



HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH SUPERVISION POLICY

Responsible Officer	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)		
Contact Officer	Dean of Graduate Research Graduate Research School		
Superseded Documents	Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy approved by the Vice-Chancellor on 9 August 2010 (file no. 2010/04965)		
Review	7 December 2015		
File Number	2010/02683		
Associated Documents	Research Code of Conduct Conflict of Interest Policy Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Supervision UNSW Delegations of Authority Intellectual Property Policy Work Health and Safety Policy		
Version	Authorisation	Approval Date	Effective Date
3.1	Administrative update by the Head of Governance	18 July 2014	18 July 2014

1. Preamble

1.1 Purpose

This policy specifies the criteria for the appointment of supervisors for higher degree research candidates and the roles and responsibilities of supervisors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all University appointed supervisors of higher degree research candidatures, Heads of School, Postgraduate Coordinators and Associate Deans (Research or Research Training) or equivalent roles as well as Faculty Higher Degree Committees or equivalents.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 All research students, upon admission to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy or a Master by Research or a Master of Philosophy, must have appointed a supervisory team comprised of at least two supervisors.

3.2 The University has 4 main categories of supervisor. They are primary, secondary, joint and panel supervisors.

3.3 Primary supervisor

The primary supervisor will take primary academic responsibility for the higher degree research (HDR) candidature and be the administrative contact for the Graduate Research School.

3.4 Secondary supervisor

The secondary supervisor shall have specific expertise that is useful to the candidate's research program and shall be available as an advisor to the candidate during the course of the candidature.

3.5 Joint supervisors

Two joint supervisors who take equal responsibility for the research may be appointed when there is a formal equal collaboration and sharing of resources to support the candidature will occur or where the student is working in a multi-disciplinary project

and there are supervisors with expertise in the different aspects of the project in the same school. Joint supervisors:

- a) will take equal responsibility for the research program and direction;
- b) must ensure that one of the two meets the criteria for appointment as primary supervisor outlined in Section 3.6 and that this supervisor is designated as the administrative contact for the Graduate Research School. The location of this supervisor will dictate the School and Faculty through which the academic decisions are made on candidature via the relevant Faculty Higher Degree Committee.

3.6 Panel Supervision

A supervisory panel is comprised of more than two supervisors. Panels may be appointed that include a member of industry, or an external person. In these cases there must still be a primary supervisor and secondary supervisor or joint supervisors appointed. Appointment of formal supervisory panels is appropriate in cases where there is an agreement between the University and external organisations such as NICTA or CSIRO regarding research. The roles of each of the panel members must be agreed by the candidate and PGC at the start of the candidature.

3.7 Supervisor Eligibility

Primary Supervisor

3.7.1 A person is eligible to be appointed as a primary supervisor of an HDR candidate provided that all of the following criteria are met:

- a) they are a full-time or fractional full-time employee of UNSW as a member of the academic staff
- b) they are able to fulfil the roles and responsibilities outlined in Section 3.10
- c) their academic tenure exceeds the expected duration of the candidature
- d) they are located in the School in which the candidate is enrolled
- e) they have a high level of expertise in the proposed field of study
- f) they have an active and continuing participation in research at UNSW
- g) they hold a Doctorate (if supervising a PhD student).

3.7.2 A person is not eligible to be appointed as supervisor if they:

- a) are a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, or
- b) have a conflict of interest as defined in the Conflict of Interest Policy, or
- c) hold an appointment that is not at the level to provide the sustained commitment required to support a PhD candidature. One example would be a fractional appointment where the time spent on campus is not sufficient for effective supervision.

3.7.3 Where the primary supervisor has not had previous experience in successful supervision of HDR candidates to completion:

- a) the secondary or joint supervisor must be an experienced supervisor (i.e. have successfully supervised two or more HDR students to completion), and
- b) professional development and participation in University supervision training programs or other relevant activities must be undertaken as specified by the Head of School.

Secondary Supervisor

3.7.4 A person is eligible to be appointed as a secondary supervisor if they:

- a) hold an appointment that satisfies the eligibility conditions for the appointment as supervisor, or

- b) are an Emeritus Professor, hold a visiting or honorary position, or are retired and remain active in research, or
- c) have appropriate expertise and experience as determined by the Faculty Higher Degree Committee

3.7.5 Appointment of a secondary supervisor who has no formal affiliation with the University is allowed to provide expertise for a research project, or when it is planned that a student spend time in an external laboratory or studio as part of a collaboration. Such researchers could include researchers from institutions such as government departments, research institutions, libraries, museums or industry.

Joint Supervisor

- 3.7.6 Appointment of two joint supervisors requires that:
- a) at least one of the joint supervisors must satisfy the conditions for appointment as a primary supervisor;
 - b) where one of the joint supervisors is external to UNSW, the UNSW joint supervisor must satisfy the conditions for appointment as a primary supervisor.

Conjoint Staff

3.7.7 Conjoint academic staff are eligible to be appointed as the primary supervisors of HDR candidates whose research will be carried out in a clinical School or an approved UNSW-affiliated Centre, Institute or location as defined by the Grants Management Office provided that they meet the eligibility conditions for appointment as a Supervisor excepting 3.7.1(a). Additionally, if the conjoint academic staff member has a concurrent substantive position as an employee of UNSW, then they will need the written approval of their Head of School or equivalent prior to being appointed as a primary supervisor.

Research Only Fellowships

- 3.7.8 A holder of a research fellowship whose tenure cannot be guaranteed to exceed the period of the candidature may be appointed as a primary supervisor only if:
- a) they meet the eligibility conditions for appointment as a supervisor excepting 3.7.1(c); and
 - b) the secondary supervisor holds a position whose tenure exceeds the duration of the candidature; and
 - c) the secondary supervisor has agreed to act as supervisor should the Fellow's position terminate before the candidate has completed; and
 - d) the candidate is informed of, and understands, the implications of these supervision arrangements.

Special Circumstances

3.7.9 In exceptional circumstances, the Faculty Higher Degree Committee may recommend the appointment of a person who does not meet the eligibility criteria in this policy for appointment as a primary supervisor or approve alternate supervisory arrangements, provided that compelling reasons are presented in writing from the Head of School and the appointment is endorsed by the Associate Dean (Research/Research Training) or equivalent. The Dean of Graduate Research or nominee must approve such appointments.

3.8 Supervisory Load

- 3.8.1 A primary supervisor may supervise more than six students full-time at any one time only if they have:
- a) evidence of adequate time for supervision taking into account teaching, research and administrative responsibilities; and

- b) a track record of successful completions within 4 years for a PhD or 2 years for a Masters; and
 - c) approval by the Head of School
- 3.8.2 Supervisory loads will be monitored by the Faculty Associate Dean (Research/Research Training) or equivalent and an annual report provided to the Dean of Graduate Research.

3.9 Making Appointments

- 3.9.1 The Head of School or Postgraduate Coordinator in the School or the Associate Dean (Research or Research Training) or equivalent recommends the appointment of a primary or secondary supervisor, joint supervisor or a supervisory panel to the Dean of Graduate Research
- 3.9.2 Recommendation of appointment must be on the basis of appropriate space, resources and expertise being available to support the proposed research candidature

Replacement of Supervisor/s During Candidature

- 3.9.3 Changes to supervisory arrangements are subject to the approval of the Dean of Graduate Research.
- 3.9.4 If appointment of a new primary supervisor is required then either the secondary or joint supervisor or an alternate eligible supervisor shall be appointed. Such candidatures will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the candidate is not disadvantaged. The suitability of the secondary or joint supervisor or other proposed supervisors in the School/Faculty to be appointed as supervisor must be discussed with the candidate. In certain cases, it may be necessary to appoint a supervisory panel.
- 3.9.5 If a breakdown of the supervisory relationship occurs, appropriate attempts at mediation should be made by the Head of School or the Postgraduate Coordinator. The Associate Dean (Research/Research Training) or equivalent in the Faculty must be advised of the issues that have arisen and be involved in mediation if the issue is not able to be resolved by the School. Independent mediators may also be used
- 3.9.6 A supervisor must be a fit and proper person to provide supervision to research candidates. In rare cases, the University may remove or suspend a supervisor from their role if the supervisor is not considered a fit and proper person to provide supervision. The Dean of Graduate Research will inform the supervisor and give the supervisor reasons for the decision and the opportunity to respond to those reasons. This applies to all categories of supervisors. The change in supervision will be managed in accordance with 3.9.3 and 3.9.4.

3.10 Roles and Responsibilities

The Primary Supervisor

- a) is the University's agent in advising and assisting the candidate to complete an original and feasible research program
- b) monitors the quality of the research being conducted
- c) advises the candidate on any additional skills training they may require
- d) supports the candidate in timely completion of the research

Primary supervisors are responsible for:

- a) ensuring that the candidate understands their rights and obligations under relevant UNSW research policy including the UNSW Research Code of Conduct and Intellectual Property Policy
- b) ensuring the candidate is familiar with and understands the UNSW Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- c) ensuring regular contact and communication are maintained with the candidate via a mutually agreed, documented mechanism that is reviewed annually by the candidate and supervisor
- d) providing formal advice on progress of the candidature to the Head of School via the UNSW annual review process
- e) ensuring that the candidate is provided with appropriate resources and support for the research program
- f) ensuring that absences from the University of more than 4 weeks are covered by a member of academic staff if the secondary or joint supervisor is not available or not a member of academic staff; this includes periods of approved leave such as sabbatical leave or time overseas
- g) providing advice to the Head of School on the appointment of thesis examiners as soon as possible after the student has put in their notice of intention to submit, and
- h) certifying that the thesis is in the correct format for examination.

The Secondary Supervisor will:

- a) ensure regular contact and communication are maintained with the candidate via a mutually agreed, documented mechanism that is reviewed annually by the candidate and supervisor,
- b) act in place of the primary supervisor when they are absent from the University, and
- c) provide feedback to the candidate at annual review.

4. Legal & Policy Framework

Relevant policy includes:

4.1 Research Code of Conduct

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/researchcode.html>

4.2 Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines

4.3 UNSW Delegations of Authority

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/registerofdelegations/register.pdf>

4.4 Intellectual Property Policy

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/ippolicy.html>

4.5 Occupational Health and Safety Policy

<http://www.gs.unsw.edu.au/policy/ohspolicy.html>

5. Review

This policy is due for review three years from its date of effect.

Appendix A: History

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
Guide	Academic Board (AB99/43)	1 June 1999	1 June1999	
1.0	Academic Board (AB06/141)	07 November, 2006	01 January 2007	Full review and re-issue as a Policy.
2.0	Vice-Chancellor	9 August 2010	9 August 2010	All sections have had some minor modification and restructuring.
3.0	President and Vice-Chancellor	11 December 2012	7 December 2012	Minor revisions in response to PhD Review and updating supervisor eligibility and removal or suspension (3.9.6 added)
3.1	Administrative update by Head of Governance	18 July 2014	18 July 2014 to 14 June 2016	Section 3.7.1 (b)

Archived Document