Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy

Responsible Officer: Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation
Policy Editor/Contact: Research Student Coordinator, Research Office
Approving Authority: The Senate
Date approved: 6 July 2021 Senate2/21
Effective Date: 6 July 2021 Senate2/21
Review date: Every 3 years from Date Approved

1.   Purpose

This document specifies the criteria for the appointment of supervisors for postgraduate research students (Ph.D., Masters and SRP) and the roles and responsibilities of supervisors.

2.   Objective

To assist postgraduate research supervisors in fulfilling their responsibilities and clearly define the TOR for research supervision.

The policy applies to all University appointed supervisors of postgraduate research [Master's and PhD] candidates, Heads of Schools, Deputy Head of the Schools (Research Innovation and Postgraduate Affairs)or equivalent, Research Student Coordinators, and Academic Unit Research Committees (AURCs) or equivalent.

3.   Policy

3.1   All postgraduate research students, upon admission into their programme, must be assigned by the relevant Academic Unit Research Committee (AURC) or equivalent a supervisory team agreed by the student normally of two supervisors; one of whom will be the Principal Supervisor and the other will be a Co-supervisor who need not be affiliated with the University. Under the special situation when support on a section of the thesis is required which is not well into the expertise of the Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor, more than one co-supervisor can be appointed by AURC with a proper justification. In such cases, a Supervisory Panel will be created (see 3.5). The Supervised/Directed Research Project student may not need a co-supervisor.

3.2   The University has 3 main categories of supervisors. They are principal supervisor, co-supervisor, and panel supervisor(s).

3.3   Principal Supervisor

The Principal Supervisor will take responsibility towards the postgraduate research candidature progression and will be the administrative contact for the AURC or equivalent, and the University Research Office. Every postgraduate research student must be assigned a Principal Supervisor regardless of the supervision arrangement.

3.4   Co-supervisor

The Co-supervisor, who need not be affiliated with the University, shall have expertise that is relevant to the candidate's research fully or partially. In the case where the Co-supervisor is not affiliated with the University, she/he shall have accepted the University's terms and conditions for supervision.

3.5   Supervisory Panel

A Supervisory Panel is comprised of one Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisor (s). Panels may include a member of the industry or an external person. The roles of each member in the panel must be agreed upon by the candidate and the AURC or equivalent.

3.6   Supervisor Eligibility

i)   **Principal Supervisor**

A person is eligible to be appointed as the Principal Supervisor for a postgraduate research student provided the following criteria are met:

a)   They are a full-time employee of the University and a member of the academic staff;

b)   They are part of the same school/section the candidate has been enrolled in;

c)   Under exceptional cases, the principal supervisor could be appointed from another school/section;

d)   They are able to fulfil the roles and responsibilities outlined in Section 3.8;

e)   They are an active researcher in the same or cognate discipline as the candidate's research project;

f)   They hold a doctorate degree with demonstrated high rank research output;

g)   For Master's supervision, at least a successful supervision as a supervisor at Supervised Research Project (SRP) level or co-supervisor at Masters level is also required. The staff at lecture level and above are eligible for Masters's supervision.

h)   For PhD supervision, at least a successful supervision as a principal supervisor at the Masters level or co-supervision at PhD level is also required. The staff normally at senior lecturer level and above are eligible for PhD supervision. Under special cases, DVC RI can approve lecturer for supervision on the recommendation of AURC.

ii) **Co-supervisor**

A person is eligible to be appointed as a Co-supervisor if:

a)   They have a doctorate degree;

b)   For PhD supervision, demonstrated research output is also required. OR

c)   if a person does not have Ph.D., she/he must have relevant professional or industry experience of at least 5 years for Master's thesis co-supervision and 10 years for PhD thesis co-supervision with demonstrated excellence.

3.7   Supervisory Load

A supervisor may not supervise more than FIVE full time equivalent (supervision workload) or ten part-time postgraduate research students at one time, unless in the special cases approved by the DVC, Research & Innovation on the recommendation of AURC or the disciplines that have only Postgraduate programmes. The Principal Supervisor will get 70% of the supervision workload and the co-supervisor 30% . In the case of a were a Supervisory Panel (see 3.5), the Principal Supervisor will get 50% of the supervision workload and the co-supervisors will get altogether the other 50%   which will be equally divided among the co-supervisors. The supervision workload distribution may change according to the new QoR policy when accepted/reviewed. There is no separate workload for the supervision rather is part of the overall research workload given to staff.

3.8   Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the Principal Supervisor is to:

i)   advise and assist the candidate to complete an original and feasible research programme;

ii) monitor the quality of the research being conducted;

iii) support the candidate for the timely completion of the research;

iv) ensure the provision of sufficient funds, if the project should exceed the AURC normal allocation for the proposed degree

v)   encourage and facilitate high quality research publications resulting from the thesis.

The Principal Supervisor is responsible for:
i)   ensuring regular contact and communication are maintained with the candidate via a mutually agreed, documented mechanism that is reviewed bi-annually by the candidate and supervisor(s);
ii)   providing formal advice on the progress of the candidate to the Head of School and the AURC or equivalent via the semester progress report;
iii) ensuring that the candidate is provided with appropriate resources and support for the research program;
iv)   ensuring that the AURC or equivalent is aware of the supervisor's absence from the university where that absence is for more than 4 weeks **[this includes periods of approved leave such as sabbatical leave or time overseas],** so that alternative supervision arrangements can be put in place by the AURC; this also applies in case the Principal Supervisor ends his contract.
v)   providing advice to the Head of School on the appointment of thesis examiners after the student has provided intention to submit the thesis for examination; and
vi)   ensuring that the thesis is in the correct format for examination

The Co-supervisor will:
i)   ensure regular contact and communication are maintained with the candidate via a mutually agreed, documented mechanism that is reviewed bi-annually by the candidate and supervisor;
ii)   act in place of the Principal supervisor when absent from the University [only if she/he is a staff member of the University and if the absence is greater than 4 weeks then only with the approval of the School]; and
iii) provide feedback to the candidate at each semester review.

4.   Acknowledgments
We acknowledge the following universities who have provided input or example into this document:
- Australian National University
- Deakin University
- Griffith University
- Monash University
- University of Melbourne
- University of New South Wales
- University of Western Australia
- The University of Sydney

5.   Related documents
This document should be read in conjunction with the Postgraduate Research Candidature and Supervision Procedure.