

## **Academic Quality Handbook**

### **Statement of Expectations for PGR students and supervisors**

This statement is a high level document that addresses expectations of both doctoral students and supervisors at a necessarily generic level. It is envisaged as a starting point for conversations in Schools and between supervisors and their supervisees. It is anticipated that Schools / Disciplines will develop more specific frameworks to sit beneath this document and that terms such as 'regularly', 'frequent' and 'timely' will carry different interpretations across the university. These should be made clear to students and discussed openly with them. Such terms may also require re-negotiation at different points in the PhD journey so conversations should be held throughout the period of study to ensure that they are being interpreted appropriately.

#### **Joint Expectations and Responsibilities for Students and Supervisors**

- Student and supervisor(s) should work together to plan timetables and templates for the project and review these as the project develops.
- Student and supervisor(s) should keep agreed appointments but if they need to be changed give good notice. Both parties should also come to meetings well prepared.
- Student and supervisor(s) must keep in regular contact with each other (at least once a month either in person, email, or other means) and respond to any emails and meeting invitations within a reasonable and agreed timeframe.
- Student and supervisor(s) should agree a professional and mutually suitable arrangement in terms of how and when they can be contacted.
- Notes of formal supervision meetings should be recorded, kept and shared in an agreed format. What constitutes a formal meeting should be agreed between supervisor(s) and students.
- Both student and supervisor(s) should make themselves aware of the expectations and monitoring hurdles associated with the project (both at a local and institutional level) and clarify anything that is not understood. These regulations and frameworks will be readily available.
- Student and supervisor(s) should work together to achieve these milestones.
- Student and supervisor(s) should discuss training and skills requirements and work together to identify a development plan. Where a student is off campus appropriate options should be discussed.
- Student and supervisor(s) should set clear timeframes for delivery of written and other work and discuss appropriate expectations for feedback.
- Students and supervisors should discuss on-going professional and career development.

#### **Doctoral Student Expectations and Responsibilities**

- Students should take responsibility for the development and completion of their project.
- Students should submit written and other work by agreed deadlines and if this is not possible keep their supervisor(s) well informed and negotiate reasonable alternatives.
- Students should be willing to have a professional openness with their supervisor(s) and keep them informed about any difficulties they are facing with the project.
- Students should also inform their supervisor(s) or another appropriate person located in the School of any other difficulties they are facing that might affect their work.
- Students should check with their supervisor(s) if there is anything discussed in supervision meetings that they do not understand.
- Students should be aware that their supervisor(s) have many commitments and that they cannot always be available immediately for them.

### **Supervisor Expectations and Responsibilities**

- Supervisor(s) should respond to emails and questions from their student within a reasonable and agreed timescale and should be available during advertised office hours. However, supervisors may be off campus when on research leave or for other good reason. In such instances, they should communicate how the student will be supported in their absence.
- Supervisor(s) should provide advice to students in applying for funding, conferences and other career development opportunities.
- Supervisor(s) should be alert (as they are with all students) to the general well-being of their students and encourage them to work in a manner that is healthy and appropriate. Where necessary they will discuss with their students the possibility of changing mode of study to part-time or of suspending.
- Supervisor(s) should discuss with their student what is expected in terms of daily work patterns and meetings as appropriate to the discipline and project; for example, what is expected of the student if they are part of a lab-based team is very different from the expectations for a lone scholar or off-campus student.
- Where conflicts and issues arise within the wider supervisory team or research group the lead supervisor should work to resolve them.

### **A Supervisor is Not:**

- A complete expert in the field – by definition the doctoral student will soon have more expertise in their area of study than the person supervising it!
- The author of the thesis.
- A best friend – supervisor(s) should be supportive and may well become a friend in the future but that is not part of their role.
- Someone who knows the answer to every question that students have – but they should be able to help identify ways to find the answer to the question.
- A terrifying person! Most supervisors are reasonable and will be willing to talk to you if things do not work out quite as planned.

### **A Supervisor is:**

- Normally someone who knows the shape and form a PhD project should have in the discipline.
- Someone who can give advice on the shape and development of the project and guide students through the decision making process of the PhD - but the responsibility for this is ultimately the students.
- Someone who may well know others working in the field and help students to develop networks through professional groups, organisations and conferences.