

Process for Change of Supervisor(s) for Doctoral Students

1. Context

All doctoral students will have a minimum of one Director of Studies and one Research Supervisor allocated to them at the commencement of their programme*. In many cases, students will be allocated a Research Adviser or an External Adviser who may undertake a discrete role within the team.

If a Research Supervisor or Director of Studies is unable to continue with the supervision, the doctoral student is entitled to have a replacement who is suitable for the task assigned promptly to him/her on either a temporary or permanent basis to ensure that s/he is not subject to undue periods of unsupervised study. Students and supervisory teams will also have the opportunity to request a change to the supervision arrangements in the event of insuperable difficulties arising from that relationship.

2. Responsibility of the Dean of Faculty

The Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute, or nominated representative, (e.g. Faculty Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise or Doctoral Programme Lead)¹ is responsible for ensuring that students are provided with continuous supervision from the beginning of and throughout their period of registered study. Therefore, if a Research Supervisor or Director of Studies is unable to continue supervising a student or if the supervisory relationship breaks down, the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a replacement Research Supervisor/Director of Studies with the appropriate expertise and supervisory experience who is acceptable to the student (and, if appropriate, to the student's sponsor) is found. The Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute or, nominated representative, must ensure that Research Services are informed of any change of arrangements to a student's supervision and the appropriate documentation is completed.

3. Short-term and temporary absence of a supervisor

In the case of the short term and temporary absence of a Research supervisor/Director of Studies (for example, through illness) the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute, or nominated representative must nominate, in consultation with the student and the supervisory team, a temporary replacement who has the qualifications and qualities to meet the immediate needs of the student. "Short-term" supervisory arrangements should not normally exceed

¹ It is envisaged that, in all cases, Doctoral Programme Leads will be responsible for carrying out the procedures outlined in this note. However, Deans of Faculty/Directors of Institutes are ultimately responsible for the execution of these roles.

three months. If a longer term but still temporary absence is anticipated, the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute or nominated representative will discuss with the student (and, if appropriate) the original Research Supervisor/Director of Studies, the relative benefits of operating extended temporary supervision arrangements up to but not exceeding six months, or allocating a new permanent Research Supervisor/Director of Studies.

4. Supervisor leaves

If a Research Supervisor/Director of Studies permanently ceases supervision (for example, through moving to a post at another institution), then the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute or nominated representative will discuss with the student the options which are available and which benefit the student. Discussion will normally take place within one month of the announcement of the Research Supervisor's/Director of Studies' departure and cessation of supervision. One option will be to allocate a new permanent Research Supervisor/Director of Studies and the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute, or nominated representative, should make all reasonable efforts to identify another member of staff within St Mary's University with the appropriate academic background and supervisory experience. However, it may not always be possible or in the student's best interests to allocate a new Research Supervisor/Director of Studies. Other options which then might be considered are to ask the Research Supervisor who has moved to another institution to continue to supervise at a distance (as an External Adviser) and to appoint an additional member of staff from St Mary's as either the Director of Studies or Research Supervisor, or to seek to facilitate the student's transfer to the supervisor's new institution.

5. Problems with supervisor

Doctoral students who find themselves without supervision or who are unhappy with their supervision for any other reason should discuss the matter with their Director of Studies and Research Supervisor in the first instance - or (if this is inappropriate), with the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute or nominated representative. If any of the aforementioned are involved in the supervision of the student then the student should contact Research Services and should ask that appropriate action be taken to resolve the difficulty. These discussions will be undertaken in confidence and without fear of recrimination with the aim of resolving the difficulty amicably.

6. Doctoral Programme Lead

Deans of Faculties/Directors of Institutes should designate a member(s) of academic staff to act as a Doctoral Programme Lead to advise doctoral students about general procedures and, in particular, to deal confidentially with any concern raised by a doctoral student about his/her studies and supervision. If the supervisory relationship has broken down, the Doctoral Programme Lead should be available to advise and support the student. If appropriate, the Doctoral Programme Lead should also offer to mediate between the student and the supervisor and, subject to confidentiality, should be prepared to advise the Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute on a possible solution.

7. Supervisor brings research students to St Mary's

Where it would be beneficial for a new member of staff to bring with him/her to St Mary's the doctoral students who were under his/her supervision at the previous institution, Deans of Faculties/Directors of Institutes should be sympathetic to such requests and, where appropriate, seek to facilitate the transfer.

8. Withdrawal

On rare occasions, it may not be possible to make replacement supervision arrangements, and as a consequence the student may have to withdraw from their programme.

*EdD students will be allocated their supervisory team once they have satisfactorily completed the taught element of their programme.