

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK

Chapter 3 - Arrangements for the supervision of postgraduate research students - Code of good practice

Contents

1.	Appointment of Postgraduate Research Supervisors	1
2.	Continuing Supervision of Research Students	9

1. **Appointment of Postgraduate Research Supervisors**

Definitions

Supervisor: Denotes subject experts who provide supervision in the student's specialist field.

Lead Supervisor: The supervisor designated as a student's primary point of contact, with primary responsibility for the student's progress and records of progress.

Co-supervisor: Members of the supervisory team who have not taken on the responsibilities of the lead supervisor. May also be referred to as 'second supervisors'.

PGR Pastoral Tutor: The 'PGR Pastoral Tutor' is a designated member of academic staff with a responsibility to provide pastoral support to specified PGR students at their request. The roles and responsibilities of supervisors and PGR Pastoral Tutors are specified in full in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#).

- 1.1. Postgraduate Research students should be appointed at least two supervisors of which at least one member of the supervisory team, normally including the lead supervisor, should possess subject expertise in the student's field of research.
- 1.2. Research degree supervisors should be active researchers and normally hold higher degrees. The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor must give specific approval in writing to the appointment of co-supervisors where they are not currently active researchers, ensuring that they have recent appropriate research experience.

- 1.3. One of the supervisors must be designated lead supervisor, who will be designated as the student's primary point of contact with primary responsibility for the student's progress, records of progress and administrative responsibilities.
- 1.4. Every student should have access to a designated PGR Pastoral Tutor appointed alongside their supervisors. The responsibilities of the PGR Pastoral Tutor are set out in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#).
- 1.5. The PGR Pastoral Tutor should be a member of academic staff at the University of Exeter and among those eligible to lead or co-supervise research students. PGR Pastoral Tutors should not be members of Professional Services staff. To ensure there is no conflict of interest (or the perception of such) between academic and pastoral responsibilities, the PGR Pastoral Tutor must not be the Director of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) at either the Faculty or Department level. Department Directors of Postgraduate Research should support the Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research in maintaining oversight of PGR Pastoral Tutors. As such, whilst PGR Pastoral Tutors should ultimately report to their Faculty Director of Postgraduate Research, they may in the first instance report to their Department Director of Postgraduate Research.
- 1.5.1. **Students registered on the DClinPsy Programme** will also have an appointed Line Manager who monitors their progress throughout the programme. They oversee all aspects of the student's progress, including acting as a line manager, and providing pastoral support to ensure that trainees receive appropriate support. This role is distinct from the PGR Pastoral Tutor role, as the Line Manager is employed by the programme to support clinical development, whereas their Pastoral Tutor will be independent from the programme and can offer pastoral support. Students may approach both their Line Manager and Pastoral Tutor, as needed. Students are encouraged to refer to their programme handbook for more information.

- 1.6. Each Faculty should appoint a sufficient number of PGR Pastoral Tutors to ensure students have access to a PGR Pastoral Tutor who is not their supervisor. The appointed number of PGR Pastoral Tutors should, as far as is reasonably possible, reflect the size and nature of the PGR community within the Faculty, including any equality and diversity considerations.
- 1.7. Staff new to supervision must attend a supervisor development workshop at the first available opportunity. Faculties may supplement the University-wide programme of supervisor development workshops with in-house workshops, where this would assist in ensuring that their staff had access to the relevant development event. [Educator Development](#) can give advice to Faculties.
- 1.8. Staff new to supervision should also serve an apprenticeship, normally as a co-supervisor, before being appointed to lead supervisor duties. Where the member of staff is a co-supervisor, the lead supervisor will be an experienced supervisor and be responsible for ensuring the new staff member's introduction into good practice in supervision as set out in Faculty codes of practice.
- 1.9. Under certain circumstances, the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor may appoint a member of staff new to supervision to the role of lead supervisor. The supervisory team must include an experienced supervisor (a supervisor who has successfully supervised a student through to completion of their programme), who should provide proactive mentorship to the lead supervisor, supporting the Department and Faculty Director of PGR in ensuring the new staff member's introduction into good practice in supervision as set out in Faculty codes of practice. In such cases the Faculty must ensure that the supervisory weighting is such that the co-supervisor who undertakes this role has sufficient time allocated to allow them to play a substantive role within the supervisory team.
- 1.10. Supervisory staff who are new to the University must attend a supervisor development workshop at the first available opportunity, even if they have supervised at other institutions. This is to ensure that all staff are supported in providing supervision in

accordance with the processes and procedures of the University of Exeter, which may differ from those of the institutions in which they previously worked.

- 1.11. Each Faculty should arrange appropriate staff development for all academic staff to promote best practice in research supervision, as detailed in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#). Faculties should ensure that such development events take place at least every two years for all staff with supervisory responsibilities, to share good practice in supervision with their peers, within their own broad subject areas. [Educator Development](#) can give advice to Faculties.
- 1.12. In regard to the number of research students that a member of staff might be expected to supervise at any one time, The Board of Postgraduate Research reaffirms that it cannot and should not apply a maximum number, except as in line with any research council recommendations.
- 1.13. Faculty workload models will ensure that the full work involved in supervision is taken into consideration. PGR Pastoral Tutors should receive a designated workload allocation to enable them to undertake their responsibilities.
- 1.14. A student's supervisors and PGR Pastoral Tutor are approved by the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, and any changes to supervisory arrangements must be approved by the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor. With the exceptions specified below, these duties may be carried out by a delegate of the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor where the Dean of Faculty has given approval¹. The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor retains responsibility for compliance with this Code, and therefore, for ensuring that any delegates are appropriately informed, able to carry out their duties and to refer the exceptions referenced in this Code to the appropriate authority for approval. Records of appointments must be kept to demonstrate compliance. Exceptions to this are the

¹ In order to propose delegates the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty should seek approval from the Dean of Postgraduate Research via [DC Quality Development team](#), who will keep a record of all roles with the approval to act as delegates.

circumstances set out in this Code in paragraphs [1.2](#), [1.9](#), [1.15](#) and in the [Continuing Supervision of Research Students](#) section of this Code, Section 2 below.

1.15. It would not normally be appropriate to appoint as members of a supervisory team (including the PGR Pastoral Tutor) members of staff who are in a personal relationship (for clarification see the guidance in the [‘Codes of Professional Conduct: Relations between Staff and Students and between Staff’](#)). In appointing supervisors and PGR Pastoral Tutors, the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, must be mindful of the requirements set down in the [‘Codes of Professional Conduct: Relations between Staff and Students and between Staff’](#). Members of staff so appointed, who feel that the [‘Codes of Professional Conduct: Relations between Staff and Students and between Staff’](#) may apply, have a duty to make an appropriate declaration, to ensure that the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor can make an informed decision regarding the suitability of the supervisory and pastoral tutoring arrangements. In exceptional cases, with the permission of the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, members of staff who are in a personal relationship may be appointed to a supervisory team (including the PGR Pastoral Tutor). In such instance, the Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor may insist that additional support mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the student is unlikely to be negatively affected.

1.16. Subject to the precepts above, supervisors may be drawn from the following categories: (see section [1.17 below](#) for supervisory requirements for DClin PGR Programmes):

1.16.1. Lead Supervisor:

- a. Staff in the Education and Research job family on a permanent contract.
- b. Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, and Associate Professors in the Research job family on a permanent contract.

1.16.2. Co-supervisors:

- a. When appointing co-supervisors who are not members of University of Exeter staff on a permanent contract, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of College should be assured that appropriate alternative supervision arrangements can be made, following the end of a fixed term contract or other arrangement.

- b. Staff in the Education and Research job family on a fixed term contract.
- c. Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows, and Associate Professors in the Research job family on a fixed term contract.
- d. Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors in the Education and Scholarship job family.
- e. Honorary University Fellows or Honorary Visiting Professors.
- f. Supervisors external to the University. Faculties must ensure that appropriate records are kept that demonstrate the suitability of the individual to take a supervisory role (e.g. C.V., evidence of previous experience) and that a joint supervision agreement is put in place (see the responsibilities of supervisors in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#)). Depending on the nature of the arrangement it may also be necessary for the arrangement to be established under the [TQA Academic Partnerships Handbook, Chapter 4: How to Establish a New Academic Partnership](#).
- g. Staff in specialist professional services roles, provided they meet specific appointment criteria, see [1.21 below](#).

1.17. Subject to the precepts above, supervisors for students registered on DClin PGR Programmes may be drawn from the following categories:

1.17.1. Lead Supervisor (no conditions):

- a. Staff in the Education and Research job family on a permanent contract.
- b. Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows and Associate Professors in the Research job family on a permanent contract.

1.17.2. Lead Supervisor (under specified conditions, detailed in [1.17.3](#)):

- a. Staff in the Education and Research job family on a fixed-term contract (provided that the following conditions, detailed below, are met: [1.17.3.a](#)).
- b. Research Fellows, Senior Research Fellows and Associate Professors in the Research job family on a fixed-term contract (provided that the following conditions, detailed below, are met: [1.17.3.a](#)).

- c. Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors in the Education and Scholarship job family on a permanent contract (provided that the following conditions, detailed below, are met: [1.17.3.b](#); [1.17.3.c](#)).
- d. Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors in the Education and Scholarship job family on a fixed-term contract (provided that the following conditions detailed below, are met: [1.17.3.a](#), [1.17.3.b](#), [1.17.3.c](#))

1.17.3. Conditions of Lead Supervision Appointments (under section [1.17.2 above](#)):

- a. Staff on a fixed-term contract: Staff on a fixed-term contract **should** have a contract with the University which ends no less than 12 months after the student's Period of study ends, to ensure support throughout examination and completion. Staff whose contract ends between 6-12 months after the student's Period of Study ends may be considered as a lead supervisor, on the condition that the department will ensure continued supervision throughout the student's examination and amendment period. It will be the responsibility of the supervisor on the fixed-term contract to discuss alternative supervision with the Department Director of PGR no less than 3 months before their contract with the University of Exeter ends.
- b. Staff employed in the Education and Scholarship job family, must be active researchers, and approved by the DClin Director. 'Research active' in this context means that one **should** have at least one peer reviewed publication in a relevant field in the 4 years prior to the supervisory appointment.
- c. The co-supervisor **should** be an experienced supervisor (a supervisor who has successfully supervised a student through to completion of their programme) who is employed by the University of Exeter.

1.17.4. Co-Supervisors:

- a. In addition to the above, the following may be appointed as co-supervisors for students:
 - i. Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors in the Education and Scholarship job family; Professionals in Clinical Psychology/

Psychotherapy/ Psychoanalysis/ Allied Health Professionals affiliated with the University of Exeter and who are research active².

- ii. Honorary University Fellows or Honorary Visiting Professors.
- iii. Supervisors external to the University. Faculties must ensure that appropriate records are kept that demonstrate the suitability of the individual to take a supervisory role (e.g. C.V., evidence of previous experience) and that a joint supervision agreement is put in place (see the responsibilities of supervisors in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#)). Depending on the nature of the arrangement it may also be necessary for the arrangement to be established under the [TQA Academic Partnerships Handbook, Chapter 4: How to Establish a New Academic Partnership](#).
- iv. Staff in specialist professional services roles, provided they meet specific appointment criteria, see [1.21 below](#).

1.18. Supervisors should make provision for the continuance of supervision when away from the University of Exeter (e.g. undertaking research) and normally continue their supervisory responsibilities while on study leave, subject to research council advice.

1.19. When supervisors leave the University, the Faculty has an obligation to provide continuity of supervision as set out below.

1.20. As PGR Pastoral Tutors are not necessarily subject specialists, they may be replaced when on study leave.

1.21. **Staff in specialist and research facing professional services roles** (e.g., Experimental Officers, Archivists, Curators etc) may join a supervisory team as a co-supervisor, provided the following criteria are met:

² The DClin PGR Portfolio Director will consider all such requests and approve appointments for those that are deemed “research active”. Research active in this context means that one **should** have at least one peer reviewed publication in the 4 years prior to the supervisory appointment in a relevant field

- 1.21.1. The PS Staff member must be able to cover the breadth of the supervisor role, as outlined in the [TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4: Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice](#). Any additional technical/lab support and advice which does not constitute supervisor activity may be provided under the PS staff's substantive role, and is not a part of their supervisory duties.
- 1.21.2. The PS Staff member must be able to demonstrate that they are research active³.
- 1.21.3. Workload for the PS staff member's supervision will be protected and confirmed in writing by their line manager and Director of Service.
- 1.21.4. The PS staff must attend supervisor training.
- 1.21.5. The PS staff member must not be a lead supervisor.
- 1.21.6. At least one member of the supervisory team must hold a research degree at least equivalent of the degree being supervised.

2. Continuing Supervision of Research Students

2.1. Contract for the provision of supervision

- 2.1.1. Acceptance of a research student establishes a contractual obligation on the University through the accepting Faculty to provide reasonable supervision arrangements. A Faculty may fulfil this obligation either from its own resources, or with prior agreement, in association with other Faculties or Research Organisations. This obligation remains in force for the student's period of registration, until completion of their programme of study, on the topic of research originally agreed.
- 2.1.2. Changes to supervisory arrangements are occasionally necessary as a result of unforeseeable circumstances, such as staff departure or leave, a change in direction in research, or in appropriate circumstances, where a breakdown in relationships has occurred. In those circumstances, the University/Faculty will make all reasonable efforts to put in place alternative supervisory arrangements, subject to the further provisions outlined below. Supervisors are responsible for informing their Department Director of PGR of any absences, whether planned

³ Research active in this context means that one should have at least one peer reviewed publication in the 4 years prior to the supervisory appointment in a relevant field.

or unplanned, to support arrangements for cover and student support during absence.

2.1.3. If following such reasonable efforts, no reasonable alternative arrangement can be made, the University has no liability whatsoever for any loss and/or damage suffered by the student as a result.

2.1.4. Supervisors **must not** withdraw from supervision without first following procedures to support students ([TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 15, Unsatisfactory Student Progress, Engagement and Attendance](#); [Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures](#) or other appropriate [Regulations, Disciplinary and other Procedures for Students](#), **and** without prior written permission from the Faculty Director of PGR **and** where appropriate alternative provision has been arranged.

2.2. Supervisory Teams

2.2.1. It is advisable that all members of the supervisory team are sufficiently familiar with the student's research that should one member of the supervisory team leave (or be temporarily unavailable) other members would, if necessary, be able to provide increased supervisory support on either a short-term or long-term basis.

2.3. Changes to the Supervisory Team

2.3.1. Supervision by the same supervisory team across the course of a student's studies is not guaranteed. Where changes need to be made to a supervisory team the Faculty must keep the student informed and liaise with them throughout the substitution process. However, Faculties are not required to solicit a student's agreement on internal changes to the supervisory team's composition, nor to make changes to the supervisory team at a student's behest unless there is good cause to do so. Students should also understand that there are a number of mechanisms for providing supervision, and that changes to their supervisory team may also mean changes to the mechanisms for supervisory contact (for example with regard to when and how supervision meetings take place), which should be set out in a revised supervision agreement drafted by the new supervisory team and the student, and uploaded to MyPGR.

2.4. Changes to the student's topic of study

2.4.1. If a student wishes to change the topic of their research they must first discuss this with their supervisory team. The supervisory team will seek advice from the relevant Associate Dean or Director of Postgraduate Research of the Faculty when they feel that the proposed changes represent a fundamental departure from the academic subject-matter originally envisaged by the student's application. Where such a change is supported by the Faculty, but would mean that the make-up of the supervisory team no longer remained appropriate, the Faculty will make reasonable endeavours to find alternative supervision within the University. It will be at the University's discretion to determine whether or not it will look further afield to supplement the supervision available, before determining whether it is able to continue supervision of the research in question. It is only after consideration of the above that the Associate Dean or Director of Postgraduate Research will consider the request to change the topic of research.

2.5. Appropriate Replacements

2.5.1. Where a Faculty finds it reasonably necessary to replace a supervisor who is a member of University staff it must first ensure that it has considered all appropriate and reasonable internal institutional options for ensuring that the supervisory team contains the necessary expertise before looking further afield. Where an external supervisor has been appointed because of their particular expertise or perspective (e.g. industry-based), it would normally be appropriate to replace such a supervisor with an equivalent appointment, where this is reasonably possible.

2.6. Access to Resources

2.6.1. On the departure of a member of the supervisory team Faculties should also give consideration as to whether this would affect the student's access to resources where, for example, resources had been provided at the University by a research grant which had moved with the lead supervisor. This need only be a consideration where the resources were an intrinsic requirement for the student's studies, and which had been specified as such at the beginning of their programme. If the

Faculty cannot provide these resources directly, this may also involve reasonable endeavours to provide these resources from an alternative source.

2.7. Making Alternative Arrangements

2.7.1. If it is necessary for alternative provision to be made, responsibility would sit with the Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor to determine the arrangements. The student will be consulted on the proposed arrangements to be made but responsibility for them must remain with the University (exercised through the host Faculty) and cannot be delegated to the student concerned. Where the proposed arrangements would entail a change to the registration of the student this must be discussed with the student at an early stage in the process and approval of the student must be sought before the arrangements are finalised.

2.8. External supervision

2.8.1. Provision of appropriate supervision may involve the appointment of a co-supervisor with the necessary specialist knowledge from outside the University. Where the Faculty deems it appropriate, they may approach the supervisor who is leaving to continue supervising as a co-supervisor. There is no obligation on the part of a Faculty to enter into such an arrangement with a member of staff when they leave in preference to making other alternative arrangements, nor for the supervisor in question to feel obligated to consider continuing supervision, and they should only do so of their own volition and if their new employer is happy with the arrangement.

2.8.2. In all cases lead supervisor duties must be retained by an appropriate member of staff (see [1.16 above](#)) within the Faculty in question.

2.8.3. The negotiation of such arrangements will be paid for by the Faculty and will be specified in a clearly articulated joint supervision agreement, which shall include reference to the specific supervisory arrangements and duties of all members of the supervisory team.

2.9. Transfer to another Institution

2.9.1. Where there are no reasonable alternative arrangements, the Faculty will take reasonable steps to look for a place for the student at another eligible institution and to take reasonable steps to negotiate a transfer.

2.10. Continuation Status or Post-Submission

2.10.1. Changes to supervision once a student has reached Continuation Status or has submitted their thesis should only be made in exceptional circumstances.

2.11. Where it is not possible to provide supervision

2.11.1. There may still be some circumstances, despite the University's reasonable endeavours, where it is no longer possible to identify appropriate supervision for a student. Where this is the case, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean of Faculty must consult with the Dean of Postgraduate Research before making the student aware, as soon as possible that this is the case, and of any further options open to them.