

# **Supervision policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees**

**November 2016**

**Research Degrees and Researcher Development  
Directorate of Research and Business Engagement**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The nature of different disciplines means that supervisory practice will inevitably take a variety of forms in some of its details across the University. Supervision in laboratory based subjects, for example, requires different practices from supervision in other areas; and even in the same School the supervision of a doctorate in musical composition, for example, will operate differently from the supervision of a doctorate in medieval history. Nonetheless, there are essential responsibilities of doctoral supervision that must be adhered to across the University. These responsibilities, including those of the student, are spelt out in the sections that follow.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'postgraduate research degrees' refers to all doctoral, Master of Philosophy (MPhil), Master of Surgery (ChM) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) degrees.

## **2. SUPERVISORY TEAMS**

The aim of the supervisory team is to ensure that the student's requirements and issues are addressed by providing support, advice and guidance throughout their research degree. As a minimum, each research student will have a main supervisor. The main supervisor will normally be part of a supervisory team consisting of one or more additional academic colleagues or clinical/industrial partners, who act as co-supervisor(s) and an advisor providing pastoral support. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is more appropriate to appoint only one main supervisor, a case must be put forward to the Faculty Associate Dean to request permission for sole supervision.

Supervisors will be expected to keep up to date with the progress of the research and to advise the student on academic and other pastoral matters. The student should have an advisor as part of the supervisory team to provide general pastoral advice and support. Normally, a member of staff will first engage in doctoral supervision as a co-supervisor, with an experienced member of staff included as part of the supervisory team. After an appropriate period of involvement as a member of a supervisory team (normally completion of one student), a member of staff will have gained experience of the supervisory process through being part of the team and will then be expected to take on a main supervisory role. When allocating the supervisory team, the PGR load for each individual academic member of staff should be considered by the Head of School. Practice will vary across the University dependent upon a discipline's capacity to attract research students but a normal PGR load for a member of staff is to have one new student each year.

Supervisors should meet with the student at periods throughout the degree, including where appropriate and practicable with the external or industrial supervisors. The meetings should be held once or more per year in addition to the regular meetings between the student and the main supervisor.

### **2.1. Main Supervisor**

The main supervisor takes full responsibility for the overall management and direction of the student's research degree in addition to administrative issues relating to the student's registration, attendance, and progress. Where two members of staff are both actively involved in supervising a research candidate this requirement still stands and whilst recognising the equal academic contributions of the staff concerned it is essential for one of the supervisors to be appointed main supervisor.

### **2.2. Co-Supervisor**

The co-supervisor will normally be appointed to contribute their specific expertise in assisting the main supervisor throughout the development of the student's research degree and may act as a supervisor of sections of work in progress in consultation with the main supervisor. The co-supervisor may be required to offer specialist advice to complement the main supervisor's expertise or to provide

continuity of supervision when the main supervisor is absent from the University in addition to providing the student with a second opinion on research matters.

The balance of responsibility for the student's day-to-day supervision should be negotiated between members of the supervisory team, in consultation with the student, as the research progresses.

### **2.3. External / Collaborating Supervisor**

Where a formal collaborative research degree arrangement has been approved between the University of Manchester and an external institution, supervisors must be appointed at both institutions. The Main Supervisor should be an employee of the University of Manchester or be a member of an NHS Trust with an honorary contract with the University of Manchester. The collaborating supervisor is expected to have comparable research experience and should fulfill the same selection criteria that are applied to the appointment of supervisors at the University of Manchester (See section 3 below for appointment of supervisors and section 5 for supervision for collaborative research degrees). The collaborating supervisor should take responsibility for the day-to-day supervision of the research student and their research degree whilst they are in attendance at the external organisation.

In the absence of any formal collaborative agreement or registration of the student at the University of Manchester, any request from an external organisation for University of Manchester staff involvement in a supervisory capacity may only be undertaken on a consultative basis. The academic member of staff at the University of Manchester should liaise with their Head of School to discuss the option of working on a consultative basis, and contact the University's contracts office for support in formulating a formal consultancy agreement.

### **2.4. Advisor**

The advisor should be included as part of the supervisory team and their main role is to provide pastoral support to the student and to monitor their progress, providing advice accordingly. If the student has any difficulties that he/she would prefer to discuss with someone other than their supervisor, they can approach their advisor in the first instance. The advisor may have some experience in the student's research area, and if so can offer academic input, but this is not a requirement of the role and they do not have formal responsibility for the project.

### **2.5. Industrial Supervisor**

In certain areas of the University it may be necessary to appoint an industrial supervisor or external professional doctorate supervisor to cover industrial, vocational or clinical aspects of the research degree, or where students are pursuing research which involves collaboration with an external body. The duties of an industrial supervisor are complementary to those of the internal University of Manchester supervisor and should focus on providing critical commentary on planned research and the programme of work completed. The industrial supervisor

may also enable access to equipment or data resources otherwise inaccessible to the student. The industrial supervisor should, however, only be appointed if the arrangement is covered by a formal agreement.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF SUPERVISORS**

#### **3.1. Criteria for the selection of the supervisory team**

The University of Manchester considers the supervisory process to play a vital role in the quality of education for its research students. Consequently, the University places a high priority on ensuring that the supervisory team is able to carry out its role effectively and as such, all staff under consideration for appointment as part of a supervisory team must fulfil the following criteria.

- a.** Main supervisors must have gained a doctoral degree, or have equivalent experience of research, and be practising researchers.
- b.** Members of staff appointed as a main supervisor or co-supervisor should be full-time or part-time employees of the University, except where the member of staff is on an honorary contract and a member of an NHS Trust. Any member of staff who is still under probation, who is currently registered for a higher degree of any University, a visiting professor, a visiting fellow, a retired member of University staff, practising researchers on an Academic Teaching or an Emeritus professor will not be appointed as main supervisor but may be appointed as another member of the supervisory team. Where staff employed on an Academic Teaching contract are undertaking pedagogic research and have an established track record in their field evidenced by publications, grants or external funding and a supportive research environment, a case for exceptional appointment as main supervisor may be put forward for consideration and approval to the relevant Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research.
- c.** The co-supervisor should ideally be able to deputise for the main supervisor if at any point the main supervisor is not available. However, where the selected co-supervisor does not meet the criteria for being nominated as a main supervisor, and the main supervisor is no longer available, they must not become main supervisor by default.
- d.** A member of staff should normally have at least three years' experience of university teaching or research and have an academic / clinical contract to be appointed as a student's main supervisor.
- e.** Supervision should be provided by staff who themselves undertake research and have a research interest closely related to that of the student's proposed research degree.
- f.** Any member of staff acting for the first time as a supervisor will not normally be appointed as main supervisor but may be appointed as a member of the supervisory team. When a new member of staff is appointed at the University of Manchester as a co-supervisor the main supervisor should have appropriate supervisory experience up to and including a student's submission and assessment

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of a thesis. Due attention should be given to the relative experience of the main supervisor and co-supervisor to ensure within the supervisory team there is sufficient experience to offer support. In certain circumstances, there may be grounds to appoint a member of staff acting for the first time as a main supervisor, but it is essential that under these circumstances the co-supervisor has significant experience of the supervisory process at the University of Manchester. In this circumstance, a case must be presented to the Faculty Graduate Office for the appointment to be approved.

- g.** Where a collaborative agreement is in place with an external organisation, the collaborating supervisor is expected to have comparable research experience as the University of Manchester supervisor and should fulfill the same selection criteria that are applied to the appointment of supervisors at the University of Manchester.
- h.** The main supervisor should normally be on a contract of employment with the University of Manchester or on an honorary contract and a member of an NHS Trust. Any contract should exceed the registration period of the student, and consideration should be given when appointing a supervisory team to the length of each individual's contract to ensure the student will be supported throughout their programme. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is more appropriate to appoint a supervisor whose contract does not exceed the registration period of the student, a case must be put forward to the Faculty Associate Dean to request permission.
- i.** The advisor should be a full member of academic staff.

### **3.2. Procedure for the appointment of supervisors**

The Head of School is ultimately responsible for overseeing the appointment of supervisors for each research student registered on research degrees within that School, but may delegate the responsibility to the head of graduate activities within the School. The following information provides guidance procedures for appointment of members of the supervisory team.

- a.** The student shall normally be given the opportunity of discussing the selection of supervisors after meeting the prospective supervisor(s) and seeing the facilities available. However, due to potential distances involved and funding issues, in some cases allocation of supervisor(s) may be agreed by correspondence. The student and supervisors should address from the initial meetings / contact any issues which may arise from the allocation and plan accordingly to address potential difficulties. In some circumstances, students may not be able to work with their first choice member of staff.
- b.** The main supervisor for postgraduate research students is normally assigned to students by the appropriate School at the time an offer of admission is made.
- c.** At the time of appointment, all supervisors should be aware of the rules governing candidature and the standards acceptable for the research degree. The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place for new supervisors to be introduced to the content of the code of practice for research degrees either by attending a development course or by School-arranged procedures.
- d.** Main supervisors should expect to be available for the anticipated duration of the research student's degree. The University/School, however, cannot guarantee continuity with a particular supervisor throughout the full duration of any postgraduate degree.
- e.** The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that no member of staff supervises more research students than his or her experience and commitments justify. Practice will vary across the University, dependent on a discipline's capacity to attract research students, but a normal PGR load for a staff member is to have one new student each year and this must be taken into consideration when the supervisory team is appointed. In cases where a supervisor has primary responsibility for a large number of research students, the Head of School must take care to ensure that such supervision does not have a detrimental effect on the progress of the research student or the overall workload of the supervisor.
- f.** All newly-appointed members of staff with responsibility for supervision, and existing members of staff that take on their first supervisory role, are required to attend the University and/or Faculty programme of development for new supervisors. Experienced supervisors are expected to undertake continuing professional development in relation to their supervisory role on a regular basis.
- g.** Appointment as main supervisor will cease if the appointee ceases to hold an academic / clinical contract at the University. If the main supervisor retires or becomes an honorary member of staff during the period of a student's doctoral degree, they can, however, continue to undertake a supervisory role as co-



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supervisor within the supervisory team, but a new main supervisor should be appointed.

#### **4. SUPERVISION RESPONSIBILITIES**

The University Ordinances define a doctoral degree in the following way:

“The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is awarded by the University in recognition of the successful completion of a period of supervised research and training, the results of which show convincing evidence of the capacity of the candidate to pursue research and scholarship and make an original contribution and substantial addition to knowledge. The results of this research shall then be embodied in a thesis or other appropriate form and must contain material of a standard appropriate for peer-reviewed publication.”

The following supervision responsibilities apply to all research degrees at the University, not just the PhD.

There are important reasons why all staff engaged in supervision and their students should know and adhere to their supervision responsibilities. The University has the ambition of being a leader in graduate education, with best practice in all aspects of postgraduate research. The responsibilities are born out of extensive experience of good and bad supervision across the University, and are designed to offer a high quality experience to our students. Conversely, when a supervisor/student relationship breaks down, or when a student fails, the reasons can often be traced back to failure to perform the duties attached to these responsibilities properly by members of staff and/or students. The University’s appeal procedure enables students to appeal on the grounds of inadequate supervision. In addition, the University is required to comply with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education’s Quality Code for the assurance of academic quality in postgraduate research, as a condition of receiving funding for postgraduate research. In meeting the responsibilities set out here we will meet and exceed QAA requirements. The QAA code can be found at:<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B11.aspx>.

All staff members involved in doctoral supervision, as a member of a supervisory team, should ensure that they are familiar with all of the sections that follow so that all staff involved with a research degree student clearly understand their responsibilities. All students should be made aware of them at the beginning of their degree and should be aware of their responsibilities which are listed below.

Where supervisors are not clear about their roles and responsibilities, they should, in the first place, consult the member of staff responsible for research and/or graduate education in their School. If this is not satisfactory, they may consult the Associate Dean for Graduate Education (or equivalent) in their Faculty or the University’s Associate Vice-President for Graduate Education.

As part of the University's drive towards excellence in postgraduate research, all main supervisors are required to complete the eProg expectations form with their students at the start of the programme and regularly throughout the student's programme thereafter. Completing the expectations form aims to establish realistic commitments and responsibilities in the student/supervisory team relationship. It supports a shared understanding of policies and regulations referring to research study including what the student can expect as a PhD student within the local context of the research group or discipline area where they will undertake their research.

The Expectations form is set out in as helpful a way as possible so that a supervisor can make comments on such matters as frequency of meetings and feedback on written material; and to clarify to the student his or her responsibilities. The Expectations form is made available to all members of the student's supervisory team and to the student's advisor.

#### **4.1. Responsibilities of the Head of School**

- a.** To ensure the progress of students and the adequacy of supervisory arrangements, methodological induction, availability of resources and nomination of examiners taking into account the student's mode of study.
- b.** To ensure supervisors are meeting their responsibilities around recording and monitoring progress of the student in the University's progression monitoring system.
- c.** To provide information about the procedures by which a student may make representations to the advisor if the student feels that the work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside of his/her control. It is important to make clear that, if the student feels that an effective working relationship is not being established with the supervisor, or that it has broken down, these procedures provide a means whereby the possibility of changing the supervisor can be discussed. It is necessary that the procedures should operate expeditiously to avoid loss of time in regard to research or its funding. The student should be informed that they have a right to make representations to the Head of School and then to the Faculty Associate Dean for Graduate Education if the difficulty is not adequately resolved by the advisor.
- d.** To ensure appropriate provision for the continuation of supervision is sought wherever possible when supervisors leave employment of the University, or are on formal leave of absence for a significant period of time.
- e.** To ensure that arrangements are made for students to have an opportunity to comment on any aspect of their research degree, in the absence of the supervisor, as part of the annual review process.
- f.** To provide objective support for supervisors where serious concerns regarding a student's ability or application to a research degree have been identified.

- g.** To provide an alternative route for research students who require advice on difficulties relating to the supervisory process.
- h.** To consider the academic load of staff when supervisory teams are appointed.
- i.** To consider proposals put forward by the supervisor for the appointment of internal and external examiners or delegate this responsibility to the PGR Director within the School.

#### **4.2. Responsibilities of the Main Supervisor**

- a.** Provide guidance about the nature of the research and the standard expected, the planning of the research degree, literature and sources, attendance at taught courses, where appropriate and about requisite techniques (including arranging for instruction where necessary).
- b.** Maintain contact with the student through regular meetings. The frequency of meetings will be determined by the nature of the research that is undertaken and the stage of development of the student's research but a normal expectation would be for such meetings to take place every fortnight for full-time students. All disciplines should, however, expect students to meet with their supervisors at least on a monthly basis. In all cases a provisional schedule of supervisory meetings will be agreed with the student in advance. The meeting schedule for part time students should be agreed at the beginning of the degree, but students registered on a part time basis would normally be expected to meet with their supervisor once a month. Where students are studying on split-site research degrees, some contact and communication may take the format of email, phone, skype and video conferencing.
- c.** Be accessible to the student at other appropriate times for advice and respond to difficulties raised by the student by whatever means is most suitable given the student's location and mode of study.
- d.** Record and monitor progress of the student in the University's progression monitoring system and provide detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that it may be completed within the required time.
- e.** Request written work or reports, as appropriate, and return it in reasonable time with constructive feedback. Students should give the supervisor due warning and adequate time for reading any drafts and the supervisor and student should agree during initial meetings a reasonable timeframe for provision of feedback. In relation to the final thesis, the supervisor's opinion is only advisory and the student has the right to decide when to submit and if to follow the advice of the supervisor.
- f.** Encourage the student to present his or her work to staff and other researchers, partly as preparation for the oral examination of the student at the end of the degree, and partly to introduce the student to the culture of the dissemination of research.

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- g.** Ensure that the student is made aware when progress is not satisfactory and give advice and guidance on how to improve it.
- h.** Ensure that the student is aware of the health and safety regulations and academic rules, regulations and codes of practice of the University, and of the need to exercise probity and conduct in his or her research according to ethical principles, and of the implications of research misconduct and plagiarism.
- i.** Help the student identify his or her specific training needs, both in relation to research skills and to the development of other transferable skills; inform the student of the means to develop these skills; and monitor the student's progress in these areas.
- j.** Help the student interact with other researchers by making him or her aware of other research work in the School and University, and by encouraging attendance at conferences. Support the student in seeking funding. Where appropriate, supervisors should advise on the submission of conference papers and articles to refereed journals. Supervisors should obtain the agreement of the student for any publication of work contained in the thesis and the inclusion of the student as co-author.
- k.** Ensure that the student produces a progress report normally every six months throughout their degree, to which the supervisor should add comments on progress. The process of submitting the report should meet the requirements set out in the Policy on the Progress and Review of Postgraduate Research Students. These comments should be signed by the student to confirm that they have been seen before the report is submitted by the main supervisor to the appropriate supervisory body, according to Faculty procedures.
- l.** Keep other members of the supervisory team apprised of the student's progress.
- m.** Recommend examiners for the student's thesis, after discussion with the student, to ensure that the proposed examiners have not had, or do not continue to have, a significant input into the project, a significant personal, financial or professional relationship with the student, or that there is no other good reason to doubt the suitability of the recommendation as set out in the Examination of Doctoral Degrees Policy.
- n.** Ensure the student is aware of institutional-level sources of advice, including careers guidance, health and safety legislation, and equal opportunities policy.
- o.** Provide effective pastoral support and refer students to other appropriate areas of support including student advisors and others within the student's academic community.
- p.** Help the student prepare for the oral examination of the thesis (or equivalent). Normally, this is done by the organisation of a mock viva in years two and three of the degree. Supervisors cannot, however, be involved in the examination of the final thesis.
- q.** Ensure, where required, that his/her duties are fulfilled with regard to any formal requirements from external bodies or agencies in relation to the submission of reports, training etc.

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- r. Ensure that appropriate agreement has been obtained with all parties, including external sponsors, in relation to the communication of research outputs.
- s. Ensure they have formal arrangements in place to prepare and initiate a plan of research and maintain contact with those research students working away from the University, such as part-time or distance learning students.
- t. All newly appointed members of staff with responsibilities for supervision are required to attend the University's programme of development for new supervisors and any training requirements specified by the Faculty/School. Existing members of staff with supervisory experience are required to attend professional development sessions as provided by the Faculty and/or School.
- u. Be aware of the University's Code of Practice for research degrees.
- v. Ensure that examiners are nominated within the deadlines stipulated in the [Nomination of Examiners and Independent Chairs for Postgraduate Research Degree Examinations Policy](#) so that the examination can go ahead as soon as possible after submission of the thesis.

In addition to these duties, there are matters that require particular consideration by all members of a supervisory team:

- The University regards the satisfactory completion of a student's PGR degree within the allotted time as a matter of extreme importance. There are four reasons for this:
  - the need to preserve equity between students gaining similar awards;
  - the harm that can be done to students' career development by their having protracted research degrees;
  - research council and funding body requirements for high institutional completion rates;
  - the potential for the institution to lose postgraduate funding in the future.

It is important, therefore, that the research degree is realistically defined from the beginning as one that will meet the requirements within the required time. Normally, for doctoral degrees these periods are three to four years for full-time students and six to seven years for part-time students. Regulations for other research degrees include information on normal degree duration.

- Supervisors should be aware that all PGR students have different needs and concerns from the undergraduate student body. In particular, they should be sensitive to the needs and requirements of overseas students. It is highly desirable that a significant proportion of our PGR student population comes from overseas, in keeping with the University's aim to be known internationally as a leader in research across all of its disciplines. Such students may well have a range of needs that require careful support. Supervisors should endeavour to be responsive to overseas students' needs and should regard an active awareness of

the support that is available across the University, and the means of accessing this support, as an essential element in their supervision.

- Supervisors should be aware of the needs of students with a disability and should have an active awareness of the support available to the student and the means of accessing this support.
- Supervisors need to ensure that they have the appropriate expertise for their role, and continue to have it, by engaging in continuing professional development either through staff training offered at this University (normally via the Faculty and/or School) or wider training provision external to the institution. Where a member of a supervisory team has little or no previous, supervisory experience, other members of the team should understand their role in the development of this member's supervisory skills.
- Supervisors are expected to take into consideration the differing commitments (domestic responsibilities, paid employment etc) of part-time students which will affect time schedules and access to facilities. Every effort should be made to engage part-time students with the full-time cohort, the research group, School and the University either face to face or through information and communication technology.

#### **4.3. Responsibilities of the Student**

Students are required to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development throughout the degree. Their main supervisor is their primary point of contact for consultation on all matters, academic, professional and personal; but they should also be aware of the opportunity to consult other members of their supervisory team, as indicated in the responsibilities listed above and below.

In addition, research degree students will:

- a. Maintain regular contact with supervisors, according to the pattern of meetings agreed between the supervisor and the student. The frequency of meetings will be determined by the nature of the research that is undertaken and the stage of development of the student's research, but a normal expectation would be for such meetings to take place every fortnight.
- b. Prepare adequately for meetings with supervisors.
- c. Record and monitor progress in the University's progression monitoring systems and provide and keep to timetables and deadlines for the planning and submission of work, and generally maintain satisfactory progress with the research degree. Develop, in consultation with the supervisor, an agreed schedule for progressing and submitting the thesis in a timely manner.
- d. Make supervisors aware of any specific needs and of any circumstances likely to affect their work, and take the initiative in raising issues or difficulties as soon as they arise, particularly in relation to targets relating to progress and achievements.

- e. Attend and participate fully in any training and development opportunities, research-related and other, that have been identified when agreeing their development needs with their supervisors.
- f. Be familiar with relevant University regulations and policies.
- g. Ensure that any reports and the final thesis presented to the supervisor are written in accordance with requirements relating to the correct use of language and grammar and the presentation of tables, references, figures etc.
- h. Decide when the final thesis should be submitted, taking into account the opinion of the supervisor. A supervisor's agreement to submission does not indicate that the examiners will find the thesis acceptable for the award of the research degree.
- i. Accept ultimate responsibility for his/her own research activity.
- j. Prepare periodic progress reports on the research project as may be required by external agencies.
- k. Inform the supervisor of any communications from the sponsoring or other external body in relation to the research project.
- l. Maintain adequate records of the progress of the work and of the development of the project and their own skills using the University's progression monitoring system.
- m. Gain approval, in advance, from their supervisor if they wish to issue questionnaires and adhere to the [University Code of Good Research conduct](#). If a student wishes to use the University's address for this purpose, the text of any communication must be approved by the supervisor before it is sent.
- n. Make every effort to provide feedback on the supervisory experience, through completion of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) for postgraduate research students.
- o. Inform the supervisor of any paid or unpaid work they are carrying out or wish to carry out in addition to their full time study.
- p. Inform their supervisor of any intention to take holiday and discuss the timing of the intended holiday in relation to academic priorities.
- q. Have a joint meeting with all supervisors to discuss progress at least twice per year.
- r. Meet with the advisor at least once a year.

#### **4.4. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team**

Members of a supervisory team who are appointed as the co-supervisor, External / Collaborating Supervisor or Industrial supervisor are not expected to meet a student with the same frequency as the main supervisor, nor are they expected to



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read all of the student's work, but they should meet with the main supervisor and the student once or more per year and should review progress of the student on the University's progression monitoring system. They should be actively involved in the supervision by making themselves fully aware of the research plan that has been agreed between the student and the main supervisor and by reading some of the student's work. Their role, then, is to be available to the student for consultation and advice on academic matters relating to the degree, and to offer support and guidance on non-academic matters. In circumstances where the main supervisor is not able to continue supervising a student, the co-supervisor should ideally be able to deputise for the main supervisor. In addition, postdoctoral researchers within the supervisory team, working closely with a doctoral student, can fulfil a valuable day-to-day research guidance role. The advisor is expected to be available to the student to offer further support on non-academic matters.

In some academic groups, the role of supervisory teams for each student may be organised through PhD committees, with regular periodic meetings to monitor and advise on the student's development and progress.

Although members of the supervisory team may provide support and advice in the preparation of the final thesis, no members of the supervisory team who have had any academic input into the research can be appointed as internal examiner during the examination process.

### **4.5. Responsibilities of the Advisor**

The advisor is responsible for providing pastoral support to the student and, providing advice accordingly. The advisor should also be a point of contact for the student if there are any difficulties with the supervisor/student relationship. In some disciplines the advisor may have some variable academic input to the research, but they do not have responsibility for the student's research project.

## **5. SUPERVISION FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DEGREES**

The University of Manchester has a policy for split-site and Joint research degrees and specific reference should be made to this policy.

Supervision arrangements will need to be agreed for each new link or student, on an individual basis, but certain types of collaboration will normally require particular supervision arrangements.

Students registered on a split-site research degree must have a designated supervisor at both institutions and the main supervisor should be based at the University of Manchester. The institutional contractual agreement between the University and the partner organisation will include detailed information about the supervision arrangements, particularly in relation to managing the supervisory process when the student is away from the University.

For existing validated research degree arrangements, the main supervisor will normally be based at the partner organisation. The co-supervisor may either be from the partner organisation or the University of Manchester, and this will be agreed on a case by case basis, depending upon the qualifications and experience of the staff at the partner organisation. All supervisors for validated research degrees must be formally approved by the home Faculty or School postgraduate research degree committee, or equivalent, before they can become part of the supervisory team.

Supervisory practice for collaborative research degrees must meet all the requirements set out in this document. This should include a commitment to high quality supervisory practice for all students, initial staff development for all new supervisors and continuing development opportunities for established supervisors. This may be provided by the University or the partner organisation, as appropriate, but must meet University requirements. The formal agreement between the institution and the partner organisation should include details of how initial and continuing supervisor staff development will be provided.

## **6. ABSENCE OR CHANGE OF SUPERVISOR**

Schools cannot guarantee that students will be able to work with a particular supervisor when they start their programme or that they will have the same supervisor for the duration of their research degree, but will endeavour to ensure continuity and alternative provision wherever possible.

A change of supervisor may be requested by the student or supervisor through the Head of School or his/her nominee, although it should be borne in mind that there may be difficulties in finding a replacement supervisor with experience of the thesis research area. Funding bodies should also be notified when the main supervisor is changed.

If a situation has arisen whereby a supervisor is no longer in a position to continue with their supervision duties, for example, if a supervisor retires, transfers to another institution or is absent from the University for an extended period of time due to illness, research leave or other reasons, then the Head of School should discuss the options with the student and assess the most beneficial outcome for the student.

Where the period of absence is less than three months the co-supervisor should normally assume responsibility for the student until the main supervisor returns. Where the period of absence exceeds three months, it is essential in these circumstances that alternative arrangements are made in advance by the supervisory team, with the Head of School, to ensure continuity of supervision and that the student's interests are protected.

In all cases of research leave the Head of School should ensure that either the person on leave continues with their supervision duties or that every effort is made to arrange a replacement.

If the main supervisor retires or becomes an honorary member of staff during the period of a student's PhD degree, they can continue to undertake a supervisory role as co-supervisor within the supervisory team, but a new main supervisor must be appointed.

Where a supervisor has moved to another institution, they may be able to continue to supervise at a distance, with support from a co-supervisor at this University. Using supervisors external to the University in this way is not in general desirable, but in certain circumstances there may be valid reasons why it may be in the best interest of the student and University. These arrangements would normally only apply to students in their final year, or submission pending period. A fee must be paid to the external supervisor, up to a maximum of £1000, and a formal agreement between the University of Manchester and the supervisor must be put in place. Faculties should contact the University's contracts office for support in formulating a formal consultancy agreement. As a minimum the agreement must include the following and should be signed by the University and the external supervisor:

- An explicit statement that the new institution gives the academic concerned permission to finish their supervisory duties at the University of Manchester

- A statement that the supervisor must comply with the University of Manchester's supervision policy in order to ensure quality control over the standard of ongoing supervision
- The name of the member of staff at the University of Manchester who will act as co-supervisor and formally monitor the supervisory process at this institution as part of the supervisory team
- A statement which confirms that any funding bodies or sponsors have been informed of any change in supervisory circumstances
- The notice period should the supervisor decide for any reason that they can no longer continue to supervise the student

It may also be more appropriate in some circumstances, for the student to transfer to the supervisor's new institution.

Where there are early signs that the student / supervisor relationship has broken down, the advisor should be consulted initially and every attempt should be made to resolve the issues involved at School or Faculty level. The advisor should be able to advise the student and consult with the Head of School, and should be aware of the University's complaints and appeals policies should a solution not be found at School or Faculty level.

If the student / supervisor relationship breaks down and there is no possible resolution, the Head of School is responsible for identifying and allocating a new permanent supervisor with the appropriate academic background and supervisory experience in consultation with the supervisory team. Every effort should be made to find alternative provision for the student, but in exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to appoint a new supervisor and there may not be a successful outcome. In this circumstance the student should be made aware of this as soon as reasonably possible.

## **7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR SUPERVISORS**

The Staff Training and Development Unit at the University of Manchester is responsible for delivering the Supervisor Development programme for new staff and some staff development opportunities for staff that are experienced supervisors. Additional staff development opportunities for supervision may also be offered at Faculty and/or School level. All members of staff new to the supervisory process, who are involved in the supervisory team, are required to attend.

The staff development for new staff aims to provide new supervisors with information in relation to what is expected from them by the University, postgraduate students, funding organisations and sponsors. It covers information on the code of practice for research degrees in relation to regulatory and policy matters, in addition to responsibilities that supervisors are expected to fulfil. It also offers opportunities to reflect and discuss the supervisory process and the challenges it presents, and how best to support students in taking advantage of development opportunities such as skills training and career opportunities.

Further support can also be obtained through the supervisory team and the Faculty's online resources.

**Supervision Policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees  
November 2016**

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