



Agile Mentoring

A Practical Method for Supervising
Academic Theses



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UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN PRESS

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Secondly, I would like to thank Eisse Wiersema, who observed up close how the supervision of large numbers of academic theses affected both my professional work and, at times, my private life. He helped me reflect on the importance of setting clear boundaries and conditions. As a result, this part of my work became more manageable and created more time and peace of mind.

Furthermore, my thanks go to Professor Caroline Fournet, who was the first colleague to introduce a strict final deadline for submitting international master’s theses. For me, Caroline has been an important source of inspiration and has shown that it is possible to work differently within an academic environment that can sometimes be rather conventional.

Finally, I would like to thank Gerard Tieks, who made a valuable contribution to the Dutch version of the manuscript through his precise and thoughtful feedback.

If you would like to know more about agile mentoring, or if you have questions or feedback, please feel free to contact me at l.j.j.peters@rug.nl.

- 1 -

Conventional Supervision of Master's Theses in Law

As a university lecturer in criminal law, I have supervised more than one hundred academic theses over the past few years. Today, almost all of my students complete their theses within one semester and achieve good results. For a long time, however, this was not the case.

I still remember my very first thesis student well. He was an ambitious young man conducting research on the Dutch 'crown witness' (*kroongetuigen*) scheme. At the time, I was only about a year older than he was, and the ink on my own master's diploma had barely dried. The role of thesis supervisor was new to me, and I could only rely on my own recent experience as a student.

That experience itself had been very positive. My supervisor was a renowned professor from an older generation with extensive expertise in my research topic. He supervised only a limited number of students and therefore had sufficient time to read carefully and provide clear and constructive guidance when necessary.

But who was I as a thesis supervisor? I did not have in-depth knowledge of the crown witness scheme. I was working intensively on my PhD research on a different topic and teaching several other criminal law subjects. I simply did not have the time to fully familiarise myself with the complex subject matter of my student's research.

Moreover, I was unsure about how much feedback to provide. What if my student went in the wrong direction? And to what extent should I correct language errors? Since

setting deadlines was not customary at the time, I found myself repeatedly waiting for him to submit new drafts.

Eventually, he defended his research well. However, the second assessor concluded that the student had not sufficiently engaged with certain relevant literature. I blamed myself for this. That very first supervision experience left a somewhat bitter aftertaste.

As I supervised more theses, I gradually gained better control over the supervision process. Experience also played a role. With each academic year, the age difference between my students and me increased, which made supervision slightly easier. Nevertheless, the success of a thesis still depended largely on the individual student. And at my alma mater in Nijmegen, it was customary at the time to place full responsibility for both content and process on the student in the name of academic freedom. I later encountered the same approach at the University of Groningen, where I continued my career from 2011 onwards.

As a result, some students graduated quickly with excellent grades, while others completed their theses only after many months of work and with less satisfactory results. These cases often left me dissatisfied, especially when such outcomes proved to be a major disappointment for the student.

As the number of students under my supervision grew and the time available per student became increasingly limited, the quality of their work began to decline. I also lost track of students halfway through the process. Sometimes they would suddenly reappear and submit dozens of pages of poorly developed text at once, often precisely at moments when I myself had important research deadlines.

At its peak, I was supervising twenty-one students in a single semester, and the situation became unsustainable.

Something had to change.



Many of my colleagues in Groningen were facing similar challenges and were unable to offer an immediate solution. However, one colleague, Caroline Fournet, told me that she imposed a strict final deadline each year for the submission of international master's theses. At the time, this approach was regarded by others as unconventional and insufficiently academic. Yet her students complied with the deadline without difficulty, and during the summer recess her desk was the only one that remained free of theses. I found this observation both striking and thought-provoking.

My own experiences, together with those of my colleagues, led me to explore alternative working methods for the supervision of academic theses. Brainstorming sessions with professionals from entirely different sectors contributed significantly to the development of a new strategy for effective thesis supervision. The outcome of this process is presented in this manual.

This work is not intended as a scientific publication. It is a practical guide for both experienced and novice thesis supervisors who may benefit from the lessons learned in practice. This manual is therefore not aimed at students. Its focus is exclusively on the role of the supervisor.

However, this text serves a similar purpose to publications aimed at students, namely the strengthening of skills education. Although it is primarily written for the supervision of legal science theses, this manual may also be relevant to other academic disciplines and to universities of applied sciences.

In Chapter 2, the concept of 'agile working' and its core values and principles are explored. Chapter 3 applies this concept to the context of thesis supervision, referred to as agile mentoring. Chapter 4 presents a practical step-by-step plan with checklists for each phase of the supervision process. Chapter 5 summarizes the main benefits of this method. Chapter 6 includes several students' reviews.

For reasons of readability, masculine pronouns are used as a generic form and refer to all genders.

Agile Working: An Introduction

The English term ‘agile’ refers to a philosophy and working method that is widely used in the business world. It enables teams to develop a product in a flexible, customer-focused, and iterative way (that is, in successive steps). Central concepts include collaboration, adaptability and the continuous creation of value for the customer.

Origins

The origins of agile working can be traced back to the period between 1990 and 2000. During this time, particularly in the field of increasingly complex software development, dissatisfaction grew with the traditional ‘waterfall’ approach to project management and similar rigid methods.¹ Under these approaches, projects or major phases of a process were planned in as much detail as possible in advance and then executed in a single linear sequence, leaving little room for adjustment along the way.

These methods offered limited flexibility. Products had to be delivered in finished form after a fixed period of time, which sometimes resulted in outcomes that did not correspond to the actual needs of the customer. Problems were often identified only during

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¹ See inter alia, on the agile methodology: O. Famoti, B. M. Omowole e.a., ‘A Practical Model for Agile Project Management to Streamline Engineering Delivery in Energy Projects’, *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Innovation* 2025 (vol. 6, nr. 1), www.allmultidisciplinaryjournal.com/uploads/archives/20250214152202_MGE-2025-1-357.1.pdf and M. Baumgartner, M. Klönk et al, *Agile Testing. The Agile Way to Quality*, Springer: Cham 2021, p. v – xv and 1 – 15.

the testing phase, making corrections costly and time-consuming. As a result, many projects failed to be completed within the set timeframe or available budget.²

In 2001, seventeen experienced software developers came together at a ski resort in Utah in the United States to discuss these challenges. Their discussions resulted in the *Agile Manifesto*,³ a concise document that sets out four core values and twelve principles that form the foundation of agile working. The Agile Manifesto marked a paradigm shift in the way software development projects were managed and carried out.

Today, agile methods are applied in many other sectors of the business world, including marketing and communication, financial services and product development. Public sector organisations, such as the Dutch National Police, also use agile working methods in certain areas, for example in the investigation of criminal offences, even though this does not yet constitute a widely adopted organisational model.

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² J.L. Cooke, *Everything you want to know about Agile. How to get Agile results in a less-than-agile organization*, IT Governance Publishing 2012, p. 34 et seq.

³ Agilemanifesto.org.

THE FOUR CORE VALUES OF THE AGILE MANIFESTO

Agile is not a single, strictly defined methodology. Rather, it is an umbrella term for various frameworks such as Scrum, Kanban, Extreme Programming (XP), DSDM, Adaptive Software Development, Crystal, Feature-Driven Development and Pragmatic Programming. Three of these approaches are discussed in more detail below in order to illustrate their differences. All of these methods existed before the Agile Manifesto and were originally developed independently. In the Agile Manifesto, they were brought together and their shared successful elements were identified.⁴ These common elements form the foundation of what is now known as agile working, which is based on the following four core values:

1. Individuals and interactions *over processes and tools.*

In agile working, the emphasis lies on human collaboration and communication rather than on rigid procedures and technological tools.

2. Working software *over comprehensive documentation*

Delivering a functional product takes priority over producing extensive reports or detailed specifications.

3. Customer collaboration *over contract negotiation.*

Continuous dialogue with the customer ensures that the final product reflects their actual needs.

4. Responding to change *over following a plan*

Flexibility and adaptability are valued more highly than strict adherence to a predefined plan, although agreements and structure remain important.

Taken together, agile working focuses on creating a clear and efficient work process, strong human interaction and collaboration, direct feedback, and the ability to respond effectively to changing circumstances.

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⁴ [Agilemanifesto.org](https://agilemanifesto.org).

THE TWELVE PRINCIPLES OF AGILE WORKING

In addition to the four core values, the Agile Manifesto formulates twelve guiding principles. These are as follows:

1. Customer satisfaction

Agile teams aim to deliver valuable products early and regularly, so that end users benefit quickly from the results. The final product is developed in small, usable steps. This is known as iterative working: a process in which each phase produces a usable outcome.

2. Welcoming changing requirements, even late in development

Changes are not viewed as obstacles but as opportunities. By identifying and incorporating changes at an early stage, teams can better respond to the needs of the end user. Agile working is therefore particularly suitable for environments in which requirements change rapidly.

3. Delivering working software frequently

Agile processes consist of short working cycles, known as sprints, usually lasting two to four weeks. Each sprint produces a functioning part of the final product, also referred to as an increment.

4. Daily cooperation between business stakeholders and developers

Direct communication prevents misunderstandings and speeds up decision making. Close involvement of stakeholders ensures that goals remain clear and that the process can be adjusted quickly when necessary.

5. Building projects around motivated individuals

Team members are supported and given autonomy. Trust in their abilities leads to better results, stronger engagement and higher job satisfaction.

6. Face-to-face communication

Personal interaction is considered more effective than exchanging emails and documents. In modern working environments, this also includes video meetings and other direct forms of communication.

7. Working products as the primary measure of progress

Progress is measured not by planning alone, but by the delivery of functioning products. A working product demonstrates that the team is moving forward.

8. Sustainable development

Sponsors, developers and users should be able to maintain a constant pace over time without becoming overburdened. Deadlines must therefore be realistic and workloads manageable.

9. Continuous attention to technical excellence and good design

High quality standards and sound design make later adjustments easier to implement. Ongoing development of technical skills within the team is essential in this respect.

10. Simplicity

Teams focus on what truly adds value and avoid unnecessary work. This promotes efficiency and effectiveness.

11. Self-organizing teams

Teams take responsibility for the work they produce and for the decisions they make. This fosters motivation and creativity. Management supports the process without imposing unnecessary constraints.

12. Regular reflection and adjustment

Teams periodically evaluate their way of working and adapt it in order to improve performance continuously. This often takes place through evaluations at the end of each sprint.

Examples: Scrum, Kanban and Extreme Programming

Scrum, Kanban and Extreme Programming (XP) are three widely used agile methodologies in software development and project management. They share the common goal of promoting flexibility, collaboration and continuous improvement, but differ in their approach, processes and roles. To illustrate both their similarities and differences, these methods are briefly discussed below.

Scrum: an agile method based on short iterations

Scrum is a widely used agile framework that enables teams to deliver working software in short, iterative cycles known as sprints.⁵ Each sprint aims to produce a functional and usable increment of the final product.

Core roles

Scrum defines three essential roles: the Product Owner, the Scrum Master, and the Development Team.

The Product Owner is responsible for managing the Product Backlog, a prioritised and evolving list of desired product features. This role ensures that the team focuses on delivering the highest value to the customer.

The Scrum Master supports the team by ensuring that Scrum principles and practices are properly applied. He facilitates meetings and helps remove any obstacles that may impede progress.

The Development Team is collectively responsible for completing the work within each sprint and delivering the agreed outcomes.

The Scrum process

Work in Scrum is organised into sprints, which typically last between two and four weeks. Each sprint follows a structured sequence of meetings, commonly referred to as ceremonies.

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⁵ The term 'Scrum' originates from the sport of rugby and refers to the formation in which players compete to gain possession of the ball.

Each sprint begins with Sprint Planning. During this meeting, the Development Team selects the most important tasks from the Product Backlog in consultation with the Product Owner. These tasks are recorded in the Sprint Backlog, which sets out clear and realistic goals for the upcoming sprint.

During the sprint, the Development Team meets briefly each day to discuss progress, identify obstacles and coordinate activities for the next twenty-four hours. This meeting is known as the Daily Scrum or stand-up.

At the end of the sprint, the completed work is presented to stakeholders, including the Product Owner, in order to gather feedback. This is followed by a reflection on the sprint process itself. The lessons learned are used to improve the next sprint.



Overview of the Scrum process:

- **Step 1: Product Backlog**

The Product Owner creates and maintains a prioritised list of desired product functionalities. This forms the basis for all further work.

- **Step 2: Sprint Planning and Sprint Backlog**

The Development Team selects the highest priority items from the Product Backlog and plans them into a sprint. The outcome is the Sprint Backlog, which contains concrete goals for the upcoming sprint.

- **Step 3: The Sprint**

During the sprint, the Development Team collaborates to complete the tasks defined in the Sprint Backlog. Daily stand-up meetings facilitate coordination and enable quick resolution of issues.

- **Step 4: Sprint Review**

After the sprint, the Development Team demonstrates the completed work to stakeholders, who provide feedback.

- **Step 5: Retrospective**

The team reflects on the previous sprint and identifies areas for improvement. These insights are used to enhance future sprints and support continuous improvement.

This structure, with its focus on short cycles, regular feedback and ongoing reflection, enables Scrum teams to respond flexibly to changing requirements and to deliver valuable results efficiently.

Kanban: visualizing workflows

Kanban is an agile methodology that is generally more flexible than Scrum.⁶ Its core principle is the improvement of workflow through visualization. Tasks are displayed on a Kanban board, which may be physical or digital. This board consists of columns representing different stages of the work process, such as 'To Do', 'In Progress' and 'Done'. In this way, all team members can see the current status of each task at any time.

To prevent overload, limits are usually set on the number of tasks allowed in each column. These so-called work-in-progress (WIP) limits help ensure that teams focus on completing tasks before starting new ones.

A key difference from Scrum is that Kanban does not prescribe fixed roles or time-bound sprints. Tasks can be added, adjusted or reprioritised at any moment. The emphasis lies on maintaining a continuous and efficient flow of work through the system. Bottlenecks and delays quickly become visible through the board, making it possible to identify and address problems at an early stage.

Extreme Programming (XP): strengthening technical quality

Extreme Programming (XP) is an agile method that focuses primarily on the technical aspects of software development, such as improving code quality, continuous testing and frequent customer feedback. One of its most distinctive features is intensive collaboration between developers. In XP, two developers work together at a single computer on the same code, a practice known as pair programming. This encourages knowledge sharing and allows errors to be detected and corrected more quickly.

Another central element of XP is frequent code testing, which allows problems to be detected at an early stage. In addition, all team members are permitted to modify the code to correct errors or implement improvements. Software is developed in small increments and released regularly, enabling rapid customer feedback and ensuring that the product evolves in line with user needs.

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⁶ The term 'Kanban' (看板) originates from Japanese and literally means 'visual board'. The method originally emerged in the Japanese automotive industry, where it was developed to optimise production processes and facilitate workflow. For a detailed discussion, see J.M. Gross & K.R. McInnis, *Kanban Made Simple: Demystifying and Applying Toyota's Legendary Manufacturing Process*, Amacom: New York 2003, Chapter 1.

Overview

The three examples of agile methodologies discussed above illustrate that ‘agile’ does not refer to one single way of working, but rather to an overarching concept that includes different approaches. What these methods have in common are flexibility, effectiveness and close communication between stakeholders in the creation and delivery of products.

Scrum can be described as a structured method with clearly defined roles, fixed time frames and formalised meetings. This creates a predictable development process with regular moments for consultation and evaluation.

Kanban, by contrast, is far more flexible and is particularly suited to managing a continuous workflow. It does not rely on fixed time limits or formal ceremonies.

Extreme Programming (XP) focuses primarily on improving specific technical aspects of the production process. It places strong emphasis on the quality of the product itself and less on the overall management of the development process.

Advantages of Agile Working

In the business world, agile working offers a wide range of benefits for both teams and organisations.⁷

– First, it enables faster delivery of working products.

Agile methods rely on short iterations in which partial results are delivered continuously. This leads to quicker value creation for customers.

– Second, agile working allows for greater flexibility.

The iterative approach enables teams to respond rapidly to changes in the market, technology or user requirements. This offers a clear advantage over traditional waterfall methods, where adjustments can often only be made at a late stage.

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⁷ See the advantages discussed for the software industry in M. Baumgartner, M. Klonk et al., *Agile Testing. The Agile Way to Quality*, Springer: Cham 2021, p. 8.

- Third, agile working promotes more intensive and effective collaboration.

The strong emphasis on cooperation between customers, clients and developers improves communication and decision-making, resulting in a more efficient development process.

- Fourth, agile methods contribute to higher product quality.

Through frequent evaluation and feedback moments, products are continuously improved. Problems are identified and addressed at an early stage, leading to a better final outcome.

- Fifth, agile working increases team engagement and motivation.

Teams are given the autonomy to take responsibility for the final result. Active involvement in the process strengthens a sense of ownership and contributes to a positive working atmosphere.

- Sixth, agile working enhances transparency.

Regular reviews, stand-up meetings and other recurring activities provide insight into progress, bottlenecks and decision-making.

- Finally, agile working can lead to greater customer satisfaction.

By delivering valuable interim results on a regular basis and by involving customers closely in the development process, customers feel heard and engaged. They can see progress in the short term, which increases confidence in the process and overall satisfaction.

The Challenges of Agile Working

Despite its benefits, agile working also presents several challenges, particularly when implemented in large organisations that are accustomed to clearly defined and structured processes. For individuals familiar with more traditional working methods, agile practices may initially feel overwhelming. When this approach becomes the dominant way of working, adequate preparatory training is therefore essential.

Moreover, agile working is less suitable for projects that must operate within strictly fixed budgets. Because the methodology emphasises flexibility and responsiveness to change, it can be difficult (especially in large-scale projects) to define precise budgets

and timelines in advance. This may create difficulties for customers or stakeholders who require certainty regarding costs and planning.

Finally, there is the risk of so-called scope creep, which refers to the continuous addition of new requirements that cause projects to expand beyond their original boundaries. It is therefore crucial that the Product Owner, who holds ultimate responsibility for the project, establishes clear limits and consistently monitors them throughout the process.

SUMMARY

- Agile working is both a philosophy and a methodology that enables organisations to operate in a flexible, customer-oriented, and iterative manner.
- It serves as an umbrella term for various approaches, each with its own focus. Agile working offers several advantages, including enhanced team collaboration, faster delivery of valuable products, and increased customer satisfaction.
- Implementing agile methods within traditionally structured organisations requires a fundamental shift in mindset. Nevertheless, agile working has proven to be an effective approach for achieving successful project outcomes, particularly in the private sector and, to a more limited extent, in the public and semi-public sectors.

Agile Mentoring: Applying the Sprint Concept to the Thesis Process

Iterative Thesis Supervision

A work process inspired by Scrum can also be an effective method for supervising academic research such as master's theses. The final product, namely the complete research report, can often be divided into manageable sub-products that each add value and can be developed and reviewed within short, clearly defined periods. In legal academic research, these sub-products are typically the individual chapters of the thesis. Together, they form the building blocks for formulating and answering the central research question.

By way of illustration, the master's thesis trajectory at the Faculty of Law of the University of Groningen is used as a reference point for designing an iterative supervision process. At this faculty, master's students begin writing their thesis twice a year, in early September and early February. Successful completion of the thesis yields 12 ECTS, which corresponds to 336 study hours. On average, the supervisor is expected to spend approximately 20 teaching hours on supervision. It is both the supervisor's responsibility and in the supervisor's interest to ensure that supervision can be carried out within this time frame, so that it does not come at the expense of other academic duties.

The following sections show that several elements derived from Scrum are particularly well suited to supervising master's theses in law.

Step 1: The Product Backlog, or: the Thesis Assignment

Universities work with predefined and regulated skills-based assignments. These are laid down in programme regulations that specify the substantive and procedural requirements that thesis projects must meet. In most master's programmes, the master's thesis constitutes the final component of the curriculum.

At the Faculty of Law in Groningen, the aim of the master's thesis is for students to demonstrate mastery of subject-specific and academic skills. In concrete terms, this means that students must be able to formulate an independent scientific research question based on acquired knowledge. They must also be capable of conducting academic research using an appropriate methodology, including the collection, organisation, structuring, critical evaluation and analysis of relevant material, usually literature and case law. On this basis, they must be able to draw and substantiate well-founded conclusions. Finally, the written thesis must meet the required academic standards of language and style.¹

When translated into Scrum terminology, programme coordinators may be regarded as the Product Owners. They have oversight of the number of master's students and, consequently, of the number of theses to be written. The thesis supervisor, who also acts as examiner, fulfils the role of Scrum Master by guiding each individual work process. The student carries out the assignment and therefore constitutes, in agile terms, a one-person 'development team'.

For supervisors who guide multiple theses simultaneously, it is essential to have timely insight into the Product Backlog, that is, the number of students to be supervised in a given semester. This allows sufficient time to be reserved for supervision activities and helps ensure that supervision remains manageable alongside other academic responsibilities.

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 1 Based on Article 2.2 of the Thesis Regulation English-taught programmes (2025/26) of the Faculty of Law, University of Groningen.

Step 2: The Sprint Planning, or: the Intake Interview

At the start of the thesis process, the supervisor and the student meet for an intake interview. Prior to this meeting, the student usually submits a research plan containing initial ideas for the thesis. This document forms the basis for the first discussion.

In addition to discussing the research plan, the intake interview serves two further purposes within the agile mentoring approach. First, it allows the supervisor and student to become acquainted on a personal level. Second, it is used to agree on the sprint planning, that is, the schedule of submission deadlines that determines the length and structure of each sprint.

1) Acquaintance

During the intake interview, the supervisor and the student become acquainted on a personal level, preferably through a face-to-face meeting. For the supervisor, it is important to gain insight into the stage of study the student has reached, the student's personal circumstances, particularly with regard to time-consuming activities alongside the thesis, and the student's previous writing experience.

In cases such as dyslexia or severe performance anxiety, the student can be referred at an early stage to appropriate support services, such as a study adviser or language coach. When students have substantial additional commitments, they may be advised to postpone the start of the supervision process. Experience shows that a demanding part-time job, an intensive internship or the need to take several resit examinations in the same semester as thesis writing often negatively affects progress on the thesis. If such risks are identified at the beginning of the process and appropriate measures are taken, unnecessary delays and a qualitatively insufficient final result can be prevented.



My own experience is that successful completion of a master's thesis can generally be combined with preparation for up to three examinations or with an internship of no more than two days per week. More extensive additional activities usually lead to significant delays.

It is also important to inform the student that thesis supervision is provided for only one semester. A new group of students will start in the following semester. If delays occur that are attributable to the student, the supervisor will only read the fully completed draft version and provide feedback on that draft for the final submission.

By communicating this clearly in advance, unpleasant surprises at the end of the thesis-writing process can be avoided. Students who plan to combine the thesis with multiple time-consuming activities must therefore consider either postponing the start of the thesis by one semester or temporarily reducing these activities in order to benefit fully from the supervision process.

2) Discussion of the Agile Mentoring Method

During the intake interview, the supervisor and student subsequently discuss the agile mentoring method. This discussion can be based on a predefined thesis supervision document in which the process is clearly set out. The template included in paragraph 4.2 can be used for this purpose. It explains how the thesis trajectory and supervision are organised and clarifies the mutual expectations. This creates transparency and structure, making the thesis process more manageable for many students.

Practical note

I always send the thesis supervision document to the student by email prior to the intake interview. This allows the student to read it in advance and saves valuable time during the meeting. It also ensures that the student is aware, or could reasonably have been aware, of the supervision method before the process formally begins.

After discussing the supervision approach, the student can be offered a choice between two alternatives. The first option is to work according to the agile mentoring method. The second option is that the student writes the thesis without interim feedback and submits a complete draft four weeks before the final deadline. In that case, the super-

visor provides extensive feedback only on this single version. Risks such as losing focus or becoming overwhelmed by research material then rest with the student.



In practice, the vast majority of my students choose the agile mentoring method. Over the years, only one student opted to write the thesis entirely independently. He submitted a complete draft on time. However, the final grade, a 7 out of 10, was disappointing for him. His research had diverged from the central topic, which proved difficult to correct in the final weeks before submission. Because he had been informed of this risk in advance, he recognised that this outcome resulted from his own deliberate choice, and as a supervisor I did not feel responsible for it.

If the student chooses the agile mentoring trajectory, the interim deadlines and the final deadline are agreed upon jointly. This can be done using a schedule prepared by the supervisor before the meeting. This approach is efficient, as it allows the supervisor to determine in advance how much time should be allocated between deadlines and in which weeks reading and feedback can best be planned alongside other professional commitments.

Students are usually more flexible with their time, whereas supervisors, in addition to their own research and teaching duties, may be supervising ten or more theses during the same period. Therefore, it works well to reserve one or two fixed working days for all meetings and feedback sessions, which are scheduled well in advance (see the example document in paragraph 4.4). Naturally, specific dates may deviate from the template depending on the student's obligations or the nature of the research. These arrangements are made in consultation. It is essential, however, that all key dates are established during the intake interview.

3) Planning Deadlines

When setting deadlines, it must be clear in advance how many chapters or sub-products the thesis will consist of.

In my own practice, I start from the structure of an average legal master's thesis. This generally consists of five parts: an introduction, three substantive chapters and a concluding chapter containing a summary and final conclusion.

Writing the introduction and conclusion is usually less time-consuming than writing a substantive chapter, and the planning of deadlines should reflect this difference in workload.

For developing a solid writing plan and producing a draft introduction, which together form the foundation of the thesis, I allocate four weeks. I use the same period for each substantive chapter. For the concluding chapter, I reserve two weeks, since the substantive research has already been completed by that stage. Finally, I allow one or two additional reserve weeks to accommodate unforeseen delays, for example due to illness or other unexpected circumstances.

The planning can be adjusted depending on the complexity of specific chapters. For instance, a substantive chapter dealing with a foreign legal system may require more time, because of the need to collect foreign literature or to become familiar with foreign legal sources. It is important to discuss this with the student during the intake interview. The sequence and duration of the sprints can then be adapted accordingly. In this respect, the predictability of submission deadlines is more important than strict adherence to identical sprint lengths. The supervisor is generally better able than the student to assess what level of depth and scope is realistic within the available time.

Part-time students will, by definition, need more time to complete their thesis. For this category of students, I usually double the time allocated in the planning.

Based on this division into time blocks, which is primarily determined by the supervisor's agenda but coordinated with the student, a series of submission dates is established. It is

crucial that these dates are respected, because otherwise the supervision process risks becoming delayed.

To ensure commitment on the part of the student, a clear consequence is attached to missed deadlines. If a student fails to submit a sub-product at the agreed time without a valid reason, both the written feedback on that part and the corresponding oral discussion are cancelled. In that case, no supervision takes place for that component. This risk lies with the student and must be clearly communicated during the intake interview.

Conversely, when a student submits a chapter on time, the supervisor is also obliged to provide written feedback within one week and to discuss it during the scheduled meeting. This consultation should therefore take place one week after the submission date. This time frame creates a corresponding responsibility for the supervisor, while still allowing sufficient flexibility within that week to plan the actual reading of the submitted texts alongside other professional obligations.

The agile mentoring process is therefore based on mutual responsibilities shared by the student and the supervisor.

4) Discussion of the Research Plan and Question Sheet

As the fourth and final part of the intake interview, the supervisor and student discuss the content and feasibility of the proposed research on the basis of the submitted writing plan and within the time frame in which the thesis must be completed.

Experience shows that students often propose research that is too ambitious. For example, they may wish to conduct an in-depth comparison of several national legal systems, even though they do not master the relevant languages or lack prior knowledge of those systems. Others may choose a predominantly sociological perspective for what is intended to be a purely legal thesis. It is therefore important to briefly reflect together on the scope, feasibility and practical execution of the research.

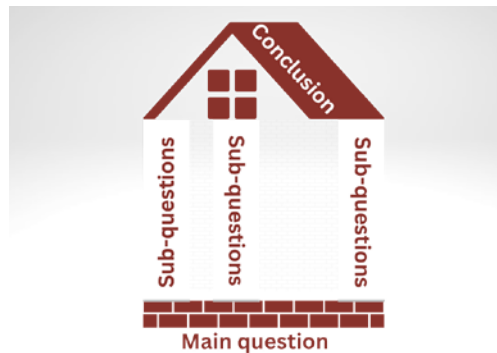
During this discussion, the supervisor should primarily ask guiding questions rather than impose a specific approach. Academic freedom remains the guiding principle. At the same time, the research methodology and the precision of the research questions require careful consideration, as they determine the scope of the research and, conse-

quently, the feasibility of the thesis process. Responsibility for safeguarding this feasibility ultimately lies with the supervisor.

If the foundation of the thesis is not yet sufficiently developed, it can be helpful to provide the student with a question sheet that allows them to refine and sharpen their writing plan (see paragraph 4.3 for a sample document). Answering these questions concisely results in a well-structured research plan that is clear, focused and easy for the supervisor to assess.

Practical illustration

Many students find it difficult to understand the relationship between the main research question and the sub-questions. I often explain this by using the image of a house:



The main research question forms the foundation that determines the scope of the research. The sub-questions function as the supporting pillars. Each sub-question directly connects to a part of the foundation. The conclusion forms the roof and rests on these pillars.

In other words, the conclusion has exactly the same scope as the main question, and the answers to the sub-questions provide a complete answer to the main question. No more and no less. By making this structure explicit and visualising it for students, they gain a clearer understanding of both their research topic and the research process. This quickly establishes a solid basis for the thesis.

Step 3: The Sprints, or: Writing and Submitting Texts

After the intake interview, the student begins working in sprints. During each sprint, the student focuses on developing one specific chapter of the thesis. The first sprint is devoted to refining the writing plan and drafting the first chapter, namely the introduction.

In this first chapter, the key elements of the question sheet are addressed: what legal problem is being examined, what the research questions are and why they are relevant, and which methodology is applied. At this stage, the student also starts collecting the necessary sources, as this already forms part of the question sheet. By gathering sources as early as possible, unnecessary delays later in the process can be avoided, for example when certain literature is temporarily unavailable.

The second and subsequent sprints are devoted to answering the sub-questions of the research and reporting on them. Each sprint results in a completed chapter. These chapters must be written in language that is sufficiently clear and polished for the supervisor to assess them properly. When the student submits a chapter on time and in accordance with the agreed standards (as set out in the thesis supervision document), a short oral discussion takes place one week later, as planned.

The final two sprints are dedicated to completing the thesis, including writing the conclusion and submitting the final version of the research report. After submission of the complete and definitive thesis, a final meeting is held between the supervisor and the student.

Sprint Reviews: Feedback and Mentoring

When a student submits their work on time at the end of a sprint, it is the supervisor's responsibility to read the text and provide written feedback. This feedback should be concrete and clear, using track changes to indicate where substantive weaknesses occur and where the quality of the text can be improved. The aim is not to correct every grammatical error in the document. In many cases, it is sufficient and more effective to correct several pages and indicate which types of language errors require particular attention.

Each sprint is followed by a short individual consultation one week after the submission date.



I personally prefer not to work with groups of students who provide feedback to one another. For many law students, learning how to conduct research and write an academic text is an individual learning process. Sharing unfinished reasoning with fellow students whom they often hardly know may feel vulnerable and unsafe. I value a safe working environment in which open discussion is possible and ideas remain protected. My experience also shows that one-to-one consultations are more effective, and also more efficient to organise.

During each consultation, the supervisor first shares a general impression of the submitted text. This is followed by feedback on the main assessment criteria: content, argumentation, structure, language and overall quality. However, the conversation is not limited to identifying points for improvement. An equally important element is coaching. An oral conversation that includes encouragement, positive reinforcement and attention to the student's individual development forms a central component of mentoring and is crucial for an effective learning process.

In principle, these consultations need not last longer than forty-five minutes. They can be structured as follows:

- Approximately 25 per cent: coaching
The supervisor explicitly asks how the student is doing and which difficulties the student encounters. The purpose is to promote open communication, gain insight into the student's personal circumstances and identify bottlenecks or challenges at an early stage so that timely guidance is possible.
- Approximately 65 per cent: discussion of the content and form of the submitted text
This part focuses on the most important points for improvement. It is not intended to go through all written feedback in detail, as this is already provided in the annotated document that is handed over or sent by email after the meeting. For example, the presence of numerous spelling errors can be addressed by discussing only one or two illustrative examples.

- Approximately 10 per cent: discussion of expectations for the next sprint
This final part concerns mutual expectations for the next sprint, as well as answering any remaining questions and addressing additional issues raised by the student.

Practical note

By scheduling several consultations consecutively for students who are in parallel thesis trajectories, supervisors can prevent excessive time overruns and ensure that meetings remain focused and efficient.

Step 4: Grading

The grading of theses differs between universities and faculties. At the Faculty of Law in Groningen, each thesis is assessed by two examiners. One of these is the supervisor. This means that the supervisor reads the thesis in full once more and assigns an initial grade.

It is efficient when the supervisor also formulates a proposed grade accompanied by a written justification that refers explicitly to the faculty's assessment criteria. The thesis is then forwarded to the second assessor, who shares responsibility for the final grade but, in accordance with faculty workload standards, has fewer hours available to review the thesis.

When the supervisor provides a well-reasoned grade proposal, the second assessor can review the thesis more efficiently and focus in particular on those aspects that the supervisor has identified as requiring critical attention.

Step 5: The Retrospective or Final Evaluation

Once the thesis has been definitively submitted and the final grade has been determined, it is important to schedule a concluding meeting in order to complete the supervision process. During this meeting, the supervisor briefly explains the final grade and invites the student to provide feedback on the supervision process.

This reflection serves two purposes: it offers closure for the student and contributes to the continuous improvement of the supervision method.

AGILE MENTORING AND THE CORE VALUES OF AGILE WORKING

Agile mentoring closely reflects the principles of agile working. Whereas agile teams aim to deliver valuable products that result in rapid customer satisfaction, agile mentoring focuses on a process in which the student works step by step towards a high-quality thesis. Regular alignment, continuous improvement of the thesis and effective communication between supervisor and student are central to this approach. This offers several advantages:

1. *Early involvement and continuous feedback*

Rather than waiting until a complete draft of the thesis is finished, agile mentoring involves the student actively from the very beginning. Supervision starts with discussing the writing plan and draft introduction, after which feedback is provided continuously throughout the writing process. This keeps the student on track and allows the end product to be refined progressively.

2. *Flexibility in content*

A key aspect of agile working is the ability to respond to changing requirements or shifts in the direction of research. If it becomes apparent during the research process that the research question needs adjustment or the focus changes, the method allows for these developments to be incorporated in time. This prevents students from becoming trapped in an overly rigid structure.

3. *Collaboration and personal communication*

Just as agile working emphasises close collaboration between team members and stakeholders, agile mentoring relies on regular contact between student and supervisor. Oral consultations form the core of this communication. The supervisor does not merely provide written feedback but actively discusses it with the student. This enhances mutual understanding and accelerates the development of the thesis.

4. *Progress and planning in short steps*

Agile teams work in short sprints that each produce a usable result. Agile mentoring follows a similar logic: the thesis is divided into chapters with clear interim deadlines and evaluation moments. Progress is therefore measured not only by a final version, but by the timely delivery of concrete parts. This makes progress transparent and manageable.

5. *Focus on quality*

Quality of the end product is central. Just as agile teams aim for well-designed and technically sound software, agile mentoring aims for a thesis of high substantive and academic quality. Through regular feedback and targeted guidance, students can continuously improve their work, resulting in a strong final outcome.

6. *Autonomy and ownership*

Agile mentoring places responsibility for the learning process with the student. The student determines the substantive direction of the research and is responsible for progress, while the supervisor provides support where necessary. This autonomy stimulates motivation and a sense of ownership and corresponds with the agile principle of working with motivated and self-organising individuals.

7. *Reflection and continuous improvement*

Finally, agile mentoring incorporates moments of reflection both during and at the end of the thesis process. In interim consultations, supervisor and student reflect on the submitted texts. In the final meeting, they reflect on the supervision process. In this way, student feedback can be used to improve the supervision process continuously, in line with the core idea of agile working.

The Thesis Supervisor as Process Director



A crucial and distinctive feature of agile mentoring, compared to more conventional forms of thesis supervision, is that the supervisor retains control over both the thesis process and their own schedule. With regard to the writing process, this means that the student maintains full academic freedom over the content of the research, while the supervisor ensures compliance with the agreed working arrangements. This creates room for timely guidance, with the aim of achieving the best possible final result. Such an approach also prepares law students for professional practice, in which products such as legal texts or reports must be delivered for assessment within clearly defined time frames.

Agreeing on deadlines in advance enables the supervisor to align supervision tasks with other teaching and research responsibilities. In this way, sufficient time can be reserved for thesis supervision and the guidance of students becomes more effective. The objective is therefore not to impose uniform deadlines at faculty level, but to develop a tailored process in which the lecturer retains control over their own often demanding schedule.

- 4 -

Sample Documents and Checklists

4.1 Checklists for Meetings

The Intake Interview (max. 30 minutes)

Getting Acquainted

- ☐ Which programme is the student following?
- ☐ Is the student studying full-time or part-time?
- ☐ What study and writing experience does the student have so far?
- ☐ Does the student have dyslexia or another writing-related difficulty?
- ☐ What additional activities does the student undertake (work, internship, courses)?
- ☐ Are there any study delays (outstanding exams)?

Discussion of the supervision process and underlying philosophy

- ☐ Explanation of the thesis supervision process (also provided in writing, for example by email)
- ☐ Choice between agile mentoring or independent thesis writing

Agreement on deadlines

Discussion of the writing plan

- ☐ Where necessary, explanation of the coherence between the main research question and the sub-questions

Expectations for the next step

- ☐ Assignment for the first sprint: revising the writing plan and drafting the introduction (Chapter 1)

Administrative Follow-up

Sending written feedback on the initial writing plan

Preparing and saving meeting notes

Structure for Interim Consultations (max. 45 minutes)

- How is the student progressing? Are there any personal or practical difficulties?
- Which bottlenecks or difficulties are being experienced in the writing process?
- Discussion of feedback on the submitted text
- Discussion of tasks and expectations for the next sprint

The Final Interview (max. 15 minutes)

- How did you experience the thesis process?
- Discussion of the final thesis grade
- Reflection on the study programme and the thesis trajectory
- Gathering feedback on the supervision process

4.2 Example of a Thesis Supervision Guide

Supervision of your Master's Thesis – Dr L.J.J. Peters – Spring Semester 2025

Dear student,

You have reached the final stage of your LLM and have started writing your master's thesis. This is an exciting but also intensive phase of your studies.

During the spring semester, staff members of the Department of Criminal Law and Criminology supervise many Dutch and international master's students who wish to graduate in criminal law. Therefore, it is important to make clear agreements about the supervision process. These agreements ensure clarity for both you and your supervisor.

This document explains the supervision process and the conditions that apply to your thesis.

Time Investment

Your thesis is worth 12 EC, which equals 336 hours of work. This corresponds to approximately eight weeks or two full months of full-time study with five days per week. If you combine your thesis with other activities, more time will be required.

Experience shows that students can successfully combine thesis writing with preparation for two or three resit exams or with an internship of no more than two to three days per week. However, students generally do not finish their thesis within one semester if they combine it with more courses, more resit exams or a more intensive internship.

Please note that I can supervise your thesis for only one teaching semester. If you need more time, I can only read one complete draft version and your final version.

If you plan to do a demanding internship of three or more days per week, or if you have to take four resit exams or three extra courses, you are advised to start your thesis in a later semester in order to benefit fully from supervision.

Deadline for the Final Version

The deadline for submitting the final version of your master's thesis is [25 June 2025].

This deadline is binding.

If you do not submit your thesis by this date, you will have to complete it independently without further supervision and submit the final version no later than [18 August 2025].

Agreements on Thesis Supervision

Period of Supervision

Supervision will take place between [31 January and 25 June 2025]. During this period you may send drafts, email questions and receive feedback on your work.

Submission of Drafts

You may submit **draft chapters** once per month by email. The specific dates are listed in the attachment. You may submit earlier, but feedback will not be provided earlier or later than one week after the scheduled date.

Always attach your previous corrected versions together with the new draft. Each document must include your name, date and page numbers. Always include the updated literature list with each draft.

Layout of Drafts

Only submit your best possible drafts. Draft chapters must use Times New Roman font, font size 12 and line spacing 1.5. References must follow OSCOLA style.

Language

All drafts must be written **in clear and correct English**, as if they were final versions. Drafts containing substantial language errors may be returned unread and may not receive feedback. This may delay your progress.

To avoid language mistakes, use a spell checker, ask someone else to proofread your draft and read your text aloud before submitting it.

Feedback

Feedback will be provided using Track Changes or handwritten comments. Each chapter will normally be read critically only once. If you have questions about the feedback, please contact me.

Meetings

After submitting a draft, we will have a scheduled meeting one week later to discuss the chapter and the feedback. The dates are listed in the attachment. Meetings will not be postponed in principle. If no draft is submitted, the meeting will not take place and you must wait for the next opportunity.

General Remarks

If you encounter problems, delays or difficulties in writing, please inform me in time so that we can try to find a solution. Writing the thesis is your own responsibility. The final product is your own work. The final version will be checked for plagiarism.

The Thesis Track

You may choose your own working method. You may write a complete draft independently and submit it on [7 May 2025].

If you prefer structured guidance and deadlines, the following steps apply:

1 Step 1 Thesis Outline

Revise your **thesis outline, including an overview of sources** such as literature and case law.

2 Step 2 Introduction

Write a **draft introduction** of approximately three pages including an introduction of the topic, the relevance of the research, the research question or questions, the structure and sub-questions, the research method and guidance for the reader.

3 Step 3 Chapter 2

Write the first descriptive chapter including an introduction with the sub-question and a short conclusion.

4 Step 4 Chapter 3

Write the chapter including an introduction with the sub-question and a short conclusion.

5 Step 5 Chapter 4

Write the chapter, usually analytical, including an introduction with the sub-question and a short conclusion.

6 Step 6 Summary and Conclusion

Summarize the findings per chapter and provide a final conclusion answering the research question and recommendations if applicable.

7 Step 7 Final Editing

Reserve time for delays and final revisions and formatting. Submit your thesis digitally in Word format.

The total duration of the thesis process is approximately four and a half months. While feedback is being reviewed, continue working on the next chapter to avoid delays.

Length of the Thesis and Final Layout

The required length is between 10,000 and 11,000 words excluding the front page, preface, table of contents, footnotes, bibliography and appendices.

Draft chapters may initially be longer, but must be reduced later. Do not submit draft chapters exceeding approximately 4,500 words.

Final layout must use Times New Roman font, font size 12, line spacing 1 and normal margins.

Use of Sources and Citations

Never copy text literally without quotation marks and proper footnotes. Plagiarism checks will be applied to the final version. Long quotations should be avoided where possible. Prefer paraphrasing with proper footnotes. A minimum of three to five footnotes per page is expected.

Headings and Style

Do not use underscores or full stops in headings. Avoid questions in headings. Write clearly and concretely. Ensure logical connections between sections and guide the reader through your reasoning.

Spelling and Language Quality

Spelling must be correct from the first draft onwards. A spell checker alone is not sufficient. If you have dyslexia, ask someone to proofread your drafts before submission.

Assessment Criteria

Your thesis will be graded by two staff members based on content, argumentation, structure, clarity and correctness of language, independence, originality and research skills.

Grade Indications

6	The thesis meets the minimum requirements with limited originality and much supervision needed.
7	The thesis has a clear structure, some personal input and regular feedback was needed.
8	A high level of independence and creativity with limited corrections needed.
9	Very high originality and quality with minimal supervision required.
10	Excellent research quality with almost no supervision required and suitability for publication.

Half grades may be awarded. The final grade depends not only on the final thesis, but also on the writing process and the submitted drafts.

Finally

If you have any questions following the above information, please do not hesitate to contact me. My email address is: (...)

I wish you every success in writing your master's thesis!

Kind regards,

(...)

4.3 Setup for a Research Plan

Appendix 1: The Research Plan

Write a content overview of your research of no more than three pages (A4). Address the following questions concisely, but as clearly and precisely as possible.

CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. What problem are you investigating?
2. What is the legal nature of this problem?
3. Why is this problem academically and socially relevant?
4. What is the aim of your research?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5. What is your main research question? Note that this must be a legal question.
6. Which sub-questions follow from the main research question?

METHODOLOGY

7. What issues must be examined in order to answer the main research question?
8. Which sources will you use?
9. Which relevant case law is available and which viewpoints can be identified in this case law?
10. Which relevant academic literature exists on this topic and which viewpoints can be identified in the literature? Provide a short and concise overview.

STRUCTURE

- What will be discussed in each chapter of your thesis?

SOURCES

- Prepare a provisional bibliography and attach it as a separate appendix.

4.4 Example of Overview Thesis Deadlines

Deadlines for Master's Theses – Spring 2025

Group A*

1	Thesis outline and Introduction (Chapter 1)	13 February 2025	by e-mail
	Meeting:	20 February 2025	11.00
2	Chapter 2:	13 March 2025	by e-mail
	Meeting:	20 March 2025	14.00
3	Chapter 3:	17 April 2025	by e-mail
	Meeting:	24 April 2025	14.00
4	Chapter 4:	15 May 2025	by e-mail
	Meeting:	22 May 2025	14.00
5	Chapter 5: (Summary and Conclusion):	12 June 2025	by e-mail
	Meeting:	19 June 2025	14.00
6	Final version thesis:	25 June 2025	by e-mail

The meetings will take place online or in (...)

When supervising more than six theses, I divide the students into two or more cohorts in order to distribute the workload evenly across the weeks.

The Benefits of Agile Mentoring

Quality Improvement

Through regular personal contact, the supervisor gains a clear insight into the student's writing process. Continuous guidance and timely feedback ensure an effective learning process and contribute to the production of a research output that meets academic standards. Moreover, when a student encounters difficulties in writing or performs below expectations, this can be identified at an early stage of the supervision process. Appropriate measures can then be taken immediately to address these issues. This prevents weak theses from reaching the second assessor and avoids last-minute corrective interventions at the end of the thesis process.

Through agile mentoring, students also learn to work under realistic time pressure. The scope of the thesis is aligned with the available time, which reflects an important professional skill for legal practice. In addition, students learn to receive constructive feedback in a safe learning environment and to take responsibility for both the content and the progress of their work. Delays attributable to the student do not burden the supervisor. The final grade naturally depends on the individual student's abilities and skills. In my experience, final grades are often noticeably higher than students' initial level of performance would have suggested.

Full Academic Freedom

Within the agile mentoring model, students retain full academic freedom with regard to the content of their research. The supervisor may offer suggestions, but responsibility for the substance of the research remains entirely with the student. It is important to explicitly include this principle in the supervision document that is discussed with the student during the intake interview (see section 4.2).



Reduction of Workload

After nearly ten years of experience with agile mentoring, it has become clear that this method increases efficiency in supervision and significantly reduces work-related stress. In my experience, all theses are completed within five months, and only exceptionally later than six months, with limited exceptions related to serious illness or part-time enrolment, which account for approximately five per cent of the annual intake. Furthermore, this approach leads to higher quality results in a shorter period of time, as students can be guided at an early stage of the process. As they progress, they generally produce stronger drafts, which reduces the time required for reviewing and feedback. Their learning curve shows a steady upward trend and feedback is more effectively integrated.

A Clear Desk

In line with the above, thesis supervision activities no longer continue during the summer recess. This applies both to the supervisor and to the second assessor. This arrangement promotes collegiality and is also beneficial for students, who can enjoy the timely completion of their studies. In addition, the supervisor's schedule becomes more predictable during the academic year, leaving more time for other academic responsibilities such as research, as well as for a well-deserved summer break.



Increased Satisfaction

Working according to the agile mentoring method has resulted in consistently high levels of student satisfaction and has significantly increased my own job satisfaction. Student evaluations frequently indicate, for example:

- "I always knew where I stood."
- "I learned a lot about time management."
- "I appreciated the tailored feedback."
- "I felt free to make mistakes and improve gradually."
- "I learned a lot about academic writing and research."
- "I gained more confidence in my writing."
- "I completed my thesis on time."

My experience shows that communication with students is particularly effective because short and regular meetings allow me to get to know each student personally. Students receive individual attention, with specific focus on their strengths, points for improvement, ambitions and personal circumstances. Combined with substantive feedback on submitted drafts, this results in higher-quality theses and a more enjoyable supervision process for both student and supervisor.

Student Reviews

In the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024, I received thesis supervision from Laura Peters. I found this to be a very positive and pleasant experience. Below I describe my main experiences.

After my thesis topic and supervisor had been assigned, Dr Peters contacted me by email. She provided clear information about her working method and supervision process. This created clarity from the very beginning and helped to set concrete expectations.

During our first meeting, we made agreements about communication, meetings and deadlines. There was also room for me to share my own ideas and suggestions. This was very helpful, as it ensured that our expectations were well aligned and provided a clear structure for the process.

At the start of the process, we agreed on deadlines for the different chapters. One week after each deadline, a feedback meeting took place. This helped me to stay continuously engaged with my thesis and to keep it a priority alongside other obligations. In this way, I did not lose focus on the topic and work did not accumulate towards the end of the semester.

The first document I submitted was a research plan. Dr Peters helped me to sharpen my sub-questions. This gave me a clear structure and helped me throughout the process to avoid getting lost in the large amount of information.

During the feedback sessions, it was clear that Dr Peters had carefully read my chapters and had taken the time to understand the subject matter. This was very reassuring and, although this may sound obvious, this has not always been my experience in the past.

Feedback was provided both in writing and verbally. This worked very well because it prevented misunderstandings and made it possible to discuss questions or uncertainties directly.

Communication by email worked very well. I received quick responses to my questions and always felt comfortable emailing her or approaching her when I got stuck.

During our meetings, there was plenty of room to ask questions and we always had enough time to discuss everything properly. The atmosphere was pleasant and supportive, which made me feel free to express doubts and concerns.

It was also very motivating to receive genuine compliments alongside constructive feedback. This encouraged me and gave me the confidence and motivation to continue working on my thesis.

Sara R.

I recently completed two LLM programmes in Law and also the Bachelor's in Philosophy I did at the same time with my LLB, which means that I have now written a total of four university theses.

Looking in hindsight, it is more than clear that none of the other three compare to the thesis I wrote with you. And while I might have been the one behind the words, I truly do consider the place that thesis has in my heart a testament to your dedication, input and support. Out of the range of supervisors I have had the privilege to work with, your approach distinctly stands out. Your presence, attentiveness and genuine care shaped that piece of writing in a remarkable way – without holding back from criticism while still encouraging my creative and original expression.

More than the thesis though, you had an immense impact on my self-image, confidence and drive in the academic context, which I am very grateful for. I can only imagine that this type of dedication takes a toll on your time and energy, but I hope you find the bandwidth and support in your own life to continue doing this with future generations.

The LLM thesis I wrote with you remains the highlight of my academic years in Groningen; and I know Angela feels very similarly, the common denominator being your supervision.

I can only wish this type of experience on any student who finds themselves in the position of writing a master's law thesis. Having said this, I hope all your commitments are going well and that you have as many fun and exciting projects as I remember!

With great appreciation,

Filip S.

Concluding Note

The approach presented in this manual developed gradually from practical experience. Like many colleagues, I initially struggled with the supervision of large numbers of master's theses while trying to balance teaching, research and other academic responsibilities. Over time, the principles of agile working provided a helpful framework for organising the thesis process in a clearer and more structured way.

Agile mentoring is, therefore, not intended as a rigid model for thesis supervision. Rather, it offers a practical set of ideas and tools that supervisors may adapt to their own teaching practice and institutional context. Each academic environment is different, and colleagues will naturally adjust elements of this method to their own needs.

If this approach contributes, even in a modest way, to a thesis process that is more manageable, transparent and rewarding for both students and supervisors, then this manual will have achieved its purpose.

