



AGST Alliance

## **Student Support Memorandum of Understanding – Guidelines –**

Christian leaders in AGST Alliance postgraduate programs make a significant commitment to equip themselves as more effective servants of God, however they express that – as researchers, teachers, writers, practitioners, advocates, or in other significant ways.

Our students face many pressures as they seek to complete their programs within the given timeframe. These pressures come from various directions: Work and church ministry, family and personal expectations and responsibilities are the main forces which often derail the good intentions to finish well.

Prayer – permeating the whole study process – is a significant dynamic to enable timely completion of the program. But AGST Alliance also considers it important to remind for the major stakeholders in students' study programs of the potential pressures, and to encourage them to make a commitment to help the student give adequate time and energy to the study program.

### **1. SELF-SUPPORT BY THE STUDENT**

Often students are their own worst enemy, by putting themselves under unhelpful self-imposed pressure during their study program. Self-support may be expressed in these ways:

- Remember the study program is a team effort – between student, institution, family, local church and friends.
- Be willing and self-disciplined to make some significant lifestyle decisions for the duration of the program.
- Not take on additional responsibilities without close consultant with appropriate stakeholders (in the workplace, family, church) and the appointed mentor.
- Ensure adequate quality time is given to significant others, especially family members.
- During the program, pay attention to one's health: physical, emotional and spiritual.
- Seek help from significant others if undue pressure builds up, or if unexpected situations arise which impact on one's wellbeing.

### **2. SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENT'S FAMILY**

Students' families usually bear a heavy load during the study program. Support from family will make the program more achievable for the student, and the heavier load by family members can be manageable for a defined period. Ways families can support the studying member include:

- Be aware of the increased demands on the student during the study program, and make allowances for that in practical ways.
- Recognise that the student may not be able to contribute as much time and energy to family life during the study program.
- Be willing to release the student for intensive on-campus sessions.

### 3. SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENT'S WORKPLACE

The workplace may be a theological seminary, organisation or church. Support from workplace leaders and colleagues may be expressed in these sorts of ways:

- Release time for the student to attend the on-campus sessions of modules and intensive supervisory periods.
- Allocate a reduced workload for the duration of the program outside the dates of the on-campus sessions of modules. In the case of seminaries, this reduced workload may be in teaching and/or administrative areas.
- Grant partial or full research/study leave or a sabbatical for at least some of the time the student is working on the thesis/dissertation phase of the program. This will enable the student to give more focused effort.
- Provide financial support. This may include keeping the student on full/partial salary, and/or grants for program-related costs (e.g. course fees, travel and accommodation assistance for on-campus sessions, books/resources allowance).
- Encourage (and support financially) the student to attend professional association meetings within their academic discipline.

### 4. SUPPORT FROM THE STUDENT'S CHURCH/CHRISTIAN NETWORK

If the student's church/Christian network is not their workplace, support may be expressed in these ways:

- Release the student from some/all ministry responsibilities for the duration of the program.
- Financial support to help cover the cost of the study program.
- Provide special friendship, encouragement and practical help to the student's family.

### 5. SUPPORT FROM AGST ALLIANCE

We in AGST Alliance recognise our responsibility to help the student complete the program too. We want to see students graduating, and with good results. To enhance this, we will commit ourselves to our students in these ways:

- Ensure adequate academic support for students during their program.
- Ensure courses are spaced realistically through the year for students to be able to complete the requirements with reasonable time and effort.
- Point students to the availability of the resources required for their programs.
- Provide clear channels for students to use in the event of problems/concerns about aspects of their program and/or AGST Alliance faculty and personnel.
- Encourage the appointment of a local mentor/accountability partner for each student. This is someone who will
  - meet regularly with the student to review progress, support and encourage;
  - act as an advocate for the student with the student's workplace and local church, as required;
  - liaise and advocate with the student's family as necessary;
  - be a 'doorkeeper' to help the student decide on what invitations for ministry/teaching to accept;
  - be an advocate to AGST Alliance to ensure that the student's needs are being properly addressed.

It is crucial that applicants to AGST Alliance programs take time with their family, their workplace supervisors, colleagues, and/or other appropriate leaders, to discuss the implications of being in the program, and the likely impact it will have for them, their family and their workplace. We trust that there will be mutual agreement between the various stakeholders that it 'seems good to them and the Holy Spirit' for the student to pursue this educational opportunity in AGST Alliance.

We strongly encourage the stakeholders to sign the *Student Support Memorandum of Understanding* (see the separate form), as a statement of intent and commitment to work together to see the student finish well.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this memorandum, please contact:

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