Directed Study

Outline

A Directed Study allows students to pursue a specific interest under the guidance of a supervisor. Because of the limited time of a Directed Study, we strongly recommended that it does not involve research that requires ethical approval.

Students are advised to engage in:

• A theoretical project, or

• A project that examines data/material already in the public domain.

A Directed Study is normally 7,000-10,000 words. It has individual start and finish dates and students may enrol at any time during the academic year. The Directed Study is a 30-point paper and should normally be completed within six months.

First steps

Students should begin by contacting a proposed supervisor – normally a lecturer from one of their taught postgraduate papers. Academic staff employed in an ongoing position are eligible to supervise a Directed Study.

If a student is unable to find a supervisor they can approach the Faculty Administrator – Postgraduate educ_grad@waikato.ac.nz Finding a supervisor can take time, so students are encouraged to start this process at least a month before their intended Directed Study start date.

Entry into a Directed Study paper normally requires:

Completion of an approved research methods paper

Approval by the proposed supervisor

Approval by the School Postgraduate Leader

Enrolment process

• The student submits a one-page proposal (see below) and the completed Dissertation/Directed Study Application Form to the supervisor

• The student applies online for the Directed Study paper

• The supervisor agrees to supervise the student and signs the Dissertation/Directed Study Application Form

• This form and a copy of the proposal are given to the school Postgraduate Leader for approval
• The Postgraduate Leader gives the form and proposal to the Faculty Administrator - Postgraduate for online processing

• Both the supervisor and student are advised when formal approval for enrolment has been granted.

The form of a Directed Study

The Directed Study provides an opportunity for students to pursue a specific interest under the guidance of a suitable supervisor. The recommended text forms for a Directed Study could include, but are not restricted to:

• A literature review
• A report
• A reflective journal
• A position paper
• An oral presentation (note for some departments this is a requirement)
• A performance. The Directed Study can also be a combination of the above, as long as it falls within guidelines for time and/or length.

The proposal (one page)

The proposal should contain:

• A working title
• Statement providing the reason why a Directed Study is appropriate
• Statement of issue, problem, or topic area
• Brief list of literature consulted to indicate some familiarity with the topic
• Brief description of the scope of the Directed Study
• Directed Studies involving a performance will still require a brief proposal to indicate to a potential supervisor how the study will be undertaken.

Submission and Marking of a Directed Study

A Directed Study should be submitted to the supervisor by 4pm on the due date.
Extensions

A student who expects their Directed Study will not be ready for submission by the due date may apply for a 21 day grace period for submission. It is not possible to suspend a Directed Study enrolment, or extend enrolment by re-enrolment and payment of extra fees.

A grace period for submission of 21 days does not require re-enrolment or payment of additional fees. To request a 21 day grace period a student should:

• Confirm the 21 day grace period with their supervisor

• Ask their supervisor to contact the Faculty Administrator - Postgraduate to request the grace period. The Faculty Administrator - Postgraduate will notify the student when their supervisor when the grace period has been granted.

Marking

Directed studies are marked by the supervisor and are moderated by a member of staff with appropriate expertise. The moderator's role is to ensure that the supervisor has marked fairly and that the grade awarded is reasonable. If there is a significant disagreement between the supervisor’s grade and the moderator’s assessment, the moderator will provide a report to the Associate Dean Academic, whose decision is final.

With the permission of the student and the supervisor, a Directed Study may be published online if it is of excellent quality.

Withdrawal

A student wishing to withdraw from their Directed Study paper should do so prior to the end of the enrolment period by:

• Consulting with their supervisor

• Completing a change of enrolment through i.waikato.ac.nz Students are responsible for ensuring that their withdrawal from a paper is registered. Failure to do so can result in an 'Incomplete' grade (IC=fail) on the student’s academic record once the enrolment period is complete. This may prevent the student from re-enrolling in their degree.

Medical or compassionate withdrawals and extensions

If a student has exceptional circumstances outside of their control mean that they feel unable to complete their Directed Study, they should contact the Faculty Administrator – Postgraduate educ_grad@waikato.ac.nz for advice on how to withdraw. Requests for full or partial fee refunds for withdrawals made on exceptional medical or compassionate grounds are considered by the head of Student Experience and Administration not by the Faculty.
Advice for supervisors and students

Starting out

Beginning researchers often only have a vague idea of their research topic. It is important that a supervisor:

- Emphasises the creation of a realistic time line and scope for the Directed Study
- Clearly articulates marking criteria to the student at the commencement of the paper
- Helps the student to finish a good quality project in the required time. At the start of the Directed Study, the student and supervisor should:
  - Work together to negotiate a timetable and assessment schedule. The supervisor may require a number of different outcomes for assessment, or may require drafts to be presented
  - Establish expectations around the frequency, mode, duration and content of meetings.

Meetings between the supervisor and the student

It is important that the supervisor and student keep in contact regularly to ensure the progression of the Directed Study. Students should aim to keep a written summary of these meetings and email a copy to the supervisor. This ensures that:

- The student has understood the supervisor’s guidance
- The student and supervisor are both monitoring progress.

Weekly workload

The anticipated workload for a fulltime postgraduate student is 40 hours a week and a part-time postgraduate student 20 hours a week. This means that students can be expected to devote a considerable amount of time to their Directed Study.

Reading drafts

An important part of any research process is writing. Often undergraduate students write their assignments only once before handing them in. At the postgraduate level, however, it is important to emphasise that part of any research process is to write several drafts before the research is ready to be presented.

While a supervisor should guide students and assist them to structure their research in a coherent manner, it is not the supervisor’s responsibility to write it for them. Supervising postgraduate students is only one part of a supervisor’s workload and therefore, students should provide, as far as possible, well organised, grammatically correct written drafts, with correct referencing. This way, supervisors can comment on content which is their major area of expertise.

It is important for students to be aware of how much time is required to comment on a draft, and to take this into account when submitting drafts and waiting for feedback. Students may point out specific aspects that they would like supervisors to comment on with their drafts. Drafts should normally be presented at least seven days before a meeting.
Writing drafts

Students may find it demanding to write a longer and more sustained argument than in their previous papers. They may also find that the Directed Study requires a greater level of information literacy skills. Supervisors should direct students to the support of subject librarians and to Student Learning Support for additional help.