

## Lead Supervisors

Lead supervisors have primary responsibility for providing guidance to research students in the choice of a suitable field for research or topic for a dissertation, bearing in mind that the research must be capable of completion within the period of study allocated to the degree. Supervisors should seek to encourage choice of a research topic as early as possible in the student's period of research.

Lead supervisors are responsible for providing guidance about the nature and techniques of research, about the standard expected for the degree, about the planning of the research programme, about literature and sources and about required attendance at taught classes, about the copyright implications of working on certain subject areas, in particular given the requirement for the electronic publication of theses, and about the embargoes of work where publication would have commercial, professional, legal or ethical consequences again in particular given the requirement for the electronic publication of theses.

### ***Supervisors must:-***

#### **1. Quality Assurance**

- 1.1 know the [regulations](#) governing higher degrees
- 1.2 attend training courses in supervision as appropriate
- 1.3 comply with the requirements of the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework, and School-specific procedures, in relation to the training, supervision and monitoring of research students
- 1.4 submit bi-annual Postgraduate Assessment Forms to the Head of School, and meet with the Head of School and research student where the student is deemed as "not satisfactory" with regard to progress
- 1.5 ensure that their workload is such as to allow adequate time to be given to each supervised student.
- 1.6 advise the Head of School of any lack of resources which may prevent the student from completing their study within the period of study
- 1.7 keep the Head of School informed about progress or potential problems
- 1.8 advise on extensions of study or suspension of study as appropriate

#### **2. On admission of the student**

- 2.1 arrange a meeting between the student and the supervisory team to take place as soon as possible after the student's arrival in Aberdeen
- 2.2 advise the student on the choice of research topic in the light of what is appropriate for the degree and the present state of knowledge, and outline the scope of the project at the initial supervisory meetings
- 2.3 advise on a topic which can be satisfactorily completed within the specified time and within the specified word limit
- 2.4 give guidance about planning the research programme, about literature and sources, and about requisite skills
- 2.5 advise the student on regulations governing research degrees and on the [review and progression procedures](#) in place and the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework
- 2.6 ensure that the research student has the opportunity to become acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and that they receive appropriate training and supervision when following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous

- 2.7 offer welfare support where required, and if necessary, advise that the student contact Student Advice & Support as appropriate
- 2.8 ensure that disabled students do not receive less favourable treatment and that relevant reasonable adjustments are made. These should be discussed with the University's Senior Disability Adviser
- 2.9 ensure that a student from overseas has the necessary linguistic and other skills to ensure profitable use of his or her time and experience, and take steps to assist those in need of support to obtain help from the appropriate University section

### **3. During the research degree programme**

#### **3.1 Support**

- 3.1.1 maintain regular contact through supervisory meetings, or by electronic means if the student is off-campus for any periods (what is expected is defined more closely by Schools in the light of the demands of the subject)
- 3.1.2 maintain reasonable accessibility so that advice may be offered at other times, and arrange an alternative point of contact when away for protracted periods
- 3.1.3 request written work on a regular basis, as appropriate
- 3.1.4 return such work with constructive criticism within a time period to be agreed with the student that does not impede the student's progress
- 3.1.5 work collaboratively with other supervisors when involved in a supervisory team
- 3.1.6 work collaboratively with advisers
- 3.1.7 agree notes of formal meetings with the student
- 3.1.8 give detailed advice about completion dates, and about pacing the work so that the whole thesis may be submitted within the scheduled period (it is expected that students will normally submit their thesis within their period of registration)
- 3.1.9 advise on other members of staff or experts in the field whom the student might consult
- 3.1.10 assist and give guidance for student to complete assessments as required by review and progression procedures
- 3.1.11 encourage and arrange, as appropriate, for the student to present papers to graduate seminars, staff seminars and conferences
- 3.1.12 ensure that appropriate steps are taken to find alternative arrangements should other members of the supervisory team, ie assistant supervisors or advisers, need to be replaced
- 3.1.13 ensuring that undocumented absences are reported in accordance with monitoring procedures

#### **3.2 Ethical Issues**

- 3.2.1 Explain best research practice and ethical considerations as early as possible in the student's studies
- 3.2.2 advise on ethical issues relating to the conduct of the research (including how to obtain the approval of relevant ethics committees if appropriate)
- 3.2.3 advise on honest and fair dealing with the work of others quoted or paraphrased in the written work of the student
- 3.2.4 consult with the student on the appropriate recognition of the student's contribution to research publications, taking into account the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights

**3.3 Assessing**

- 3.3.1 ensure that the student has adequate opportunities to become aware of the standards required, and the standards being attained
- 3.3.2 advise on whether and when a student should request a transfer to a higher degree (eg MSc to PhD)
- 3.3.3 advise whenever progress or standards of work are below what are generally expected and the implications of unsatisfactory progress (eg transfer to a lower degree or termination of studies) as soon as the issue arises

**3.4 Skills training**

- 3.4.1 undertake a skills audit with their student at the beginning of their programme of study, and annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine the student's research, transferable and generic skills requirements
- 3.4.2 determine what training in research methods and skills and further education in the subject are required by the student, and seek approval from the Head of School/Discipline for proposals to obtain the necessary training and support, as part of Personal Development Planning
- 3.4.3 ensure that the student has access to the required skills training and development opportunities and agree with the student a programme of skills training

**4. Nearing completion**

- 4.1 advise on career and professional development
- 4.2 discuss CV-writing and job applications, and direct the student to skills training courses and the Careers & Appointments Service
- 4.3 try to ensure by advice and encouragement that the thesis is submitted within the specified time and within the specified word limit
- 4.4 receive and comment on the final draft of the thesis
- 4.5 offer advice and training as required for the oral examination
- 4.6 submit nominations for the internal and external examiners to the Head of School
- 4.7 assist research students throughout their period of supervised research and for up to twelve months thereafter during the writing up of the thesis (or to completion if sooner)
- 4.8 assist student appropriately during the period of corrections following the student's viva, both in the case of minor corrections or a full resubmission.

**Co-Supervisors**

Assistant supervisors have an equal role and responsibility to the lead supervisor with respect to supervision of the student's work; thus, a co-supervisor should participate in much of the responsibilities outlined for lead supervisors above. However, it is normally the principal supervisor's task to deal with the administrative aspects of supervision, such as ensuring that monitoring forms are completed. One of the main responsibilities of the assistant supervisor is to act as temporary lead supervisor in the event of the departure or absence, or long-term illness of the lead supervisor, or in the event of a breakdown in supervisor relationship between the lead supervisor and the student. Where appropriate, and with agreement between supervisors, assistant supervisors may share administrative duties of the lead supervisor.

Assistant supervisors should be present at the early meetings in which the initial scope of the project is established and will be expected to review and provide feedback on assessment

submitted by the student for monitoring or progression purposes throughout the student's study. Assistant supervisors should normally be present at supervisory meetings with the student, but, in the event that they are unable to attend in person, they must keep informed of the outcome of meetings.

### **Advisers**

Advisers will not normally have supervisory input into a student's research and need not be a subject-specialist in the area that the student is researching. The primary function of an adviser is to fulfil the role of someone that the student can approach for pastoral support and assist in helping the student to contact the appropriate student support service if required. An adviser provides another point of contact other than the supervisor who the student can approach to discuss any concerns or seek advice on a confidential basis, in particular, but not exclusively, when the supervisor is absent. Advisers will also be expected to have knowledge of University regulations governing research degrees and will be able to advise students on the correct procedures and offer guidance regarding changes in terms of study, ie suspensions, withdrawals etc. Schools may have further specific requirements of advisers.

Advisers must:

- not be someone directly involved in the student's research project and not direct a student's research
- meet with the student as soon as possible after the commencement of their study
- provide pastoral support and liaise on behalf of students with relevant University staff as appropriate (eg the Registry, the University's or School's Disability Coordinator)
- the adviser should meet the student at about six-monthly intervals minimum (more often if wished).
- advise on administrative procedures in regard to changes in a student's terms of study
- maintain an oversight of a student's progress through their degree and discuss any potential concerns with the student supervisor(s)
- become familiar and keep up-to-date with the University's policies and procedures with respect to the provision of academic and personal support to students: this includes becoming familiar with related University services (eg Students' Association (SA); Counselling Service; Old Aberdeen Medical Practice; Careers Service; the Chaplaincy Centre; the Disabilities Adviser), and the University's various codes of practice and guidance notes (eg with respect to discipline and academic appeals)
- ensure appropriate steps are taken to find alternative arrangements should the lead supervisor need to be replaced, in the case that there are no assistant supervisors appointed who can take on the role of lead supervisor on a temporary basis. In the case where an assistant supervisor is able to take on the role of lead, the adviser must retain an oversight of the process of appointing a new supervisor to ensure that it is completed appropriately and in a timely fashion.

## Research Students

**Research students** will greatly benefit from the advice and direction of good supervisors, but **ultimately are responsible for their own research and their thesis**. The University strongly advises students to submit their thesis before the expiry of their period of supervised study, and degree regulations require that they do so within twelve months from the end of this period. The timely completion of the degree will greatly enhance employment prospects. Extensions beyond the normal period of supervised study plus twelve months must be applied for and are not granted without good reason.

### *Research students must:-*

#### **1. Quality Assurance**

- 1.1 be familiar with the requirements of the University's Postgraduate Structured Management Framework and discuss these with their supervisor(s) as appropriate
- 1.2 discuss the six-monthly Postgraduate Assessment Forms with their supervisor(s) and counter-sign as appropriate
- 1.3 submit six-monthly Postgraduate Assessment Forms to their Head of School, and if deemed as "not satisfactory" with regard to progress meet with their Head of School and supervisor
- 1.4 submit yearly supervision questionnaires to the Registry (at annual registration)
- 1.5 recognise that although the University aims to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for the conduct of research studies by postgraduate students, from time to time students will encounter academic problems and difficulties. In the first instance they should raise them with their supervisor(s), but if this is not appropriate they should see their Head of School or the Dean of the Postgraduate Research School. Particularly when their Head of School is also their supervisor they may wish to contact the Postgraduate Research School.
- 1.6 accept that when a student's research interests diverge from what they originally intended, it might be appropriate to be allocated to a new supervisor (although all that may be necessary is to look for informal advice from other members of the University); again the correct approach is to discuss the situation with the current supervisor, then the Head of School/Discipline, and then the Postgraduate Research School.

## **2. On admission**

- 2.1** Register at the start of their studies and do so annually **even if they are studying off-campus or are part-time**
- 2.2 define the area of their research in consultation with their supervisor(s)
- 2.3 agree a research topic with their supervisor(s) as soon as practicable
- 2.4 seek approval for their research topic via their supervisor(s) or Head of School
- 2.5 ensure that they have understood the University's guidelines on good research practice
- 2.6 ensure that they have been introduced to their Personal Development Plan
- 2.7 ensure that they are thoroughly acquainted with all relevant safety regulations and procedures, and have received training before following any course of action or using any technique which might be deemed hazardous or dangerous

## **3. During the research degree programme**

### **3.1 Studies**

- 3.1.1 agree a timetable for the conduct of their research
- 3.1.2 maintain progress in accordance with the plan agreed with their supervisor
- 3.1.3 agree a schedule of meetings with their supervisor(s), write up notes of these meetings and agree them with their supervisor(s)
- 3.1.4 discuss work and progress with their supervisor(s)
- 3.1.5 submit written work as and when required by their supervisor
- 3.1.6 keep a written record of their work in a research notebook that can be reviewed
- 3.1.7 take the initiative with their supervisor(s) in defining and raising problems or difficulties
- 3.1.8 attend courses as specified by their School with the agreement of their supervisor(s) and/or Head of School/Discipline
- 3.1.9 agree with their supervisor(s) a plan and timetable for the writing of the thesis

### **3.2 Ethical Issues**

- 3.2.1 obtain approval of their research from ethics committees where appropriate
- 3.2.2 consult with their supervisor on the appropriate recognition of their contribution to research publications in accordance with the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights (see Section C)
- 3.2.3 attend training on ethical issues

### **3.3 Skills Training**

- 3.3.1 define their training and educational needs and discuss them with their supervisor(s), as part of PDP planning
- 3.3.2 Undertake, with their supervisor(s), a skills audit at the beginning of their programme of study, and annually thereafter throughout their prescribed period of study to determine research, transferable and generic skills requirements.
- 3.3.3 Attend a programme of skills training as agreed with their supervisor(s)

## **4. Nearing Completion**

- 4.1 be aware that the thesis is their own work and responsibility
- 4.2 accept that while their supervisor(s) will give advice, constructive feedback and other guidance, they must take ultimate responsibility for the final version of their thesis

## Guidance for Supervisors

- 4.3 decide whether or not to accept any advice or suggestions given by the supervisor(s)
- 4.4 decide when to give notice of intention to submit, taking due account of their supervisor's opinion (which is, however, only advisory)
- 4.4 present the final draft of their thesis to their supervisor
- 4.5 ensure timely submission of the thesis for examination.
- 4.6 seek advice on preparation for the oral examination.