



# Postgraduate Research Student External Supervisor Policy

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UNIVERSITY of  
GREENWICH

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## 1. Context

The *Postgraduate Research Students and Supervisors Handbook* acts as the University's Code of Practice by providing a framework of procedures and practices, in accordance with the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Research Awards, to support postgraduate research students (PGRs) and their supervisors to understand the provision to which the student is entitled and the obligations that are incumbent upon all parties.

This document sets out the roles and responsibilities of **external** members on such supervisory teams, and should be read in conjunction with the *Postgraduate Research Students and Supervisors Handbook*.

There are several reasons why an **external** member might form part of the supervisory team, most commonly they may be part of a sponsoring body, a collaborating team or a previous member of academic staff who has left the University. In all cases, they must have a demonstrable connection to the project.

## 2. Framework

The Faculty Research Degrees Committee (FRDC) ensure agreed arrangements are followed for the appointment of appropriate and qualified supervisors for the duration of the project. FRDC oversight is essential for monitoring the progress of the research and the effectiveness of the supervision; for dealing with complaints about supervision; and effecting changes to the supervisory team as appropriate.

A postgraduate research student (PGR) will typically have two supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor the PGR effectively. They may also have a third supervisor who will either be a junior academic or a further subject expert, and under this context, may be external to the University. Collectively, a supervisory team should have a combined experience of supervising not fewer than three PGRs to successful completion, with a preponderance of completions associated with the internal supervisors.

The First Supervisor is, officially, the first point of contact between the university and the research student. Their responsibilities are clearly outlined in the *Postgraduate Research Students and Supervisors Handbook*. In short, the First Supervisor has the responsibility to supervise the student on a regular and frequent basis, and it is therefore, expected that the First Supervisor is a Greenwich employee.

The First Supervisor will be currently engaged in the research discipline(s) to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up-to-date subject knowledge and research developments. They will shape the direction of the research programme, and have the primary responsibility to direct the student towards successful completion.

The Second Supervisor will contribute academically and as a mentor, discuss frequently with First Supervisor, and attend those meetings required to oversee the research project, **but will defer to the First Supervisor in matters of PGR management**. Under normal circumstances, and as befitting the mentoring aspects of the role, the Second Supervisor would be a Greenwich employee.

The Third Supervisor should also contribute positively and regularly to the research programme. A variety of roles may be envisaged - academic, professional or sponsor – and it is anticipated that the Third Supervisor will possess specific knowledge that will be brought to bear when necessary. Importantly, they will physically attend those meetings required to oversee the advancement of the research project, generally, not less than quarterly, though electronic interaction would be expected to be more frequent. Under normal circumstances, an external member of the supervisory team would be aligned to the Third Supervisor role. **They would also defer to the First Supervisor in matters of PGR management**

### **3. Management**

Supervisors must remain in regular contact with their research students. As guidance, the First Supervisor's should meet with their students at intervals of no less than two weeks, with a view to ensuring the academic rigour of the research, for shaping its direction, monitoring its progress and ultimately, steering the PGR towards submission of an appropriate standard of thesis. The University

regulations further state that PGR student should be entitled to an *average* of 1 hour per week quality time supervision.

Throughout this process, the Second and Third Supervisors will contribute where necessary. External members might ordinarily be expected to comment on manuscripts, provide specific input into niche areas, consistent with being an academic, consultant or member of a sponsoring body. It is recommended that the whole supervisory team should meet together a minimum of twice per year, with the First Supervisor having more frequent contact.

PGR students should be entitled to regular face-to-face meetings, of a duration and frequency that constitutes a detailed supervision of the research activity, along with frequent electronic communication on specific elements of the research.

When a member of the supervisory team leaves the employment of the University of Greenwich, and they had a significant contribution to the supervision and mentoring of the PGR, the formal arrangements for supervision must change. However, continuity of supervision of the PGR should be maintained whenever possible. It is nonetheless, accepted that there may be factors which will preclude this, such as conflicts-of-interest and employment requirements of the new employer. It is crucial that the PGR's research is not significantly or negatively disadvantaged by the departure of the academic, and the Faculty Director of Research & Enterprise should work closely with RETI to coordinate the change-over when it becomes known an academic is departing.

To this end, it is desirable that the departing academic maintains some connection to the research, but the mechanism depends on the stage of study of the PGR.

If the PGR has successfully transferred their registration to PhD, such that their research is well-developed, it is expected that an external member of the supervisory team would be allocated the Third Supervisor status and will continue to have regular and frequent contact with the PGR as previously stated *i.e.* at least every fortnight, with duration at least 1 hr per week. Some regular face-to-face meetings may be replaced by Skype or similar meetings, with additional



guidance through email to supplement the less frequent face-to-face contact. The Supervisory team should agree with the PGR the nature/frequency/duration of the contact. The Greenwich employee supervisors must ensure that the agreed level of contact is being adhered to.

If the PGR is in the formative stages of research, measured in terms of having not yet transferred to PhD, where the research topic is still being shaped or refined, it is expected that the departing academic will be replaced by a current employee on the supervisory team to ensure that no issues are encountered further downstream.

Ultimately, responsibility rests with FRDC to approve supervisory teams, with the expectations that the above criteria will be adopted, unless there is good reason to not do so.

#### **4. Intellectual Property and Confidentiality**

University of Greenwich employees have responsibilities pertaining to IP and confidentiality as part of their conditions of employment, as set out on the *Intellectual Property Policy*. In short, the University asserts its rights of ownership of all IP generated during the course of an employee's tenure at the University unless the IP is generated as part of research funded by external partners where there should be an overriding contract in place that defines IP ownership.

All PGRs are normally asked to assign any potential IP arising from their research to the University prior to commencement of the studies, and are treated for this purpose, as if they were employees of the University.

For supervisory teams where an external member has been approved as part of the FRDC process *at the project inception*, it is customary and desirable that a confidentiality or IP agreement is in place before the research starts, and listed in RDA1 form. The process also solicits the external members CV. When the project is externally funded, this is likely embodied in the conditions of funding. If no such contracts exists, an NDA must be appended for the external party. The default position should always be that any generated knowledge – be it

subsequently commercially protected or not - is unless otherwise explicitly stated, retained by the funder, be that an external party or the University itself.

For supervisory teams where the membership changes during the PGRs candidature, and an external member is then part of the team, it is desirable that a statement on IP and confidentiality – approved by GRE – is included in the RDA5 form that goes to FRDC for approval.

The IP policy states that when an academic leaves the employment of the University, they are bound to not enter into any agreement with any third party (including the new employer) to exploit IP generated at Greenwich and not declared whilst an employee for at least 2 years. University IP cannot be transferred to any third party, in any manner, without the written approval of the authorised signatory of the University of Greenwich.

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