

SUPERVISION OF A POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH THESIS / PROJECT POLICY

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1. Purpose

1.1. Research supervision is an integral part of postgraduate research degree programmes and the success of PGR students is, in part, dependent on the development and maintenance of a constructive and supportive supervisory relationship with appropriately qualified individuals.

2. Supervision Arrangements

2.1. A Student is supervised by:

- A Principal Supervisor, AND
- At least one Secondary Supervisor

who are normally contracted members of staff of the University. Additional Secondary Supervisors employed by an external body are permitted.

2.2 If the Principal Supervisor ceases to be employed by the University, they can remain as the Principal Supervisor if the student is expected to submit their thesis imminently or is at stage 3 of a professional doctorate. This must be approved by the Deputy Registrar, who will consult with the Associate Dean: PGR Studies.

2.3 Unless specifically stated in an individual agreement with a partner institution, one member of the supervisory team must be a member of academic staff employed by the University.

2.4 The Head of Division (or nominee) is responsible for assigning the supervisory team to a PGR student. The Head of Division is also responsible for overseeing the quality of the supervision provided to students, although these responsibilities can be delegated as appropriate.

2.5 Heads of Division can appoint a senior member of staff to mentor the supervisory team.

2.6 When assigning a supervisory team, the Head of Division must take every reasonable step to avoid potential conflicts of interest; this is particularly important if the student is also a member of staff. In these cases, the Head of Division can appoint supervisors from outside of the individual division.

2.7 The [Personal Relationships Policy](#) and the [Staff Code of Conduct](#) apply to the choice of supervisory team. Normally, a student should not have more than 90% of their supervision from supervisors who are related to each other by marriage, civil partnership, blood/law or who are business partners.

2.8 All students must have a Principal Supervisor who is their main point of contact and will normally have the most appropriate expertise in the area of the individual project. Other members of the supervisory team are referred to as Secondary Supervisors.

2.9 No supervisor, Principal or Secondary, can normally undertake the supervision of any more than eight individual research students. The Head of Division is responsible for overseeing the resource allocation of academic staff to supervision and can set a lower maximum number of students supervised by one individual in their division.

2.10 If a Supervisor leaves the University or partner institution and/or is unable to continue their supervision, for whatever reason, the Head of Division (or nominee) appoints a replacement Supervisor. In appointing the replacement Supervisor, the Head of Division must put in place reasonable measures to ensure appropriate continuity of supervision and to minimise the impact of such changes. Students must be told as early as possible if their supervisory team is going to change and must be asked to identify any concerns they have about the continuity of supervision.

2.11 When appointing supervisors, Divisions must indicate the level of each Supervisor's respective input into the student's supervision which is recorded in the central student records system. For example, where two supervisors have an equal input, this would be recorded as a ratio of 50:50. Alternatively, where the Principal Supervisor might contribute the majority input into the supervision, and the

Secondary Supervisor might play a largely pastoral role, this is reflected in the percentage split. A Supervisor must have an input of at least ten per cent. The Principal Supervisor normally has the largest percentage of supervisory input; this must be at least forty percent. If the supervisory team consists of two Supervisors, the Principal Supervisor's input is at least fifty percent. The proportion of supervisory input by a student's Principal and Secondary Supervisor can change over time, especially if one Supervisor leaves or cannot continue to supervise for any reason.

3. Criteria for Appointment of Supervisors

3.1 The University sets minimum essential eligibility criteria that academic staff must meet in order to be considered for approval as a PGR Supervisor. Meeting this criteria does not entitle an individual to act as a supervisor.

3.2 Individual academic Divisions can set higher eligibility criteria, such as requiring greater experience or higher qualifications.

3.3 The criteria for appointing a Principal Supervisor are:

- normally, a qualification at Doctoral level or, alternatively, at least to Master's level where the Master's has a demonstrable piece of independent research associated with its award;
- previous supervisory experience;
- experience of supervising research projects at Level 7 (or above);
- the individual is a subject specialist and currently research active, with a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or has active involvement in on-going projects, OR;
- the individual is an expert practitioner with ten years or more of professional experience in a relevant field, holds an appropriate senior position, and is involved in on-going research projects.

3.4. The criteria for appointing a Secondary Supervisor are:

- the individual is a subject specialist and currently research active, with a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or has active involvement in on-going projects, OR;
- the individual is an expert practitioner with appropriate professional experience in a relevant field, holds an appropriate senior position, and is involved in on-going research projects.

3.5 All supervisors must take part in professional development, as appropriate in relation to best supervisory practice. All members of staff intending to supervise at the University must complete the online supervisor training before they are appointed to a supervisory team. Additionally, all appointed supervisors must complete this online training at least every three years.

3.7 Registry Services maintains the Accredited PGR Supervisor List. Staff who wish to be designated as supervisors can apply to their Head of Division by sending a copy of their full CV and the designated form. The relevant Head of Division must inform Registry Services when a new individual has been approved to act as Supervisor.

3.7.1 The Accredited PGR Supervisor List is submitted to [Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee](#) each year.

3.8 Postgraduate Research Programmes Subcommittee is responsible for reviewing the criteria for the appointment of supervisors.

3.9 If a Supervisor persistently fails to meet the responsibilities of supervisors set out in this policy, the Head of Division can recommend that they be removed from the Accredited PGR Supervisor List. This recommendation is made to the Dean of the Faculty, who has the final decision.

4. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team

The key responsibilities are listed below.

4.1 All Supervisors are responsible for:

- establishing a professional and supportive relationship with their student(s), including encouraging students to engage in the wider national and international research community;
- setting expectations with the student (e.g. frequency of meetings, submission of drafts, feedback, etc) (the **Supervisor-Student Supervisory Arrangement** template can help with this);
- contributing to the development of the three month project plan (or six months for part time students);
- reading and keeping up to date with University regulations and policies relating to PGR supervision;
- recording any concerns they have, particularly during any formal process for evaluating a student's academic progress;
- advising on both academic and pastoral issues, including pointing students to relevant University student services;
- not engaging in any activity which could compromise the independence of the viva examination;
- advising students on the processes for requesting a change in registration, particularly in relation to a suspension of studies if the students' personal, financial or health circumstances prevent them from continuing on their programme temporarily;
- processing administrative requests (e.g. change in registration or suspension of studies) in a timely fashion and explaining the implications

4.2 The Principal Supervisor is responsible for:

- taking a lead within any supervisory team in advising students on the University's regulations and policies relating to supervision and the research process;
- providing guidance about the planning of the research project;
- ensuring that the student receives an appropriate induction;

- undertaking a skills audit with the student at the start of their programme to identify an appropriate skills training programme;
- ensuring that the student meets all ethical research requirements and making them aware of the [Code of Practice for Research](#);
- monitoring a student's progress and notifying them of any areas for improvement, or development through constructive and timely feedback;
- meeting regularly with their student and keeping a formal record of these meetings;
- participating in monitoring and review process of the student;
- ensuring that Head of Division and Faculty PGR Tutors are kept informed of any significant changes to the project or of any significant problems encountered;
- taking the lead in nominating Examiners for approval;
- preparing the student for the viva examination.

4.3 Secondary Supervisors are responsible for:

- providing general support as required to the student and the Principal Supervisor. Depending on the proportion of supervision provided to the student by the Secondary Supervisor, their role may be more academic (i.e. the greater the percentage, the more supervision provided), or more pastoral.

5. Entitlements and Responsibilities of the Student in relation to Supervision

5.1 The Student is entitled to a high quality of research supervision, through the allocation of appropriately qualified staff and exposure to the wider internal and external research environment.

5.2 The key responsibilities are:

- reading and keeping up to date with University regulations and policies relating to PGR supervision;

- setting expectations with the supervisory team (e.g. frequency of meetings, submission of drafts, feedback, etc) (the **Supervisor-Student Supervisory Arrangement** template can help with this);
- developing the three month project plan (or six months for part time students);
- identifying and undertaking appropriate research skills training;
- being aware of the University's academic and support services available to students;
- attend supervisory meetings and keep a written record of these;
- engaging in monitoring and review processes;
- working independently on their research and writing their thesis, including meeting objectives and deadlines.

6. Problems with Supervision

6.1 If a Student wants to raise concerns about their supervision, in the first instance they should raise the issue with the Supervisor(s) themselves. If the Student feels unable to do this, they can contact the Head of Division or the Faculty PGR Tutor. If the matter is not resolved, the student can use the [Student Complaints Procedure](#). If the student is unhappy about the conduct of Supervisor(s) they can use the [Dignity and Respect Policy](#).

6.2 The Student can raise any concerns they have about supervision during the formal Annual Progress Monitoring process to ensure that their concerns are recorded.

6.3 Supervisors must address any concerns raised by students as quickly as possible.

6.4 If a Supervisor receives a complaint from a student, they must seek advice from [Academic Services](#).