PhD WR Programme

Ahlia Academy of Supervisors

Supervisor Development Programme

Introduction

In order to support future expansions of the PhD WR Programme, it is vitally important to ensure a steady and sustainable increase of the number of research active local supervisors at Ahlia University. Local supervisors are those who are recognised by Brunel University London as having the necessary qualifications and expertise to supervise PGR students. The aim of this programme is to develop the skills and knowledge base of supervisors, which will allow them to provide the support and guidance necessary for their PhD students to successfully complete their research degrees in a timely fashion. Therefore, this document encompasses a formalised staff development programme outlining the minimum requirements and standards for meeting recognised status, accompanied by the sessions' plans and assessment criteria designed to ensure that supervisors at Ahlia are effectively trained and supported to carry out their duties as recognised supervisors of Brunel University London. Successful completion of this programme will entitle the members of academic staff to be proposed as a recognised supervisor of Brunel University London. The programme will include formally delivered interactive briefing/training sessions and the preparation and maintenance, by prospective supervisors, of a portfolio of activity generated while shadowing active supervisors, which will be assessed against the set criteria. This portfolio shall provide continued evidence of research activity and interaction with research students. More formal staff development sessions take place in May each year and the content and development of the portfolio is discussed in less formal settings throughout the year – including a major follow-up session in November each year.

Portfolio and Assessment

Each prospective supervisor is expected to successfully complete a set of tasks which will be assessed upon completion. The minimum period for completion is 6 months, whilst the maximum allowable period for completion is 2 years. Assessment criteria are based on a set of supervision skills listed below and evidence and reflections in the portfolio. Successful candidates will receive a Brunel Certificate of Supervision Skills; successful completion will also allow the candidate to be considered for appointment as a recognised supervisor by Brunel University. The Supervisor Development Programme will be run every six months. Each candidate will be required to provide a set of targets and achievement plans within each six months period which will then be reviewed by Brunel delegates.

In order for a candidate to successfully complete the programme and receive the supervision certificate (and be considered for appointment by Brunel Senate as a recognised supervisor) he/she will need to show evidence of acquiring the skills listed below. For assessment purposes, evidence of skills will need to be included in the portfolio.

Supervisor Skills and Requirements

Minimum levels of achievement in skills**,** the assessment criteria and evidence required are presented in detail in Table 1 (Mapping of Sessions to Minimum Skills and Assessments) below. The list below provides the basic skills categories and experiences that candidates must address in the Supervisor Development Programme in order to be considered a member of the Ahlia Academy of Supervisors and be proposed as a recognised supervisor of Brunel University London:

- Research capacity (Publications and Projects);
- Experience in reviewing PhD proposals;
- Experience in PhD supervision;
- Experience in conducting mock viva;
- Attendance of supervisor training and other related sessions.

Programme Outline

Research Skills

The research skills programme comprises 3 main components: publishing and improving citations; literature review and research methods; and applying/securing research funding. Staff Development Sessions are based on interactive workshops that allow participants to gain an understanding of the basic concepts of being research active academics coupled with the preparation of contextualised plans, which allow candidates to translate such concepts into practice. Each session will be supported by the development of a follow-up personalised plan for the candidate to ensure that they are on track to achieve the minimum level of publications and that they are increasing their engagement in research activities and discourse with their colleagues and research students. These sessions are aimed at improving the publication track records of supervisors and, more importantly, at improving the collaborations within Ahlia and between Ahlia and Brunel.

Session 1 – Getting Published

Content:
- Why publish and the importance of publications
- Quality research – characteristics of good research
- Research steps – the building blocks of a good research project
- Journal ranking – where to publish
- Time management
- Citation and the academic community
- Writing academically

Outcome – *at the end of the sessions participants should*:
- To understand the importance of publication for academics.
- To understand the main building blocks of a typical research project.
- To know how to conduct publishable research.
- To understand the main concepts of designing and writing good articles for publications.
- To be able to identify relevant publication outlets.
- To understand the review process.

Session 2 – Literature Review and Research Methods

Content:
- purposes of literature review;
- types and profiles of literature review;
- literature review as a precursor;
- literature review as an outcome;
- justification of selection of research methods;
- research philosophy;
- preparing and arguing a case for a research method.

Outcome – *at the end of the sessions participants should*:
- have a basic understanding of the importance of literature review;
- to be able to draw taxonomies and profile fields of interest;
- to be able to supervise and critique PhD literature;
- to be able to provide constructive challenges to proposed research methods;
- to be able to capture the important components of a research methodology

Session 3 – Applying And Securing Research Funding

Content:
- the importance and purpose of research grants;
- selling your research;
- funding Application Guidelines;
- criteria for a good proposal;
- potential Funders in MENA region.

Outcome – *at the end of the sessions participants should*:
- be able to draw up research ideas and implementation plans
- be able map their interests into areas that attract funding
- know about the building blocks of a good research proposal

Supervision Skills: Introductory Level

The introductory level is aimed at new supervisors and those who would like to supervise research students. There are three workshops which are delivered using a combination of presentation discussion, exercises and quizzes. Participants will gain basic knowledge of Brunel research degree regulations and process and how they relate to the practice of supervision. Participants will also gain understanding of the skills a good supervisor must develop and the expectation placed upon them by the University and research students. Once prospective supervisors have completed the three workshops they will be assigned a mentor and will shadow them in supervisory meetings (with the agreement of the research student).

The second part of the introductory level is the development by prospective supervisors of a portfolio of activity showing i) their personal development in terms of visibility to prospective applications be designing and maintaining a suitable web site giving information about their research for prospective applicants; ii) their interaction with research students and their mentor in terms of meeting records and evaluation of real situations.

Session 4 – Admissions and Recruitment

Content:
- investigation of the importance of research students to Brunel/Ahlia Universities and to individual members of staff;
- discussion of an individual's eligibility to supervise research students and investigate steps that can be taken by individuals to improve their eligibility;
- discussion how best to deal with difficult admissions queries/applications;
- consideration of how to assess the applicant's research proposal;
- how to reject an applications;
- good practice in considering an application;
- cautionary tales and top tips.

Outcome – *at the end of the sessions participants should*:
- have a greater understanding of why research students are important to HEIs and to their own career development;
- have a more complete understanding of the Brunel recruitment/admissions process and feel more confident in assessing applications;
- have an understanding the regulations relating to PGR admissions and be able to identify and use good practice in considering applications.

Session 5 – The Process of Supervision

Content:
- examination of the relationship between interpersonal skills, regulations and supervision;
- discussion of the Brunel research degrees available and the timescales associated with them;
- 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.

Outcome – *at the end of the session participants should*:
- be able to relate regulations and policy to practice;
- have a clear understanding of the expiations placed on research student supervisors by the

University;
- understand the way in which the expectations of student may change during the course of their PhD;
- understanding the regulations and processes governing the formal review of research student progress;
- have a clearer understanding of the ways in which they should deal with problems in supervision.

Session 6 - The viva and beyond

Content:
- discussion of how to assess when a thesis is ready for submission and what it should contain;
- exploration of what the examiners will be looking for in the thesis and viva voce;
- exploration of the regulatory deadlines for submission of a thesis and the process for submission;
- discussion of how to handle students who are reluctant to submit their thesis;
- appointment of examiners;
- preparing a candidate for examination;
- exploration the examination process;
- discussion of the possible outcomes of the examination;
- discussion about how to handle academic appeals;

Outcome – *at the end of the session participants should*:
- have gained a better understanding of the regulations and processes governing the assessment of research students;
- be able to explain to research students what examiners are looking for in a thesis and viva voce and be able to prepare a candidate for examination;
- be able to provide support and guidance following the viva voce in the light of the result of the examination.

Supervision: Advanced Level

The more advanced level is aimed at current supervisors and those who have successfully completed the introductory level. This level is again delivered in three workshops using presentation, discussion, exercises and quizzes. Participants will gain more detailed knowledge of Brunel research degree regulations and process and how they relate to the practice of supervision. In particular participants will also gain understanding of the relationship between supervisor and student, the various stages of a PhD and how the role of the supervisor develops and the needs of the research student changes. There will be a more in-depth discussion of the Brunel examination process including how to deal with suspected plagiarism cases and how to ensure research students avoid committing plagiarism. The roles of the participants in a Brunel viva voce examination will also be discussed helping supervisors prepare for their activities as internal examiners and independent chairs.

The second part of the advanced level is the continued development, by prospective supervisors, of a portfolio of activity showing i) their continued personal development in terms of visibility to prospective applications be designing and maintaining a suitable web site giving information about their research for prospective applicants; ii) more detailed accounts of student interaction with their mentor in terms of meeting records and evaluation of real situations. The portfolio will be discussed with the prospective supervisor at 6 monthly intervals until they have completed the programme.

Session 7 – The Supervisor as a Critical Friend

Content:
- what is a supervisor?
- navigating the PhD;
- starting a student;
- year 2/3;
- year 3;
- criteria for award;
- the dinner party conversation.

Outcome – *at the end of the session participants should*:
- understand the definition of a supervisor and the general principles about how a supervisor 'directs' the performance of a student;
- have developed an understanding of the techniques that can be used to help students have a positive experience and how to mitigate against the negative;
- have a fully developed understanding of the stages of a PhD and how a supervisor might go about guiding a student through the PhD;
- have developed a more detailed understanding of the criteria for the award of a Brunel PhD and how they might support a student to meet these criteria;
- have gained the skills necessary to begin to analyse their own supervisory techniques.

Session 8 – The Supervisor/Student Relationship

Content:
- framework for the supervisor/student relationship;
- establishing an infrastructure;
- metaphors;
- project metaphor.

Outcome – *at the end of the session participants should*:
- understand the different types of relationships between supervisor and student;
- be able to work with their own students in developing a framework within which the supervision will proceed;
- understand the factors that might influence the infrastructure/relationship between student and supervisor;

- be equipped to develop an understanding of how metaphors can be used to describe supervisor/ student relationships and how their own supervisory style might best be described;
- having discussed the project metaphor participants should be able to evaluate other metaphors and be able to identify the risks associated with any one particular supervisory style.

Session 9 – Research Student Assessment

Content:
- what is research student assessment?
- preparation of the student;
- plagiarism/Poor Academic Practice;
- contribution to Knowledge/originality;
- reluctant submission;
- the viva voce;
- practicalities/appointment of examiners;
- role of the examiners/independent chair/supervisor in the viva voce
- preparing a student for viva voce;
- the examination process;
- examination outcomes;
- is it really the end?

Outcome – at the end of the session participants should:
- have a full understanding about the regulations and processes governing the assessment of research students;
- have developed an understanding of how to help prepare students for examination;
- understand the roles and expectations placed upon examiners and independent chair;
- understand the role of the supervisor following the viva voce.

Session 10 – Developments at Brunel

Content:
- This will vary depending on recent developments at Brunel in terms of regulations and other developments at the University and how these developments affect the research degree provision at Ahlia.

Outcome – at the end of the session participants should:
- have an understanding and be fully aware of any changes to regulation and how they affect the supervision processes at Ahlia.

Table 1 Mapping of Sessions to Minimum Skills and Assessments

Skill	Assessment Criteria	Evidence and support
Publishing at least one article in highly reputable journals every 18 months.	• Publication in an A class journal (according to ERA classification). • Publications in B class (or above) journals in subject specific classification will also be accepted.	<u>Training Sessions*</u>: • Session 1 – Getting Published • Session 2 – Literature Review and Research Methods • Session 3 – Applying And Securing Research Funding <u>Evidence:</u> The candidate will provide evidence of publication (or a letter of acceptance) in an A class journal (according to ERA classification). Publications in B class journals in subject specific classification will also be accepted. The article itself will need to be included in the portfolio.
Experience in reviewing PhD proposals	• Review of at least 3 PhD application proposals.	<u>Courses to attend:</u> • Session 4: Admission and Recruitment • Proposal Writing Workshop <u>Evidence:</u> Evidence of these reviews will include the applicants' details, proposals, a written review of each proposal, records of meetings/emails where a review outcome is communicated to the applicant (subject to director's approval), and evidence showing how a review has resulted in improvements in an applicant's proposal.
Experience in PhD supervision	• Shadow supervision • Mock progress monitoring sessions with written review. • Co-authoring with PhD students.	<u>Courses to attend:</u> • Session 5: The Process of Supervision • Session 7: The Supervisor as a Critical Friend • Session 8 The Supervisor/Student Relationship: • Session 1 – Getting Published <u>Evidence:</u> The candidate must provide records of meetings with students (names, dates, minutes etc.) – subject to agreement by the PhD student in question. The candidate must provide documentary evidence of any feedback provided to students (subject to director's approval). The candidate must provide evidence of working with research students who are writing research articles arising from PhD (desired but not essential).
Experience in conducting mock vivas	• Record of attendance of 3 mock vivas.	<u>Courses to attend:</u> • Session 6: The Viva and Beyond • Session 9: :Research Student Assessment <u>Evidence:</u> The candidate must provide evidences of attending at least 3 mock viva voce examinations. The written evidence must include the examination report and justification of the outcome.
∗ The candidate will be required to provide written evidence of reflection that shows how they were able to link between their practical engagement in supervision and what was delivered in the staff development sessions.		