COMPOSITION OF RESEARCH DEGREE SUPERVISION TEAMS POLICY

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POLICY

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1. SCOPE

1.1 All research degree programmes. Within the DrPH programme the procedure applies to the research study (thesis) elements: this will affect the timing of some procedural matters.

2. DOCUMENT OWNERSHIP, REVISIONS AND REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 Document owner: Pro-Director (Learning & Teaching)
Approved by SRDC: 22 March 2016

3. DEPENDENCIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 This policy depends on the Regulations for Research degrees:
http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/currentstudents/studentregulations/researchregulations/rd_regulations.pdf

3.2 [It will sit alongside the Change of Supervisor Policy and Procedure]¹

¹ The Task and Finish Group for the Research Student Degree Journey plans to develop a Change of Supervisor Policy & Procedure during 2016.
4. PRINCIPLES

4.1 Students and supervisors benefit from collegial working within teams, which tend to support the contribution of a broader range of ideas and generate more ways to solve problems. Within supervision teams the supervisors can normally ensure continuity of supervision if one supervisor is temporarily unavailable.

4.2 The QAA Quality Code\(^2\) requires each research degree student to have an identified main supervisor within a supervision team, so one supervisor will be designated ‘first supervisor’.

4.3 Supervisors need to work in partnership with the research degree student to support the timely and successful completion of the research degree study and thesis. Circumstances that hamper supervisors’ ability to focus on supporting timely and successful completion of the research degree should be identified and discussed openly.\(^3\) Such circumstances should be avoided whenever possible. When avoidance is not possible, mechanisms for mitigating the impact of the adverse circumstances must be identified before the supervision team can be approved.

5. SUPERVISORS, ADVISERS AND MENTORS

5.1 Each supervision team comprises, at minimum, a first supervisor and a second supervisor. A third supervisor may be appointed if appropriate for a particular research degree study. Further supervisors will only be appointed in exceptional circumstances. (See Institutional Recognition of Workload section below).

5.2 The first supervisor must hold an academic contract with the School that (explicitly, or via the School’s expectations for appointments to particular academic levels or roles) includes the role of research degree supervisor. Honorary and Visiting Academic staff will not normally be appointed as first supervisor.

5.3 The first supervisor does not need to be the most experienced supervisor or the supervisor committing the most to the total supervision workload.

5.4 The supervision team must possess at least two successful research degree completions at doctoral level, at least one of which must be a UK doctorate. A third or subsequent supervisor may be appointed to fulfil this requirement, if the first and second supervisors cannot jointly fulfil this requirement.

5.5 The supervision team may be augmented by one or more advisors. An advisor has a more limited role than a supervisor e.g. providing methodological or technical expertise; or a perspective not otherwise available within the supervision team (e.g. service provider or service user).

5.6 A supervisor may be supported by the appointment of a mentor. The mentor may be a member of the supervision team, or a member of staff also appointed as an advisor to the student, or the mentor may work only with the supervisor. It is good practice to appoint a mentor for a supervisor who has not yet supervised a UK research degree to successful completion.

6. CIRCUMSTANCES THAT REQUIRE REVIEW BEFORE THE SUPERVISION TEAM IS APPROVED

6.1 The supervision team must be able to commit sufficient time to the supervision of the research student.

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\(^3\) For examples see section on circumstances that require review before the supervision team is approved.
6.2 Each supervisor must be able to commit sufficient time to his/her declared and agreed annual contribution to overall supervision workload.

6.3 Each supervisor must complete supervision training and periodic updates.

6.4 Conflicts of interest that may diminish the likelihood of high quality research degree supervision, or otherwise threaten the timely and successful completion of the research degree, should be avoided. If avoidance is impossible, mitigation must be identified before the supervision team can be approved.

Conflicts of interest may lie between a supervisor and student, between supervisors, or between a supervisor and another key stakeholder for the research degree study. Potential conflicts of interest include, for example:
- Personal relationships
- Line management relationships
- Project/study management relationships
- Financial relationships

6.5 If a supervisor holds a fixed term contract with the School that will expire before the student's anticipated date of completion this should be noted and contingency plans considered.

7. INSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF THE SUPERVISION ROLE

7.1 Workload recognition should be based on the declared and agreed percentage contributions of the supervisors to the overall supervision of the research degree study. The workload distribution between supervisors will be agreed before the supervision team is approved, and recorded in the student record. Variation can be agreed if circumstances change considerably.

7.2 Supervision teams with three or more supervisors do not provide more supervision than two-member supervision teams, but divide the overall supervision workload between more people.

7.3 The first supervisor is the School's formal first point of contact for the student and responsible for oversight of progression through the research degree.

7.4 A supervisor will not normally be appointed as first supervisor for more than three research degree students, nor appointed as supervisor (first, second or subsequent) for a head count of more than six research degree students.

7.5 High quality supervision, supporting timely and successful research degree completions (or when necessary, timely withdrawals from research degree registrations) will be considered as evidence in PDR, Senior Staff Review and promotions processes.

PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS

8. CHECKLIST FOR APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF SUPERVISION TEAMS

9. DECLARATION OF AGREED PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTIONS TO OVERALL SUPERVISION WORKLOAD

10. OUTLINE ROLE DESCRIPTIONS FOR SUPERVISORS

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4 e.g. Two supervisor teams: 50%:50%; 75%:25%; or any other agreed division; Three supervisor teams 45%:40%:15%, etc.

5 To be created, based on the checklists currently in use in Faculties

6 To be created as an ‘event’ within the online Research Degree Management system.

7 To be created