

Appendix 2: Guidelines on Supervision & Supervisory Teams

Selection of Supervisors

Supervisors will be identified for each research degree student at the point of application.

Supervisors are drawn from a Register of Supervisors maintained by each Faculty and updated periodically to reflect the qualifications and experience of each Supervisor. This register will hold essential information about the Supervisor's research areas and research activity, qualifications, research supervision and examining experience.

Supervisor Training

Mandatory participation in the University's Research Supervisor Development Programme is required, within 6 months of appointment to the role of research supervisor, where the member of staff:

- a) is new to the role of research supervisor.
- b) is new to the University of Wolverhampton.
- c) has not recently (i.e. within three years) supervised research students.

All supervisors employed by the University of Wolverhampton must attend 'Research Supervision and the Research Regulations' supervisor training at least once every three years to ensure that they remain conversant with the regulations. External supervisors are strongly encouraged to attend.

The Director of Studies

The Director of Studies (DoS) shall be a full-time or fractional member of the academic staff of the University of Wolverhampton who must have current and active engagement in research in the relevant discipline.

The DoS will normally have supervised at least one student to completion at the level of the award being supervised.

The DoS has more responsibility and time-commitment to the individual research student, particularly with the requirement to take a lead role in the monitoring and completion of the research programme.

In addition to the minimum supervisory meetings outlined, the time commitment that a DoS is expected to devote to the supervision varies through the life cycle of the research degree project. The initial project design and implementation phase and the writing-up stage towards the end of the programme may require a significant time-commitment.

Supervisors

Nominations for appointment as an internal second or third supervisor are considered from members of academic and professional services staff.

An Emeritus Professor, honorary Professor, or honorary research fellow may be appointed as an internal second or third supervisor as long as they are still research active as evidenced by recent and relevant peer-reviewed research publications or successful research grant applications.

Visiting Professors or visiting research fellows can be nominated to act as a second or third supervisor (or as an adviser) during their period of appointment in the visiting role. Normally the visiting appointment should last for the expected duration of the student's programme of research. The normal 'quarantine' period of three years after the termination of their visiting status will apply before they can be appointed as an external examiner.

External Supervisors

Faculties may nominate, and pay for, an external supervisor where this is deemed necessary but they cannot act as the Director of Studies.

Exclusions from Supervisory Teams

A relative/partner of the student shall not be permitted to be appointed as a member of the student's supervisory team.

Supervisors who are related to each other will normally not be permitted to be appointed as a member of the supervisory team without explicit approval of the Chair of the RSB.

Supervisors must have no line management relationship with any student they supervise.

Honorary, Visiting or Emeritus appointments are not eligible to be appointed as a Director of Studies.

Role of Adviser

In addition to the supervisors, an adviser or advisers may be proposed to contribute some specialised knowledge or a link with an external organisation.

Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team

The primary role and responsibility of the supervisory team is to advise upon and guide students through the scholarly and technical processes that enable students to produce a thesis at the appropriate level.

Supervisors will:

- a) Undertake regular monitoring of the progress of the student's research programme.
- b) Maintain appropriate records of supervisory meetings and interim correspondence.
- c) Undertake a Research Skills Training Needs Analysis of the student's development needs.
- d) Provide timely, constructive, and effective feedback on the student's work,
- e) Provide advice and guidance to enable the student to conduct research with integrity in accordance with the University of Wolverhampton's Code of Good Research Practice and the Ethics Policy.
- f) Ensure the student is familiar with research degree regulations, policies and guidelines and where to locate them.
- g) Provide relevant advice for students whose first language is not English. This may include arranging a referral to appropriate support services, to ensure that the student is supported to write and defend the thesis effectively in English.
- h) Provide support and advice to register with Student Support and Wellbeing, where a student identifies additional needs associated with disability, learning difference or long-term health condition.
- i) Implement reasonable adjustments in their manner of supervision, as laid out in a student's Tutor Awareness Sheet, such that additional needs associated with disability, learning difference or long-term health condition are met.
- j) Help the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences and supporting in seeking funding for such events.
- k) Where appropriate, provide encouragement and advice to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals.
- l) Maintain supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills to perform the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities.
- m) Identify suitable examiners and submit their nomination to the Research Student Board and Research Awards Sub-committee.
- n) Provide detailed feedback on the final draft of the thesis, normally within two months of receipt.
- o) Prepare the student for the oral examination and supervise the completion of any amendments.

Supervisors will provide effective pastoral support, referring the student where appropriate to other sources of such support. An awareness of the range of advice and support available to students, and knowledge of how students can access it, is an important part of the supervision process.

Supervisors should be sensitive to the diverse needs of individual students, including international students, and the associated support that may be required in different circumstances.

Maximum Number of Students per Supervisor

The University recognises that research students are best served by supervisory teams with sufficient expertise, experience, and commitment to fully support each student and their research.

The Faculty Research Committee shall ensure that individual supervisors are not overloaded by excessive supervisory loads. To monitor this, the University Research Committee operates a 'points' system that applies to all research degrees.

The system is based on a simple points allocation:

- For full-time students - one point is allocated for each second supervisor role and two points for DoS.
- For part-time students – half a point is allocated for each second supervisor role and one point for DoS.

The maximum number of points allocated to any member of staff is 10. On reaching a threshold of 6 points, the question of whether extra supervisory commitment is in the best interests of both the research student and supervisor is considered, as is the potential to reduce the demand on existing staff by extending the available pool of supervisors.

The Chair of the FRC or Director of the Research Institute has the authority to limit the maximum number of supervision points to optimise supervisor and student performance, within the 6-10 point band.

In exceptional circumstances, supervisors may supervise more students if their workload allows and only when either or both of the following conditions have been met:

- The supervisor has a track record of successful and timely completions of the type and level of research degree being considered.
- An alternative supervision allocation statement has been outlined in the course documentation (e.g. in the case of Professional Doctorates) and approved by Faculty Research Committee

Proposals to increase supervision points outside the 6-10 range must be considered and approved by the FRC. Prior agreement for the additional students must be gained from the relevant Line Manager.

Consistent Access to Supervision

The RSB will ensure that action is taken to keep the period of time a student is without a Director of Studies to a minimum. The RSB is responsible for ensuring that action is taken to replace supervisors who are leaving the University.

Where a supervisor is temporarily unable to continue supervising a student, the PGRT will assess the situation and, if necessary, ensure that action is taken to appoint an interim replacement. Normally a PGRT will ensure that action is taken to permanently replace a supervisor if they have been absent from the University for more than six months.

Change in Supervision Arrangements

The University recognises that on rare occasions a student/supervisor relationship may run into difficulties. Where possible, the student and supervisors should seek to resolve any difference informally. If this proves impossible, by mutual agreement between the student and the RSB, supervisory responsibilities can be changed, subject to the availability of equivalent supervisory expertise.

Any such change may be at the request of either the student or a supervisor and is subject to the agreement of any external sponsor, where applicable.

A proposal for a change in supervision arrangements shall be made to the RSB on the appropriate form.

Where students are experiencing difficulties in relation to supervision and feel that they cannot discuss this with one of the supervisory team, they should raise the issue with their Postgraduate Research Tutor in the first instance.