



University of
St Andrews

Guidance on the use of external supervisors for postgraduate research students

Document type	Guidance
Scope (applies to)	PGR only
Applicability date	31/07/2021
Review / Expiry date	31/07/2024
Approved date	11/08/2021
Approver	Postgraduate research committee
Document owner	Academic Policy Officer
School / unit	Office of the Principal
Document status	Published
Information classification	Public
Equality impact assessment	None
Key terms	Academic policies/Learning and teaching/Supervision
Purpose	This document provides guidance on the use and appointment of external supervisors for postgraduate research students.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.1	Updated responsibility for right to work checks	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	10/08/2021

Guidance on external supervisors for PGR students

Overview

Postgraduate research students should have at least one St Andrews supervisor, normally with at least 50% of the supervisory load. This document provides guidance for situations where it becomes clear, after a student has started their programme, that an external expert is needed to assist with the supervision of a postgraduate research student. Relevant situations might include when:

- i. a member of the supervisory team is unexpectedly absent for more than three months or leaves the university;
- ii. the research project goes in an unanticipated direction which requires expertise which cannot be provided by current staff members;
- iii. there is a breakdown in relationships that cannot be resolved internally.

If need for external expertise is evident from the application stage, cross-institutional supervision, an industrial partnership, or a Global PhD should be arranged before the student matriculates. Where external supervision arrangements can be prepared in advance, the School should speak to Financial Advice and Support (FAS) to agree how fees should be split between the two institutions.

Appointment process

A member of the supervisory team should contact the Director of Postgraduate Research Studies (DoPGR) as soon as it becomes clear that an external supervisor may be needed. The DoPGR will then consult with the Associate Provost Education about the situation and discuss possible external supervisors.

With the Associate Provost Education's support, the DoPGR should approach the proposed external supervisor to gauge their interest and explain the role. If the individual is willing to act as an external supervisor, the DoPGR should obtain a CV, fill out the [external supervisor nomination form](#) and send it to the external supervisor to complete. Once completed, the form will go to the Head of School and Associate Provost Education for approval. Following approval, the form will be forwarded to [Human Resources](#) and the [PGR Team](#) in Registry. The School is responsible for providing the external supervisor with an [appointment letter](#) confirming the expectations for their role.

The DoPGR must also submit a [change of supervisor form](#) if necessary.

Role of the external supervisor

The external supervisor should familiarise themselves with key St Andrews [policies and procedures](#). Schools may ask external supervisors to engage with the online supervisor training. The external supervisor will assist with all aspects of the supervision of the student, including preparation for the annual review and submission of the thesis, through to successful completion of the research degree.

The supervisory team should discuss and agree a supervision plan with the student, which clearly assigns the key duties laid out in the [Supervision of postgraduate research students policy](#). This includes:

- a minimum of 10 substantive meetings with the student each academic year;
- timely feedback on work submitted by the student;
- an annual review of the research skills the student should acquire;
- support in preparing for the annual review, and completion of the supervisor's report;
- maintaining a record of supervision and correspondence with the student.

The supervision plan should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is still meeting the needs of the student and supervisory team.

Payment

External supervision will normally be paid for out of the School budget at a rate of £2000 per year, pro-rated based on the percentage of supervision provided (ie, £400 per year for 20% of the supervisory load). The external supervisor must submit a [fee payment form](#) at the end of the supervision period, or at least once a year if the period extends across multiple academic years. Any required [right to work checks](#) must be completed by the School.

Termination

The external supervisor can end their appointment at any time by giving 3 months' notice, in writing, to the other members of the supervisory team, DoPGR and Head of School.

The University may end the appointment of an external supervisor if their expertise is no longer required, or the DoPGR, Head of School, and Associate Provost Education consider that the supervisor has not properly performed the duties at the level required.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	New guidance	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	01/07/2021
1.1	Updated responsibility for right to work checks	Approved	Emily Feamster, Academic Policy Officer, Principal's Office	10/08/2021