



## PhD Without Residence Supervisor Development Programme

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## Session 5 The Process of Supervision



### Content

26 May 2015

- Discussion about completion rates
- Examination of the relationship between interpersonal skills, regulations and supervision;
- Setting expectations of supervisors and research students;
- Exploration of the attributes and good and bad supervisors and research students;
- Role of a supervisor;
- Discussion of key support areas at different stages of a PhD;
- Formal review processes;
- Dealing with problems:
- The big picture.

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### Outcome

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- At the end of the session you should:
- Be able to relate regulations and policy to practice;
- Have a clear understanding of the expectations placed on research student supervisors by the University;
- Understand the way in which the expectations of students may change during the course of their PhD;
- Understanding the regulations and processes governing the formal review of a research student's progress;
- Have a clearer understanding of the ways in which you should deal with problems in supervision.

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### Completion Rates

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#### Definition of Completion Rates:

##### HEFCE:

- “A student is defined as qualifying when they have been **awarded** a research degree and the qualification obtained. ...typically up to one year after submission”

##### BRUNEL:

- Submission within 4 years  
**>90% by end 2016/17**

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### Current Completion Rates

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- PhD (WR)
- All students on the programme are Full-Time and so should submit a thesis with 4 years of their start
- Completion rate for PhD (WR) is 20%
- Completion rate for Brunel is 49%
- Average withdrawal rate for PhD(WR) is 19%
- Average withdrawal rate for Brunel is 22%
- Currently 13% of students on PhD (WR) are outside maximum period
- Currently 13% of Brunel students are outside Maximum period of registration

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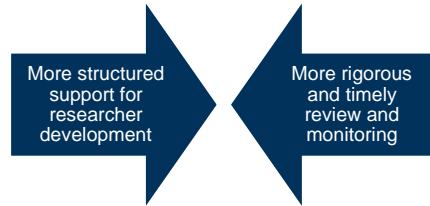
## The Supervisory Team

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- For new students commencing on or after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014
- Supervisory Team consists of:
  - A Principal Supervisor, with main responsibility for the student;
  - A further research-active member of academic staff who will provide supervisory support for the student;
  - A member of staff who is not directly involved in the supervision of the research and will be assigned the role of Researcher Development Advisor;
  - External experts or industry representatives may be included as further additional members of the supervisory team where appropriate.

## Supervision and Monitoring

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## Structured Approach to Researcher Development

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- Supervisory teams for new entrants to include a member of academic staff in the role of **Researcher Development Advisor** in addition to the Principal Supervisor and Supervisor
- Review process encouraging regular reflection upon research and professional skills development using the Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool©:
- Skills needed to **Do** your research
- Skills needed to **Disseminate** your research
- Skills needed to **Develop** your research and career

## Supervision Meetings

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- More frequent contact during first few months.
- **Formally recorded supervision meetings must take place at least every six to eight weeks for students on all modes of study until the student submits a thesis for examination.**
- Meetings recorded through the eVision system. Student writes up the notes and the supervisor approves them. Supervisor and students will be chased if meetings are not recorded.
- Regulations:
  - 8 supervision meetings are formally recorded for each 1 year period of study for all research students until they have submitted their thesis.
  - 4 supervision meetings are formally recorded for students required to re-submit their thesis in a revised form for re-examination within twelve months (reduced pro-rata for students who re-submit their thesis within the 12 months period).
- The expectation is that these meetings will be face-to-face, unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevent this. In such cases the 'meetings' may be carried out by other means, but the process described below must be followed.
- Process is detailed in the PGR Code of Practice.

## Setting Expectations

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- Role of supervisory team?
- Primary point of contact?
- What level of support can you provide?
- How often will you meet?
- How and when can you be contacted?
- **Exercise 1**
- Exploring researchers' expectations in supervision

## Responsibilities of Supervisors I

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- At least 60 hours to each of their PhD student per year.
- 8 would be formally recorded or other means of communication.
- Giving guidance about expected standards (planning of the research, literature and sources, methodologies including arranging for instruction where necessary);
- Maintaining contact through regular meetings;
- Ensuring (where appropriate) notes of meetings with the student are kept;

## Responsibilities of Supervisors II

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- Ensuring a formal record is kept of at least 8 supervisory meetings each year;
- Being accessible to the student at appropriate times when advice is needed;
- Continuously reminding the student of completion targets;
- Requesting written work, and returning it with constructive criticism in an agreed reasonable time frame;
- Critique work through the formal and informal meetings;
- Providing general advice and support of a pastoral nature.

## Responsibilities of Students I

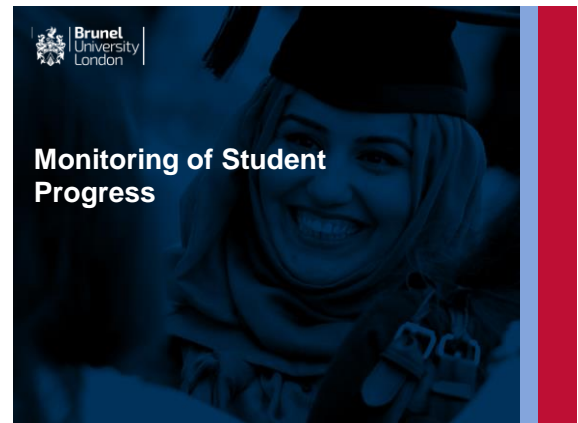
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- Discussing with his/her supervisors the type of guidance and comments s/he finds most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of meetings.
- Keeping written notes of such meetings.
- Identifying and taking part in appropriate training.
- Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties.

## Responsibilities of Students II

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- Maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisors.
- Presenting his/her work to staff or at graduate seminars and research conferences.
- Providing annually a formal report to his/her supervisors for discussion.
- Deciding when s/he wishes to submit, taking due account of the supervisors' opinions which are, however, advisory only.



## More rigorous and timely review and monitoring

26 May 2015

- New 4-week review for new entrants
- Updated research proposal
- Brunel 3D Researcher Development Tool© Plan
- Formally recorded supervision meetings for all research students every 6-8 weeks
- New 9-month Progression Review for new entrants with a panel independent of the Principal Supervisor and Supervisor
- Annual Review with independent Progression Panel
- Regular developmental review meetings with the Supervisory Team

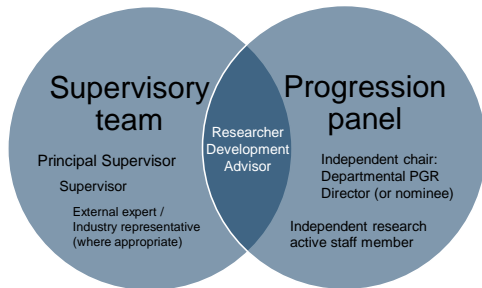
## Timeline (FT PhD)

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When?	What?	Who?
4 weeks	Progression review	Supervisory team
4 months	Review of progress	Supervisory team
9 Months	Progression review	Progression panel
14 Months	Review of progress	Supervisory team
20 Months	Annual review	Progression panel
25 Months	Review of progress	Supervisory team
30 Months	Annual review	Progression panel
35 Months	Review of progress	Supervisory team
36 Months	Expected submission	
40 Months	Annual review	Progression panel

## Supervisory team / Progression panel

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## Exercise 2 – What is the panel looking for at the formal reviews?

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- Students will be required to submit 1000-2000 word research plan for the 4 week review and a completed 3-D research development plan.
- Produce a list of what you think should be included in these documents and what the supervisor should be looking for at the 4 week review.
- In your group also discuss the format of the 9 month review. If the review panel is seeking to confirm whether or not the student should progress:
  - A) what documentation should the student be asked to submit:
  - B) what should the student demonstrate in this documentation and at the formal review meeting.

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## What the regulations require

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- At the 4 week review students should be able to clearly and concisely articulate:
  - The research questions to be addressed;
  - Why it is important;
  - Methodology to be used;
  - Timeline.
- At the 9 month review students should submit the following:
  - A progress report, including a statement from the Principal supervisor;
  - An updated 3D Researcher Development Plan;
  - A substantive piece of written work (10,000 -15,000 words excluding references), which should include a critical review of the literature; description of methods; results/outcomes achieved and proposed further work.
- The student must present their work to the panel and answer questions regarding their work and progress.

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## What the regulations require

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- On the basis of the submitted documentation, presentation and oral examination, the Panel will assess if the student was able to:
  - demonstrate an appropriate level of engagement with research training and personal development activities;
  - articulate a clear research question which, if appropriately investigated, should allow the candidate to make a meaningful contribution to knowledge of the discipline within the required period;
  - demonstrate critical engagement with relevant research literature to inform and justify the refinement of their research topic and approach;
  - articulate and justify an appropriate and achievable approach to conducting their research and provide evidence for an appropriate level of competence in, and understanding of, relevant research techniques and methodologies;
  - produce a piece of academic writing which is indicative of their potential to produce a successful written thesis within the required period.
- The Panel will make a recommendation regarding the student's progression or otherwise to the Vice-Dean (Education) who will make the formal decision.
- Students may now appeal against this decision.

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## Annual Reviews

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- Documented in detail in the PGR CoP. Similar to how they have been in the past but with new panel composition.
- Details of all review methods are given in the CoP.
- Purpose is to ensure a student if on track to submit on time and is receiving the level of support that is appropriate to enable this.
- All documentation and results are held on the students record.
- The process will be supported by a task on eVision.
- Possible outcomes of all formal reviews are:
  - Confirmed in registration for the award, subject to conditions as may be prescribed;
  - Transferred to registration for another award and may be required to take further formal assessment;
  - Required to withdraw.

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## What if there are problems?

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- Acknowledge and discuss problems as soon as they arise
- Seek advice
- Possible options
  - Consider additional support or training
  - Instigate an additional formal review with clear targets
  - Use formal review as mechanism to ask student to withdraw or transfer



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### Exercise 3

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- Map the appropriate action(s) to be taken based on each scenario.
- There may be more than one possible course of action



### What is Supervision?

### What is a supervisor?

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- **Supervise**
  - To observe and direct the performance of (a task or activity) or the work of (a person)
- **How do you do this?**



### Exercise 4

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- In small groups think about and identify:
  1. The best part, and
  2. The worst part
 of doing a PhD (draw on your own experience as a research student)
- How are you going to help your students to have a positive experience and mitigate against the negative?

### Navigating the PhD

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- Define research
- Pass annual review
- Finish research
- Write thesis
- Identify contributions
- Publications
- Have a viva (pass!)
- Student graduates
- They get a job?
- You get a promotion?



### Starting a Student

26 May 2015

- Year 1 Broaden things out
- Don't rely on their proposal!
- Widen their view, open things up
- Get them to search the literature
- Teach them how – provide with few key references get them to expand
- Guide them to becoming the expert



## Literature Search

26 May 2015

- Ensure they read original journals
- Follow reference links
- Make sure they are not just searching Google or wikipedia
- Get them to summarise the literature in writing and to discuss with you what they have found
- Work with them to identify the gaps?



## By the End of Year 1

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- Literature chapter (evolving)
- Outline contents of a thesis
- Research question being developed
- Research methods established
- Contribution to knowledge
- Plan for rest of work data collection/analysis/writing
- Abstract development
- Potential to complete PhD on time!
- Need to emphasise that student is 1/3 of way through



## Year 2/3

26 May 2015

- Continue to focus ideas
- Do the research – field work, data gathering, surveys etc.
- Continue to develop research question/contribution to knowledge
- Refine research methods
- Ensure student is writing all the time – check quality of academic writing – set tasks and provide constructive criticism
- Publications – posters/papers/conferences

## How to support this activity?

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- Literature search – make sure they stop
- Agree the outline of the thesis/contribution to knowledge
- Ask for and check chapter outlines at an early stage
- Keep checking they are writing up as they go along
- Encourage to publish as they go along
- Ensure they really understand their 'research methods' and the research methods debate.

## Focus

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- "thrashing around is ok for a short time but the student needs to be helped to focus in year 2/3"
- Ensure student records the literature they examiner
  - you need to ensure they have read and understood it
  - perhaps test them (remind them the examiners will!)
- Then focus again
  - Outline write up of what they are going to do
- Talk to Brunel supervisor
- Keep checking the quality of written work
  - "its roughly the area or x" is not good enough
- Remind at end of 2<sup>nd</sup> year they are 2/3 way through their PhD



## Exercise 5

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- Scenario
  - A colleague tells you their research student has lost motivation, is not responding to their encouragement to produce work on time and has raised the possibility of giving up.

In small groups consider what advice you would give to your colleague to help them deal with the situation.

## Possible advice to Colleague

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- No single solution
- Treat seriously and urgently it may be a cry for help
- Each student is different and working under different conditions
- Open, no holds barred discussion with student to jointly diagnose the problem and identify issues
- Set up meetings with other students who are a later stage of their research, possibly illustrate from own experience, invite to return for further discussion
- Raise possibility of withdrawing and moving to alternative career, stopping may be the right thing to do

- Point out the possibility of abeyance
- Very important to listen
- Don't impose a solution - Many supervisors can immediately spot a solution and it is often tempting to try to impose it on the student
- The student often needs to 'get their emotion out' about the situation by talking 'at' the supervisor
- Supervisor needs to listen and show they recognise the issues
- Language the student uses can help you spot where s/he begins to shift from seeking empathy, to being open to advise about a possible solution

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## Year 3

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- Finish data collection/analysis
- Write-up
- Iterate
- Review and provide constructive feedback
- Ensure the student reflects on the writing
- Hold mock viva

## The Dinner Party Conversation

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- The 2 minute conversation that will interest people
- 2 contributions – that guests will understand
- Title of best student's 2 publications
- 2 things about the research methods used by the student
- 2 things the student can say in a job interview



## Supervision – Big Picture

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- Hard work at the beginning
- Easier when they are 'doing' the research
- Make sure they are writing up as they go along
- Review outlines of thesis structure
- Review chapters
- Don't avoid the difficult conversations
- Make sure you benefit

## Questions?

Clarifications?

Comments?

Code of Practice for Research Degrees:  
<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/quality-assurance/research>