

Supervisory team overview

The following information is based on the information in the [Code of practice for research degree students and supervisors](#)

Key roles

- Each student is allocated a supervisory team, which will include as a minimum two members: a principal (first) supervisor and either a second supervisor or an advisor.
- [Find out about the responsibilities for each role](#)
- The principal supervisor will normally be a non-probationary, doctorate-holding and research-active member of the academic staff of the University. The programme that the student is registered on reflects the department of the principal supervisor.
- The second supervisor or advisor will normally be an established or probationary, doctorate-holding and member of the academic staff of the University with an active research profile, an Honorary Research Fellow, Emerita/Emeritus or Visiting Professor or may be external to the University.
- Examples of situations where advisors should be appointed:
 - For pastoral support.
 - An advisor may also be appointed as an additional member of the supervisory team where departmental practice and/or gender considerations require.
 - Where the student's principal supervisor is of the opposite gender and the student has expressed a wish to have a member of their supervisory team of the same gender, this should be accommodated in appointing the second supervisor/advisor.
- Staff with no prior experience of supervising a research degree student to completion may act as principal supervisor or second supervisor but in each such case they will have an experienced senior colleague as the second member of the supervisory team.
- There may be cases where, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the research and/or the subject-specific expertise required (or exceptionally for pastoral reasons), there is a need to appoint a third or fourth member of the supervisory team. This will be a third supervisor if the individual is involved with the research and an advisor if they have a pastoral role.

Supervision from outside the University

- Both principal and second supervisors/advisors, regardless of tenure, should normally be employed by the University. In cases of scarce expertise, where an external funding body requires it or where a student's research is considered to be at a stage where a change of supervisor may compromise their progress, the second supervisor may be external to the University. Cases of scarce expertise within University may include circumstances where there is a lack of technical and academic expertise in a particular research area or a lack of expertise in a particular methodology or theoretical perspective.
- Normally, supervision exclusively by persons from outside the University will not be permitted.
- Requests for the appointment of an external person to act as a principal supervisor, second supervisor or advisor must normally be made to the Head of School, who will be responsible for the approval of any such requests.
- The appointment process for external supervisors is dealt with by HR and the HR process within your academic School. [Find out more](#).

Percentage weighting within a supervisory team

- Where there is more than one supervisor, a percentage weighting needs to be allocated to each supervisor.
- The percentage split should reflect the relative amount of time and responsibility each supervisor is allocating to the student.
- [Find out how the percentage weighting data is used](#)

Recording the membership of a supervisory team

- All new postgraduate researchers are required to complete a [Supervisory team arrangement form](#) so that the Doctoral School can record the details on Banner. These details can be viewed on the Student Dashboard.
- The supervisory team roles are:
 - Principal supervisor – the postgraduate researcher belongs to the department of the principal supervisor
 - Second supervisor – please indicate if they are external to Royal Holloway
 - Advisor
- If, for any reason, the student or the principal supervisor believes that a change in the supervisory team is necessary, this must be agreed by all parties and the School Director of PGR Education. A written record of the agreed arrangements, with the student's signature of consent, must be circulated to all those involved and placed on file in the school and in the Doctoral School. [Further details here.](#)

Dealing with problems within the supervisory relationship

- Where difficulties in the supervisory relationship arise, students are advised to discuss these concerns informally with the supervisor(s) or advisor in the first instance. The University would expect students to take reasonable steps to resolve such problems or difficulties with their supervisor(s) and/or department before referring the matter on.
- Where it is not possible or practicable to discuss the matter with the supervisor/advisor or to resolve the difficulties through such a discussion, the matter may then be referred on to the Department PGR Lead in the first instance. If the difficulties cannot be resolved by the Department PGR Lead, the matter may then be referred to the School Director of PGR Education. Where the School Director of PGR Education is also the supervisor/advisor, the matter may be referred on to the Head of School.
- In the event that the supervisory problems or difficulties are of such a nature that they could not reasonably be resolved through discussion with the supervisor(s), Department PGR Lead, School Director of PGR Education and/or Head of School or department, the matter may be referred to the Dean of the Doctoral School.
- In circumstances where the supervisory relationship has broken down and the School is unable to allocate a suitable replacement principal supervisor from within the University, a replacement principal supervisor who is external to the University may be appointed. In such circumstances, the second supervisor/advisor should normally be a member of University staff from outside the student's home department.