

### **3.3 Issues for Consideration by the Supervisor**

Supervisors vary greatly in their style and method of supervision. Supervision may occur as a one to one or a team approach. A team approach may mean regular meetings with people apart from supervisors, such as other students in the research group or other staff members involved in the research program. Some supervisors choose to supervise their students using a “master/apprentice” model while others leave students largely to their own devices. However, supervisors, no matter what choice of style, are expected to meet the reporting policies and the established standard of supervision outlined in the “Code of Practice for Research Studies and Supervision”. This is available on the OPR website: [www.vu.edu.au/postgrad](http://www.vu.edu.au/postgrad)

Supervisors need to be aware that different students have different ways of getting to grips with the research area and with the task in hand. It is therefore advisable to discuss supervision approaches early in the program. Such discussions ensure that each party understands the expectations of the other, and that both are committed to the mutually agreed arrangements. It may take two or three meetings for the supervisor and the student to work through different styles, approaches and preferences for working and interacting. Each party will need time to consider the relevant issues and return to discuss them in the next meeting. (See section 3.4 on initial areas for discussion between the supervisor and student).

The supervisory relationship will change as the student’s work progresses. The student will experience a shift from being largely dependant on the supervisor in the early stages of the project to being relatively independent as the research develops. More or less supervisory contact will be required at different stages in the project. Students require different types of interaction, assistance, feedback and direction from the outset of their research and during different stages of the program. Some students may be comfortable about articulating their needs and limitations from the beginning. Other students, either because of social or cultural background, are less forthcoming in communicating such needs. It will be easier for all parties if expectations and clear ground rules are developed early on and the means for open discussion are developed.

It is proposed that, under normal circumstances, staff be restricted to being the registered supervisor of research students that represents no more than six EFTSU. It is further proposed that staff be permitted to exceed this load by two EFTSU for short periods up to six months where staff have two EFTSU or more research students who are close to completion (Committee for Postgraduate Studies minute 150.4.2 refers).

### **3.4 Initial Areas for Discussion between the Supervisor and Student**

The following areas of discussion should help to clarify the supervisor and the student’s expectations of the supervisory arrangement. If there is more than one supervisor it may be appropriate to involve co-supervisors in the initial discussions. If this is not practical, the principal supervisor should ensure that the expectations are communicated to the co-supervisors. Discussing supervisory issues at the outset helps to lay foundations for a good working relationship, but it may also be necessary for aspects of the supervisory relationship to be renegotiated as the student progresses.