



UCL Academic Manual 2023-24

Chapter 5: Research Degrees Framework

Guidance on Appointment of Supervisory Teams

General

This is guidance aimed at Departmental Graduate Tutors and administrators on assigning supervisors to students. All supervisory appointments must be made in accordance with the Regulations- Section 3.

Students must have at least one Principal and one Subsidiary supervisor.

Each student will be allocated a provisional Principal Supervisor at the time of offer of a place; however, this should be reviewed and confirmed within the first month of registration. The Subsidiary Supervisor(s) should be appointed as soon as possible thereafter. Both a Principal and Subsidiary Supervisor must be in place for upgrade or final examination to take place.

However, for those students with taught or rotational elements at the start of their programme, their programme director(s) may be named as the Principal initially and their supervisory team updated as soon as possible after commencing the substantive research project.

UCL is supportive of supervisory panel/team models of supervision. This means that students may have multiple Principal and multiple Subsidiary Supervisors and/or a thesis committee. Tertiary supervisors may also be unofficially appointed. This can be used when staff do not meet certain eligibility criteria, e.g. someone who is external to UCL or a junior member of staff. Tertiary supervisors have access to student progression notes; however, they will not be formally reflected in the student's record.

When appointing a supervisory team, the department should consider the following:

- Is the staff member a currently approved supervisor? If the proposed supervisor is from a different department/faculty, should the relevant Graduate Tutor be consulted to check any conditions of supervision for the staff member?
- Does the staff member have adequate time to take on an additional student in the capacity proposed? See below guidance on calculating workload.
- Does at least one member of the team have a contract that extends beyond the duration of the student's degree?
- Does at least one member of the supervisory team have a PhD (or equivalent research degree as relevant to the student in question, e.g. MDRes, DClinPsy etc)?
- Has at least one member of the supervisory team supervised a PhD (or equivalent research degree as relevant to the student in question) to completion?
- Are there any personal relationships between any members of the supervisory team and/or between the supervisory team and the student? Intimate relationships between students and supervisors are not allowed. We also strongly advise against those in close personal relationships,

e.g. a romantic couple, to co-supervise, as well caution against family members being a supervisor. You may also wish to refer to UCL's [Personal Relationships Policy](#).

- Are there any other EDI considerations that would be helpful to take into account when appointing additional supervisors, e.g. ethnicity/background, disabilities/learning differences, caring responsibilities, etc...?

Workload allocation guidance

The maximum number of students [head count], whether full- or part-time, that may be supervised by a member of staff as either Principal or Subsidiary Supervisor will be ten. We recommend that no full-time member of staff takes on more than the workload roughly equivalent to six full-time doctoral students. However, this may vary depending on whether the student is part-time, distance-learning, degree type, etc. This calculation should be the starting point for departments to use to check workload. Going above a total of six points using this calculation should be scrutinised by the department and can be used for a reason not to approve a requested assignment of a supervisor to a student.

Consideration should be given to the other duties of the member of staff concerned. Heads of Department may wish to recommend an upper limit on the number of students supervised by a single member of staff that is lower than that set out above.

Exceptions to the headcount rule are allowed where programme directors are required to be named as a supervisor.

**Agreed by UCL's Research Degree Committee
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