

# Research Degree Supervision Criteria

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Edge Hill  
University

Graduate School

# Research Degree Supervision Criteria

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## Introduction

This document does four things:

1. describes the different types of supervisory role (standard supervisor, Director of Studies, supervisory team mentor, external supervisor, developmental supervisory role) and the role of specialist advisor;
2. outlines the criteria for someone to occupy a specific supervisory role;
3. outlines the criteria that must be met for an individual to qualify as eligible to be a member of a supervisory team (in any capacity);
4. outlines the criteria for the composition of research degree supervisory teams.

All criteria specified here constitute the *minimum* requirement either for an individual to be approved as a research degree supervisor, or for the composition of a supervisory team to be approved. Those criteria being met does not guarantee approval. The Graduate School/Graduate School Board of Studies may require revision to proposals or reject proposals where it judges them to be insufficient in a given case.

## Type of supervisory role

Recent regulatory changes resulted in the differentiation of a number of supervisory roles, each with different implications for individual supervisory capacity and supervisory team formation. Those changes were designed to strike a balance between ensuring rigour, quality, standards and the best possible PGR experience on the one hand and using regulatory adjustments to increase supervisory capacity and facilitate the kind of agility needed to be able to pursue all sensible developmental and funding opportunities on the other. The following supervisory roles have a bearing on the composition of supervisory teams:

**Director of Studies:** this is simply an ordinary supervisor with a few additional administrative responsibilities. The Director of Studies need not have successfully supervised to completion, nor have the greatest level of subject expertise among the members of the supervisory team. Many people think that being Director of Studies is in some way prestigious, but there is nothing in the *Research Degree Regulations* that makes the role prestigious; it is simply an administrative role. The person who holds the role is, in every other sense, just an ordinary supervisor. The Director of Studies must, however, be a permanent member of Edge Hill University staff.

The Graduate School has various options available to it in identifying suitable supervisory teams. In addition to the **standard supervisory role** (research active staff of the University contributing to meeting the regulatory requirements for a supervisory team), the Graduate School may appoint a supervisory team mentor, a supervisor with developmental supervisory status, or an external supervisor.

**Supervisory team mentor:** individuals allocated such a role will have significant experience of supervising at the relevant level to successful completion. Supervisory team mentors may contribute to meeting the requirement for two members of Edge Hill University staff on a doctoral supervisory team, but often they will not conduct their own research in the relevant discipline. Where a supervisory team mentor is drawn from a different discipline there will be a third member of the supervisory team, usually external to the University, with relevant subject knowledge and experience in addition to the Director of Studies and the supervisory team mentor. Supervisory team mentors will primarily focus on assisting, mentoring, and advising the other members of the supervisory team, but may also advise the PGR. Supervisory team mentors will be credited with completions along with other members of the supervisory team, but their responsibilities as supervisory team mentors are additional to their supervisory workload as standard supervisors on other teams. The role of supervisory team mentor is not included in calculations of supervisory capacity. It is the responsibility of the Graduate School to ensure that supervisory team mentors have sufficient time to perform their duties. The role of supervisory team mentor was introduced to extend our capacity while ensuring standards. While there are no strict rules about when a supervisory team mentor can and cannot be used, the role would normally be employed in cases where there is, in addition to the supervisory team mentor, one other member of Edge Hill staff on the supervisory team (as Director of Studies) and an external supervisor.

**Developmental supervisory status:** some supervisors (those with no previous experience of supervision to successful completion) may be designated as having a developmental supervisory status. In such cases, the person occupying such a role will be a third member of the supervisory team, additional to those necessary to meet the regulatory requirements for a supervisory team. Where someone is given developmental supervisory status, they will be permitted a higher supervisory load than would normally be the case for someone without supervision to successful completion. It is important to note, however, that where someone has such a status, they must always be a third member of each of the supervisory teams of which they are a member. It is not possible for someone to have developmental supervisory status on one team but not on another.

**External supervisors:** these are normally members of academic staff of other universities or research organisations. External supervisors will often be members of staff of *partner* institutions or members of a *research network* involving Edge Hill staff and staff of other institutions, where that network is recognised for research degree purposes by the Graduate School. In the case of the professional doctorate and occasionally the MRes or PhD, an external supervisor from a profession, who need not be an academic, may be appointed to a team to bring relevant professional experience and expertise to the team. Often individuals with such expertise will be designated advisors rather than supervisors in the case of the MRes or PhD, but in exceptional circumstances where the specifics of the project warrant it the Graduate School may appoint someone from a profession as a supervisor, but in such cases the individual will be appointed in addition to those supervisors necessary to meet the core requirements of the *Research Degree Regulations*.

Where there is a formal partnership between Edge Hill University and another institution, one member of Edge Hill staff and one member of staff of the partner institution shall constitute a supervisory team by the requirements of the *Research Degree Regulations*. The Graduate School will decide in each case whether to appoint a supervisory team mentor in addition to those two supervisors. Where there is no such formal partnership, external supervisors will be a third, or in rare cases, fourth, supervisor and so not be part of the core members of the team necessary to meet the regulatory requirements.

## **Specialist advisors**

- Specialist advisors may be appointed to augment the expertise of a supervisory team in a specified area. Any request for a specialist advisor must articulate the need for, and the expertise of, the advisor.
- Advisors may, for example, provide time-limited expertise in a specified area, or may provide occasional advice to the PGR and team throughout the period of research.
- Specialist advisors need not be members of Edge Hill staff, nor need they be academics.
- Specialist advisors would not normally be expected to attend supervisory meetings or comment on draft material, other than in cases where the particular area in which they are providing assistance is central.
- Advisors are not a member of the supervisory team, and therefore the requirement for a member of the supervisory team to have supervised to completion at doctoral or masters level cannot be met by an advisor having a completion.
- If someone has acted as a specialist advisor on a research degree project in which there was successful completion, that does not count as supervision to completion for purposes of approval of a supervisory team.

- The relevant faculty or academic department must meet any remuneration, travel and subsistence costs associated with the appointment of specialist advisors.

## Supervisor Criteria

- The Director of Studies (DoS)<sup>1</sup> and, in the case of doctoral degrees, one other supervisor must be a member of Edge Hill staff. Normally that will mean academic staff on teaching and research or research only contracts, but very occasionally a member of staff with an appropriate academic background and level of experience or subject knowledge that is on a different kind of contract may be considered for a standard supervisory role, but not for the role of Director of Studies.<sup>2</sup>
- The *maximum* number of Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) that can be supervised concurrently by an individual member of staff of the University is normally nine, with no more than six of those at doctoral level (PhD or professional doctorate). Only very experienced supervisors are permitted to supervise the maximum number of PGRs specified here (N9.10 of the *Research Degree Regulations*). Specific judgements regarding the appropriate maximum number of PGRs for an individual supervisor will be made by the panel considering applications for approval of a supervisory team. In making such judgements the panel will consider the individual's experience.
- If a supervisor is on a fractional contract, the maximum number of PGRs he or she will be able to supervise will be calculated on a *pro rata* basis, rounded to the nearest whole number.
- Staff supervising PGRs at other universities must declare such commitments, but those commitments will not generally count as part of an individual's supervisory load as a member of Edge Hill staff.
- Research degree supervisors must be active researchers currently involved in the production of peer-reviewed publications, and with a recent record of such publications.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> PGRs will normally be based in the department (or faculty in the case of the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine) of the Director of Studies. Occasional exceptions will be approved, such as in cases where the Director of Studies is not a member of an academic department or faculty.

<sup>2</sup> Emeritus Professors do not count as contracted EHU staff and therefore would be classed as external members of any supervisory teams.

<sup>3</sup> Determining what is required in each specific case to meet this criterion is a matter of judgement for the panel approving the proposals. It is possible, however, to give some guidance as to the kinds of consideration that will influence those judgements.

- For *all but early career researchers*, the expectation would normally be for a member of staff to have a minimum of four pieces of work of suitable quality to be appropriate for return in the REF (2\* quality work), those need not have been published within the current REF cycle, but the panel would normally expect at least one item to have been published within the last three years. Exceptions to that expectation would include, for example, cases where a member of

- Research degree supervisors must not themselves be registered for a first doctorate or other research degree.<sup>4</sup>
- All supervisors must attend the relevant departmental or faculty programme of research supervisor development sessions.
- In exceptional circumstances, and more standardly in the case of the professional doctorate, the Graduate School/Graduate School Board of Studies may approve the appointment of a supervisor who is not an academic.

## Supervisor team criteria

In the formation and approval of supervisory teams a distinction is made between those supervisors required to meet the stipulations of the Research Degree Regulations and those with a supervisory role additional to the core regulatory requirements. The core regulatory requirements for the composition of a doctoral supervisory team are two members of Edge Hill University staff, one of whom must have previously supervised at least one doctorate to successful completion. That means that a team containing a Director of Studies and a standard supervisor, where there is at least one successful supervision to completion at the relevant level constitutes a team that meets the requirements to the regulations. The addition of a supervisor in a developmental role, a supervisory team mentor, an external supervisor or an advisor will usually be additional to the membership of the team necessary to meet the requirements of the regulations.

**Doctoral supervisory teams** must contain a minimum of two supervisors, including the DoS, and often not more than three supervisors, all of whom must meet the supervisor criteria above.

**MRes supervision** is normally provided by one supervisor (the DoS), but occasionally, where necessary, a second supervisor may be permitted, all supervisors must meet the supervisor criteria above.

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staff was working on a monograph, had a recent period of prolonged sick leave, or had recently taken on significant management responsibilities.

- The work should be in an *area* relevant to the project being supervised.
- The research need not be on the specific topic on which the PGR is working, but the relevance of the staff expertise demonstrated by the record of recent publication must be shown in the application for approval of a supervisory team.
- *In the case of early career researchers* (those within five years of completing a doctorate, or, where the individual does not hold a doctorate, within five years of gaining a first publication), the panel will adjust its expectation in relation to volume, depending on the period since completion of a doctorate or since first publication.
- Evidence of research engagement for any early career researcher should be provided in the application for approval of a supervisory team.

<sup>4</sup> Registration for a second doctorate or a higher doctorate would not debar a member of staff from supervisory responsibilities.

- One member of the team must have supervised to successful completion at doctoral level in the case of PhD or professional doctorate supervision, and at M level (taught or research) in the case of MRes.
- Early career researchers without any research degree supervisory completions at the appropriate level can only constitute a third or subsequent member of a doctoral supervisory team. Developmental supervisory status will often be appropriate.
- Normally, only one early career researcher or one person with developmental supervisory status will be permitted on each supervisory team.
- Generally, the University will not use external supervisors for research degree supervision, other than where the external supervisor is a member of staff of a partner institution or is a member of a research network recognised by the Graduate School.<sup>5</sup> The requirement for a member of the supervisory team to have supervised to completion at doctoral level cannot be met by an external supervisor.
- The relevant faculty or academic department must meet any remuneration, travel and subsistence costs associated with the appointment of external supervisors where those are necessary, but external supervisors that are members of staff of partner institutions or members of research networks recognised by the Graduate School will not be paid as their involvement will be part of reciprocal arrangements.
- As with all supervisors, and the composition of supervisory teams, any external supervisors must be approved by the Graduate School/Graduate School Board of Studies. The fact that a faculty or academic department is prepared to pay a prospective external supervisor does not mean that approval will be given of that individual being a member of a supervisory team.
- In approving a supervisory team, the Graduate School will look to ensure that the University has suitable staff to act as internal examiners. Two additional staff with appropriate expertise to examine the project should be identified.

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<sup>5</sup> In cases where changes are proposed to a supervisory team, for example, because a member of the supervisory team leaves the University, the panel approving the amended supervisory arrangements will generally look to replace a supervisor leaving the University with one from within Edge Hill staff. Where that is not possible, or where continuing supervision from the individual who has left the University is deemed necessary by the Graduate School for supervisory continuity, that individual may be permitted to continue in the capacity of an external supervisor or as an advisor. In such cases, responsibility for any payments (remuneration, travel and subsistence costs) to the external supervisor rests with the department or faculty in which the PGR is based for supervisory purposes.



## Key to Relevant Documents

- [Research degree regulations](#)
- [Research degree handbook](#)
- [Supervision criteria](#)
- [Criteria Decision Process](#)
- [Supervisory team change form](#)
- [Code of Practice for Research Degree Supervisor Conduct](#)

## Endmatter

Title	Research Degree Supervision Criteria
Policy Owner	Dean of the Graduate School
Policy Manager	Graduate School Manager
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