

## Problems with your Supervisor

Welcome to Advice Direct..., the written information service for Guild Advice.

This leaflet is designed to provide information for registered research students who may encounter problems with their supervisor at the University of Birmingham. You should refer to your department's procedures for full details.

This guide will examine some of the responsibilities that you and your supervisor have as outlined within the **Code of Practice on Supervision & Monitoring Progress of Research Students, and the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses** (see 'Sources of Help' below).

### Responsibilities Of Your Department

The responsibilities of the department and specifically of the lead supervisor are outlined within the **Code of Practise on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students** (see 'Sources of Help').

Responsibilities of the Department include:

- Assigning each student a lead supervisor, a second/Co- supervisor and a mentor;
- Regularly monitoring students' progress, with formal monitoring at least once every month for full time postgraduate researchers (and the equivalent for part-time);
- Providing feedback from the review process in the form of a written recommendation (GRS2 or equivalent agreed format);
- To organise alternative suitable support if the supervisor or mentor are due to have an extended absence. The student should be notified in writing.

The Code of Practice on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students provides the fundamental obligations of both department and student – all Researchers should familiarise themselves with both this document and the general information from the Graduate School

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/os/student-services/graduateschool/documents/public/guidelinesuparc.pdf>

Responsibilities of the Supervisors and mentors include:

- Having an initial meeting normally within 10 days of beginning a postgraduate researcher period of study.
- Maintaining contact through regular tutorial, supervision or seminar consultations, and initiating formal monthly supervisory consultations and setting the agenda for these meetings;
- Being accessible at other appropriate times when the student may need advice (should normally be within one week of your request);
- Giving guidance about the nature of research and the standards expected;
- Returning work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time (in normal circumstances, within 20 working days);
- Ensuring that the student is made aware of inadequacy of progress or of standards of work below that generally expected;
- Responsibility for the overall direction of the students research work in consultation with any member of the supervisory team and the mentor as appropriate.

All research students are advised to read the full list of responsibilities that can be expected from their School by them.

## Responsibilities Of Students

As a student you have a number of responsibilities. These are outlined within the **Code of Practice on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students** (see 'Sources of Help') and include:

- Discussing with your supervisor(s) the type of guidance and comment you find most helpful, and agreeing a schedule of consultations
- Ensuring that you are familiar and comply with University Regulations and School guidelines and procedures relating to your degree
- Ensure annual online registration process is met and other administrative arrangements.

- Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties **without delay**
- Ensuring work progresses in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor(s).
- Completing the Development Needs Analysis and attending any other appropriate training as directed by the supervisor, to include attendance at presenting papers within the University at conferences etc
- Informing your supervisor of your intention to submit your thesis at the relevant time
- Consulting with your supervisor in regards to any absences
- Providing an annual formal report of progress e.g. a GRS3
- Ensuring that own supervisors responsibilities towards the student are understood.
- Providing a notice of intention to submit thesis at least 3 months prior to students intended submission date. Submission of the thesis should not exceed the maximum registration period.

All research students are advised to read the full list of responsibilities that are expected of them by their School.

## **'I've got Problems With My Supervisor'**

Your School should have clearly defined procedures for students to make representations to the Head of School (or other designated member of staff or body) if you feel your work is not proceeding satisfactorily for reasons outside your control. This includes a breakdown in the relationship with your supervisor (supervisory team). These procedures should have been made available to you at the commencement of your studies (contact your department if you do not have a copy). **You must follow the procedures outlined by your School in the first instance if applicable.** If you cannot do this then follow the procedure outlined below:

- 1 There are a number of reasons why you may feel unsatisfied with your supervisor. Therefore, you should **clarify whether your supervisor is responsible** for the problem that you have (in line with the 'Responsibilities Of Your Supervisor', above). If they are you must first try

to **resolve the problem informally** with your supervisor (if applicable).

- 2 If having done this you are still unsatisfied, you can approach your **Mentor** (for pastoral support and guidance) or departmental (**Senior**) **Welfare Tutor**. Explain the problem to them and inform them of any action you have taken to try to resolve the problem. They will then discuss your case and advise you of your options.
- 3 If you are still unsatisfied, you should **contact your Head of Department in writing** and explain the problem and the steps that you have taken to resolve things. At this stage you may want to notify the Head of Department of these issues by following the **Student Concerns and Complaints procedure**, please see '**Advice Direct...Making A Complaint**'.

You can do this by completing your informal complaint on a **PGR Supervision Experience Concern Review Form** that can be found here; <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/policy/documents/public/student-complaints/supervision-experience-concern-form.doc>

**complaints should be made within one month of the initial incident**

**Do not delay submitting a complaint**

Do not wait for the recommendation of your progress review or viva result.

If you are still unsatisfied you can make a formal complaint within 1 month of the date on your informal complaint written response.

**You can speak to an Advisor at Guild Advice who can provide help and support at all stages of the process.**

## Sources Of Help

### **Advice & Representation Centre (ARC), Guild of Students**

Email: [thearc@guild.bham.ac.uk](mailto:thearc@guild.bham.ac.uk)

Visit the website at: <https://www.guildofstudents.com/support/guildadvice/who-we-are-guild-advice/>

Opening Hours

Monday - Friday

10am — 4pm

**Drop In Clinics**

**Monday - Friday**

**12 – 2pm**

Saturday/Sunday

CLOSED

### **Code of Practice on the Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students:**

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/supervision-monitoring-postgrad-researchers.pdf>

### **Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses:**

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/assess-research-degree-theses.pdf>

### **Code of Practice on Student Concerns and Complaints:**

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/complaints-procedure.pdf>

### **Students Charter:**

<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/birmingham/student-charter.aspx>

### **University Charter:**

<http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/charter.pdf>

### **Counselling & Wellbeing**

Website: [www.studenthelp.bham.ac.uk](http://www.studenthelp.bham.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 414 5130

### **Disability & Learning Support**

Email: [disability@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:disability@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0121 414 5130

**Disclaimer:** The information on this leaflet only provides general guidance on academic support and University policy. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of University policy or procedures. Guild Advice will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of information on this leaflet.

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