

**Handbook  
for  
Supervisors  
of  
Research  
Postgraduates**

**2023**

# Handbook for Supervisors of Research Postgraduates

Supervising research students can be among the most rewarding of tasks for any scholar. Training the next generation of researchers is among the most exciting and important of our responsibilities. Supervising research students also brings challenges and this handbook aims to equip academic staff with the means to navigate administrative procedures, engage with requirements for Quality Assurance and facilitate the promotion of best practice. It contains important information for both supervisors and departmental representatives on procedures and on their responsibilities.

This Handbook will be more fully revised in 2024 to reflect the new PGR management software which is currently being introduced and which will introduce new online systems and workflows for tasks such as PGR monitoring, examination and extensions. It will also be linked to the supervisor training being introduced to enable accreditation from the UKCGE.

This document is available online at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/docs-handbooks/>

**Please Note:**

This document was accurate at the time of going to press. However, procedures and regulations are periodically updated. If in doubt, please contact the Graduate School.

# 1. Contents

<b>2.</b>	<b>USEFUL INFORMATION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	INTRODUCTION .....	4
2.2	THE GRADUATE SCHOOL.....	4
2.3	USEFUL CONTACTS.....	4
<b>3.</b>	<b>REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION OF STUDENTS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
3.1	REGISTRATION.....	5
3.2	INDUCTION .....	5
<b>4.</b>	<b>RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES .....</b>	<b>5</b>
4.1	ENSURING AN APPROPRIATE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT .....	5
4.2	DEPARTMENTAL HANDBOOKS *.....	7
4.3	ENHANCING THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT .....	7
4.4	RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY .....	7
4.5	AUTHORSHIP.....	8
4.6	HEALTH AND SAFETY ENVIRONMENT .....	8
4.7	DISABILITIES.....	8
<b>5.</b>	<b>SUPERVISION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
5.1	SUPERVISORY TEAM.....	8
5.2	SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATIONS.....	9
5.3	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAIN SUPERVISOR .....	9
5.4	RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECOND SUPERVISOR.....	12
5.5	SUPERVISOR ABSENCE AND RESEARCH LEAVE .....	12
5.6	CHANGING SUPERVISOR .....	13
5.7	EXTERNAL SUPERVISORS .....	13
5.8	SUPERVISORY LOAD .....	13
5.9	RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH STUDENTS.....	13
5.10	INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WITH STUDENT (FORMERLY TIER 4) VISAS.....	14
<b>6.</b>	<b>SUPERVISOR TRAINING AND GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS.....</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1	SUPERVISOR TRAINING .....	14
6.2	EXAMINATION.....	15
<b>7.</b>	<b>MONITORING PROGRESS AND FORMAL ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>15</b>
7.1	GENERAL REQUIREMENTS IN MONITORING PROGRESS.....	15
7.2	REQUIREMENTS OF THE SUPERVISOR.....	15
7.3	REQUIREMENTS OF THE FACULTY.....	15
7.4	INFORMING THE STUDENT ABOUT THE PROGRESS RECOMMENDATION .....	16
7.5	MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM CANDIDATURE.....	16
7.6	CHANGES IN CANDIDATURE .....	16
7.7	SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION OF THE THESIS .....	17
7.8	THE THESIS .....	19
<b>8.</b>	<b>APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND UNACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC PRACTICE .....</b>	<b>19</b>
8.1	APPEALS.....	19
8.2	COMPLAINTS.....	19
8.3	UNACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC PRACTICE (See also above).....	20
<b>9.</b>	<b>MONITORING QUALITY AND STANDARDS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
9.1	QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES .....	20
9.2	SPECIFIC QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE .....	20
<b>10.</b>	<b>Appendix 1 .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Appendix 2 .....</b>	<b>23</b>

## 2. USEFUL INFORMATION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This handbook should be used in conjunction with the following documents, for a comprehensive understanding of Postgraduate Research Issues.

Handbooks are available from the Graduate School and the University website:

Policy and Procedures for the Admissions of Postgraduate Students <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/pg-admissions/>

- Researcher Development Programme Handbook: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms-handbooks/>
- Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms-handbooks/>
- Rules and Regulations <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/regulations/student-rules-regs/>

### 2.2 THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

**The Graduate School** deals with Researcher Development, the provision of facilities for postgraduate students, and the monitoring of academic progress of students. It also has a co-ordinating role in the development of policy relating to postgraduate issues.

**General enquiries** can be directed to Mrs Jan Davies, the Office's Administrator (tel: 01970 622219) email: [graduate.school@aber.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.school@aber.ac.uk).

### 2.3 USEFUL CONTACTS

**The Academic Registry** deals with all queries relating to a student's registration, academic record, results and certification. The Graduate School is responsible for the examination process and gives advice on regulatory queries. **General enquiries** can be directed to 01970 622921 or email: [pgstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:pgstaff@aber.ac.uk).

**The Postgraduate Admissions Office** deals with students up until the time that they register for their degrees. If you have a query regarding a prospective student telephone 01970 622921 or email [pg-admissions@aber.ac.uk](mailto:pg-admissions@aber.ac.uk).

**The Fees Office** deals with student fee accounts. Students wanting to pay fees etc. by credit card or direct debit should contact the Fees Office on 01970 622041, or email [fees@aber.ac.uk](mailto:fees@aber.ac.uk). **Finance Office staff also deal with stipend payments to studentship holders paid via the university.**

**IT and Library Services** (Information Services) provide library, computing and media services to students at Aberystwyth University, and make electronic copies of the final thesis available though in some circumstances will also make hard copies available in the Aberystwyth Research Portal and in Hugh Owen Library, Penglais Campus. SY23 3DZ / 01970 622400 / [is@aber.ac.uk](mailto:is@aber.ac.uk) / [www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/is/)

**Student Support Services** can provide advice on personal matters supervisors may not feel equipped to answer and can provide information on the student support facilities of the university and financial matters. Call 01970 621761 or email on [student-support@aber.ac.uk](mailto:student-support@aber.ac.uk).

**Accessibility Service** – for advice on issues relating to disabled students, transgender and care leavers ([accessibility@aber.ac.uk](mailto:accessibility@aber.ac.uk))

**Advice, Information & Money Service (AIMS)** – advice on issues such student finance and hardship ([student-adviser@aber.ac.uk](mailto:student-adviser@aber.ac.uk))

**Student Wellbeing Service** – Mental Health and Counselling practitioners to support student wellbeing ([studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk](mailto:studentwellbeing@aber.ac.uk))

**The Careers Service** has advisers who can provide advice to postgraduate researchers at all stages of their training and career – see their web site for details: [www.aber.ac.uk/careers/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/careers/)

#### **Student Learning Support**

Help is available for both International and Home students who may be experiencing language difficulties or who wish assistance in strengthening their writing skills.

**The Accommodation Office** can be contacted by calling 01970 622772/2773/1952 or visit the website at [www.aber.ac.uk/en/accommodation/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/accommodation/)

**The Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee** is chaired by the Head of the Graduate School. The Committee meets three times each session to consider student progression and issues affecting research students.

The **Research Degrees Committee** is chaired by the Head of the Graduate School. This Committee takes responsibility for the oversight of research degree candidatures from registration to examination and advises on all matters relating to postgraduate research students. It meets three times a year and is responsible for the quality and standards of research degree programmes.

### 3. REGISTRATION AND INDUCTION OF STUDENTS

#### 3.1 REGISTRATION

Students need to register at the beginning of their studies and again each September of their minimum registration period. Information about the introduction to the University, registration and induction will be sent in advance to all incoming students. Returning students will be informed about the procedure for re-registration by email and via the Academic Registry web pages. Re-registration is subject to satisfactory progress. After formal registration, the University will grant students access to its facilities. It will supply certificates of registration on request to the Academic Registry. For full information see the University's **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates: [www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/docs-handbooks/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/docs-handbooks/)**.

If students have not registered please direct them to Academic Registry.

#### 3.2 INDUCTION

##### **University Induction**

A programme of introduction, registration and induction for all new full-time postgraduates is organised at the beginning of each academic year by the Graduate School and is compulsory. Part-time students are encouraged to attend. The period of Induction also includes initial workshops which are compulsory for all research students. Details of the programme will be available on the website, and the most recent one (which could be last year's programme), can be accessed at: **<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/current-students/induction/>**. Many faculties and departments also offer their own induction programmes and will send out details in advance. Where this is the case, students should attend both University and faculty/departmental induction. Alternative induction arrangements are provided in March for students who register at the beginning of semester two.

##### **Faculty and Departmental Induction**

During the induction period, faculties and/or departments will provide supplementary information about postgraduate research in the relevant subject, the names and contact details of the student's supervisors and information about how supervisory arrangements work. They will also provide details about opportunities that exist for meeting other research students and staff at departmental level and beyond, and for developing scholarly competence and independent thought.

The supervisor should meet with the student during the induction period and agree on their plans for the programme including the following:

- The desired outcomes of the programme with planned objectives of the research, taking account of the sponsor's requirements where appropriate;
- The training and general educational needs of the student, measured against the **Researcher Development Framework** [see Appendix 1];
- The means by which the student will communicate progress to the supervisor(s) and how they will arrange regular meetings;
  - Monitoring of progress in the research and training aspects of the programme.

### 4. RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES

#### 4.1 ENSURING AN APPROPRIATE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

##### **Research Culture**

Postgraduate research is integrated into the research culture and activity of the University and takes place in an academic environment which fosters and actively supports an advanced level of creative and independent scholarship. Indicators of high quality research include demonstrable research achievement on the part of staff (in terms of research outputs), sufficient numbers of research-active staff, including post-doctoral researchers and research students, and the ability to attract external funding.

Central to the University's research culture for postgraduate students is the Graduate School. Details may be found at **[www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/)**. A key purpose of the Graduate School is to foster a sense of community and to introduce students to multidisciplinary research.

Other components of a supportive environment for postgraduate research include:

- The provision of supervisors with the necessary skills and knowledge to facilitate the successful completion of students' research programmes within the completion periods;
- Appropriate research skills and continuing professional development training [see **Researcher Development Framework**, Appendix 1];
- Guidance on research ethics and research misconduct, intellectual property and plagiarism, and health and safety issues;
- Access to appropriate welfare and support facilities;
- Opportunities for students to exchange ideas with other researchers, and to develop peer support networks;
- Opportunities for postgraduate-run initiatives (e.g. seminars, conferences, and journals);
- Opportunity for effective student representation and addressing students' feedback, including complaints;
- Sufficient implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that where a project is undertaken in collaboration with another institution or organisation, the standards of both are maintained

In some areas of study, in order to provide and nurture an adequate and appropriate environment for postgraduate research, departments will need to consider collaboration with cognate disciplines or through collaborative arrangements with other institutions or organisations.

### **Facilities**

In accepting a research student, the University and the Department concerned are committing themselves to providing the facilities required to undertake the agreed research project. The nature and extent of support facilities will vary according to the field of research and the research project itself. If it is the policy to charge students for using any of the facilities or to limit access in any way this will be clearly indicated at the outset of the research. As outlined in the **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates**, among the support facilities which will be made available, subject to the requirements of the project and the resources available, will be:

- a) Appropriate working space, preferably within the student's immediate work environment;
- b) Information Services provides study places for around 1100 students in two libraries, one of which is open 24 hours during term-time. Alongside traditional borrowing of printed books, there are over 40,000 e-journal titles, 100,000 e-books, and dozens of databases available on and off campus. Additional services include More Books (stock selection by students) and Document Supply (inter- library loans). The National Library of Wales (the copyright library for Wales) is located close by and can be used for reference by University students and staff.
- c) Over 500 desktop computers are provided on campus, and a range of applications software. The wireless network (eduroam) has extensive coverage across campus including teaching rooms, libraries and some outdoor spaces. All students and staff enjoy email through Office 365, a cloud-based service which includes 50GB store for emails and files. A self-service, combined printing, photocopying and scanning service is available at multiple campus locations.
- d) Where appropriate to the research project, access to laboratory facilities, laboratory consumables, scientific instrumentation and photographic services, etc;
- e) Appropriate photocopying and postage facilities and, where directly relevant to the research project, appropriate access to internal and external telephone networks;
- f) Support to attend conferences and similar events;
- g) Appropriate research and skills training.

### **Part-time research students**

Departments and supervisors will ensure the effective supervision of research students who are registered on a part-time basis and will take into account the particular problems and conditions which may arise from part-time research, especially where the student is remote from Aberystwyth. In particular, regular contact must be maintained between supervisors and part-time research students who are not resident in Aberystwyth. Information Services will advise students how they can access computing and library facilities both remotely and when they are in Aberystwyth.

### **Writing up period**

The period between the end of the registration period and the latest submission deadline is generally referred to as the 'writing up' period. Research students who do not complete their thesis by the end of the normal period of registration will still receive supervision and will be given free access to University library and IT facilities. Full-time students will, on request, be exempt from Council Tax in the writing up year. MPhil students may also be exempt for six months after the end of registration. Writing up students cannot apply for temporary withdrawal.

#### 4.2 DEPARTMENTAL HANDBOOKS \*

(\* For some students this may be done at Faculty level)

The department must ensure that the necessary range of facilities, learning and teaching tools, and research equipment is available before considering admission for specific areas of study. In some cases these facilities, including office or working space, are defined, required or recommended by the relevant research council or sponsoring body. Departments should ensure that students are made aware of how to access any research or training support funds to which they are entitled or for which they can apply.

Departments must ensure that students are informed of policy and practice for supervision, normally through issuing a **departmental research handbook**, either printed or web based. It should detail the availability of facilities, general resources and specialist equipment, including:

- Research environment and facilities (including opportunities to enhance research skills, e.g. departmental research seminars and doctoral training workshops): see 3.1.2 above
- Departmental induction
- Reviews and monitoring, including criteria for completion of probation and, where relevant, upgrading from MPhil to PhD, and for progression
- Record keeping
- Feedback and student representation
- Opportunities for teaching and training and mentoring schemes
- Intellectual property
- Research Ethics and Good Practice
- Health and Safety
- Guidelines on correct attribution of authorship for papers to which both student and supervisor contribute
- Welfare
- The routes which the student should follow in the event of supervisory difficulties.

#### 4.3 ENHANCING THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

It is essential that postgraduate students should be fully aware of the current research interests and range of activity undertaken by the members of the department. The department should advertise, internally and externally, its research interests and outputs. Departments should make every effort to involve postgraduate students in their research.

Departments should encourage students to become members of relevant academic societies, and to attend and deliver papers at departmental research seminars and university or external subject colloquia and conferences.

#### 4.4 RESEARCH ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

The university is committed to ensuring that all research activity, whether conducted by staff, or undergraduate or postgraduate students, adheres to published guidelines on good practice and employs appropriate and ethically sound methodologies.

Developing an awareness of these issues is also an important element in the training of the next generation of researchers.

Guidance on good practice in research can be consulted at [www.aber.ac.uk/ethics](http://www.aber.ac.uk/ethics) and it is the supervisors' responsibility to familiarise themselves with the issues addressed in that document. They should note that the university attaches considerable importance to the raising of awareness in young researchers of the need to develop sound methodologies in the conduct of their research, and to develop an understanding of good practice. Consequently, all departments are required to assess the ethical implications of student research projects at the beginning of the programme of study and to review them regularly as part of their monitoring procedures. All students must at the very minimum complete an online ethical assessment.

Given that theses will be available online and in the library, supervisors should be particularly aware of the representation of interviewee data in theses. Interviewee methodologies, documentation and anonymisation processes should be clear enough for readers to know that either an interviewee has accepted identification or partial identification (work place or online user name, for example) or that interviewees have been robustly anonymised, as indicated in sample consent forms.

**Please note that research involving animals follows a different ethical approval route.**

The online ethical assessment form allows departments to assess the ethical implications of research projects. This allows departments to consider whether *departmental approval* can be provided or whether an application should be made to the University Research Ethics panel.

Supervisors and departments will give detailed advice on what is required and students should recognise the need for ethical review of the procedures which they are likely to adopt in their research. Training sessions and drop-ins are frequently organised through the Department of Research, Business & Innovation, details can be requested through [ethics@aber.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@aber.ac.uk)

Research councils and professional associations often provide advice on ethical issues and it is an expectation that supervisors will ensure that research students are familiar with these, regardless of whether they directly relate to a student's research, as part of their professional training.

The University also complies with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The concordat sets out commitments that will provide assurances to government, the wider public and the international community that research in the UK continues to be underpinned by the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

Developed in collaboration with the funding and research councils, the Wellcome Trust and various government departments, the concordat will:

- Provide better coordination of existing approaches to research integrity
- Enable more effective communication of efforts to ensure that the highest standards of rigour and integrity continue to underpin all our research
- Encourage greater transparency and accountability at both institutional and sector levels
- Stimulate reflection on current practices to identify where improvements can be made.

More information about the Concordat to support research integrity can be found here:

<http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/good-practice/research-integrity/>

#### **4.5 AUTHORSHIP**

Supervisors and research students often work together to produce papers for conferences or publication. This is part of a research relationship and is to be encouraged whenever appropriate. However, correct attribution of authorship must be ensured. Disciplinary practice on this varies, and both students and supervisors should adhere to disciplinary norms, often available through professional associations. If in any doubt, contributors are advised to consult with Faculty Associate Deans.

#### **4.6 HEALTH AND SAFETY ENVIRONMENT**

The University is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, students, and others, together with the environmental affected by our activities. Everyone in the University Community has a responsibility for protecting the health, safety and environment, it is the specific responsibility of supervisors to ensure their graduate students identify hazards associated with their work and manage the risk control measures to a tolerable level. This will involve developing a risk assessment that includes foreseeable significant risk of harm and may include additional training needs for the student and supervisor.

For further information, please access the HS&E webpages : <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hse/>, contact your Departmental HS&E Co-ordinator or contact the HS&E Team through [hasstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:hasstaff@aber.ac.uk) or 2073.

#### **4.7 DISABILITIES**

The University aims to provide all students with an experience of the highest quality, and to make academic facilities available to all who meet the entrance requirements.

For disabled students, those with long standing physical/mental health conditions or a specific learning difference, we aim for an inclusive curriculum accessible to all, adapted accommodation, and access to learning areas which are equipped with computers, special hardware, additional software and laptop access. Accessibility Advisers can offer advice on individual examination arrangements and enabling technology so that disabled students can reach their full potential.

The University will endeavor to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students where the course content allows. There may be certain instances where adjustments cannot be made (e.g.: where field trips are an essential part of the work). It is therefore advisable to deal with these issues during the admissions process wherever possible. For further information see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/accessibility/disability-learning-support/>

Further information about support for students with disabilities – email: [accessibility@aber.ac.uk](mailto:accessibility@aber.ac.uk) or phone us on (01970) 621761 or 622087.

## **5. SUPERVISION**

### **5.1 SUPERVISORY TEAM**

It is the University's policy that each student will have a minimum of one main supervisor, who will be part of a supervisory team. At least two members of staff must be involved in the supervision of each research student. The supervisory team may also include the departmental postgraduate coordinator and/or other research-active staff.

#### **Joint supervision**



Joint supervision refers to the practice where a research student has two main supervisors rather than a main and secondary. The case for Joint Supervision is on research grounds where the student's topic EITHER cannot be adequately supervised by one member of staff OR where there are clear advantages in bringing two perspectives to bear on a more regular basis than would normally be the case with a secondary supervisor. Joint supervisors have the same responsibilities as main supervisors.

On occasion joint supervision might involve staff from two different academic Departments. In this instance, one Department must be clearly identified as the lead Department and take responsibility for the student.

The student will be expected to conform to the norms and expectations of that Department for research students.

## 5.2 SUPERVISOR QUALIFICATIONS

Normally, the main supervisor:

- Will have a PhD or appropriate professional expertise
- Will be a permanent member of the academic staff at this University
- Will have already been part of a supervisory team that has seen the successful completion of at least one PhD
- Will have undertaken relevant training regarding supervision and institution-specific policies and supervision procedures
- Will have relevant and recent research expertise in the proposed topic area of the thesis.

Normally, the second supervisor:

- Will have a PhD or appropriate professional expertise
- Will be a permanent member of the academic staff at this University or collaborating institution or organisation
- Will have undertaken relevant training regarding supervision and institution-specific policies and supervision procedures
- Does **not** necessarily need to have specialist knowledge of the proposed topic area but should be research active in the discipline or field of study, broadly defined

Probationary staff members may act as supervisors (either main or second) provided that they have completed the relevant training, have the relevant qualifications and experience, and are paired with more experienced members of academic staff as part of the supervisory team.

The Graduate School runs regular supervisor workshops which cover all essential aspects of PGR supervision at AU: see [https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list\\_courses.php](https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list_courses.php)

Provided that the main supervisor is a full-time member of staff at this University, a second supervisor who is part-time or who is employed at another institution or organisation may be part of the supervisory team. This can arise in cases of:

- Students undertaking projects run jointly with another university;
- Supervisors leaving or retiring from this university;
- Research projects requiring specialist input.

Please note that neither supervisor may be appointed as an examiner for their candidate's thesis.

## 5.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MAIN SUPERVISOR

### 5.3.1 *General Expectations*

The responsibilities of the main supervisor, the second supervisor (see below) and the research student (see below) are also outlined in the University's **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates**.

The responsibilities of the main supervisor include in particular:

- (a) Possessing sufficient knowledge of the research area to provide accurate guidance and advice on the feasibility and progress of the student's programme of research, and to facilitate the production of high quality research work;
- (b) Being accountable to the relevant Department and Faculty for monitoring the progress of the research;
- (c) Establishing and maintaining regular contact with the student according to any agreed schedule, and being accessible at appropriate times for consultation by whatever means is most suitable given the student's location and mode of study (the normal expectation would be 1 hour per fortnight over 44 weeks or the equivalent, as appropriate, throughout 3 years of full-time study: one hour per month for part-time);
- (d) Having input into the assessment of a student's development needs
- (e) Reading written drafts produced by the student and providing constructive and effective feedback within a specified time (as a guidance, feedback on a chapter should be provided within 3 working weeks);
- (f) Alerting the student if either the progress or standard of the research work is unsatisfactory, and arranging any supportive action which may be necessary;
- (g) Ensuring that the student is aware of the need to exercise probity and conduct his/her research according to ethical

principles, and of the implications of research misconduct;

- (h) Ensuring that students are advised at an early stage in their registration of the essential need to avoid conduct amounting to the fabrication of research results or plagiarism;
- (i) Helping the student to interact with others working in the field of research, for example, encouraging the student to attend relevant conferences, supporting him/her in seeking funding for such events; and where appropriate to submit conference papers and articles to refereed journals;
- (j) Exercising any relevant formal duties in relation to health and safety regulations;
- (k) Maintaining the necessary supervisory expertise, including the appropriate skills, to perform all of the role satisfactorily, supported by relevant continuing professional development opportunities;
- (l) Ensuring that there is sufficient uninterrupted time available to dedicate to the needs of each individual research student that they are supervising;
- (m) Ensuring that the student receives due credit for any contribution to a collaborative project and providing advice on academic publication and intellectual property rights;
- (n) Providing effective pastoral support and/or referring the student to other sources of such support, including student advisers (or equivalent), the Postgraduate Co-ordinator and others within the student's academic community;
- (o) Ensuring that the student is aware of institutional- level sources of advice, including careers guidance, and equal opportunities policy;
- (p) Nurturing a sense of personal responsibility in research students for the quality of their research.
- (q) Reading and commenting on the whole of the thesis before submission (see further below)

Supervisors should be particularly sensitive to the diverse needs of individual students, including international students, and should be aware of the range of support available and how the students can access it.

### **5.3.2 Monitoring Progress and Record Keeping**

The main supervisor is responsible for reporting regularly on the student's progress in accordance with the procedures of the Department and Faculty, Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee, and for informing the student of the key issues of such reports. For progression students may be required to have submitted a substantial piece of written work (usually one or two chapters and a full research proposal and plan) of a satisfactory standard that has been read by the candidate's main supervisor AND another member of staff. The supervisor should provide specific evidence where the decision is not to recommend satisfactory progress, e.g. requiring further probationary reports, advising the student to withdraw temporarily, requiring the student to withdraw from the programme or recommending the transfer to an MPhil rather than continuing to pursue a PhD. (For details of the role in progression see Section 6). Further information about University monitoring procedures, including proceeding from the probationary period and upgrading from a research Master's degree to a PhD, withdrawal, and suspension can be found in the University's **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates** available at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms-handbooks/>

In addition to monitoring report forms, and records of training needs analysis (see above) records of formal meetings between supervisors and students which summarise the key discussion items and action points may be kept. An example may be found in Appendix 2. This record of the meeting must be seen and agreed to by both the supervisor and the student, with a final approved record being maintained by the department in the student's file. Some departments require the student to record the main outcomes of their meetings with supervisors, including agreed actions by all parties, and the date of the next meeting. This record is given to the supervisor who reviews it to ensure that it is an accurate reflection of the discussions. Supporting information relating to extenuating circumstances should also be kept. The supervisor must provide detailed advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the student is informed of progression requirements, their progress and that the thesis may be submitted within the scheduled time.

In the case of international students who require a student visa, there are additional requirements for monitoring and recording progress which the Compliance Office will make known to supervisors.

### **5.3.3 Training Needs Analysis**

Research and skills training in different fields of research activity will be determined by Faculties and Departments in conjunction with the Head of the Graduate School. Attention must be paid to the differing needs of differing cohorts of postgraduates and of individual postgraduates. Each student's research training, skills and development needs will be identified and agreed jointly by the student and the appropriate staff (usually the main supervisor in consultation with the Faculty Director of Postgraduate Studies) during the Induction period, and regularly reviewed during the research programme and amended as appropriate. The Faculty Research Monitoring bodies are responsible for ensuring that each student's research training, skills and development needs are being addressed. When postgraduate students are provided with opportunities for teaching or demonstrating, appropriate guidance and support is provided at departmental and/or institutional level. Where this activity also extends to assessing students, training will reflect this. It is the responsibility of departments to ensure that students receive sufficient training to enable them to perform these tasks. Within departments postgraduates will usually be part of a larger teaching team in

order for them to benefit from the support and mentoring provided by experienced staff. For further information about research training, see the University's [Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates](#), and the [Researcher Development Handbook](#) provided by the Graduate School and relevant departmental handbooks.

#### **5.3.4 Delivering Training**

The Roberts Report on Research Assessment recommended that the equivalent of at least two weeks per year is allocated to transferable skills training. This training may be provided by the department or University or externally. Supervisors must allow students time to meet these training requirements. These needs may be specified by the research funding council sponsoring the student, and ring-fenced funding may be available for the training. Supervisors should familiarise themselves with how students can access such funding and also with how they can apply for any other Research Council, University or departmental research, training or skills funding and opportunities that might be available. The Postgraduate Admissions website provides useful information: [www.aber.ac.uk/en/postgrad/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/postgrad/).

#### **5.3.5 Reviewing Written Work and Providing Feedback**

The supervisor must read written drafts produced by the student and provide constructive and effective feedback within a specified time (feedback on a chapter should normally be provided within three working weeks). Where requested, the supervisor must also provide advice and feedback on other assessment pieces, e.g. for departmental or university research training modules. **This also must be done in time to enable work to be returned with feedback within the standard three week period. This is regarded by the Graduate School as a key role.**

A supervisor is expected to read and comment upon the whole of the thesis before submission and give feedback on its strengths and deficiencies. Theses should be the work of the students and not the supervisors, but supervisors should advise students to enable them to remedy major problems. Supervisors should alert students to weaknesses in language, presentation or layout, but it is not the role of the supervisors to act as copy editors or proof readers. The submission may be delayed if a thesis is seriously defective and the student has time before the deadline to revise the work.

The student, in consultation with the supervisor, should then determine when the thesis is considered suitable for submission. Both parties should be aware however of the candidature deadlines regarding submission. Please see Section 6 for details of submission deadlines. Students unable to meet their deadlines may (only in exceptional circumstances) apply for an extension of time limit in which to submit their thesis. If students are intending to apply for an extension they should agree, with the supervisors, a timetable for completion in advance of the application. For further information see the University's [Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates](#).

#### **5.3.6 Intellectual Property, Unacceptable Academic Practice, Plagiarism and Referencing**

The supervisor should advise the student on issues relating to intellectual property (including the University's policy on Intellectual Property Rights, see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/hr/policy-and-procedure/au-and-bu/intellectual-property/>), unacceptable academic practice and plagiarism and should be aware of the University's procedures for dealing with research misconduct. Further information on these issues can be found in the University's [Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates](#). The supervisor is responsible for acquainting the student with the conventions **applicable in the field** as regards bibliographical references and of the acceptable form for footnotes and/or endnotes in the thesis. Guidance on the preparation of the thesis for submission is provided by the Academic Registry prior to submission of the thesis.

The final thesis must be suitable for Open Access, so third party copyright needs to be considered before the final thesis is deposited in the Aberystwyth Research Portal. If a lot of third party material (images or long quotations, for example) has been used without permission, it can be removed with citations left in place.

Draft work submitted to supervisors that does not meet standards of proper academic practice will be handled in the first instance by the supervisor giving feedback on draft work. Where a student is attempting systematically to represent the work of others as their own, the student will be referred to the Research Monitoring Committee and possibly be prevented from progressing further in his/her degree programme. In all cases, the action to be taken by the student and supervisor, will be clearly communicated to the student in writing along with the potential consequences of non-compliance. A full set of documentation on the problem and the outcome will be retained by the department.

Unacceptable academic practice in formal assessment of research training module assignments or of the thesis itself will be dealt with through the University's Unacceptable Academic Practice procedures, at:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/regulations/uap/>

#### **5.3.7 Protecting Sensitive Research**

Occasionally material contained within the thesis may be seen to be commercially sensitive or, for some other reason, the student may wish to restrict access to the thesis. In such cases, if there is a hard print copy, the supervisor (in conjunction with the Head of Department) should submit a request for a bar on access (which will prevent public access to the thesis for a specified period) to the Research Degrees Committee via the Graduate School. It is important that the request be made as soon as possible. If it is only recognised at the point of submission of the final thesis, a number of unnecessary difficulties may arise. If the student wishes

only to restrict access to the electronic thesis in the Aberystwyth Research Portal, they may do so on the Electronic Thesis Declaration form with authorization from their Faculty.

Externally funded theses are subject to the same Open Access requirements as staff journal outputs (<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/good-practice/open-access/who/>), with AHRC offering the longest acceptable embargo period (12 months) before the full text should be Open Access. Faculty need to be aware of this requirement when organizing electronic thesis deposit and when authorising embargo periods, and should get in touch with Information Services to record acceptable exemptions (due to contracts with industrial partners, for example).

Independently of the above, Information Services also conduct brief checks of electronic theses before making them Open Access, and will permanently embargo those identified as posing a high risk of data protection and/or 3rd party copyright infringements, and these embargos may also affect the fund holder's ability to meet Open Access requirements.

### **5.3.8 Preparing for the Viva**

The supervisor should help prepare the student for the viva by confirming the format of the examination board, explaining the procedures for the oral examination and ensuring that the student understands the possible decisions of the examination board, and their implications. Further information can be found in the **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates**. Where possible, the supervisor should arrange for the student to have a 'mock' viva in advance of the event. The Graduate School facilitates viva workshops on a regular basis: see [https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list\\_courses.php](https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list_courses.php)

### **5.3.9 Role of the Supervisor in the Examination Process**

A candidate's supervisor may not act as an examiner of the thesis but may attend the oral examination at the invitation of the chair and with the prior consent of the candidate. The supervisor may speak only when invited to do so by the chair.

### **5.3.10 Role of the Supervisor in Monitoring Teaching Commitments**

Postgraduate research students often teach and/or demonstrate within Departments. This is supported as a practice by the University as part of career development and training. Departments are expected to provide students with support for these activities.

The primary purpose of the supervisor is to ensure that these activities **support** a student's career development and do not **jeopardise** the thesis. If a supervisor has concerns, they should be raised within the Department, Faculty or with the Head of the Graduate School.

### **Role of the Supervisor in Continuing Professional Development**

The University recognises that it is highly desirable for research students to develop a range of skills, not least to prepare them for future employment and enhance their career opportunities. Some of these may be directly related to their research, others more tangential. It is the responsibility of the supervisory team to advise and encourage research students to develop their skills. A range of CPD and training programmes are available (details at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/pg-skills-training/>). Supervisors are also expected to be aware of AU's guidance to research students with regard to CPD and the number of credits they are advised to accumulate (details available at <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/researcher/guidance/>).

The University is working towards full compliance with the Post Graduate Employment Charter.

## **5.4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECOND SUPERVISOR**

The role of the second supervisor is normally to provide support to the main supervisor and advice to the student on more general issues or at times when the main supervisor is temporarily unavailable (this may include periods when the main supervisor is on research leave). Second supervisors should expect to attend at least one meeting with the student and the main supervisor each term and to read drafts of the student's work so that they can make a meaningful contribution to formal monitoring processes. The second supervisor may also act as a mentor for the student's Continuing Professional Development. The second supervisor need not be a subject specialist and is not normally expected to act as a permanent substitute for the main supervisor should the latter cease to be involved in the student's supervision.

Postgraduate students are advised to discuss complaints or grievances concerning the main supervisor with the second supervisor or the named postgraduate coordinator in the department or Faculty or the Faculty Associate Dean - Research, in the first instance. If they cannot be resolved at this level, students should follow the complaints procedure outlined in the University's **Code of Practice for Research Postgraduates**.

In cases of co- (or joint) supervision, both supervisors share the academic advisory role.

## **5.5 SUPERVISOR ABSENCE AND RESEARCH LEAVE**

During prolonged periods of absence by a supervisor (i.e. for more than a month) or upon the departure of a supervisor the Department will make appropriate provision to support the student's research, which should be discussed with and specified to the student in advance of the absence or departure.

Although recognising the importance of protecting staff on research leave from other academic duties, policy here is guided by the principle that students should receive unbroken and continuous support throughout their period of study. This policy also recognises that procedures for granting research leave include Heads of Departments reassuring the University that all teaching

(including supervision) has been satisfactorily covered. Ordinarily the following principles should apply. Exceptional cases should be made to the Head of the Graduate School.

- When the primary supervisor is on research leave, the expectation is that they will continue to act as supervisor. It may be that the second supervisor or an alternative will take over some of the responsibilities of the primary including the regular meetings, completion of monitoring and other forms, and the provision of pastoral care. Recognising that the second supervisor may not always possess the detailed subject knowledge, the primary supervisor will also normally read and comment on drafts of submitted work when on research leave. It is recognised however that the nature of research leave may make it impractical for the primary supervisor to return work within the normal three week period. The second supervisor may be able to provide more rapid feedback.
- When the primary and secondary supervisor are both on leave at the same time, then the Department should make arrangements to ensure that the student remains adequately supervised. This may involve a 3rd colleague with relevant experience, or arrangements whereby the primary and secondary maintain regular supervisory contact. These should be discussed with the student. These arrangements must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School in advance of the two members of staff going on research leave.
- If the student is producing a final draft before submission, then the primary supervisor will read and comment on this in all but the most exceptional of circumstances

### **5.6 CHANGING SUPERVISOR**

By mutual agreement between the student and the University, and where permitted by the terms of any sponsorship agreement, supervisory responsibilities can be changed, at the request of either the student or a supervisor. The Academic Registry must be notified of any change of supervisor via MyPGR

Students who are not happy with their supervisory arrangements may follow the procedure described in Appendix 3 of this Handbook. Staff who no longer wish to be involved in supervision of a candidate should discuss their concerns with the PGR coordinator/ head of their department. The context for this discussion is that the University has an obligation to provide supervision to a candidate and will have to make alternative arrangements. Supervisors cannot simply independently opt out of supervision. However, where a student is behaving unreasonably or not making satisfactory progress, disciplinary action can be taken against the student. The University equally has obligations towards supervisors, who should not have to tolerate any unacceptable behaviour.

### **5.7 EXTERNAL SUPERVISORS**

In cases where the second supervisor is employed by another institution or organisation, the department must have procedures in place to ensure that the supervisor meets the qualifications as outlined in Section 4 of this handbook. The general suitability of the external supervisor will be reviewed by the Head of the Graduate School, and approval should be sought as early as possible. The supervisory arrangements cannot be agreed with the student without the prior approval of the Head of the Graduate School.

Only in exceptional cases should an external supervisor be appointed as a main/primary supervisor. Permission for this must be sought from the Head of the Graduate School.

Full responsibility for supervising the student remains with the department concerned, the Faculty and the University. The department must make clear to external supervisors what is expected of them.

### **5.8 SUPERVISORY LOAD**

Normally supervisors should undertake the supervision of not more than six full-time equivalent research students. Heads of Departments will take into account research postgraduate supervisory responsibilities in calculating the overall teaching loads of their staff, as well as research, administration and other responsibilities, for example, external examining duties and other professional commitments. They should take into account that the normal supervisory expectation would be 1 hour per fortnight over 44 weeks or the equivalent, as appropriate, throughout 3 years of full-time study: one hour per month for part-time. They should also take into account that the final writing-up period can be extremely demanding on supervisors.

### **5.9 RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCH STUDENTS**

The responsibilities of research students include in particular:

- (a) Taking responsibility for their own personal and professional development;
- (b) Accepting ultimate responsibility for their own research activity and in particular for the direction of and innovation in the research project as it develops, and maintaining regular contact with their supervisor according to an agreed schedule;
- (c) Ensuring that satisfactory progress is made in relation to the programme of work and the timetable agreed with the

supervisor, including the submission of written drafts within agreed periods of time and preparing adequately for meetings with supervisors;

- (d) Ensuring that any problems regarding the research are drawn to the attention of the supervisor and providing adequate explanation for any failure to attend meetings or meet other commitments, so that appropriate guidance may be offered;
- (e) Providing periodic progress reports on the research, as required by the supervisor or by Departmental or Faculty rules. In addition, preparing a brief formal progress report each year for the Faculty Associate Dean - Research for onward transmission to Faculty Research Student Monitoring Committees;
- (f) Developing, in consultation with the supervisor, an agreed schedule for progressing and submitting the thesis in a timely manner;
- (g) Deciding, in consultation with the supervisor and in accordance with the agreed timetable, when to submit the thesis;
- (h) Ensuring that they submit the thesis within the maximum time limit outlined in Table 1 (page 13), and that contact is maintained with the supervisor during the writing up period;
- (i) Maintaining clear, accurate, detailed and accessible records of work undertaken, irrespective of the field of research, keeping a full record of supervisions (to be agreed by their supervisor) and a record of their progress;
- (j) Identifying their own training and developmental needs, communicating these to the supervisor, and ensuring they meet the University's requirements for training and skill development, and making appropriate use of teaching or learning facilities made available by the University, completing any programme of training required or arranged by, or through, the University or a third party;
- (k) Communicating research findings as appropriate to others in the academic community, both orally and in writing;
- (l) Accepting ultimate responsibility for their own candidacy and ensuring that any circumstances that might require the mode of study to be modified or the registration to be extended, suspended or withdrawn, are brought to the attention of the supervisor, the relevant Faculty and the Academic Registry at the earliest opportunity;
- (m) Ensuring that they are familiar with university regulations and policies that affect them or those of any other interested party, including the regulations for their qualification, health and safety, intellectual property, unfair practice and ethical research guidelines;
- (n) Acting generally as a responsible member of the University's academic community.

#### **5.10 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WITH STUDENT (FORMERLY TIER 4) VISAS**

The Home Office places stringent requirements on Universities to guarantee that students on visas are fully engaged in legitimate study and resident in Aberystwyth. This requires supervisors to log the attendance and engagement each month of such students at supervisory meetings. The University's Compliance Office will provide supervisors with information on students and confirm the process. Failure to provide monthly confirmation of engagement in a timely manner may endanger a student's visa.

The Compliance Office have a responsibility to ensure that UKVI rules are adhered to as breaches may result in the University losing its sponsor license and therefore lose the ability to employ and teach non UK/Irish staff/students.

## **6. SUPERVISOR TRAINING AND GUIDANCE FOR EXAMINERS**

### **6.1 SUPERVISOR TRAINING**

It is the University's policy that all research supervisors receive appropriate training.

The University's training for research supervisors operates in two parts: A. for staff new to supervision, or who have not supervised a research student for five or more years and B. for all supervisors (to exchange good practice and keep up-to-date with the requirements of the University, UKRI and QAA). See [https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list\\_courses.php](https://stafftraining.bis.aber.ac.uk/sd/list_courses.php) for available workshops.

- A. When the primary supervisor is on research leave, the expectation is that they will continue to act as supervisor. It may be that the second supervisor or an alternative will take over some of the responsibilities of the primary including the regular meetings, completion of monitoring and other forms, and the provision of pastoral care. Recognising that the second supervisor may not always possess the detailed subject knowledge, the primary supervisor will also normally read and comment on drafts of submitted work when on research leave. It is recognised however that the nature of research leave may make it impractical for the primary supervisor to return work within the normal three week period. The second supervisor may be able to provide more rapid feedback.
- B. When the primary and secondary supervisor are both on leave at the same time, then the Department should make arrangements to ensure that the student remains adequately supervised. This may involve a 3rd colleague with relevant experience, or arrangements whereby the primary and secondary maintain regular supervisory contact. These should be discussed with the

student. These arrangements must be approved by the Head of the Graduate School in advance of the two members of staff going on research leave. If the student is producing a final draft before submission, then the primary supervisor will read and comment on this in all but the most exceptional of circumstances

The University encourages supervisors working in other organisations, industry or professional practice to participate as appropriate in supervisory training offered by the University. Faculties are asked to inform the Graduate School of the names of such supervisors.

A more comprehensive set of workshops is being introduced in line with UK Council for Graduate Education guidance, which can lead to accreditation, and supervisors are encouraged to take part.

## **6.2 EXAMINATION**

Examiners are nominated by departments and approved by a panel chaired by the Head of the Graduate School. The Panel will ensure that external examiners have the appropriate disciplinary focus and experience of examining/supervising research students.

The Graduate School sends both examiners the following documents:

- A copy of the relevant University Regulations
- Notes for External and Internal Examiners and for Convenors and Chairpersons of Examining Boards

In addition, the external examiner receives:

- The relevant section of the University's Academic Quality Handbook for External Examiners

## **7. MONITORING PROGRESS AND FORMAL ASSESSMENT**

### **7.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS IN MONITORING PROGRESS**

Section 4 outlines the University's policy on supervision including the role of the supervisor in monitoring progress, the frequency of meetings/contact with the supervisor and the minimum expectations with regard to record keeping.

The purpose of monitoring progress (and, where specified, of assessing pieces of written work) is to ensure that the research is being conducted according to an agreed timetable and to provide feedback to the student on areas for improvement.

### **7.2 REQUIREMENTS OF THE SUPERVISOR**

The Annual Monitoring Report (see above) is completed and signed by both the student and the supervisors, and the signature is also required of the Head of Department, so that an informed recommendation can be made on whether or not the student may be permitted to continue with their studies. The supervisor's recommendation is based upon the department's progression criteria and is informed through the regular meetings/discussions held between the student and supervisor.

The recommendation of the supervisor is however not a final decision, but it is forwarded for consideration by the Faculty Research Monitoring Committee who in turn report to the Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee.

### **7.3 REQUIREMENTS OF THE FACULTY**

Faculties will have a research/postgraduate committee whose terms of reference include consideration of student issues. Recommendations on student progression can be devolved to a departmental sub-committee or considered as part of a closed agenda where student representatives to the research committee are not permitted to attend. The body reviewing the recommendations made by supervisors shall:

- Devise appropriate means of checking that satisfactory progress is being made, including interviews, presentations and poster sessions
- Review the ethical implications of student research projects
- Ensure that progression criteria have been applied
- Review the recommendation made by the supervisor, seeking, where appropriate, additional evidence
- Make a final recommendation to the Faculty Research Monitoring Committee through completion of the report lists provided by the Academic Registry
- Be able to supply evidence to the Faculty Research Monitoring Committee on all recommendations but in particular, where the recommendation indicates concern about the student's progress or is not to permit the student to continue studies.
- Facilitate deposit of electronic theses in the Aberystwyth Research Portal (see [https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/information/services/pdf/theses/dept\\_workflow\\_english.pdf](https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/media/departmental/information/services/pdf/theses/dept_workflow_english.pdf))

Progression occurs from registration year to registration year, but not from registration year to writing-up period.

Progress is monitored by the Faculty Research Monitoring Committee on at least an annual basis for all students.

#### 7.4 INFORMING THE STUDENT ABOUT THE PROGRESS RECOMMENDATION

Final decisions will be taken at the Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee on any problematic cases. Except where a student is excluded, departments should inform students of the outcome.

#### 7.5 MINIMUM AND MAXIMUM CANDIDATURE

Minimum candidature is the period in which the student must be enrolled as a full fee-paying student (please see Table 1 below). The end of minimum candidature is the date by which a student is encouraged to submit. Once minimum candidature is passed, the student should be in the late writing up stages.

Maximum candidature is the latest date by which the student must submit their thesis.

<b>TABLE 1</b> DEGREE AND MODE OF STUDY	MINIMUM REGISTRATION FEE PAYING PERIOD	MAXIMUM TIME LIMIT DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF THESIS
<b>MPhil</b>		
Full time	1 year	2 years
Part time	2 years	4 years
<b>PhD</b>		
Full time	3 years	4 years
Full time *	2 years	3 years
*(exempt from probationary year)		
Part time	5/6 years	7/8 years
Part time *	3/4 years	5/6 years
*(exempt from probationary years) Time limits depend on the start date. For every student who has started since September 2018, there is a maximum additional allowance of two years for all degrees which much include any periods of withdrawal of extensions. This runs to the initial thesis submission date.		

#### 7.6 CHANGES IN CANDIDATURE

##### Upgrading or downgrading

One of the options available to supervisors is to recommend that the student transfer to another scheme. For example, upgrading from MPhil to PhD or downgrading from PhD to MPhil. This can be done at the annual reporting stage.

Please note however that transfer from one scheme to another is only possible during the period of the original candidature.

##### **Changing Mode of Study from full time to part time or vice versa**

If a student wishes to change mode of study (i.e. change from full time to part time or vice versa) then they should fill in a Change of Postgraduate Registration Form, available either from the Academic Registry or <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms-handbooks/>

Change of mode of study can only happen prior to the final 3 months of the registration period i.e. during the period for which tuition fees are payable, and is not normally permitted during the final year of registration for PhD.

##### **Withdrawal**

A student wishing to suspend studies will need to follow the online withdrawal process via the Student Record.

##### • **Temporary Withdrawal**

Temporary withdrawal allows the student to suspend their studies at the University with the option of returning in the future. In



effect, time stands still while a student is temporarily withdrawn. The registration period and submission end date (maximum candidature) are automatically altered accordingly.

Students who are writing up (e.g. in the fourth year of a PhD) cannot withdraw temporarily.

**NB - where a student has a financial sponsor or a student loan, the implications of withdrawal must be considered and discussed with/reported to the sponsor.**

• **Permanent Withdrawal**

Permanent withdrawal does not allow the student to return to their studies and therefore it is essential to confirm that the student is aware of the consequences of this and is absolutely positive that it is the course of action they wish to follow.

**Extensions**

An extension of higher degree time limit may be requested by departments where students cannot submit their thesis for examination within the time allowed for the programme of study. For example, the time limit of a student pursuing a PhD on a full time basis is four years from the start of the programme. See Table 1 (above) for more details.

Extensions may be granted on compassionate grounds, in cases of unexpected illness, serious domestic difficulties, or inordinate professional commitments, or in cases of unforeseen research problems which can be demonstrated to have adversely affected the candidate. A full and reasoned case, supported by appropriate medical or other independent evidence, together with a timetable for completion, must be provided. A clear statement must be supplied, showing that the department concerned has evaluated the situation in which the candidate finds themselves as a result of the extenuating circumstances and that it considers the requested extension to be appropriate. Extensions should not be requested where students feel that, given more time, they could submit theses of a higher standard. They should be requested only where students are, for good reason, not able to submit a complete piece of work for examination.

The department is required to submit an application to the Graduate School accompanied by documentary evidence to substantiate why an extension is being requested. The Head of the Graduate School will consider these requests, and communicate the decision to the department (which must inform the student), the Academic Registry and the relevant Faculty and Research Degrees Committee. **It is essential that these are submitted as early as possible and in particular that they are submitted in advance of a student's deadline. Failure to submit in advance of the deadline may lead to a request being considered ineligible.**

Students who are sponsored by UKRI may require permission for an extension from their CDT or DPT and/or by the relevant Research Council. Normally, up to 12 months may be approved by AU but longer extensions will need Research Council approval. UKRI will not allow extensions based on employment pressures as it expects students to enter employment after completing their training.

UKRI and other sponsors may also set expectations as a condition of funding that students complete within the funded period which may be shorter than 4 years for full-time students. Students in this situation should respect the funding body's requirements but will normally also be able to see extensions if required from the sponsors.

## **7.7 SUBMISSION AND EXAMINATION OF THE THESIS**

### ***Prior to the Candidate Submitting the Thesis***

**Candidate to email [grasstaff@aber.ac.uk](mailto:grasstaff@aber.ac.uk) to be added to the BB submission Link**

- Candidate completes section A of the Intention to Submit form – 3 months prior to submitting and forwards onto the department. This can be obtained from the Academic Registry <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/students/pg-issues/research/>
- Department completes the rest of the Intention to Submit form and forwards it to the Graduate School no less than three months prior to the submission of the thesis. It is essential for us to receive the ITS form 3 months prior to submission as the following procedures must be undertaken before the thesis can be sent for examination.

**i) Copy of Intention to Submit sent to The approval panel**

The Graduate School panel must approve the nominated Examiner(s) (see 5.2). Any problems can then be resolved before the candidate submits their thesis.

**ii) External Examiner Contacted**

The department will informally ask if the proposed examiner is willing to take on the work. They will also check that they have the right to work in the UK, where applicable. When the Graduate School panel has approved the nomination, the proposed External Examiner is formally contacted and is asked to confirm that they are willing to act as the External Examiner and that their appointment is in accordance with the regulations. At this stage they are sent a copy of the Code of Practice for External Examiners and the Regulations of the University. It is not enough for the External Examiner to have informally agreed with the

department that they will act as an examiner.

***These procedures are essential, they cannot be bypassed, and it is only when they have all been carried out satisfactorily that the thesis will be sent for examination.***

#### ***Candidate Submits Thesis to the Blackboard submission link***

The candidate submits an electronic copy of the thesis via Blackboard **presented in accordance with the submission documents**, along with the specified documentation:

- Abstract and mandatory statement and declaration forms to be within the thesis
- Electronic thesis declaration form submitted independently on the BB submission link

#### ***Graduate School Administration***

##### **Thesis is sent to the External Examiner with...**

- Report & Result form (Notes for External and Internal Examiners attached)
- Expenses claim form.

The Departmental Thesis Examination Co-ordinator and Candidate are informed by email of when the thesis has been sent for examination.

#### ***Examination of the Thesis***

The examination process including the *viva voce* should normally take no longer than 12 weeks from the examiners' receipt of the thesis.

#### ***Viva Voce***

This is compulsory for all DProf, PhD and MPhil students. The department must arrange the viva and inform the Graduate School of the date so that the information can be logged on the student record.

#### ***Report & Result***

At the end of the examining process, the Examining Board must make a decision whether to award the candidate the qualification or not. The Board's decision is final and cannot be amended at a later date.

#### ***If the candidate is successful***

##### ***Departmental action***

- Ensure that if the Examining Board required the candidate to make minor corrections, these are completed within 4 weeks or 6 months for PhD or 4 weeks or 12 weeks for MPhil of the viva, depending on the recommendation of the examining board. Ensure that the electronic copy of the final version thesis and the Electronic Thesis Declaration is uploaded to the BB submission link so Graduate School can send to Information Services for deposit in the Aberystwyth Research Portal. Where a Bar on Access to the print thesis has been approved the Department informs the libraries upon deposit and where an embargo on the electronic copy is required this can be requested via the Electronic Thesis Declaration.
- Complete the Result & Report and the interim report form including all signatures.
- Send Report & Result form and the Interim Report Form (signed by the exam board members and candidate where applicable) to the Graduate School.
- Candidate is notified of the result. The department should write to the student if its 4 weeks/6 months PhD or 4 weeks/12 weeks MPhil. In cases of full resubmission, Academic Records will write to the student.
- Copy of the Joint Report forwarded to the candidate if requested, The chair/department send this

**NB. The Department should send the Report & Result form and the interim report form to the Graduate School as soon as possible once the Examination is over. It should not wait for all corrections to be made.** An interim result form will be issued to the student at the conclusion of the viva.

#### ***Graduate School and Academic Registry action***

Once paperwork is received from the Department:

- Final financial check is made with the Finance Office
- 

#### **Corrections**

Corrections are to be made and submitted by the given date after the viva. The candidate will submit the corrections to the department who will then forward to the examiner(s). Once the examiner(s) are satisfied with the corrections, they must complete the Final confirmation form and send back to the department for the PGR co-ordinator to sign. This is then forwarded to the Graduate School. The Graduate School will check that the final version of the thesis has been uploaded to before sending the final form to Academic Records to complete.

#### ***If the candidate is unsuccessful***

##### ***Departmental action***

- The student must receive written and clear feedback on the points which the examiners felt warranted the decision that the

thesis must be re-submitted. The Chair is responsible for the collation of the feedback and ensuring it reaches the candidate. It is then incumbent on the student to ensure that the re-submitted thesis clearly addresses these points.

- Send Report & Result report form and the interim report (signed by the exam board members and candidate where applicable) to the Graduate School immediately following the Viva.

#### **Academic Registry action**

- Candidate is notified of the result in writing.

#### **Resubmission**

##### **Prior to Resubmitting**

**A resubmission is treated the same as a first submission so the above steps need to be followed.**

- .
- **The same examiners must be used** unless there is a valid reason for not doing so which should be noted by the Department in an email sent with Intention to Submit form.
- Graduate School contacts External Examiner again so that they are prepared for arrival of thesis.

#### **Candidate Submits Thesis**

##### **To the BB submission Link**

**There is an allocated section for the resubmitted thesis**

- The Graduate School dispatches theses to examiners and informs the Departmental Examination Co-ordinator and Candidate as before.

#### **Re-examination**

- A viva voce should be held. It can only be waived in cases of a straightforward pass or in exceptional circumstances.
- Once the examination is complete, the department sends the Report & Result form and the interim report form to the Graduate School
- Academic Registry carries out financial checks if candidate was successful, collates paperwork as above

## **7.8 THE THESIS**

Once the examination process is complete and if the candidate is successful, the final version thesis is uploaded to the allocated submission link for the final version with the electronic thesis declaration form and that one electronic copy of the final version of the thesis is sent by the Graduate School to Information Services for deposit in the University's Institutional Research Repository (Aberystwyth Research Portal).. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that copyright permission has been obtained for all relevant material in a thesis and that any anonymisation has been applied appropriately before it is submitted to Aberystwyth Research Repository. All theses should be sent to Information Services who will apply requested embargos (temporary or permanent) to the thesis itself with only the thesis author, title, abstract, sponsorship and supervisor information made available unless exceptional circumstances mean that this information is also embargoed. Queries regarding electronic submission for Aberystwyth Research Repository should be addressed to Information Services.

**NB. Notes or marginal comments made by the examiners must be erased prior to deposit in the libraries or return to the candidate.**

## **8. APPEALS, COMPLAINTS AND UNACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC PRACTICE**

### **8.1 APPEALS**

All candidates have the right to appeal against the decision of the examiners as laid down in the Postgraduate Research Academic Appeals Procedure available from the Academic Registry: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/students/pg-issues/research/> . The appeal must be made in writing, to the Academic Registry within 20 working days of official notification of the result of the examination on one or more of the following grounds:

- Defects or irregularities in the conduct of the examination;
- Exceptional personal circumstances affecting the candidate's performance of which the candidate was unable, for good reasons, to inform the Examining Board prior to its meeting;
- Evidence of prejudice, bias, or inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners;
- Inadequate supervision, which had not been previously reported for exceptional reasons.

Appeals which question the academic judgement of examiners are not admissible.

### **8.2 COMPLAINTS**

The University has a formal complaints procedure which is set out in the Student Complaints Procedure which is published on the web: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/complaints/complaints-procedure/>

If research students have any complaints or grievances concerning the University they should address them in the first instance to their supervisor. If they cannot be resolved at this level students should approach their Departmental/Faculty Director of Postgraduate Studies. If matters are not resolved at this level, or if this is not practicable, students can take their case to the Head of the Graduate School.

Once all internal procedures have been exhausted a candidate may submit a complaint to the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator). Any such complaint must be submitted by sending a completed Scheme Application Form together with all relevant information to the OIA within twelve months of the date on the *Completion of Procedures Letter* from the University on completion of internal procedures. A Scheme Application Form can be obtained from the Academic Registry or downloaded from the OIA website [www.oiahe.org.uk](http://www.oiahe.org.uk).

### **8.3 UNACCEPTABLE ACADEMIC PRACTICE (See also above)**

Unacceptable Practice is the act of obtaining an unpermitted advantage to obtain a result higher than a person's abilities would otherwise secure. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's work with an intent to deceive. No intellectual endeavour is entirely original. Even the most original minds depend on the thoughts and discoveries of their predecessors. Indeed one of the criteria for meeting the standards for the award of research degrees is the ability to relate the results of study to the general body of knowledge in the subject. Supervisors should offer advice on proper referencing, note taking and bibliographic and citation procedures.

For the University's procedure for dealing with research misconduct, including unacceptable academic practice and plagiarism please see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/regulations/uap/>

## **9. MONITORING QUALITY AND STANDARDS**

### **9.1 QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES**

At present the following have oversight of research degree candidatures:

#### ***The Supervisor's Role in Assuring Quality***

The main supervisor is responsible for facilitating the production of high quality work produced by the research student and for nurturing a sense of personal responsibility in the research student for the quality of their research.

#### ***Faculty's and Department's Role in Assuring Quality***

The supervisor is responsible for reporting progress to the relevant departmental or Faculty committee, and it is that committee which provides a degree of externality and assurance of standards within the subject area and across supervisors. Concerns that cannot be addressed by the department or Faculty are referred to the Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee .

#### ***The Faculty Research Monitoring Committees***

These committees have responsibility for monitoring the progress of research postgraduates, and reporting to the Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee .

#### ***Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee***

***The Graduate School Research Students Monitoring Committee makes decisions on student progression based on Faculty recommendations. It reports to the Research Degrees Committee.***

**Researcher Development Board of Studies** This board is responsible for the development of research training and is the examination board for research training modules.

#### ***The Academic Registry***

The Academic Registry provides input to the above committees and acts as a repository for the University's rules, regulations and practices.

#### ***Research Degrees Committee***

This committee oversees the work of the above committees, monitoring research degree candidatures from registration to examination. It reports to the Academic Board, on academic progress and quality issues.

### **9.2 SPECIFIC QUALITY ASSURANCE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE**

#### ***Generic issues identified by external examiners***

The Academic Registry reviews the External Examiner's report for generic issues and brings these to the attention of the Research Degrees Committee for discussion and action, where appropriate. Specific issues of concern will also be followed up.

***Monitoring of Submission and Completion Rates***

The Research Degrees Committee monitors these rates across the University and can require departments which fall below the benchmarks to provide their plan to address difficulties. The Research Degrees Committee will also consider whether there are any generic issues that the institution needs to address to improve submission and completion rates.

AU is also asked annually to complete a submission survey via Je-S for all UKRI sponsored students and these completion rates could impact future UKRI funding.

***Considering Student Feedback***

Student feedback should be through three main routes:

- Supervisor – direct concerns over supervision and facilities;
- Department/Faculty – if there are issues with supervision or other matters the student does not feel they can raise with the supervisor;
- Student representatives – to raise issues of a more generic nature with the department and/or Research Students' Consultative Group.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to raise issues that the student has taken up directly with them with the department, and to respond to them, informing the student of the outcomes of the department's action.

At a more generic level, student feedback is also received through a number of mechanisms:

- Direct concerns/complaints reported via the Department/Academic Registry/Graduate School
- Student representatives on the Student/Staff departmental Consultative Committees
- Feedback from the University's Research Students' Consultative Group, which reports directly to the Research Degrees Committee.

***Considering nomination for external examiners/external supervisors***

All nominations for external examiners are routed via Graduate School to the Head of the Graduate School who reviews the nomination to determine that it complies with the University's criteria for appointment. The Head of the Graduate School will also consider the pairing of internal and external examiners and chair to ensure that there is balanced examining board with the require experience. For instance, if the external examiner is a practitioner or is less senior than normal in order to ensure appropriate subject coverage, the internal examiner would be expected to have more substantial examining experience. The Head of the Graduate School may request additional information on the examiners before giving approval.

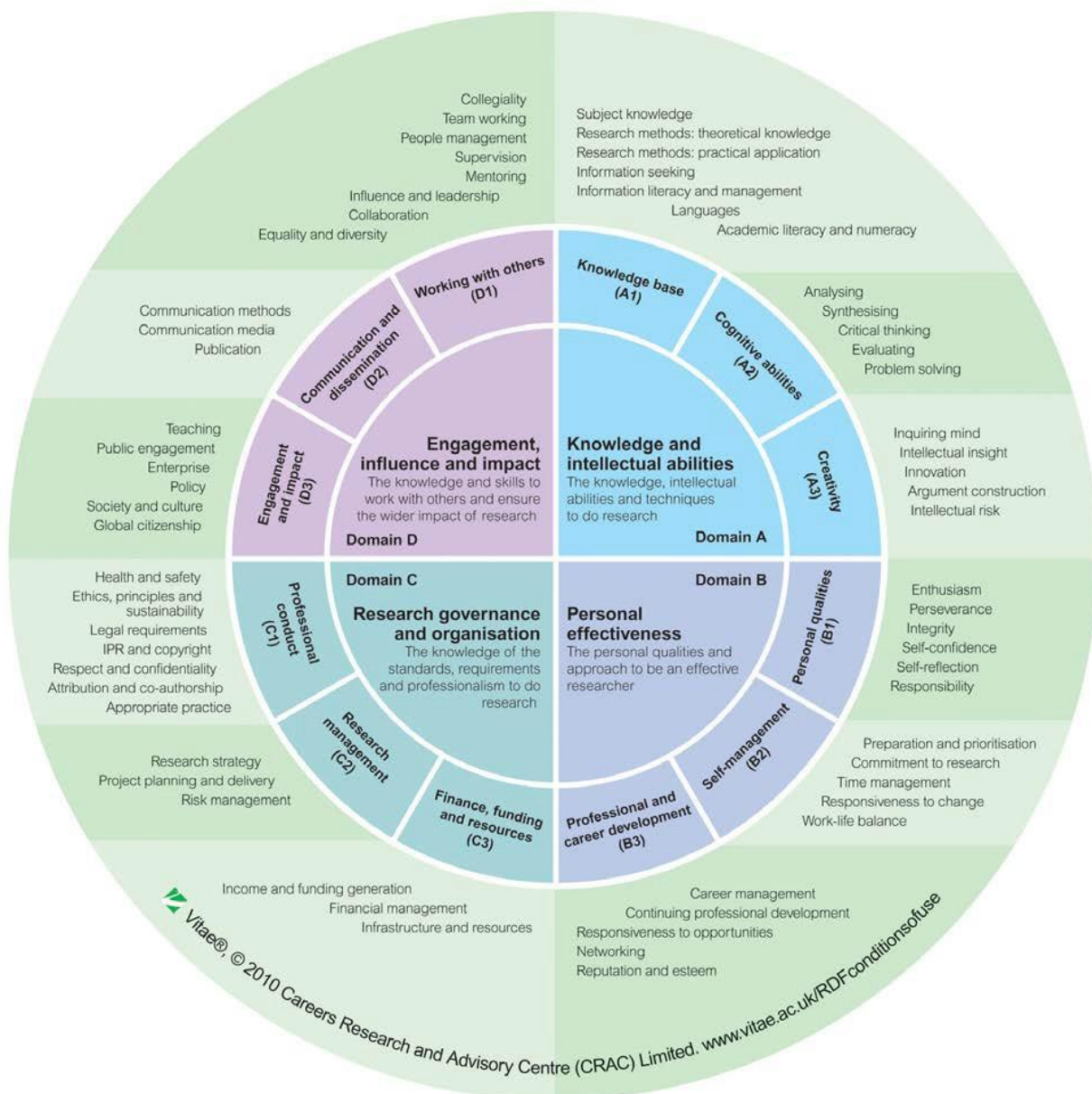
## 10. Appendix 1

# Researcher Development Framework

In 2001 the Research Councils issued a Joint Skills Statement which described the skills that research students are expected to have or to develop. These include a range of transferable skills in addition to the research skills related to completing a thesis. Development of such skills is considered as an integral part of the experience of being a postgraduate research student. The Researcher Development Statement and its associated Framework of 2010 is an evolution of the JSS and highlights the range of knowledge, skills, behaviours and personal qualities which the Research Councils see as being required to be an effective researcher and employee in a world driven by knowledge production and innovation. These skills may be present on commencement of a research degree, explicitly taught, or developed during the course of the research.

The Researcher Development Framework articulates the skills and attributes of successful researchers and encourages them to aspire to excellence through achieving higher levels of development. The framework is a comprehensive new approach to enhancing the careers of researchers. It was developed by and for researchers, in consultation with academic and non-academic employers.

Aberystwyth University's Researcher Development Programme is underpinned by the Researcher Development Framework and courses on offer are grouped according to skills identified in the Researcher Development Framework Domains.



**11. Appendix 2**  
**Record of Supervision**

STUDENT NAME:	
SUPERVISOR NAME:	
SUPERVISION DATE:	
REVIEW OF PROGRESS AND SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK:	
TOPICS DISCUSSED:	
ACTION AGREED BEFORE NEXT SUPERVISION:	
ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH TRAINING OR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS:	
DATE OF NEXT SUPERVISION:	
STUDENT'S SIGNATURE:	DATE:

### **PGR Student / Supervisor Relationship and Change Mechanisms**

The relationship between a postgraduate researcher and their supervisory team, particularly the main supervisor, is of crucial importance to the development of the project and the researcher. The Code of Practice for Research Students sets out the responsibilities of all parties which forms the basis of this relationship: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/grad-school/forms-handbooks/>

In most cases, the relationship is strong and valued by supervisor as well as supervisee, and bonds are maintained long after completion of the degree. Ongoing collaboration and publication, as well as friendship, is common. At the least, we expect professional and effective supervisory arrangements to support the researcher throughout their studies.

In emphasising the value of a successful relationship, we must acknowledge the potential seriousness of problems with supervision. Postgraduate researchers need to know that these problems can be raised with the University, which will seek remedies that support the student and the supervisor. Some principles that apply here:

1. It is the responsibility of the university to assign appropriate supervisory teams, providing continuous supervisory support through to completion. It may be necessary for the university to change supervisors due to staff turnover, workload, sick leave, or a range of other circumstances. Students cannot decide who will be their supervisors. Where a student is funded by a sponsor such as a UKRI doctoral training partnership involving joint supervision across two universities, the DTP will also be involved in selection of supervisors. However, the university will take full account of student views and seek to provide supervision to the satisfaction of the student.
2. Bullying, harassing and any sexually inappropriate behaviour cannot be tolerated and the University will act immediately if these behaviours are raised. Intimidation also cannot be tolerated and threats from supervisors to remove funding or negatively impact a researcher's career should be reported. The University's Student Dignity and Respect policy describes how to raise concerns and the action that may be taken against those in breach of the policy: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/student-dignity-respect/#read-the-code-on-student-dignity-and-respect>
3. Some issues can be raised directly with a supervisor, discussed and resolved. Postgraduate researchers are encouraged to do this where they feel comfortable.
4. Postgraduate researchers as well as supervisors have responsibilities for making these relationships work. While supervisors bear the greater responsibility, students do need to conduct themselves in line with the responsibilities set out in the University's PGR Code of Practice and policies on dignity and respect (<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/student-dignity-respect/>). Supervisors should not have to put up with unreasonable conduct and may bring a complaint or request to be released from supervision if that is the case.
5. Postgraduate researchers should never feel that they cannot raise supervision issues because they do not think an alternative supervisor would be available. If necessary we can arrange external supervision.
6. However friendly the relationship between supervisor and student becomes, appropriate professional distance must always be maintained.

Where a student has concern that difficulties in their relationship to their supervisors are affecting their progress or well-being, they should feel able to:

1. **Discuss** the situation confidentially and informally with staff in their department, where possible. Normally the PGR coordinator from the department would be the first port of call. If that person is the supervisor with whom the student is experiencing difficulties, or the student perceives a conflict of interest, or would prefer to speak to someone else, perhaps outside of the department, the following could be approached: another member of the supervisory team; the head of department; the Associate Dean for Research; the Head, or other senior staff, of the Graduate



School; or Student Support Services. It may be that, following this discussion, the student may feel able to carry on without further action or may be able to take forward some suggestions for coping with the situation. Some mediation could take place to address issues to everyone's satisfaction.

2. **Request a change of supervisor:** there are many reasons why the student might seek a change, including evolution of the project in a direction better suited to another member of staff. Students should put requests for a change of supervisory team in writing (email is sufficient) and should receive a written response. The departmental PGR coordinator will consider the request, putting the student's progress and wellbeing at the centre of decision-making, and will seek to meet the request. If approved, the change should be formalised via the 'MyPGR' record. If not approved, a written explanation should be provided. Changes will not always be possible, but if it is clear that the relationship with the current supervisor cannot continue due to the conduct of the supervisor, a replacement must be found. If either the student or staff member's conduct has been inappropriate, further action may need to be taken.
3. **Escalation:** if the student is not satisfied with a decision they may take this to the head of department for further consideration. If the PGR coordinator is their supervisor they should go to the head of department in the first instance; escalation should be to the Associate Dean for Research in their Faculty. Students can also speak to the Head of the Graduate School for advice. The Student Complaints procedure allows students to raise a formal complaint if they feel the matter has not been satisfactorily been addressed:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/handbook/complaints/>