

Research Degrees: Guidance notes series

# # 2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES / MANAGING THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

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## INTRODUCTION

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1. The Chair of the Hub Scrutiny Panel, on behalf of the Hub, ensures that appointed supervisors meet the minimum eligibility criteria.
2. If a student's work goes significantly outside the supervision team's field, the supervisors and the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator is responsible for finding specialists either inside or outside the University who could be appointed as an advisor; this may in some cases involve a change in the supervision arrangements.
3. Southampton Solent University cannot guarantee that students will be able to work with any particular supervisor or that they will have the same supervisor throughout their period of study at the University.
4. A student may ask for a change of supervisor if they consider the relationship with their supervisor has irretrievably broken down. The student should take the matter up with the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator in the first instance. The Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator will then advise the Chair of Research Degrees Committee of the most appropriate action, such as the appointment of an additional or replacement supervisor.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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5. The quality of the University's research degree provision rests on the integration of the various strands of activity that form part of the doctoral experience: administrative support, academic supervision and partnership where student-focused services are integral and expected parts of the research degree provision.
6. The respective responsibilities of the key players in the research degree process are set out in this document.

### The Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator

7. The Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator is expected to make a personal contribution towards sustaining the research environment and culture in the University. Examples might include occasional participation in research supervisor training and leadership events, ensuring awareness across the institution of Hub events, external speakers and research seminars, and celebrating the successes of research degree students within the university and beyond.

8. The Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator, or nominee, is responsible to the Chair of Research Degrees Committee for all matters pertaining to research degree students in the Hub. Responsibilities on behalf of, and reported to, the Hub are as follows:
- i. Co-ordinates and enhances all aspects of the learning experience of research students in the Hub.
  - ii. Represents the Hub and its research degree students in the broader University, as representative on the Research Degrees Committee and in other informal groups convened for specific purposes.
  - iii. Ensures that students are accepted into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research.
  - iv. Contributes towards the sustainment of the research environment and culture in the Hub/University: for example, arranging periodic meetings of the postgraduate research students and of supervisory teams, and supporting appropriate training for these students and their supervisors at University level.
  - v. Responsibilities for delegated activity on behalf of and reported to the Research Degrees Committee are as follows:
    - **Admissions:** Undertakes the initial review of applications and act as Chair of the Hub Scrutiny Panel, recommending acceptance (or not) of applicants and the composition of the preliminary supervisory team to the Director of School and Chair of Research Degrees Committee.
    - **Research methods:** Where appropriate, ensures that all students have training in research methods relevant to their discipline.
    - **Project proposal:** Ensures that all project proposals are subject to approval through Hub scrutiny prior to presentation to the Research Degrees Committee.

- **Supervision loading:** In conjunction with Graduate Studies ensures that supervisor loading does not exceed the maximum permitted.
  
- **Supervisory capacities:** Ensures that supervisors have the training and support they require to undertake effective supervision.
  
- **Supervisory team maintenance:** When a member of a supervisory team leaves the team, seeks out a suitable replacement and presents this to the Research Degrees Committee for approval.
  
- **Annual monitoring:**
  - Progress Review: Ensures that the student and their Director of Studies produce a joint report on the student's progress, agreed by both parties, in a timely manner.
  - Independent Review: Ensures that timely review meetings are conducted for all the students in their Hub, including the submission of the written report.
  - Ensures that the Hub Scrutiny Panel is proactively involved in the monitoring process.
  - Initiates appropriate action to resolve issues arising from these reviews; presents a report to the Research Degrees Committee on the student progress and experience.
  
- **MPhil to PhD transfer viva:** Oversees the arrangements for the MPhil to PhD transfer viva, including the appointment of suitable assessors.
  
- **Examination arrangements:** Oversees the examination arrangements for MPhil and PhD awards, including the nomination of examiners and liaising with Graduate Studies in relation to the appointment of an independent examination chair.

- **Faculty annual report:** Prepares and presents the Hub annual report to the Research Degrees Committee.
  - **Appeals:** Serves as Hub representative on Appeal Panels as requested from the Head of Student Achievement.
  - **Information management:** Reviews and reports to the Research Degrees Committee the following:
    - Feedback from students;
    - Analysis of progression and attainment rates; and
    - Analysis of comments from examiners.
- vi. Represents the interests of the Hub’s postgraduate research students and staff in University and Hub discussions of research policies and procedures, research training, and academic and pastoral matters.
- vii. Informs the Hub when they will be away from the University for any extended period so that the Hub can make special arrangements where necessary.
- viii. Undertakes such other activities as are at time to time required to ensure the safeguarding of standards and the enhancement of the research degree student experience.

## The Supervisory Team

9. The supervisory team is composed of one primary supervisor, the Director of Studies and co-supervisors. There is a strong expectation that all supervisors understand the University policies for research degrees (2Q and 2R) as well as their associated policies and procedures.
10. Supervisors are expected to:

### THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

- Encourage the postgraduate research student to engage in the wider research culture including attending relevant seminars and conferences, and submitting conference papers and journal articles.

- Ensure that the postgraduate research student is aware of current developments in both their own area and the broader area of research.
- Encourage their students to participate as fully as possible in an appropriate Research and Innovation Hub.

## THE RESEARCH PROJECT

- Give guidance about literature and sources as well as exemplars of good research practice in the specialist field.
- Assist the postgraduate research student in identifying research and defining the topic which is to be tackled during the course of the research.
- Consider and advise the postgraduate research student on both health and safety and the ethical aspects of any research proposal, including any parts that may be carried out away from the University.

## REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

- Provide a regular structured review of the work produced by the student, including constructive feedback on written work, within a reasonable time period.
- Provide general advice on the research and preparation of the thesis and comment within a reasonable time on written work submitted by the student.
- Read and comment on the whole draft thesis prior to submission provided that it is made available by the student in reasonable time for feedback.

## DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

- Support the postgraduate research student to make presentations on their research work to their peers and other academics, as appropriate.
- Advise the postgraduate research student on the preparation of material for publication.

## RECORD KEEPING

- Keep a record of all formal supervisory meetings with their student(s). These notes must be kept until the end of registration. The purpose of these notes is to serve both as an aide memoir and as a basis for formal reporting and accountability.

## CPD

- Undertake staff development to enhance supervisory skills and maintain sufficient knowledge of the research area and research skills in order to be able to provide appropriate guidance on the research project.

11. The University expects that full-time research degree theses are submitted within the specified registration period (Policy 2Q). The Director of Studies should manage the student-supervisor relationship and guide the project with this objective in mind. The Director of Studies accepts prime responsibility for (1) carrying out supervisory functions, (2) co-ordinating the supervisory team and (3) keeping track of the student's progress.
12. In addition to the expectations placed on the supervisors as listed above, the Director of Studies is also expected to:

## CORE BASIC INFORMATION AND FACILITIES

- Ensure that the postgraduate research student is introduced to the facilities of the University and that he/she is fully aware of the relevant health and safety regulations.
- Ensure that the postgraduate research student adheres to Southampton Solent University's policies, procedures and relevant legislation including, but not limited to, student academic misconduct, research misconduct, intellectual property rights, health and safety, ethics and data protection.
- Ensure that the postgraduate research student has access to the necessary facilities within the University and outside where relevant (i.e. access to library facilities).
- Ensure that the postgraduate research student's intellectual property rights are protected liaising with the Intellectual Property Advisory Panel, where necessary.

## THE ACADEMIC TRANSITION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Conduct with the postgraduate research student a training and development needs analysis and agree in writing a training plan at the start of his/her study. Review the analysis annually. As appropriate, assist the postgraduate research student in identifying professional and personal skill development needs and review these periodically.
- Advise the research degree student at an early stage of their research of the high standards of academic conduct which are expected.
- Ensure that the postgraduate research student submits drafts to Turnitin, and initiate dialogue about academic conduct and plagiarism.
- Arrange for instruction in relevant supplementary classes, including English Language, if deemed to be required.

## SUPERVISORY MEETINGS

- Hold supervisory meetings with the postgraduate research student on average fortnightly for full-time students or monthly for part-time students during term-time, with telephone or email contact in between supervisory meetings.
- Agree a schedule of supervisory meetings.
- Approve a timetable of work and monitor progress, thus guiding the student in planning the research project.

## PROBLEMS

- Discuss with the postgraduate research student any inadequate progress, problems or difficulties affecting their research and be able to direct them to the relevant student support services if necessary.
- Raise any issues for concern to the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator.
- Alert the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator and Graduate Studies, in a timely manner, to any situation where it may become necessary to request a suspension or extension of study for a postgraduate research student.

## ADMINISTRATION

- Prepare and provide regular reports on the postgraduate research student's progress.
- Support the postgraduate research student in completing the necessary administrative steps in undertaking a research degree - such as registration, transfer, approval of examiners, suspension or extension of registration - and ensure these are carried out promptly at the appropriate time.
- Notify the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator and Graduate Studies of any changing circumstances which may mean that it is no longer appropriate for supervisors to remain in the supervisory team, temporarily or permanently.

## COMPLETING

- Prepare the postgraduate research student for the viva voce, including advice on the conduct of the oral examination and ensuring that the student understands the nature and process of examination of the thesis. A mock viva is expected, either as part of the postgraduate research student's final annual review or as a separate event, depending on the timing.
- Advise the postgraduate research student that the supervisor's endorsement of the request to submit their work/thesis does not prejudge the outcome of the subsequent examination, which is entirely a matter for the examiners.
- Nominate internal and external examiners to the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator for approval at least six months before the expected date of submission of the work/thesis.
- Ensure that the final thesis is submitted to Turnitin before it is submitted to Graduate Studies.
- Ensure that the student is made fully aware of the examination procedures.

## THE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT

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- 13.** As candidates for research degrees, the responsibilities of the students include, but are not limited to:

- i. Attend all mandatory induction events;
- ii. Register every year until submission of the work/thesis and pay their fees on time;
- iii. Use the University email account provided to them and check for messages regularly;
- iv. Undertake to study diligently during the period of registration;
- v. Be familiar, and comply with, the relevant University policies relating to their programme of study, which can be found on the University Portal. These are for example:
  - Admission, supervision and monitoring of research students
  - Examination of research awards
  - Procedure relating to academic misconduct in Postgraduate Research Degrees
  - The University Ethics Policy
  - The University Intellectual Property Policy
- vi. Maintain their current contact details on the University Portal, and inform their Director of Studies in good time should they plan to be away from the University or out of contact for an extended period of time.
- vii. Make regular contact with their supervisors.
- viii. Discuss with their supervisors the type of guidance and comment they find most helpful, and agree from the outset a schedule of meetings and other contact for the prescribed period of study.

- ix. Reflect upon and agree their development needs with their Director of Studies at the outset of the programme, reviewing these on an annual basis, and attending any relevant development opportunities offered by the faculty/University that fulfill these needs.
- x. Listen and respond accordingly to supervisory guidance and advice and develop increasing levels of independence in the research process.
- xi. Seek advice from their supervisors in an active manner, recognising that it is the student's responsibility to raise their own relevant issues and topics with their supervisors.
- xii. Take note of and respond to the guidance and feedback on their work provided by their supervisors.
- xiii. Recognize that the supervisor's role is to offer advice on the academic content of the work and its general presentation and not to provide detailed correction of written English.
- xiv. Pursue their research project, on average, for at least 35 hours per week (full-time registration) or at least 15 hours per week (part-time registration).
- xv. Document meetings with supervisors and keeping an up-to-date Skills Development Plan.
- xvi. Actively engage in research opportunities, including involvement with the Research and Innovation Hubs, as appropriate.
- xvii. Participate in any research seminar organised by the Hub/University, where they can present their work to their peers. Students are advised that this is an important part of their course.
- xviii. Respect the contribution and intellectual property rights of their supervisors and other collaborators in external outputs.

- xix. Take the initiative in raising problems or difficulties, which may affect the progress of their research, with their Director of Studies in the first instance. However, if the student does not wish to share sensitive information with their Director of Studies, he/she may do so with a member of the Student Hub's Counselling Service.
  
- xx. Raise to the Research Degrees Committee, via the Research Student Representative in the first instance, any general issues related to the resources and facilities available in the University which may affect the progress of research students.
  
- xxi. Discuss with their Director of Studies any issues which may lead to the application for a suspension or extension of registration.
  
- xxii. In their own interests, submit their work frequently to their supervisors for review.
  
- xxiii. Produce and submit an independent report and a progress report, as requested during the academic session.
  
- xxiv. Inform their supervisors or other individuals with whom the work is being discussed of any conflicts of interest, for example in relation to joint publications, so this may be taken into account when examiners are recommended for appointment.
  
- xxv. Provide their supervisors with a complete draft of the thesis in an agreed reasonable time, for comment and feedback, normally at least three months before the planned submission date. It is not the supervisory team's responsibility to proof-read the thesis.
  
- xxvi. Decide when to submit the thesis taking due account of the opinion of the supervisors, which is only advisory and whose agreement to submission is not a guarantee of success.
  
- xxvii. Write their thesis and plan the submission of the thesis so that the thesis can be submitted within the permitted period of registration.
  
- xxviii. Prepare and bind their thesis for submission, including any relevant documentation for practice-based projects; prepare and arrange the exhibition or presentation of creative work that forms part of the thesis submission that will be seen by examiners.

- xxix. Submit their thesis to Graduate Studies before the end of the registration period.
- xxx. Attend their viva voce at a time and place, negotiated through Graduate Studies.

## Graduate Studies

### 14. The Graduate Studies Team's role is to:

- i. Process student applications, admissions and registration including dealing with pre-application enquiries and student record system data entry.
- ii. Process forms relating to suspension, extension and withdrawal of students.
- iii. Provide advice to staff on suspension, extensions and withdrawals of students.
- iv. Log research project applications (RD1PA) as received from the Hubs and submit these to the Research Degrees Committee.
- v. Produce statistical and monitoring data on a regular basis as required by the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinators, and in line with the reporting timescales required by the Research Degrees Committee.
- vi. Update student records to reflect any changes to supervisory arrangements.
- vii. Arrange annual monitoring reviews.
- viii. Arrange viva examinations including the appointment of a suitable chair for viva panel and carrying out post-viva administration.
- ix. Deal with student and staff enquiries related to regulatory issues and Research Degree policies.
- x. Re-route any queries about student fees and/or payment of fees to the income team.

- xi. Raise a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for Tier 4 visa application purposes.
- xii. Monitor the attendance of international research degree students and report issues to the Admissions Manager where applicable.
- xiii. Coordinate the informal 'meet and greet' event as part of the introduction of research students in the postgraduate research community.

## MANAGING THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

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**15.** The first meeting is usually a good opportunity for both parties to demonstrate their commitment to the learning process. Supervisors and students are advised to discuss the roles and responsibilities stated above and may wish to discuss the following points:

- **Confidentiality:** *What level of confidentiality is appropriate?*
- **Expectations:** *What are each other's expectations?*
- **Frequency of meetings:** *Is the recommended frequency of meetings achievable on both parts?*
- **Length of meetings:** *How long will meetings usually last?*
- **Time of meetings:** *When is a mutually convenient time of day to meet?*
- **Setting the agenda:** *Who will set the agenda?*
- **Other contact:** *How will you stay in touch between meetings?*
- **Losing contact:** *What will you do if you lose contact with each other?*

**16.** Getting the most out of supervisory meetings: A few tips (adapted from ‘How to Get a PhD’ by E. Phillips and D. Pugh (2005)<sup>1</sup>:

- A clear agenda should be drawn up in advance of the meeting so that both parties can prepare.
- If anything is unclear, ask supplementary questions to make sure that there is a clear understanding as to what each has to do. Never leave a supervision meeting without fully understanding what is expected of you.
- Ensure that a date for the next meeting is agreed and put in diaries before the end of the meeting.
- Be punctual in meeting appointments and deadlines. Time is precious.
- Criticism is part and parcel of the PhD experience, but it should be constructive.
- Be enthusiastic! Remind others why your work is important. Your enthusiasm for your subject will rub off!
- Keep a log and a written summary of your meetings.

<sup>1</sup> Philips, E and Pugh, D (2005, 4th edn) How to get a PhD: A Handbook for Students and their Supervisors, Maidenhead: Open University Press.