**MATHEMATICAL, PHYSICAL AND LIFE SCIENCES DIVISION**

# Examples of Supervisory Team Structures

## Durham

“All students at Durham have a supervisory team, normally two members of staff. Between them, the members of your supervisory team will have both subject expertise and expertise in supervising research students. They will guide and oversee your research, and support your personal development as an independent researcher.

The roles undertaken by individual members of your supervisory team will differ depending on your department, discipline, and the nature of your particular research project. However, there are some general principles which underpin supervisory teams at Durham:

* Usually you will have one main supervisor, who will have research expertise in your area of study, and who will be your first point of contact. Other supervisors will play a supporting role, by bringing additional or different subject expertise, or by providing more general support as you progress and develop as a researcher.
* If your research is highly interdisciplinary or brings together methodologies from different areas, supervision may take the form of a joint supervisory relationship where both supervisors have equal weight. One supervisor – the supervisor based in your ‘home’ department if your supervisors are from different disciplines – will be nominated as your main point of contact.
* In some cases you may find that one of your supervisors works outside the university but is considered the most appropriate person for the role, having a particular expertise. If this is the case, you will also have at least one internal supervisor at Durham.”

## Cambridge:

### “The Supervisory Team

The supervisory team for a research student consists of a minimum of two persons, the principal supervisor and the advisor.

In the sciences and technology, group research may be the norm, and a supervisor, his or her students and postdoctoral researchers work alongside each other on a daily basis; in some cases, students may be supervised on a day-to-day basis by postdoctoral members of the team while the head of the team takes the formal role of the principal supervisor.

Detailed information on the responsibilities and mutual expectations of supervisors and advisors is provided in section 2.3 of the Code of Practice. Supervisors and advisors should also be aware of the responsibilities and mutual expectations of students' departments and faculties, the Director of Graduate Education, and degree committees and examiners, outlined Section 2 of the Code of Practice.”

### From their code of practice…

(note this is quite a detailed document with considerable detail about the responsibilities of parties)

### Your Adviser

38. If you are studying for any qualification covered by this Code other than the MPhil examined only by thesis and oral, your Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution) will appoint an Adviser for you. Your Adviser might not be in exactly the same research area as you and your Supervisor, nor necessarily in the same Faculty/Department (or University Partner Institution), but will be able to bring sufficient expertise to your Supervisory Team to act as a second point of contact for you for academic advice (after your Supervisor); and to provide supervisory cover in the absence of your Principal Supervisor. Your Adviser may make him or herself available to read your work and discuss your progress as reasonably agreed with you and your Supervisor.

40. Your Adviser is not required to provide regular, formal supervision; write supervision reports; nor provide pastoral support for you or your Supervisor, nor to act as go-between you, although he or she may offer advice to either party if asked to do so.

## Manchester

### Supervision policy for Postgraduate Research Degrees

### 2. SUPERVISORY TEAMS

The aim of the supervisory team is to ensure that the student’s requirements and issues are addressed by providing support, advice and guidance throughout their research degree. As a minimum, each research student will have a main supervisor. The main supervisor will normally be part of a supervisory team consisting of one or more additional academic colleagues or clinical/industrial partners, who act as co-supervisor(s) and an advisor / PG tutor providing pastoral support. If, in exceptional circumstances, it is more appropriate to appoint only one main supervisor, a case must be put forward to the Faculty Associate Dean to request permission for sole supervision.

Supervisors will be expected to keep up to date with the progress of the research and to advise the student on academic and other pastoral matters. The student should have an advisor / PG tutor as part of the supervisory team to provide general pastoral advice and support…

Supervisors should meet with the student at periods throughout the degree, including where appropriate and practicable with the external or industrial supervisors. The meetings should be held once or more per year in addition to the regular meetings between the student and the main supervisor.

### 2.1. Main Supervisor

The main supervisor takes full responsibility for the overall management and direction of the student’s research degree in addition to administrative issues relating to the student's registration, attendance, and progress. Where two members of staff are both actively involved in supervising a research candidate this requirement still stands and whilst recognising the equal academic contributions of the staff concerned it is essential for one of the supervisors to be appointed main supervisor.

### 2.2. Co-Supervisor

The co-supervisor will normally be appointed to contribute their specific expertise in assisting the main supervisor throughout the development of the student’s research degree and may act as a supervisor of sections of work in progress in consultation with the main supervisor. The co-supervisor may be required to offer specialist advice to complement the main supervisor’s expertise or to provide continuity of supervision when the main supervisor is absent from the University in addition to providing the student with a second opinion on research matters.

The balance of responsibility for the student’s day-to-day supervision should be negotiated between members of the supervisory team, in consultation with the student, as the research progresses.

2.4. Advisor / PG Tutor

The advisor / PG tutor should be included as part of the supervisory team and their main role is to provide pastoral support to the student and to monitor their progress, providing advice accordingly. If the student has any difficulties that he/she would prefer to discuss with someone other than their supervisor, they can approach their advisor / PG tutor in the first instance. The advisor / PG tutor may have some experience in the student’s research area, and if so can offer academic input, but this is not a requirement of the role and they do not have formal responsibility for the project.

4.4. Responsibilities of the Supervisory Team

Members of a supervisory team who are appointed as the co-supervisor, External / Collaborating Supervisor or Industrial supervisor are not expected to meet a student with the same frequency as the main supervisor, nor are they expected to read all of the student’s work, but they should meet with the main supervisor and the student once or more per year and should review progress of the student on the University’s progression monitoring system. They should be actively involved in the supervision by making themselves fully aware of the research plan that has been agreed between the student and the main supervisor and by reading some of the student’s work. Their role, then, is to be available to the student for consultation and advice on academic matters relating to the degree, and to offer support and guidance on non-academic matters. In circumstances where the main supervisor is not able to continue supervising a student, the co-supervisor should ideally be able to deputise for the main supervisor. In addition, postdoctoral researchers within the supervisory team, working closely with a doctoral student, can fulfil a valuable day-to-day research guidance role. The advisor / PG tutor is expected to be available to the student to offer further support on non-academic matters.

In some academic groups, the role of supervisory teams for each student may be organised through PhD committees, with regular periodic meetings to monitor and advise on the student’s development and progress.

Although members of the supervisory team may provide support and advice in the preparation of the final thesis, no members of the supervisory team who have had any academic input into the research can be appointed as internal examiner during the examination process.

## Nottingham

## Appointment of Supervisor

### 1. Policy

Every postgraduate research student will be guided during his/her period of registered study by a team of supervisors with suitable academic qualifications, appropriate expertise in the agreed area of the student's research topic, and an acceptable level of supervision experience.

### 3. Supervisory Team

Students will be allocated a supervisory team containing at least two supervisors. This should normally occur prior to the student commencing his/her studies, but failing that and in exceptional circumstances supervisors must be allocated within four weeks of the commencement of their studies.

At least one member of the supervisory team will be currently engaged in research in the relevant discipline(s), so as to ensure that the direction and monitoring of the student's progress is informed by up to date subject knowledge and research developments. The other member(s) need not necessarily have relevant discipline expertise, so long as the breadth of experience and knowledge across the supervisory team means that the student will always have access to someone with experience of supporting research student(s) through to successful completion of their programme.

Schools have the option to appoint joint or lead supervisors within the supervisory team. However, one of the supervisors in a joint supervisory arrangement must be designated as the prime point of contact between the University and the student. The respective roles and responsibilities of the lead and second supervisors should be agreed and the student advised. (see Responsibilities of the Supervisor)

Joint supervision is particularly suitable when, for example, two members of staff are engaged in collaborative work, when the student's topic of research extends beyond the boundaries of a single discipline, or when the student is spending all or part of his/her period of registration studying at an another institution or in an outside laboratory.

If a supervisor is not going to be available throughout the whole registration period of a research student's study, this unavailability should be limited to a maximum of six months during the student's time at Nottingham. In such an instance regular supervisions will continue to take place with other member(s) of the supervisory team. If the unavailability is going to exceed six months, an alternative supervisor should be appointed.

## Exeter

### 3.1 Supervisory teams

Each research student is allocated to a supervisory team, to see them through their studies. This team usually comprises three members of academic staff as follows:

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| --- | --- |
| First (Lead) Supervisor  | has expertise in your chosen research area and/or methodology |
| Second Supervisor  | brings a different perspective on the research process |
| Mentor  | helps with any non-academic issues that may arise |

### 3.5 Records of supervision meetings

Students are required to maintain detailed records of each supervision meeting, which should include information regarding matters discussed and any agreed actions. Use of the online My PGR system (see section 4 for further details) to record these meetings is compulsory. Once you have uploaded the record of the meeting, your supervisor(s) will review, comment on, and sign off the record.