

CODE OF PRACTICE ON POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH DEGREES: APPENDIX 9

PROCEDURE FOR SUPERVISION OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) is committed to providing a high quality educational experience for all students, with appropriate academic support, administrative structures and good welfare services and facilities. This procedure is Appendix 9 of an inter-related framework of procedures under the *Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees*.

1.1. Students registered on a postgraduate research (PGR) degree programme are entitled to a high quality of research supervision through the allocation of appropriately qualified staff and exposure to the wider internal and external research environment.

2. Scope

2.1. This procedure applies to all current PGR students registered with LSTM, whether based on-site, off-site or split-site, and studying full-time or part-time.

2.2. The procedure covers examination of a thesis leading to one of the following awards:

- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Doctor of Medicine (MD)

3. Supervision Arrangements

3.1. All research students must be supervised by at least two suitably qualified members of academic staff. At least one member of the supervisory team must be a member of LSTM staff based in Liverpool. Under specific institutional agreements, LSTM may recognise appropriately qualified non-LSTM staff with the status of 'Recognised Supervisor'. Approval is the responsibility of the Director of LSTM and may be rescinded if performance by a 'recognised supervisor' is considered unsatisfactory.

3.2. There must be a clearly identified Primary Supervisor who will be the student's main point of contact and will normally have the largest percentage of supervisory input. The Primary Supervisor will have the most appropriate expertise in the area of the individual project and must be a member of LSTM staff. A member of LSTM staff based off-site may be appointed as a Primary Supervisor but only if there is a Second Supervisor based in Liverpool.

3.3. PGR students designated as 'off-site' are registered with LSTM but spend the full duration of the period of study at an alternative institution. PGR students designated as 'split-site' are registered with LSTM but spend substantial period(s) of study (more than one month) at the remote institution(s) with normally a minimum of twelve months at LSTM. All students will have both a local supervisor (with Recognised Supervisor status) and at least one LSTM supervisor. The supervisory arrangements for such students must be specified in a formal agreement in line with the *Procedure for Off-site and Split-site Research Degree Study*.

- 3.4. The percentage of supervisory input by the Primary Supervisor should not be less than fifty percent. No supervisor should have an input of less than ten percent. The proportion of supervisory input by a student's Primary and Second Supervisor may change over time, especially if one supervisor leaves or cannot continue to supervise for any reason.
- 3.5. No supervisor should undertake the supervision of any more than a limited number of students. As a guide, this number should not normally exceed six students. However, it is recognised that reasonable limits will vary across disciplines and research programmes, and will depend on the size and nature of the thesis, whether or not the supervisor is a member of full-time academic staff, and the previous performance of the staff member in a supervisory capacity. It is the responsibility of the Director of LSTM to oversee the resource allocation of academic staff to this function to ensure that all students have appropriate access to supervision.

4. Appointment of Supervisors

- 4.1. The Director of Postgraduate Research (DPR) is responsible for the appointment of supervisors of PGR students.
- 4.2. The essential criteria for the appointment of individuals as supervisors are:
 - 4.2.1. Either, the person is a subject specialist and currently research active, as demonstrated by a publication record which includes both recently published work and work in progress, or active involvement in on-going projects;
 - 4.2.2. Or, the person is an expert practitioner, demonstrated by ten years or more of professional experience in a relevant field.
- 4.3. Supervisors must normally hold a qualification at Doctoral level, or at least to Master's level where the Master's has a demonstrable piece of independent research associated with its award. The qualifications held should be relevant to the subject matter and have made a contribution to original research.
- 4.4. The DPR will approve the level of each supervisor's respective input into the student's supervision and this will be recorded as a percentage in LSTM's student information system.
- 4.5. An individual should not be appointed as a supervisor if they have a relationship with the student through kinship (whether by blood, marriage, civil partnership or common law), or a business relationship.
- 4.6. Normally a PGR student should not have more than 90% of their supervision from supervisors who are related to each other by marriage, civil partnership, blood/ common law or who are business partners.
- 4.7. In the exceptional circumstance that an appointed Primary Supervisor does not have previous supervisory experience, the DPR must ensure that the appointed Second Supervisor does have the appropriate supervisory experience and also provides mentoring support to the Primary Supervisor. A supervisor deemed to be 'experienced' in this context will have supervised at least two students to successful completion in the capacity of Primary Supervisor.
- 4.8. If a supervisor leaves LSTM or is unable to continue their supervision of one or more students, for whatever reason, the replacement of that supervisor should be considered by the DPR, taking into account the measures that will be put in place to ensure appropriate continuity of supervision and to minimize the impact of such changes.

Students should be informed as early as possible if their supervisory team is going to change and should be asked to identify any concerns they may have about the continuity of supervision.

5. Responsibilities of all Supervisors

- 5.1. It is the responsibility of all supervisors to:
 - 5.1.1. Establish a professional and supportive relationship with their student(s), in order to facilitate their development as a researcher.
 - 5.1.2. Ensure that the student has access to the wider national and international research community, including opportunities to network with others in the field, or present their work. This includes participation in relevant conferences and workshops and through dissemination via journal publications.
 - 5.1.3. Encourage students to critically appraise and reflect on the existing literature around the topic area and methods used, and critically interrogate the assumptions of the research project and the results they obtain.
 - 5.1.4. Make clear to students that the research project is the students' own responsibility and that it is the examiners, who are entirely independent of the supervisors, who will ultimately determine the final outcome of the award.
 - 5.1.5. Encourage students' engagement with their research project but remain critical and realistic about students' progress. They are required to record any concerns they have about a student's academic progress and ensure that students are made aware of the consequences of not making satisfactory progress.
 - 5.1.6. Keep up to date with changes and updates to LSTM regulations, codes of practice and procedures governing PGR programmes and bring these to the attention of their students. Supervisors must seek advice from the DPR if they are unclear about any aspects of LSTM regulations. They should also be aware of the various professional and specialist services available to students (e.g. health, finance, disability and immigration) and be able to advise students on how to access such services.
 - 5.1.7. Engender and encourage research practices and collaboration that embody the principles and philosophy of high ethical standards and research integrity.
 - 5.1.8. Address promptly any concerns from students, including but not limited to concerns about the supervisory relationship, seeking advice from the DPR and other members of staff as appropriate.
 - 5.1.9. Engage as required in the professional development activities offered by LSTM in relation to best supervisory practice. This will include training on the regulations and procedures pertaining to postgraduate study and professional development to ensure that the staff member can effectively carry out their responsibilities as a supervisor.
- 5.2. Supervisors must not engage in any activity which could compromise the independence of the *viva voce* examination, which includes consulting with the appointed examiners regarding the scheduled examination (other than about logistical arrangements) or taking part in any formal examination of the thesis or research project, including attending, in any capacity, the examination.

6. Additional Responsibilities of the Primary Supervisor

- 6.1. It is the responsibility of the Primary Supervisor to:
- 6.1.1. Conduct an interview with the prospective PGR student in order to evaluate the suitability of the proposed project and of the applicant. It should be noted that the final decision regarding acceptance of a student is the responsibility of the DPR in accordance with the *Code of Practice on Postgraduate Research Degrees*.
 - 6.1.2. Take the lead within the supervisory team in advising the student on the academic regulations governing the programme and all student-related processes such as registration, payment of fees (including the consequences of non-payment of fees), required timescales for completion, submission of the thesis and examination processes.
 - 6.1.3. Provide guidance about the planning of the research project, set appropriate and clear objectives, targets and deadlines within the overall project plan and critically monitor the student's progress against this plan.
 - 6.1.4. Ensure that the student is provided with an appropriate induction to their research group and academic Department.
 - 6.1.5. Undertake a development needs analysis with the student at the start of their programme to identify an appropriate skills development plan and monitor the student's progress against this plan.
 - 6.1.6. Meet with their full-time students at least once per month and with their part-time students at least once every two months, either in person or remotely. Meetings should have an agenda agreed in advance. The student is responsible after the meetings for producing a record of agreed outcomes. Primary Supervisors should ensure that students are aware that failing to provide a full record of supervisory meetings will affect their ability to meet annual progressions requirements and could lead to an international student losing their current visa status.
 - 6.1.7. Ensure that the student is enabled to complete the requirements of annual progress monitoring within the required timescales and complete the supervisor's evaluation with supportive but critical and realistic feedback in a timely fashion.
 - 6.1.8. Advise the student on issues relating to academic integrity and assist the student in avoiding breaches of LSTM's procedures on such matters.
 - 6.1.9. Advise the student on the processes for requesting a change in registration (e.g. a suspension of studies if the students' personal circumstances prevent them from continuing on their programme temporarily). The Primary Supervisor should explain to the student the implications and the consequences of the change in registration, taking advice as appropriate from the DPR, and must process such requests in a timely fashion.
 - 6.1.10. Be accessible to the student as appropriate at times other than formal supervisory meetings.
 - 6.1.11. Read drafts of the thesis and give feedback within agreed timescales.
 - 6.1.12. Arrange for the student to present their work to staff and other students.
 - 6.1.13. Take the lead in nominating examiners for consideration and approval by the DPR, inform the student of the names of the examiners and ensure that the

student is prepared and supported to undertake the *viva voce* examination. If the student informs the Primary Supervisor of any exceptional or medical circumstances that might affect their performance in the examination, the Primary Supervisor must ensure that the examiners are informed of these circumstances by alerting the DPR, provided that the student has given consent to share this information.

6.2. Where a research student is undertaking off-site or split-site study, the Primary Supervisor has the following additional responsibilities:

6.2.1. To ensure that appropriate monitoring of the student's progress is maintained whilst off-site in line with LSTM expectations.

6.2.2. In the event that the off-site supervisor is no longer able to supervise the student while they are located at the off-site host institution/organisation, the Primary Supervisor must identify an appropriately qualified replacement.

7. Responsibilities of the Second Supervisor(s)

7.1. It is the responsibility of the Second Supervisor and other Supervisors (collectively referred to below as 'Second Supervisors') to:

7.1.1. Consult with the Primary Supervisor on the feasibility of the proposed project and the suitability of the applicant prior to formal offer, and, where appropriate, to participate in the interview of prospective students.

7.1.2. Assist the student and the Primary Supervisor in completing the Development Needs Analysis and developing the skills development plan.

7.1.3. Meet with the student and other members of the supervisory team at least once per term to discuss progress with the project and the direction that the research is taking.

7.1.4. Be available at times other than formal supervisory meetings and provide general support as required to the student and the Primary Supervisor. Depending on the proportion of supervision provided to the student by the Second Supervisor, they may make more or less academic input into the research. It is expected that, the more academic input made (i.e. the greater the percentage supervision provided), the greater the frequency of supervisory meetings between the student and the Second Supervisor.

7.1.5. Provide appropriate mentoring and support in instances where the Primary Supervisor does not have previous supervisory experience. This should include meeting with the student and Primary Supervisor at least once per month for the first twelve months following registration.

8. Entitlements and Responsibilities of Students

8.1. It is the responsibility of all PGR students to:

8.1.1. Become familiar with the LSTM procedures and academic regulations governing their programme, adhere to the content of these documents and be mindful of any notified changes.

8.1.2. Become familiar with the various professional and specialist services available to them.

8.1.3. Take responsibility for the planning of their project with their supervisors and engage with their programme in accordance with agreements made with their supervisors prior to and during their formal registration period.

- 8.1.4. Conduct with their supervisor an annual Development Needs Analysis and undertake skills training in accordance with their agreed skills development plan.
- 8.1.5. Meet regularly with their supervisors and record at least one formal meeting per month (full-time students) or per two months (part-time students). It is strongly advised that students make a written record of all substantive supervisory interactions, however informal (e.g. via an e-mail summary).
- 8.1.6. Work independently on their research and writing their thesis, taking advice when necessary. Students should take ownership and responsibility for meeting agreed objectives and deadlines and ultimately are responsible for the submission of their thesis for examination. Students should be aware that their supervisors play no part in the examination process.
- 8.1.7. Maintain a professional and courteous relationship with their supervisors and be prepared to receive critical feedback of their work. They are entitled to expect, however, that any feedback will be provided by their supervisors in a constructive and supportive way.
- 8.1.8. Agree annual leave with their supervisors in line with their entitlement to 25 working days per annum (including LSTM closed days and closed days of any partner institution in which the student is working as part of a split-site or off-site agreement), plus bank holidays.
- 8.1.9. Raise concerns about their supervision by following the processes in Section 9.

9. Problems with supervision

- 9.1. The Annual Progress Review meeting provides a formal opportunity for students to raise concerns about their supervision. However, students are encouraged to raise concerns about supervision at the time they arise in order that they may be resolved promptly.
- 9.2. If a student is concerned about their supervision, in the first instance they should raise the issue with the supervisor(s) themselves or, if that is not appropriate, with the DPR. If the matter is not resolved, the student should refer to the *Student Complaints Procedure*.