Supervision: good practice for philosophy MA

A successful MA supervision in the department of philosophy usually involves:

1. Fixing the supervisor by the end of September of the first study year.

2. Discussing and clarifying the responsibilities and expectations regarding roles of the supervisor and the student at the beginning of the supervision. Whatever is agreed at the beginning of studies can be amended later on mutual agreement.

3. Agreeing on the anticipated regularity of the supervisory meetings and the general procedures and mutual expectations regarding feedback. A recommended minimal amount of supervision meetings is once per month.

4. Discussing the anticipated post-MA plans of the student and taking these into account in designing the study plan (depending on plans the focus might be more on research skills, interdisciplinary courses, practice etc). If the student aims to apply for PhD positions then this discussion should cover the entrance requirements of the relevant PhD programs so as to ensure that the study plan best places the student to meet these requirements. Particular attention should be given to whether the relevant PhD programs require a research, as opposed to a taught, master's degree.

5. Guiding a student in the selection of a research topic.

6. Facilitating the student's choice of courses and composition of study plan.

7. Establishing a timetable for the timely completion of the programme and thesis writing.

8. Advising on, closely following, and giving continuous and detailed written feedback on the student’s MA thesis drafts until final submission.

9. Discussing with the student how to revise the text in response to the feedback on the MA thesis received from thesis reviewers at prospectus stage (end of third semester) and pre-defence stage (if applicable).

10. If wished by the student, consulting on the feedback received from reviewers after the thesis' final submission, in preparation for the thesis defence.

11. Following since the beginning the student's development of crucial skills, in particular writing skills.

12. Being available to conduct at least some portion of individual studies (as part of specialisation module) with the supervisee, as well as advise on potential individual studies with other faculty.

13. Making sure that supervision can continue when the supervisor is absent or arranging for appropriate substitution.

14. Encouraging wider academic development (participation in events, submission of articles etc) and involvement of the student in supervisor's research, teaching etc (if appropriate).

15. Supporting students' efforts in applying for scholarships.

16. Avoiding personal or business relationships between supervisor and the student which might lead to conflict of interest.

17. In cases of disagreement, the parties can turn to the head of the department or programme manager.

Guidelines for co-supervision

1. As a rule, students in the MA philosophy programme have one supervisor.

2. Co-supervision means that a substantial part of the preparation for and writing of the thesis was a shared duty (i.e. simply asking someone to read and comment once or twice on student's writing is not in itself sufficient to grant co-supervision).

Responsibilities of supervision are outlined in our MA supervision best practices.

3. It is always one supervisor who is the main supervisor and has main responsibility for the thesis. This means that the contribution of supervisors does not need to be 50-50.

4. Co-supervision arrangements are, as a rule, negotiated between the supervisors and the student. All three need to agree on who is the main supervisor, on the arrangement of division of labour and other relevant issues. Supervisor(s) need to be approved at the latest during the Institute Council meeting prior to the prospectus defence (that takes place at the end of the third semester).

5. In case agreement cannot be reached between the supervisor(s) and the student, the programme manager will be consulted.

6. Supervisors (especially main supervisors) from outside the department are to be considered only under exceptional circumstances. This is due to contractual (the department can only officially lay duties on its own staff) as well as financial arrangements.