



Principles of postgraduate research student supervision

These principles cover the expectations of both postgraduate research (PGR) students and their supervisors, within the supervisory relationship.

Supervision at the University of Bristol is founded on mutual respect, shared responsibility, and equal participation. A successful and fulfilling partnership requires commitment from all parties that considers and reflects the diversity of PGR student experience and backgrounds and collectively works to ensure the best possible research and training outcomes.

Supervisor(s) and PGR students are both expected to:

- **Read** these principles and discuss how they will apply to the student's research degree during the first supervision meeting
- **Familiarise themselves** with the [Regulations and Code of Practice for research degree programmes](#)
- **Share responsibility** for developing and maintaining an effective working relationship
- **Monitor**, track and discuss progress to ensure completion of the research degree in the appropriate timeframe, i.e. in the fee paying or funded period
- **Maintain an open dialogue**, discussing any issues at an early stage
- **Understand the funding arrangements of the PGR student**, including awareness of who the funder/sponsor is, if they are self-funded, and any terms and conditions, including those for medical leave, extensions and suspensions
- **Meet frequently**. The regularity should be agreed on during the first supervision meeting and must meet the minimum requirements of once a month
- **Discuss and agree** the academic, personal and professional development needs of the PGR student and how best to develop these skills or access training
- **Respond** to each other's communication respectfully and in a timely manner
- **Communicate absences**, including ensuring everyone is informed of unplanned absences (e.g., sickness) and annual leave plans are discussed.

Supervisors are expected to:

- **Be available** for scheduled meetings and be clear in the provision of guidance and instruction
- **Review and guide** the development of the PGR student's research plan in terms of practicality, timescales, and content

- **Provide specific and constructive feedback** on written work, research outputs, analysis and progress
- **Help the PGR student understand and prepare** to meet the expectations and requirements for progress monitoring and final assessment
- **Signpost to University research policies and good practice guidance**, including researcher integrity, ethics, intellectual property, open access and data management and protection.
- **Ensure the PGR student is familiar with the rights and responsibilities** for the standards relevant to their degree, concerning the publication of their research and open research requirements (discuss the ownership or assignation of IP rights with students at an early stage of the degree)
- **Be proactive and engaged** in supporting the career development of the PGR student throughout their studies, including signposting to opportunities such as conferences and external training courses and supporting networking and collaboration with other academics, where appropriate.
- **Listen** to any pastoral needs or concerns sensitively and signpost the PGR student to appropriate services accordingly (e.g. Student Wellbeing Services)
- **The main supervisor should take a lead** in resolving issues across the supervisory team
- **Support the student to disseminate their research** and maintain contact following graduation for publication purposes related to the student's research degree.

PGR students are expected to:

- **Be proactive** in their development towards becoming an independent researcher. Taking ownership of their research project, developing and practicing research skills, attending departmental seminars, training courses, and conferences, presenting work to an academic audience, and collaborating with other academics
- **Display initiative** by preparing, and actively contributing to supervisory meetings (e.g., by preparing an agenda for the meeting and following up with action points)
- **Take responsibility** for maintaining an accurate record of formal supervisory meetings
- **Ensure they adhere to University research policy and good practice guidance**, including researcher integrity, ethics, intellectual property, and data management and protection
- **Actively engage** in their career development, discussing plans with supervisors and relevant colleagues
- **Engage with progress monitoring activities**, including Annual Progress Monitoring and submit written work or analysis for comment by their supervisors to agreed timetables
- **Communicate** with their supervisor as soon as possible if they are unable to make progress on research for any reason
- **Be mindful** of their own wellbeing and proactive in accessing wellbeing support if appropriate (e.g. through Student Wellbeing Services)