

Roles and responsibilities within the supervisory team

[Supervisory team overview](#)

[Responsibilities of the principal supervisor](#)

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The following descriptions are taken from the [Code of practice for research degree students and supervisors](#)

- All supervisors and advisors should ensure that they behave politely and considerately towards students at all times. In particular supervisors and advisors should avoid the following types of behaviours:
 - abuse of power or authority
 - verbal, written and/or physical intimidation such as threats or derisory remarks
 - persistent unjustified criticism
 - public humiliation
 - the setting of impossible deadlines or intolerable workload burdens
 - isolation and exclusions from team meetings and work and social events
 - deliberately withholding information or other resources an individual needs to do their job
 - removing, unnecessarily, areas of work from a person so reducing their job to tasks well below their skill and capabilities
 - refusal to allow taking of reasonable holiday entitlement notified in advance
- The supervisory team must clarify for the student at the start of the programme if there are any changes to the allocation of responsibilities of members of the supervisory team. In such cases where an advisor is required, the supervisory team will clarify for the student at the start the programme what the responsibilities of the advisor will be in relation to other members of the supervisory team, in particular the principal supervisor.

Responsibilities of the principal supervisor

- The principal supervisor bears the major responsibility for providing advice and support to the student on the conduct of their work. However, the independent research will normally be carried out by the student alone. The supervisor is an important resource and is there to offer guidance, ask relevant questions and suggest lines of enquiry but not to provide answers to major research questions.
- The principal supervisor should be approachable and available for consultation at reasonable times. The success of a student's research depends to a large extent on the help and guidance provided by the supervisor. The University encourages students and supervisors to maintain close contact, particularly in the early stages of the work, in order to avoid difficulties.
- A schedule of supervisory meetings and work should be agreed with the principal supervisor and, where necessary, other members of the supervisory team in advance (e.g. at the start of the academic year).
- The principal supervisor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - a) agreeing with the student a suitable research topic that can be completed within time and at an appropriate level, and checking that appropriate resources are available
 - b) advising on techniques, literature and methods, and encouraging familiarity with developments in the subject
 - c) ensuring that any necessary internal administrative and other procedures are adhered to (e.g. annual reviews)

- d) with the student, advising on and agreeing a schedule of meetings, based on a minimum (for fulltime students) of one meeting per month in the first year and, on average, one meeting every six weeks throughout subsequent years (and a pro-rata equivalent for part-time students); for laboratory-based projects, students can expect more regular contact, with substantive discussion meetings often on a weekly basis for full-time students (or fortnightly for part-time students); only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. fieldwork or the student working abroad) will communication by e-mail or telephone be an acceptable substitute for face-to-face meetings
- e) lodging notes and dates of each substantive supervisory meeting (as agreed with the student) centrally in their school (this would normally be with the annual review notes)
- f) by the end of the first term, agreeing with the student a broad timetable of work and objectives to be met in the first year; these must be written down and sent to the School Director of PGR Education for approval and filing
- g) agreeing with the student a written statement of research and skills development needs at the start of the programme (by completing a Training Needs Analysis Tool⁸) and monitoring and updating the fulfilment of these needs through supervisions, annual reviews and at the upgrade meeting
- h) arranging appropriate introductions to the school and where appropriate the departmental and/or school research environment
- i) promoting awareness of ethical, legal and professional issues relevant to the conduct and presentation of research, including plagiarism
- j) requesting written work according to an agreed schedule and returning such work with constructive feedback within a reasonable time
- k) making students aware of the procedures for annual review and upgrade from MPhil to PhD and arranging reviews of student progress; ensuring that the student is fully aware of the progress of the work in relation to the expected standard and the agreed programme; writing to students to make them aware if progress is inadequate, offering support and advising them how to rectify the situation; making an annual written report to the School Director of PGR Education
- l) offering support to students with their personal development planning by encouraging them to attend research skills training courses and conferences and, where appropriate, facilitating the presentation of papers; providing opportunities for the student to present work to appropriate seminars; advising on making grant and job applications; giving guidance on identifying learning, achievement and employment goals
- m) completing documentation for Research Councils and other funding bodies, where required
- n) ensuring that adequate supervision is maintained where they may no longer be able to fulfil the responsibilities of the role (e.g. where the supervisor is leaving the employment of the University or undertaking a period of sabbatical) and consulting the School Director of PGR Education and/or Head of School as necessary
- o) submitting reports on student progress to the School Director of PGR Education, jointly agreed and signed by the second supervisor. Exceptionally, the principal and the second supervisors may decide to submit separate reports
- p) co-ordinating and advising on the submission of examination entry forms, the nomination of examiners, and arrangements for the viva voce examination; supervisors may attend the viva voce examinations of their students, provided the student has no objections to this
- q) offering to meet with students after the release of the final examination report to provide advice and guidance on the examiners' requirements and how these could be addressed. Where minor amendments or re-presentation of the thesis in a revised form are required, supervisors should make themselves available for further support and consultation at times to be agreed between student and supervisor, at a minimum frequency of one meeting every two months
- r) making students aware of the services offered by Student Advisory and Wellbeing and the Students' Union for students with personal difficulties
- s) exercising their duty of care towards students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties in line with advice from the Disability and Neurodiversity Services (D&N)
- t) alerting students to the various courses and types of support offered by the University as part of the research skills training programme

- u) reporting to the University any students who hold a Tier 4 (general) / Student Route visa and who have failed to meet the attendance and/or engagement requirements set out by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

If the principal supervisor on sabbatical / leaves the University:

- Members of University staff assigned as principal or second supervisors will have continuing responsibility for supervision throughout any period of sabbatical. Where they may be unable to continue to act as principal or second supervisor (e.g. for reasons of overseas research fieldwork), they will be responsible for working with the School Director of PGR Education to make alternative arrangements as necessary.
- Where the principal supervisor is due to leave the University, or will be unable to supervise the student for a protracted period (e.g. period of maternity leave), a meeting will be held beforehand to agree future supervision arrangements. The meeting will be arranged by the principal supervisor, or the School Director of PGR Education, and will include the student, the principal supervisor, the second supervisor/advisor, the School Director of PGR Education and any staff who it is proposed will be involved in the future supervision arrangements.
- A principal supervisor who leaves the employment of the University may continue to be involved as the student's second supervisor, provided the School appoints, at the earliest opportunity, an appropriately qualified replacement principal supervisor who is a member of the University's academic staff and will take responsibility for ensuring that the student is supervised and supported in line with the requirements of the University's Research Degree Regulations and this Code. In such cases, the student will also still have an additional supervisor and / or advisor. Should both the principal and second supervisor leave the University's employment within a short period of each other, and alternative supervision arrangements cannot be made from within University, then the Head of School may agree to an external appointment.

Responsibilities of the second supervisor

- Where departmental staff expertise and availability allow, a second supervisor will be appointed (in line with funding body and/or Research Council policy) whose responsibilities are normally to:
 - a) have reasonable familiarity with some aspect of the work and progress of the student so that they are able to advise and support the student as appropriate, both academically and pastorally
 - b) read the student's work and provide informed (but not necessarily detailed) feedback
 - c) maintain contact with the student throughout the period of their studies by meeting with them at a minimum frequency of three times each academic year
 - d) participate in annual reviews and any other periodic reviews of the student's progress and in the upgrade from MPhil to PhD as required
 - e) provide additional pastoral support and advice to the student as necessary
 - f) where appropriate and agreed, contribute to the discussion of the planning of research and any associated training, timetable and objectives in consultation with the principal supervisor.

Responsibilities of the advisor

- The advisor is not expected to have expertise in the student's research area or to offer guidance on academic work and has an essentially pastoral role. The advisor's responsibilities are normally to:
 - a) maintain contact with the student throughout the period of their studies by meeting with them at a minimum frequency of three times each academic year to monitor progress and offer pastoral support as necessary
 - b) participate in annual reviews and any other periodic reviews of the student's progress and in the upgrade from MPhil to PhD as required.