University of Northampton (UON logo)

Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy

1   Introduction and background

1.1   This policy sets out the requirements for the supervision of students on postgraduate research degrees including PhDs, MPhils and Professional Doctorates.

1.2   The requirements include the roles of supervisors, the qualifications and composition of supervisory teams, approval processes and supervisor development.

2   Purpose and scope

2.1   This policy applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via partner arrangements, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed during the approval of the arrangement.

3.0   Definitions

3.1   Postgraduate Research Degrees are Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (including Practice-based PhDs in The Arts), Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) by Published Works, Doctor of Business Administration (DBA), Doctor of Professional Practice (Health and Social Care) (D.Prof.Prac) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

3.2   The Graduate School is the University's central hub for postgraduate research degree administration, quality assurance and researcher development. The Head of the Graduate School is the academic lead. The Postgraduate Research Manager and administrative staff provide a university-wide administration for research degrees programmes.

4.0   Key principles

4.1   Supervisors for candidates for higher degrees by individually supervised study shall:
i)   be appointed by the Faculty;
ii)   be part of a supervisory team;
iii)   have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively;

iv)   be required to meet with their students regularly; normally at least once in every four weeks for full-time students and once in every six weeks for part-time students. These meetings shall have a minimum duration of one hour;

v)   be given time by their Faculty to undertake supervisory responsibilities to ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities.

Internal Supervisors

4.2   Internal Supervisors shall be:
i)   research active members of staff;
ii)   located within a robust and coherent research environment where there are at least three other internal members of research active staff.

4.3   In addition they will either be experienced in successful supervision or have undertaken (or be undertaking) the programme of development for new supervisors.

4.4   Emeritus and Visiting Professors and Visiting Fellows of The University of Northampton may join supervisory teams as first or second supervisors provided that the requirement for the composition of a supervisory team is met (see 4.10-4.11). Visiting Professors and Fellows may only be first supervisors where the terms of their appointment at the university as approved by Senate explicitly recognise research degree supervision as a substantive part of their role.

External Supervisors

4.5   A person who is not a member of staff of The University of Northampton but is deemed suitable by the Research Degrees Committee may be accorded the status of external supervisor. The external supervisor assists the first supervisor in overseeing the work of the student and, in appropriate circumstances, undertakes direct personal supervision. Final responsibility for ensuring the provision of adequate supervision rests with the first supervisor. Responsibilities of the supervisor are given in the Postgraduate Research Code of Practice.

4.6   The position of external supervisor is an official position and there will be a nominal remuneration paid for by the Faculty (or between Faculties for collaborative projects).

4.7   The external supervisor is not eligible for appointment as the external examiner of any student whom s/he supervises.

Supervisory Teams

4.8   The University of Northampton provides a supervisory team for each research degree student rather than a single supervisor. This enables a spread of

experience and expertise to be applied to the supervision task. Supervision of research degree work requires a combination of subject expertise, pastoral oversight and the ability to manage the process of producing and submitting a thesis within the allowed registration period.

4.9   It is expected that the supervisory team will together define the roles for each supervisor within the context of a particular research degree programme of study in such a way that their roles will be clear to the student and will provide complementary support for all aspects of the student's supervisory needs. It is recommended that the particular roles of each member of the supervisory team are discussed with the student at the outset of the supervisory process.

Composition of Supervisory Teams

4.10   Supervisory teams should be constructed to ensure that research students obtain the best possible supervision, in support of their programme of research. Teams should therefore be composed so as to provide a balance of experience, including both specialist knowledge of the research area and the methodologies to be used, and appropriate experience of supervision at the relevant level.

4.11   Section 4.2 of the Academic Regulations for Research Students states that supervisory teams should comprise:
- A minimum of two and a maximum of three internal supervisors, with a combined contract of 1.4FTE for two member teams and 2.0FTE for three member teams.
- At least one internal supervisor on a substantive contract and normally no more than one external supervisor.
- A Director of Studies and a First Supervisor.

Additional support may be provided by the appointment of advisors.

4.12   The workloads of supervisors at the University are calculated on a points-based tariff system to ensure that the supervisors are not overloaded. For every student to whom a member of staff is first or second supervisor, the supervisors obtain one point each. For every student to whom they are Director of Studies, they obtain 0.5 points. If a member of staff is Director of Studies and First or Second supervisor, they obtain 1 point. Normally, the maximum number of points any member of staff can have is 6. Therefore, a Director of Studies cannot have more than 12 students and a supervisor cannot have more than 6 students. Executive Deans and Deans should acknowledge individuals who exceeded 6 points to ensure that the higher supervision load is considered alongside an individual's other duties.

Qualifications of Supervisory Teams

4.13 Members of supervisory teams should meet the following qualification requirements:

i) All members of the supervisory team should normally hold a degree at least equivalent to that of the intended award where the research thesis constituted a substantial part of that degree and should be research active.

ii) In addition to i), the Director of Studies must have undertaken a Graduate School workshop on being a Director of Studies and have completed either a) or b) as follows:
   a. have supervised at least one student to successful completion at that level at the University of Northampton or elsewhere
   b. have a minimum of three years' experience of supervision at the University of Northampton <u>and</u> have successfully completed the first module of the supervisor development programme.

iii) A supervisory team can consist wholly of part-time staff so long as their combined contract is equal to or greater than 1.4FTE (for two-member teams) or 2.0FTE (for 3-member teams) so that they are able in practice to meet extant supervision obligations as set out in both this policy and the Postgraduate Research Code of Practice.

iv) At least one person on the team (either the Director of Studies or the First Supervisor) should be on a substantive contract (not time limited).

v) The supervisory team as a whole should normally have experience of supervising at least two students to successful completion at the level of the intended award where the research thesis constituted a substantial part of that degree. A qualification from an accredited supervisory development course will be counted as one successful completion. However, no more than one such qualification can be counted towards supervisory experience in any team.

vi) As noted in 4.4 of the Academic Regulations for research students , a person who is registered for a research degree is ineligible to act as a supervisor of a research degrees student intending to study for the same award.

4.14 Academic staff without a PhD, but who are able to demonstrate current and recent research activity of equivalence to doctoral study, will be allowed, by application to the Research Degrees Committee. Those approved by the Research Degrees Committee may act as a first or as a second supervisor providing that at least one member of the supervisory team has a PhD and that the conditions for two completions are still met. Any such person would be required to undertake the first part of the PG Certificate in Research Degree Supervision. The case for inclusion of such a person as part of a supervisory team shall be considered and approved by the Research Degrees Committee as described in 4.15 and 4.16.

Approval of Supervisory Teams

4.15   Supervisory arrangements should be specified when the recommendation of an offer is made following an applicant's interview. However, supervisory teams are formally nominated and approved as part of 'initial project approval' or 'registration' (see the Postgraduate Research Registration and Progression Policy).

Changes to Supervisory Teams

4.16   Changes to supervisory teams may be required for a variety of reasons including if a supervisor leaves the university, if the research project changes and requires different or additional supervisory expertise or if supervisory capacity changes. Should a change to a supervisory team be required, the Director of Studies should propose a new supervisory team. The proposal and details of the proposed team members is submitted to the designated Research Degrees Board for recommendation and approval by the RDC.

4.17   Should a supervisor or Director of Studies leave the University before the student has completed his or her research degree, the supervisory arrangements should be reviewed by the remaining supervisor(s) and the student. In the event of a first supervisor leaving the University their continuing obligation to the supervisory team should be discussed. It is expected that the student would remain registered and based at the University. In these cases, part-time contractual or external supervision arrangements may be necessary to ensure adequate access to the departing supervisor by the student and an agreement drawn up between the Faculty and the departing supervisor. If the original supervisory team comprised only two supervisors an additional supervisor would be identified within the University to join that team. The new team must meet the criteria set out in 4.8-4.14 and be subject to approval as set out in 4.16.

Supervisor development

4.18   A programme of supervisor development is delivered by the Graduate School to provide initial development opportunities for new supervisors and continuing development for experienced supervisors.

4.19   Those who have not previously supervised a research degree student to successful completion are required to undertake and pass the first part of the supervisor development programme (ENVM501: Research Degree Supervision – Workshops) either before they join a supervisory team or at the first delivery of the module after they join a team. The second part of the programme (ENVM502: Research Degree Supervision –Observation) is optional. Those who have supervised a professional doctorate student to successful completion will be not be required to undertake the programme where the research thesis constituted a substantial part of that doctoral programme.

4.20   Experienced supervisors who are new to postgraduate research degree supervision at The University of Northampton shall be encouraged to attend a workshop on the postgraduate research regulations and policies.

4.21   Annual Graduate School Update Days and other workshop and 'roadshow' events provide continuing development opportunities for supervisors.

4.22   All active supervisors are required to engage in at least one supervisor development opportunity every two years.

The responsibilities of the Supervisory team

4.23   Research students should not be left in doubt as to what is required of them. In particular, it must be emphasised that a thesis should be the student's own work and that, within the framework of supervision, students have the responsibility for bringing forward and developing their own ideas. A clear understanding between student and supervisor needs to be established at an early stage about the supervisor's responsibilities in relation to the student's written submissions. The understanding must cover the nature of guidance or comment a supervisor will offer within the general principle that a thesis must be the student's own work.

4.24   Supervisors should ensure that students understand the requirements of the degree for which they will be registered. Particular care should be taken to ensure that international students, whether registered full-time or part-time, fully understand the concept of a UK research degree, particularly requirements relating to originality and the viva voce examination.

4.25   In the case of students resident outside of the local region supervisors should ensure that there are adequate means available whereby formal consultation can take place on a regular basis. Use should be made of all forms of technology such as e-mail to facilitate this process.

4.26   Where students are undertaking research as part of a team the supervisor should ensure that students are fully aware of how their own research fits into the group as a whole.

4.27   Supervisory arrangements are expected to remain in place during periods of post-viva amendments or referrals.

5.0   Key responsibilities

5.1   The responsibilities of the Director of Studies, First and Second Supervisors, External Supervisors and Students in relation to the supervisory relationship are described in the Postgraduate Research Code of Practice.

5.2   It is the responsibility of Deans of Faculties to ensure that students are recruited to areas of the university where appropriate expertise and capacity for research degree supervision exists and that supervisors are given adequate time to fulfil their supervisory responsibilities.

5.3   The Graduate School is responsible for providing opportunities for supervisor development for those who are new to research degree supervision and those who are experienced.

6.0   Links to related UON Policies/Guidance/Regulations

Regulations
6.1   Academic Regulations for Research Students
Policies
6.2   Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy
6.3   Framework for Postgraduate Researcher Development
6.4   Postgraduate Research Code of Practice
6.5   Postgraduate Research Satisfactory Progress Policy
6.6   Postgraduate Research Thesis and Examination Policy
6.7   Research Ethics Code and Procedures
6.7   Complaints Policy
6.8   Postgraduate Research Degrees Appeals Policy
6.9   Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy
6.10   Research Misconduct Policy
6.11   Intellectual Property policy
Guidance
6.11   Transfer Guidance
6.12   Research Ethics Committee guidance

7.0   Links to related external documents (e.g. QAA)

7.1   UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance: Research Degrees

8.0   Appendices

Summary Sheet:

Policy Title:
Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy

Purpose of Policy and to whom it applies (please specify cohorts):
To meet the requirements of the QAA UK Quality Code for HE, Chapter B11: Postgraduate Research Degrees. This policy applies to all research degrees programmes offered by the University of Northampton, as well as any delivered via

partner arrangements, except where alternative arrangements have been agreed during the approval of the arrangement.

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Dissemination and implementation plan:
Via RDC and RDBs Via web

Date of initial committee approval (state committee name):	Research Degrees Committee – June 2015
Date of Senate approval:	July 2015
Date for implementation and cohorts to which it applies:	Immediate implementation to all cohorts
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Proposed date of full review:	
Date of last full review:	
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