator to arrange for the papers to be sent to the Second Marker for assessment in a timely manner. The deadlines are set in your office agenda and the form is attached to that notification. The form gives the email addresses where to send the form.

The GA/FP are sent to the Second Marker on Monday of week 5 and the marks of the Second Markers are available on Friday of week 5.

If there are substantial differences between the grades (more than 1 point) assigned by the Second Marker and those of the Academic Supervisor, they are required to meet and reconcile the differences. The results of this 'reconciliation' should be reported to the Exam Coordinator and the secretary of the Graduation and Examination Board (result and explanation).

If the Second Marker and Academic Supervisor come to an agreement on the pre-moderation mark within the 1-point (10%-point) limit, the student will be scheduled for the final presentation on Friday in week 4.

If, however, no agreement as mentioned above is reached, the AS must report this immediately to the secretary of the Graduation and Examination Board. The board will then assign the paper to a Third Marker for assessment. The Third Marker's grade will be referred to the exam board and a decision will then be made as to the final mark of the paper.

Presentation/Oral defence

On Friday of week 6 in every teaching block, the oral defences are scheduled. During these sessions the student has the opportunity to present the work and clarify issues found by the AS or the Second Marker.

For the oral defence, a 45-minute time frame is scheduled, and the timeslots will be communicated to the student, AS and Second Marker on Wednesday before the Oral Defence. The defence can be done physically or online.

Wittenborg University of Applied Sciences
Academic & Operations Guide
Academic Supervisor Handbook

The AS is the chair of this session and, during the defence, the student is allowed to give a 10 to 15 minutes presentation. Since the planning is tight, the AS should stop the student's presentation after 15 minutes. After that there is a Q&A session where the student provides answers to questions that have risen from the written work of the presentation. The last part of the session is for establishing the final grade. For that, the student is sent out of the meeting. At the end, the student is asked back in the meeting and the final outcome will be given.

The last element that needs to be covered is informing the Exam Results Team about the final mark. For that the AS should fill out physically or digitally the 'Bachelor and Master's Graduation Assignment Supplementary List' (available on the Academic Supervision online area) and send it to/hand it in via examresults@wittenborg.eu.

Public attendance by family, friends, sponsors, is allowed. There is no maximum to the number of people. For practical reasons ascertain beforehand the number of attendants present for the size of classroom.

Electronically mediated defence is allowed. The student, for technical arrangements, should contact the Front Desk (frontdesk@wittenborg.eu). The Academic Supervisor checks with Front Desk the technical availability prior to the Graduation Presentation.

If an Academic Supervisor or Second Marker on the day of Graduation Presentation is delayed, or due to other circumstances cannot be present, Front Desk is to be informed immediately. Front Desk confers with the Secretary of the Examination Board on how to proceed. The Secretary of the Examination Board, when needed in cooperation with Head of Academic Supervision, and/or relevant Head of School, decides on an alternative Academic Supervisor and/or Second Reader to be present during Graduation Presentation. The Final Graduation Presentation must take place. Note: students can sometimes come from abroad specifically for this important event.

Graduation ceremony and speech

Twice a year, a graduation ceremony is scheduled. The AS has to prepare and give a max. 2-minute speech to the graduated student. This can be done physically by attending the ceremony or by sending in a video of a recorded speech. Contact our events team for specifics on the recording.

2.2   Master's Programme

In the master's programmes, the start of the FP phase differs from the bachelor's programmes. The decision on the research topic and the marking of the Research Proposal (RP) is part of the GA41 Research Methods module. Students need to obtain an approved status for their RP topics and RP from their GA41 lecturers. Students' GA/FP starts only when their RP or feasible analysis is approved by their GA41 lecturers.

First meeting/decision on topic

In the mail on the allocation of an AS (after the RP topic is approved), the student is asked to contact the AS for a first meeting. The content of this meeting is:

Introduction
Although the AS might have met the student in one or more of the modules the AS provides, in most cases, this meeting will be the first one-on-one meeting the student has with the AS. This meeting provides an opportunity to get to know each other.

Deadlines and deliverables
The graduation phase is an activity that requires clear planning. The student should share their planning with the AS and acknowledge the deadlines that need to be made in order to complete the GA/FP in time. Please make it clear to the students that the consequence of not using the feedback moments is that they cannot apply for a tuition-free block if the work was marked with a fail.

Discussion of the approved research proposal
Finally, the approved RP should be discussed. During the discussion, the AS can bring up issues the AS sees appearing in the RP that was approved. The student should address those issues in the first feedback document (chapter 1-3). For that, the student must send in the approved RP to the AS at least 3 days before the scheduled meeting.

From the next step onwards ('Feedback uploads chapter 1-3 and chapter 1-4') the graduation phase follows the same mode as for the bachelor's programme as stated before.

3   Additional Information

Turnitin: Final Products. Correcting and/or commenting on a final version of a Research Proposal (RP)/Feasibility Analysis or GA feedback upload product is allowed via Turnitin **ONLY**. In this way all GA41 lecturers, Academic Supervisors and students work in the same manner. Data on progress is centrally stored and, as a result, checked for plagiarism. Students should make sure that the submitted content is not a draft and/or final draft but the absolute final error-free version (in UK English), before pressing the submission button on the deadline for submitting the final version RP or GA. Turnitin RP and GA upload area/s **CLOSE** at **4 p.m. CET** (16:00 hours Dutch Time) on the specified day. Once closed, it will become hidden to students and the upload area in the next block will open. If students miss the deadline, they will need to submit in the next block's submission area. Students must make sure to attempt upload well before the deadline. If there is any technical error, students are obliged to contact the ICT Management at ict@wittenborg.eu immediately for help, but no later than the deadline and they should send their work as an attachment.

Handling Data. Know when to expect RP or GA uploads in Turnitin. Processes and deadlines are outlined in the EEGs. Make notes in the Outlook agenda on Blocks and/or other moments. This is possible at the start of each academic year. Correspondence between Academic Supervisor and student via e-mail is allowed. Store this in a folder (see 'Storage of data', next item).

Storage of Data. All important information and communication should be saved for record/reference purposes for at least 10 years. This may include a written commentary by the Academic Supervisors or copied emails from the Academic Supervisors' inbox and any other relevant correspondence.

This is to facilitate other tutors, supervisors and management to intervene seamlessly to ensure continuity in the handling of students' cases in the event of a tutor being momentarily incapacitated.

Regular, punctual attendance at supervisory tutorial meetings. Academic Supervisors should, as much as possible, request all students to visit through a formally arranged process (formal meetings, e.g. MS Teams) so that you can give feedback after properly reviewing their work. Students should come fully prepared to all supervisory meetings, which means that they have read around the subject area, and/or have drafts of material that they will be consulting. The same obviously applies to the Academic Supervisors. Some practical comments are:

- Academic Supervisors will provide advice and guidance on appropriate research methodologies. It is expected that students will also attend relevant lectures to support their research, as well as reviewing various research method texts.
- Students should keep Academic Supervisors up to date with regards to any problems that may interfere with their deadlines, or the successful completion of the GA.
- Students should openly communicate with their Academic Supervisor on all other problems or fears about their GA.
- Students should develop a regular timeline for their GA research process.

Replying to Correspondence. Academic Supervisors are required to reply to all correspondence with their tutees within three working days. This could be a full reply or an acknowledgment with a commitment to send a full reply later.

In some situations, a GA/FP student requests for a Non-Disclosure Agreement, or Secrecy Agreement. This is mainly a result of organisations requesting the student to handover such an agreement before the student can use the organisation's confidential information prior to working on their research proposal and/or graduation assignment. To accommodate this situation a Non-Disclosure Agreement can be made available. For formal WUAS internal reasons, as this is a legal document, this form can only be signed by the Head of Academic Supervision or a Head of School.