

# **Research Degrees**

# **Professional Doctorate**

# **Supervisors Guidelines**

## **Introduction**

This document provides information about the role and responsibilities of supervisors for students registered for a Professional Doctorate in Education/Health and Social Care. It should be read in conjunction with the [Research Degree Regulations,](https://help.open.ac.uk/documents/policies/research-degree-regulations) the principle means through which The Open University ensures consistency in academic standards across the research degree programmes it offers and also the ***Professional Doctorate Programme Guide.***

Please note that although every effort is made to avoid discrepancies in the information provided, should there be an inconsistency, it is the Research Degree Regulations that will take precedence.

## **Supervision arrangements**

In Year 1, students will only be allocated one supervisor (the main supervisor). Co-supervisors will join the supervisory team in Year 2. Main supervisors who have not supervised to completion will be mentored by an experienced internal or external colleague. Main supervisors and co-supervisors between them must have at least one UK PhD/PD completion.

Area Leads and the EdD/DHSC Programme Leader are responsible, in consultation with their colleagues, for recommending the appointment of PD supervisors to the Research Degrees Committee. All appointments require Research Degree Committee approval.

## **Duties of supervisors and mentors**

Good supervision is an important contributing factor to a student’s successful and timely completion of their research degree. Supervisors are responsible for academic progress and pastoral or personal support of their students, and for dealing with administrative matters. They should provide the guidance and support necessary for the successful completion of the research project. Supervisors must undertake supervisory training and be committed to on-going development of supervision skills in accordance with the Research Degree Regulations (PD 4.11 and Appendix 2).

## **Main supervisor**

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The PD Main Supervisor will be the first point of contact for the student and will supervise and provide academic and pastoral support throughout the period of study using computer mediated communication, telephone and face-to-face (at residential events) as required. For each student supervised this involves:

1. supporting the selection process. Potential supervisors will be invited to contribute to the initial vetting of PD proposals by:
   * recommending acceptance or rejection
   * writing detailed feedback on proposals
   * contributing to the selection interview for candidates.
2. advising the student on locating, interpreting and critically reviewing published material relevant to their thesis topic
3. advising on the selection and practical use of research methodologies and techniques
4. facilitating ways for the student to work effectively with other students on topics of common interest
5. providing study support for the student as required
6. reporting, as required, upon work done and the student’s progress, through providing feedback on all assignments and progress reports
7. confirming the thesis as being worthy of submission
8. attendance at residential events, and conducting individual supervision with the students at these events
9. completing Annual Progress Reports from year 3 onwards.

More specifically, for each student the PD Main Supervisor is required to:

1. contribute to twelve hours of supervision contact during each year of registration, at least half of this contact should be synchronous (e.g. via Skype, an appropriate online conferencing tool, or telephone), with the remaining contact being synchronous or asynchronous (e.g. e-mail), as agreed with the student. The Research Degree Regulations (PD 4.8) require all students to receive a minimum of 5 formal supervision meetings a year, ideally including one face-to-face. ‘Formal’ means that the meeting had been scheduled and that there are jointly agreed notes made on the meeting. The supervision sessions planned during PD residential weekends and day schools may be included towards this requirement.
2. comment upon the formative assignments of their own student
3. mark and comment upon the Year 1 and 2 summative assignment of another student in a similar area, and remark it when appropriate
4. consult with the co-supervisor with regard to arrangements for the final viva examination to ensure that the supervision team nominates a panel and is aware of the date, etc.

## **3.2 Duties of co-supervisor**

Students will be assigned their second supervisor (the co-supervisor) in Year 2. The PD co-supervisor will supervise and provide academic support for students throughout this period of study, individually and/or in small groups, using computer mediated communication, telephone and face-to-face (at residential events) as required. This involves:

1. contributing to twelve hours of supervision during each year of registration (from Year 2). The OU supervision policy requires all students to receive a minimum of 5 formal supervision meetings a year, ideally including one face-to-face. ‘Formal’ means that the meeting had been scheduled and that there are jointly agreed notes made on the meeting.

The supervision sessions planned during PD residential weekends and day schools may be included towards this requirement.

1. commenting upon the formative assignments of their own student and marking and commenting upon the summative assignment of one other PD student in a similar area, and remarking it when appropriate
2. confirming the thesis as being worthy of submission
3. attendance at the residential events and conducting individual supervision with the students at these events
4. completing Annual Progress Reports from year 3 onwards.

## **3.3 Responsibilities of the mentor**

Main and co-supervisors who are new to research degree supervision, or have not supervised to completion, will be paired with an experienced mentor, i.e. a supervisor with supervision to completion.

A mentor will support a main supervisor during the student’s first year. Mentors will be offered the role of co-supervisor during the second year. All new main supervisors will be mentored by their co-supervisor from year 2 and throughout the student’s study, this will include active participation in supervision as evidenced by relevant documentation.

Co-supervisors who are new to research degree supervision will be mentored by the main supervisor.

Who can be a mentor?

* An internal or external academic with supervision to completion
* An academic with an understanding of professional doctorates
* An academic with research expertise in the relevant area

Responsibilities of a mentor

Mentors will support supervisors through:

1. Advising on issues of student progress
2. Advising on level 8 expectations
3. Advising on how to manage problems
4. Reading supervisor feedback on the two formative assignments in Year 1 and discussing it with them in terms of:
   * the extent to which it focuses on evaluating the student’s work in terms of the assessment criteria
   * its sensitivity, skilful identification of issues, and its supportive tone o how it feeds forwards
   * the extent to which it reflects the notion of supervision as pedagogy
   * the extent to which it takes account of the student’s professional role, identity, and workplace context.

During the first year, mentors will communicate with supervisors via a dedicated forum space (under the area [‘monitoring new supervisors’)](https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/forumng/view.php?id=1549974) on the [Professional Doctorate Supervisor](https://learn2.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=207539) website.

Supervisors will need to allow time for mentors to comment on assignments before the feedback to student deadline.

Reporting

Mentors and supervisors will report issues about mentoring to Area Lead or Programme Leader.

## **3.4 Conditions of appointment of supervisors**

The requirements for the appointment of supervisors are outlined in the Research Degree

Regulations. In addition, those appointed as PD main supervisors and co-supervisors have:

1. expert knowledge of the relevant topic area or areas or the research methodology to be employed
2. supervision skills and competence (or for new supervisors the potential to develop these)
3. critical understanding of the research process
4. familiarity with research methods
5. a commitment to being available and accessible to the student as specified
6. a commitment to student-centred learning
7. the ability to work with students from diverse cultural backgrounds
8. an understanding of, and commitment to, equal opportunities policies and practices
9. the ability and willingness to promote the learning of adults, both individually and as a group, through correspondence, computer-mediated communications, telephone and face-to-face supervision
10. prior experience of computer use (for example, word processing and email) and a commitment to supporting students through the PD programme website
11. an organised and systematic approach to work
12. the potential to work successfully both as part of a team and independently
13. good communication skills, both written and oral
14. a commitment to personal staff development
15. some direct knowledge of the professional context in which PD students are likely to be working.

Supervisors must not be involved in a close personal relationship with a student they are appointed to supervise. If a relationship develops after the appointment has been made, alternative arrangements must be put in place for the student’s supervision.

## **General information**

### **Year 1 Assignments**

During Year 1 of the programme, the main supervisor is required to comment on two formative assignments and a final summative assignment from their student. The formative assignments are around 4,000-5,000 words in length, and the summative assignment 10,000 words in length on which the student will be assessed. The main supervisor is required to act as a marker for this summative assignment from a student other than their own. Area Leads will act as second markers.

### **Year 2 Assignments**

During Year 2 of the programme, both the main and co-supervisor are required to comment on two formative assignments. Formative assignments are around 4,000-5,000 words in length. The main and co-supervisor will be required to comment on the summative assignment (research proposal) from a student other than their own.

### **Years 3 and 4 Assignments**

In the third and further years of registration, supervisors will continue to comment on assignments. In Year 3 both supervisors will comment on three formative assignments, and in Year 4 three formative assignments, two of which comprise the draft thesis.

### **Residential weekends**

Residential weekends will be normally held on the following dates:

* 1st weekend in October for Year 1
* 1st weekend in November for Year 2
* 1st weekend in February for Year 3
* Mid March weekend for Year 4

The residential weekends are compulsory for students and supervisors. Attendance at the Residential Weekends is a requirement of the Post.