

**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK****Chapter 4 - Supervision of postgraduate research students: code of good practice***Contents (ctrl+click to take you to the section you need)*

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This code sets out the generic requirements of supervisors, students and the University in the supervision of postgraduate research students. It is supplemented by individual Faculty codes approved by the Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellor. The Board of Postgraduate Research recognises that supervision practice necessarily varies between disciplines and departments and therefore this code cannot set out prescriptive requirements for matters such as the level and nature of contact that should be maintained between student and supervisors.

Unless otherwise stated this code applies to both part-time and full-time postgraduate research students studying under both on and off-campus arrangements.

This code should be read in conjunction with the [University Regulations](#) governing the degrees of Master of Arts/ Science by Research, Master of Philosophy, Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Arts/ Science by Research by Publication, Master of Philosophy by Publication, Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy by Publication, Master of Surgery and with other codes of good practice affecting postgraduate research students, particularly the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 3: Arrangements for the Supervision of Research Degree Students- Code of Good Practice and the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 2: Admission of Students to a Research Degree Programme Under Off-campus Arrangements.

Where students are not content with any aspect of their supervision they are encouraged to address problems as soon as possible through discussions with their supervisors or the Director of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) at Faculty or Department level. If necessary they should pursue a complaint through the University's formal [student complaints procedure](#).

During the period of supervision from the time of initial registration until completion of all stages of the examination (including where necessary any resubmission) responsibilities and obligations are as set out below.

**1. Responsibilities of supervisors**

Supervision is a relationship requiring trust and respect. Students have the right to expect regular, high quality advice, support and direction in their quest for academic excellence.

Further guidance on the appointment of supervisors may be found in the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 3: Arrangements for the Supervision of Research Degree Students- Code of Good Practice.

- 1.1. To give guidance about the nature of research and the standard expected, the planning of the research programme, relevant literature and sources, research methods and instrumental techniques, research data management and to direct students to particular training programmes and modules.
  - a. At the outset, as part of this responsibility, the supervisor should explore in detail the student's academic background in order to identify any areas in which further training (including language training) is required.
  - b. Guidance about the nature of research will include some of the following: a clear understanding in general terms of the main aspects of postgraduate research, the concept of originality, different kinds of research, and the form and structure of the thesis.
  - c. In planning the research programme the supervisor should ensure that the project can be completed fully, including preparation of a thesis, within the time available and advise the student accordingly.
- 1.2. To make the student aware of relevant regulations and legal issues, including but not limited to good practice in the conduct of research, research misconduct, copyright, data protection, health and safety, and any ethical issues that might arise in the course of research.
- 1.3. To assist in the arrangement of necessary administrative steps such as changes in registration under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Periods of Registration Changes to Registration for PGR Students and upgrade under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 9: Upgrade from MPhil, MA by Research or MSc by Research to Doctoral Study. Where applicable, Research Council approval must be obtained prior to University approval being given for changes in registration.
- 1.4. To maintain contact through regular personal supervision and seminar meetings in accordance with Faculty policy and in the light of any agreement reached with the

student. The frequency and nature of these sessions will vary depending on the nature of the research, the requirements of the discipline, whether the student is based on or off-campus and on the registration status of the student (students registered on continuation status will be expected to require less frequent supervision). Reference to a student's working pattern and hours should be included, particularly if part-time or based at a distance. Both student and supervisor should sign a clear written supervisory agreement (see TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4 Annex 1: Research Supervision Agreement) of the level and nature of contact which should include an agreed procedure for dealing with urgent problems and a copy of the agreement should be lodged with the Faculty. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining a record of all supervision with the student; however students are expected to produce a record of supervisory contact using MyPGR, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to use MyPGR to review and agree that record, and to initially follow up with the student should it be unforthcoming. A record should normally, as a minimum, be kept of all standard contact points, as indicated by the student's MyPGR record. Supervisors should make provision for the continuance of supervision when away from the University of Exeter (e.g. undertaking research) and normally continue their supervisory responsibilities while on study leave, subject to Research Council advice.

- 1.5. To give detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of research in order to ensure that a thesis is submitted within the time allowed by the regulations. This advice should take into account the requirements of any relevant funding bodies and the University with regard to, for example the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 9: Upgrade from MPhil, MA by Research or MSC by Research to Doctoral Study and dates for submission.
- 1.6. Whilst MyPGR should be used to keep a record of all supervisory contact events, it is important that the student and supervisor take the time to regularly review overall progress, recording the discussion and any outcomes in MyPGR. This should take place at least three times per year for all registered students.
- 1.7. To request written work as appropriate, normally through MyPGR and return such work with constructive feedback within an agreed period of time.

- 1.8. To arrange, as appropriate, for the student to present his or her work at seminars within the University and to attend external academic meetings or conferences and where possible to present their work, and to provide encouragement and assistance with possible publication of the student's research.
- 1.9. To take prompt action to raise with the student in writing concerns about inadequate progress or of an unsatisfactory standard of work and at an appropriate point instigating or referring for action under the appropriate Code, e.g. TQA LTS Handbook, Chapter 15: Unsatisfactory Student Progress and Engagement and Attendance, Health Wellbeing and Support for Study Procedures (HWSSP) – Exeter and Penryn Campuses or University of Exeter Policy and Procedures for Fitness to Practise (FtP).
- 1.10. To advise the student in writing of the option of interrupting their studies under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration Status for PGR Student (section 4) should illness or other adverse personal circumstances impede progress with their research with a copy lodged with the Faculty. Research Council approval, where applicable, must be obtained prior to University approval being given.
- 1.11. To complete Faculty and funding body progress reports in a timely fashion.
- 1.12. Supervisors should take note of any feedback from the student, department or Faculty, whether arising from Annual Monitoring Reports under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 7: Annual Monitoring Review: Code of Good Practice or separately.
- 1.13. Supervisors are expected to keep in contact with students and respond to reasonable requests for assistance, although students who have transferred to continuation status will be expected to require more limited contact from their supervisory team. Supervisors should provide guidance on the writing and preparation of the thesis, including commenting on at least one draft. Supervisors are not expected, however, to undertake substantial editing or revision of a draft thesis. Ultimately, the student is responsible for his or her work and the supervisor's responsibility is to give guidance.

- 1.14. To initiate procedures for the appointment of examiners under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 12: Handbook for Examination of Postgraduate Research Programmes well in advance of the thesis being submitted.
- 1.15. To ensure that the student is prepared for the viva and understands its role in the overall examination process.
- 1.16. To advise the student subsequently of the implications of any recommendations from the examiners and assist in the preparation of any amendments or re-submission.
- 1.17. To conduct a training needs analysis with the student at least once a year (following the initial assessment) and ensure that training needs are being met. The outcome of initial and subsequent training needs analyses should be recorded in a written agreement uploaded to the student's MyPGR record. Supervisors should monitor the provision of agreed training and discuss the outcomes with the student.
- 1.18. To conduct a research data management review with the student at least once a year addressing issues of capture, management, integrity, confidentiality, security, selection, preservation and disposal, commercialisation, costs, sharing and publication of research data and the production of descriptive metadata to aid discovery and re-use when relevant.
- 1.19. To ensure that inter-Department/Faculty collaborative research/work undertaken by the student is documented and agreed by all participants. The supervisory agreement should record details of who is carrying out the work (and what this involves), the resources required to complete the project (who is funding them) and the use of the data generated following the completion of the project (who can use this for assessment and/or publications and how and with whom it can be shared). The agreement should be signed by all relevant parties and updated as necessary. Copies of the agreement (see TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 4 Annex 1: Research Supervision Agreement) should be kept by the participants and the supervisor.

- 1.20. To be aware of the needs of different groups of students particularly those that are not regularly on campus ensuring for example that students are not disadvantaged with regard to access to information concerning the requirements of their degree programme.
- 1.21. To refer students to the relevant PGR Pastoral Tutor if they request pastoral advice and support (e.g. concerning accommodation, finance, health and well-being), and to ensure that any such referral is recorded in MyPGR. To inform the relevant PGR Pastoral Tutor if there is any evidence to suggest that a pastoral problem or issue might be affecting a student (e.g. a demonstrable change in their general demeanour and behaviour, the non-submission of work, or a sudden change in academic performance).

## 2. Responsibilities of PGR Pastoral Tutors

As set out in the Code of Good Practice: Arrangements for the Supervision of Research Degree Students, the 'PGR Pastoral Tutor' is a designated member of academic staff with a responsibility to provide pastoral support to specified PGR students at their request. The PGR Pastoral Tutor should be a member of academic staff at the University of Exeter and among those eligible to lead or co-supervise research students. The PGR Pastoral Tutor must not be the Director of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) at *either the Faculty or Department level*.

- 2.1. To contact all PGR students allocated to them within the Faculty as soon as possible after registration (e.g. meeting them at induction) to identify themselves and their role and responsibilities.
- 2.2. To contact PGR students at least once every term:
  - a. To offer the opportunity, if it is needed, for advice and support on pastoral matters which are adversely affecting the ability of students to study (e.g. issues concerning accommodation, finance, health and well-being)
  - b. To identify and promote professional services and other sources that offer advice and support for students on pastoral matters
  - c. To identify and promote resources, events and activities, such as relevant training within the Researcher Development Programme, that specifically offer pastoral advice and support

- 2.3. To offer advice and support (where requested) to PGR students who apply for interruptions and extensions, or who are at any stage of any student procedure (e.g. the Health, Well-being and Support for Study, Fitness to Practise, Academic Appeals, Complaints, Unsatisfactory Student Progress and Engagement, Disciplinary, Research Misconduct and Complaints Procedures).
- 2.4. To refer students to relevant academic and/or professional services staff if they raise concerns specifically about their academic programmes. PGR Pastoral Tutors may offer advice and support in cases where difficulties arise between students and their supervisors, but responsibility for any intervention resides with the relevant Director of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) at the Faculty or Department level.
- 2.5. To work in collaboration (where appropriate and as necessary) with:
  - a. Supervisors
  - b. Directors of Postgraduate Research (or equivalent) at Faculty and Department levels
  - c. Professional Services staff at University, Faculty and/or Department level
  - d. Students' Guild/ Students' Union
- 2.6. To attend PGR Liaison Forums within the Faculty as appropriate and collaborate with PGRLF representatives where necessary.
- 2.7. To keep a record of all contacts on MyPGR.
- 2.8. To respond to all student requests in a timely fashion (e.g. normally within three working days) or to refer students to another appropriate source of advice when unavailable.
- 2.9. To attend PGR Pastoral Tutor training and other relevant professional development provision (including Doctoral College Forums) when requested, and to access applicable information, advice and guidance as provided, for example, by the Doctoral College or Academic Development.

### 3. Responsibilities of students

Supervisors have the right to expect a high level of commitment from their students who should respond positively to advice and guidance and will develop an increasing level of independence in the conduct of their research.

- 3.1. To plan and discuss with their supervisors the research topic and timetable for the research.
- 3.2. To discuss and agree a schedule of meetings, recorded in MyPGR, and appropriate feedback.
- 3.3. To maintain a record of progress, including writing up records of supervisory and PGR Pastoral Tutor meetings using MyPGR.
- 3.4. To undertake study as required by the supervisors which may include directed reading, research training or other taught modules as required.
- 3.5. To familiarise themselves with relevant regulations and legal issues, including but not limited to good practice in the conduct of research, research misconduct, copyright, data protection, health and safety, and ethical considerations which might arise in the course of research. The student should also be aware of the regulations for the degree for which they are registered.
- 3.6. To raise relevant problems or difficulties with their supervisors and in particular inform their supervisor of any personal circumstances which prevent them from working on their research.
- 3.7. To inform their PGR Pastoral Tutor if there is a pastoral problem or issue affecting their ability to study, and to follow up any initial contact should a response not be forthcoming.
- 3.8. To maintain progress according to the agreed schedule, in particular including the presentation of written material, normally by uploading content to their MyPGR record,



in time to allow for discussion and comment before proceeding to the next stage of research.

- 3.9. To take note of and respond to feedback and guidance from their supervisors.
- 3.10. To keep systematic records of work completed and if inter-department/Faculty collaborative work is undertaken to contribute to the agreement between all participants.
- 3.11. To inform the Faculty and the University of any changes in address or similar personal details.
- 3.12. To complete the administrative requirements of the University, Faculty, and where necessary, any grant awarding or sponsoring bodies.
- 3.13. To write up and submit the thesis within time under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Periods of Registration and Changes to Registration Status for Postgraduate Research students and in accordance with University guidelines for the submission of theses under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 11 - Presentation of Theses/Dissertations for Postgraduate Research Degrees: Statement of Procedures
- 3.14. To discuss with their supervisors the preparation of the thesis and to decide, taking account of advice from the supervisors, when it is ready for submission.
- 3.15. To take advantage of any relevant skills training offered by the Faculty or the University including preparation for a viva.
- 3.16. To make appropriate acknowledgement of their supervisors and the University in any publication based on research undertaken and published during their degree programme. If appropriate to the discipline the supervisors should be given as joint authors.

- 3.17. The pressures on the time of part-time students can make it difficult to set aside the long periods required for intensive study. Long periods of concentrated effort are more likely to be productive than larger numbers of shorter periods. Part-time students, should to the best of their ability, plan for at least one period of concentrated study within each academic year.
- 3.18. Students studying under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 2: Admission of Students to a Research Degree Programme Under Off-campus Arrangements. are encouraged to seek to visit the University campus often enough to gain experience of working within the environment generated by a research institution and to identify with the academic community of the University.
- 3.19. Students should comply with [funder](#) and [University Institutional Open Access Policy](#) requirements on research data management. Responsibility for ongoing, day-to-day management of their research data lies with PGR students. Where the PGR is part of a project, data management policy will be set and monitored by the Principal Investigator (PI) and the PGR will be expected to comply with project guidelines. All PGR students' digital research data that has been selected for retention should be uploaded to [ORE](#) or an appropriate national or international data service or domain repository.
- 3.20. Students should comply with [funder](#) and the [University Institutional Open Access Policy](#) requirements on Open Access. All PGR students should ensure that research papers published whilst affiliated with the University are made available in ORE, as open access, as soon as possible. PGRs can apply for funds to pay to publish open access and may be eligible to benefit from open access publishing through publisher agreements that the University has signed up to. Advice and support are available from the [Open Research Team](#). In addition, PGR candidates are required to upload the final version of their thesis/dissertation into the institutional repository, ORE.

## 4. Responsibilities of the Faculty

The responsibility for Faculty actions lies with the Faculty Director of PGR (DPGR).

- 4.1. To have regard to the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 3: Arrangements for the Supervision of Research Degree Students - Code of Good Practice to ensure that the student has appropriate supervision and PGR pastoral support throughout their time as a student of the University.
- 4.2. To provide information and guidance on the Faculty and University regulations and codes of practice.
- 4.3. To provide each full-time campus-based postgraduate research student with a base where they may keep their belongings and clarify the physical facilities which will be available to part-time and continuation status students. Unless explicitly stated otherwise in the Faculty Handbook, students registered on continuation status shall not be entitled access to a permanent desk. See [O below](#).
- 4.4. To endeavour to provide students with adequate access to computer facilities whilst on campus.
- 4.5. To ensure the provision of appropriate skills training.
- 4.6. To provide students whilst on campus with use of a photocopier, fax and telephone for research purposes within defined limits.
- 4.7. To endeavour to ensure access to sufficient library provision.
- 4.8. To co-ordinate the pastoral care of research students including the appointment, support and training of PGR Pastoral Tutors.
- 4.9. To ensure that students are informed of sources of independent advice should they raise any concerns about their academic programmes, including the breakdown of student/supervisor relationships.
- 4.10. To record the progress of research students and submit reports to the Postgraduate Administration Office as required. To ensure that student files, including the MyPGR

records for each student are maintained and that this includes written progress reports from the supervisor.

- 4.11. To approve the research topic for postgraduate research students- the Department Director of Postgraduate Research may undertake this task on behalf of the Faculty DPGR with the exception of instances covered by section 23 'Changes to the student's topic of study' of the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 3: Arrangements for the Supervision of Research Degree Students- Code of Good Practice.
- 4.12. To ensure that any teaching or other duties undertaken by research students conform to the Code of Good Practice - Employment of Postgraduate Research Students.
- 4.13. To monitor students' progress and the implementation of this code of practice as it applies to supervisors and research students. This should include formal reviews of student progress in addition to those required by the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 7: Annual Monitoring Review: Code of Good Practice.
- 4.14. To ensure that normally a thesis is examined and the viva held within three months of submission.
- 4.15. To provide a Faculty code of practice for supervision to supplement this Code, approved by the Faculty DPGR, detailing:
  - a. The nature of the physical facilities with which students will be provided, including desk space.
  - b. The frequency and nature of contact which will be expected within their discipline, for on-campus, off-campus, full-time, part-time, and continuing registration students.
  - c. How it ensures that off-campus students are able to participate in the research culture of the Faculty.
  - d. How parity of experience for off-campus and part-time students is achieved in view of the responsibilities of the Faculty, Supervisors, PGR Pastoral Tutors and the student as detailed above. This should include full details of opportunities for visiting the campus and the opportunities for induction and research training.

- e. Any Faculty-specific monitoring requirements. This should include for continuation status applications: The grounds upon which the Faculty defines a thesis as 'complete or near complete' for the purpose of supporting consideration of whether a student is ready to transfer to continuation status under the TQA PGR Handbook, Chapter 5: Periods of Registration Changes to Registration for PGR Students (section 8).
- 4.16. On occasions when off-campus students are required to attend the campus Faculties are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to interact with the research community.