GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT SUPERVISION PROCEDURE

SCOPE

This procedure applies to all Monash University appointed graduate research supervisors, graduate research students and campuses and teaching locations.

PROCEDURE STATEMENT

This procedure specifies supervisory roles and responsibilities at Monash University (the University), outlining the appointment of supervisors and supervision limits; determination of supervision load; variations to supervision loads and limits; changes to supervision arrangements; and conflict resolution.

1.   Supervisor roles and responsibilities

Main supervisor

1.1   A main supervisor is a member of the student's supervisory team who is designated to undertake the role and hold the highest (or equal highest) supervision load (%) at Monash University.

1.2   The main supervisor is responsible for taking on primary academic and administrative responsibility for the student, including, but not limited to:

1.2.1   Guiding the student on the responsible conduct of research in accordance with the [Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#);

1.2.2   Ensuring that any Intellectual Property (IP) matters relating to the student's research project are discussed prior to the start of the research and revisited as required, and assignment of IP to the University is made where the student is undertaking a collaborative research activity;

1.2.3   Conducting safety and risk assessments of the student's research/fieldwork activities (internal and external) and mitigating risks where required;

1.2.4   Maintaining a schedule of regular contact with the student, whether in person or via video. Regular contact is considered to be at least every two weeks for full-time students and at least monthly for part-time students;

1.2.5   Notifying the student of all arrangements regarding the respective role and responsibilities of each member of the supervisory team as agreed to under 1.8.

1.2.6   Ensuring that students understand thesis-related obligations, for example;

- requirements to respond to all reasonable requests from supervisor/s for regular written work (interim reports or research results; final thesis draft etc.),
- submitting requested work within two weeks for chapter-length drafts and by negotiation for longer pieces (normally no later than one month from the date of the request);

1.2.7   Providing regular constructive feedback to the student. Feedback should be provided within two weeks for chapter-length drafts and no longer than one month for longer pieces from the date of submission;

1.2.8   Responding to changes to the student's enrolment (leave, study away etc.) in a timely manner;

1.2.9   Supporting the student to prepare for milestones and meet thesis examination requirements;

1.2.10   Supporting the student to complete all mandatory course requirements, including compliance training and Monash Doctoral Program requirements (doctoral students only);

1.2.11   Intervening to support the student where progress is not up to standard or the student has disengaged from their studies and directing them to relevant Monash University support services where required; and

1.2.12   Seeking to resolve any conflicts with the student in accordance with this procedure or where there is a complaint, in accordance with the [Student Complaints Policy](#) and [Procedure](#).

1.3   Where a student's research involves an external party (for example, the student is involved in a collaborative research project involving another party either in Australia or overseas) the main supervisor must ensure that:

- a valid agreement is in place prior to the student commencing their research, and remains in place throughout the duration of the student's research; and
- the student is made aware of all obligations in the agreement that may potentially impact on the student's research.

1.4   Where the student will be located at an external research site (such as a laboratory, medical institute etc.), the main supervisor must ensure that the student:

- will be provided with the training and supervision necessary for their project to be conducted in a manner that eliminates or minimises risks to health and safety (e.g., Occupational Health and Safety, Equal Opportunity; other relevant policies and procedures etc.); and
- is provided with training in relevant emergency, safety and evacuation procedures where required, and has access to counselling and other appropriate ancillary support services.

1.5   Main supervisors are expected to undertake supervisor development training throughout their accreditation, ensuring currency in supervision skills, knowledge and best-practice.

Prior to admission

1.6   Prior to considering supervision of an applicant, a supervisor must ensure they:

- meet requirements for quality supervision as specified in the Graduate Research Student Supervision Policy, where required; and
- will not be entering into a supervisory arrangement where there is a potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest, as defined under the University's [Conflict of Interest Procedure](#) (including [Conflict of Interest Examples and Actions Guideline](#)) and [Staff/Student Personal Relationships Procedure.](#)

1.7   In addition to the requirements outlined above, the proposed supervisor should:

- consider the capacity of the academic unit to provide sufficient facilities and resources to support the applicant's proposed research for the entire enrolment period, taking into account any potential delays beyond the student's control;
- ensure that a preliminary assessment of the applicant has been undertaken in relation to the University's admission standards, including Academic and English Language Proficiency (ELP) requirements; and
- where relevant, consider any existing or likely obligations or contracts, for example, funding or confidentiality requirements that may impact on the applicant's ability to undertake the proposed research.

At commencement of the course

1.8   The main supervisor must ensure that all members of the supervisory team discuss and agree on their respective roles and responsibilities, with the main supervisor responsible for communicating these arrangements to the student. Discussion and agreement should be reached on:

1.8.1   The specific contribution and support each supervisor will make to the student's research; when and how frequently meetings will occur; who should attend the meetings; and how communication will be established and maintained between supervisors and the student between meetings;

1.8.2   How meetings will be conducted (e.g. in person, via video conference, via teleconference), along with protocols in maintaining records of meetings (for example, use of LabArchives); and how notes and actions arising from the meeting are taken and distributed and by whom. (The supervisor may ask the student to write the record, but supervisors should keep a copy);

1.8.3   The nominated contact/s for receiving milestone documents, thesis chapters and any other written work relating to the student's research;

1.8.4   Any other issues relevant to the student's study (for example, specific study or work arrangements that may need to be put in place to accommodate students with disabilities or health isssues; who have carer responsibilities; or who are part-time etc.);

1.8.5   IP matters, specifically, whether the student is undertaking a collaborative research activity which necessitates assignment of IP to the University. Refer to the [Guidelines on Graduate Research Student Intellectual Property](#) if required;

1.8.6   Authorship matters (Refer to Monash's [Research Authorship & Attribution Policy](#) and [Procedure](#) if required);

1.8.7   Any mandatory Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) training is completed, ensuring that where required, the student is provided with standard operating procedures if undertaking research involving specialist equipment/techniques.

Throughout enrolment

1.9   A main supervisor and members of the supervisory team should come to mutual agreement with the student on:

- the type of guidance and supervision required to support an individual student-supervisory project throughout its various stages. Supervisory arrangements should be reviewed at least annually or more frequently if required; and
- reasonable and appropriate working hours for the student as circumstances change, taking into consideration course requirements, the type of research being undertaken, attendance requirements as required under the University's regulations, OHS matters, carer responsibilities, disabilities, health, family/life/work balance, and the Staff/Student Personal Relationships Procedure.

Associate supervisor

1.10   An associate supervisor is a person with relevant research expertise who provides support to the main supervisor and student in accordance with the agreement reached under 1.8.

1.11   Any person who wishes to be an associate supervisor must be either registered or accredited in accordance with the Graduate Research Student Supervision Policy.

1.12   Associate supervisors are expected to undertake supervisor development training throughout their registration or accreditation, ensuring currency in supervision skills, knowledge and best-practice.

External supervisor

1.13   An external supervisor is a person with relevant research expertise who provides support to the main supervisor and student in accordance with the agreement reached under 1.8.

1.14   Where the student will be located at an external research site (such as a laboratory), an external supervisor must be appointed to ensure that provisions under 1.4 can be met.

1.15   External supervisors are expected to be familiar with relevant graduate research Monash University policies and procedures.

2.   Appointment of Supervisors

Appointing supervisors

2.1   To be appointed a supervisor, a person must meet requirements as specified under the Graduate Research Student Supervision Policy.

2.2   In being appointed as a supervisor, a person must actively avoid any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest which are incompatible with the University's Conflict of Interest Procedure (including Conflict of Interest Examples and Actions Guideline) and Staff/Student Personal Relationships Procedure. Examples of conflicts of interest which are incompatible with University policy - and which a supervisor must take action to avoid – include:

- a person supervising a student with whom they have (or have had) a close or intimate personal relationship, as defined under the Staff/Student Personal Relationships Procedure; and
- supervisors who are currently in (or have been in) a close personal relationship with one another co-supervising the same student.

2.3   The decision to appoint a supervisor or change a supervisor is made by the relevant Associate Dean (Graduate Research) (ADGR) following consultation with the relevant Head of Academic Unit (HoAU), and must be made in accordance with the Graduate Research Student Supervision Policy and relevant sections under this procedure.

2.4   In approving the appointment of a supervisor and any subsequent changes to supervision the ADGR or equivalent should consider whether the supervisor:

- has demonstrated that they have the appropriate qualifications, research skills and experience to support the student's approved research project, and is able to provide sufficient research facilities where required, and
- has been registered/accredited as required for the purposes of the specific supervisory appointment, and
- has sufficient capacity in their workload to provide high-quality supervisory support, and
- is willing to supervise the student - in the case of appointment as main supervisor - for the full period of their enrolment in the graduate research degree.

3.   Determining supervision load

3.1   The minimum amount of supervision load that can be allocated is 10% and the maximum load 90%. However, for quality supervision experience, a minimum load of 20% and a maximum load of 80% is recommended.

3.2   Following consultation with the relevant Head of Academic Unit, the ADGR or equivalent should consider the following when determining appropriate supervision and load:

- the level, extent and breadth of expertise that the supervisor will provide to the student's research project, including, but not limited to, their role in supporting the student to conceive and design the project; providing guidance in designing the research and interpreting research data; and reviewing the student's written work; and
- assessment of the supervisor's contribution against the roles and responsibilities of different supervisor types, as specified under this procedure. For example, roles and responsibilities of a main supervisor in comparison to an associate supervisor; and
- the supervisor's current supervision, teaching and administrative load; and
- whether the supervisor requires accreditation or registration in order to undertake their supervisory role.

3.3   Variations to supervision loads may be appropriate at different stages of a student's enrolment, but must be academically justifiable.

4.   Changes to supervision arrangements

4.1   Changes to supervision arrangements (including supervision load) constitute new appointments, and must be made in accordance with section 2 and 3 of this procedure. Changes to supervision arrangements may be required as a result of the scenarios outlined below.

Changes to the supervisory team

4.2   Students seeking to make change/s to their supervisory team should:

4.2.1   discuss the proposed change/s with their supervisory team, Head of Academic Unit (or academic delegate such as the Graduate Research Coordinator), unless there are compelling reasons not to do so; and

4.2.2   seek advice where appropriate from the Head of Academic Unit (or academic delegate such as the Graduate Research Coordinator) on any potential impact of a change of supervisory team on:

- sourcing alternative suitable supervisors in the student's academic unit/faculty/University-level;
- the student's ongoing enrolment in their course of study; their progress, including pending progress milestones; their approved research project; IP arrangements, scholarship; and other funding arrangements; and
- ongoing access to particular resources, particularly where resources are linked to a withdrawing supervisor or to a particular grant to which a withdrawing supervisor is linked (for example, in a Chief Investigator capacity).

4.3   Students must request any change to their supervisory team via the relevant form.

4.4   Except for compelling circumstances, the existing supervisor is expected to:

- continue to actively supervise the graduate research student during any transition to a new supervisor; and
- assist in negotiating alternative supervisory arrangements for the student, if required.

4.5   Students wishing to seek independent and confidential advice or support on supervisory matters may contact their relevant student association.

Change in supervisor circumstances

4.6   The Head of Academic Unit (or their academic delegate, such as the Graduate Research Coordinator) must initiate the appointment of a new supervisor where an existing supervisor is unable to carry out their duties for six or more consecutive weeks.

4.7   The Head of Academic Unit (or their academic delegate, such as the Graduate Research Coordinator) must initiate the appointment of a new supervisor in the event of an existing supervisor's accreditation or registration lapses.

4.8   Where a supervisor intends to leave the University, the Head of Academic Unit (or their academic delegate) must make all reasonable efforts to ensure alternative supervision arrangements are finalised prior to the supervisor's departure.

4.9   In making alternative supervision arrangements under 4.6 or 4.7, the Head of Academic Unit should:

- discuss the proposed arrangements with the affected student(s); and
- consider the capacity of the academic unit to provide sufficient facilities and resources to support the student's research.

4.10   If alternative supervison arrangements cannot be made following all reasonable efforts, the Head of Academic Unit must advise the student that this may result in termination of enrolment for an inability to progress under the *Monash University (Academic Board) Regulations*.

Change of research direction

4.11   A change of research direction leading to a change of supervisor/s may occur for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to the withdrawal of funding to access laboratories/data sets, or the failure to obtain ethics approval for a particular component of the research.

4.12 A change may also be mandatory in order to meet external regulatory or legislative requirements, for example, to ensure compliance with sanctions legislation.

4.13 Where a change in research direction is required, the Head of Academic Unit (or their academic delegate) should consider the following to minimise impact on the student:

4.13.1 Holding a meeting with the student and relevant stakeholders (Head of Academic Unit or their academic delegate) to determine what supervisory expertise is required in order to support the new project, and whether such supervision is available at Monash University; and

4.13.2 The implications of a change of supervision on any funding arrangements (for example, departmental scholarships linked to an individual supervisor); and

4.13.3 Designing the new project to maximise the inclusion of completed research and experiments from the original project; and

4.13.4 The stage of the student's research project, and how best to respond to the student's needs and expectations in progressing their research; and

4.13.5 Implications of any change of supervisor for existing Intellectual Property (IP) arrangements, or existing approvals (including, but not limited to, human and/or ethics approvals and publications in progress); and

4.13.6 Where the student is within their candidature – for example, whether such a change of direction will impact on any pending progress milestones; and if separate action should be taken to request an extension to a milestone.

Other changes

4.14 Other changes to the supervisory team may arise if a student needs additional supervisory support.

4.15 Any changes to provide additional support should be negotiated in consultation with the student and the supervisory team.

5. Conflict Resolution

5.1 Unless there is a compelling reason not to do so, a student and their supervisor/s should in the first instance attempt to resolve a conflict informally and in a professional manner. In doing so, both the student and the supervisor can refer to the following for advice:

- Their Graduate Research Coordinator/Program Director; or
- Their Head of Academic Unit (where the supervisor is the Graduate Research Coordinator/Program Director or the Graduate Research Coordinator/Program Director is unavailable); or
- Their Faculty Associate Dean (Graduate Research) where supervisor is the HoAU or the conflict appears intractable, and is more appropriately handled at the faculty level.

5.2 Where a conflict leads to a breakdown in the student-supervisory relationship, and one or both parties seek to change the supervisory arrangement:

- The student should speak to their Head of Academic Unit or academic delegate (e.g., the Graduate Research Coordinator) to discuss the impact of seeking alternative supervisory arrangements on their course.
- The supervisor must discuss options with their relevant Head of Academic Unit or academic delegate (e.g., the Graduate Research Coordinator) to minimise any potential impact on the student.

5.3 Where a conflict cannot be resolved informally, a student:

- May lodge a grievance under the University's Student Complaints Procedure, or
- Report the matter to the Safer Community Unit of Campus Community Division where the conflict relates to alleged unacceptable behaviour in the workplace, or
- Refer to the University's Intellectual Property – IP Commercialisation, Revenue Sharing Provisions and Dispute Resolution Policy and supporting Intellectual Property – Dispute Resolution Procedures where the conflict relates to intellectual property.

5.4 At any stage in seeking to resolve a conflict, a student may seek independent and confidential advocacy from their relevant student association.

DEFINITIONS

Adjunct appointee	A person who holds an Monash University adjunct appointment in accordance with the University's *Adjunct Appointment Procedure*.
External	Means in relation to this procedure, a person who does not hold a current Monash staff or adjunct appointment, or a body that is not affiliated with, controlled by, or a subsidiary of, Monash University. When used in reference to an external party, is interchangeable with the term "third party".

Graduate research degree	A masters by research or doctoral degree of Monash University. Interchangeable with higher degree by research.
Graduate Research Committee (GRC)	The committee (however designated) established in accordance with Part 4 of the *Monash University (Vice-Chancellor) Regulations*.
Joint Award	A graduate research degree jointly awarded by two Institutions under an executed written agreement.
Load	Percentage allocated to a supervisor within a supervisory team, and as recorded in the student system.
Monash	In relation to this policy means Monash University.
Staff member	A person employed by Monash University.
Student	A graduate research (higher degree by research) student, as defined in the *Monash University (Council) Regulations*.
Supervisor	A person appointed to supervise a graduate research student in either a main, associate, or external supervision capacity.

GOVERNANCE

Parent policy	Graduate Research Student Supervision Policy
Supporting schedules	N/A
Associated procedures	Behaviours in the Workplace Procedure Conflict of Interest Procedure Handbook for Doctoral Degrees Handbook for Research Master's Degrees Intellectual Property – Dispute Resolution Procedures RTP Scholarship Procedure Staff/Student Personal Relationships Procedure Student Complaints Procedure Student General Misconduct Procedure Student Discipline Guidelines
Related legislation	Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, 2018 Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 Malaysian Qualifications Framework MQA Code of Practice for Programme Accreditation (COPPA) MQA Code of Practice for Institutional Audit (COPIA). Monash University (Vice-Chancellor) Regulations Monash University (Academic Board) Regulations Monash University Enterprise Agreement (Academic and Professional Staff) 2014
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