Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date
2.1	Vice-Chancellor and President	12 December 2023	12 December 2023

Procedure Statement			
Purpose	This procedure specifies the eligibility criteria, roles and responsibilities of Higher Degree Research supervisors at UNSW including the process for registration and deregistration.		
Scope	This procedure applies to all UNSW staff and affiliates, all registered Higher Degree Research supervisors, their candidates, Postgraduate Coordinators, Heads of School, and Associate Deans (Research or Research Training) or equivalent.		
Are Local Documents on this subject permitted?	☐ Yes, however Local Documents must be consistent with this University-wide Document	☐ No	

Procedure Processes and Actions

1. Supervisor roles

There are four main supervisory roles at UNSW:

1.1. Primary supervisor

A primary supervisor takes responsibility for the academic supervision of the candidature.

1.2. Joint supervisor

Joint supervision is where two supervisors have a formal, **equal** collaboration and share resources to support the candidature. Joint supervisors take equal responsibility for the academic supervision of the candidature.

1.3. Secondary supervisor

A secondary supervisor has specific expertise related to the candidate's research and assists in the academic supervision of the candidature.

1.4. External supervisor

An external supervisor has specialist expertise related to the candidate's research and can include staff from other universities, industry, business, government, or non-government organisations. An external supervisor is not a university employee nor holds an adjunct, emeritus or honorary status.

2. Supervisory teams

2.1. Supervisory team requirements

1. All Higher Degree Research (HDR) candidates must have a supervisory team of at least two supervisors. Each team must have either a primary or joint supervisor appointed, who will be the designated administrative contact for the purpose of communicating about the candidature.

2. The supervisory team must have the appropriate qualifications, experience, and disciplinary expertise to supervise the candidate's research and candidature.

3. The supervisory team must hold academic tenure which normally exceeds the expected duration of the candidature.

4. Each supervisor on the team must demonstrate active engagement with supervision of the candidate.

2.2. Supervisory panels

1. A supervisory panel is a team of more than two supervisors, one of whom will be the primary supervisor.

2. Supervisory panels are used when the research project requires a range of expertise and experience, such as multi-disciplinary or industry focussed projects.

2.3. Joint supervision

1. Joint supervisors have equal responsibility for the academic supervision of the candidature.

2. At least one of the joint supervisors must meet the eligibility criteria for being a primary supervisor (see Section 3.2).

2.4. Enrolling Faculty and/or School

The supervisory team or panel may consist of supervisors from more than one faculty as suits the research project. In such cases, the primary supervisor will normally be from the school and faculty in which the candidate is enrolled.

3. Supervisor eligibility

3.1. All supervisors must:

1. Agree to supervise according to the principles of supervision as outlined in the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy*, and all other relevant policies, procedures and legislation;

2. Meet the eligibility criteria in this policy;

3. Be approved to be on the UNSW Supervision Register in accordance with this procedure (excluding external supervisors);

4. Perform the roles and responsibilities in accordance with this procedure;

5. Take an active involvement with each candidature commensurate with their role; and

6. Engage in appropriate supervisory professional development activities as directed by the Dean of Graduate Research (excluding external supervisors).

3.2. Primary supervisors must be:

1. Academic staff members of the University who are employed on either a continuing or fixed term basis with an active and continued participation in research at UNSW who:

    a. Hold a doctoral degree or professional experience deemed by the University to be equivalent to AQF level 10; and

    b. Have a high level of expertise appropriate to the candidate's proposed research; and

    c. Have demonstrated experience in supervision of at least one HDR candidate to a timely completion as primary, joint or secondary supervisor at UNSW, or demonstrated experience of at least one HDR completion from another institution (noting the requirements for academics new to supervision detailed in Section 3.3), and

    d. Have been placed on the Supervision Register, and

    e. Completed the Research Integrity training provided by the University.

        or

2. Conjoint academic staff with a current affiliation with the University approved by the relevant faculty or school who:

    a. Have a doctoral degree or professional experience deemed by the University to be equivalent to AQF level 10; and

    b. Have an active and continued participation in research at UNSW; and

    c. Supervise candidates who are enrolled in an approved UNSW Clinical School or Research Centre; and

    d. Have demonstrated experience in supervision of at least one HDR candidate to a timely completion as primary, joint or secondary supervisor at UNSW, or demonstrated experience of at least one HDR completion from another institution,

(noting the requirements for academics new to supervision detailed in Section 3.3), and

    e. Have been placed on the Supervision Register, and

    f. Completed the Research Integrity training provided by the University.

3.3. For all academics new to supervision:

1. All UNSW academics new to supervision must enrol and complete the Essentials of Supervision course provided by the Graduate Research School, regardless of the type of supervisor role they take.

2. If these academics wish to be appointed as a primary supervisor they must have an experienced supervisor as part of the supervisory team and there needs to be an agreed mentoring plan to support them, approved by the Head of School or delegate. Once enrolled in Essentials of Supervision and the plan is confirmed, the academic will be placed on the Supervision Register.

3.4. Joint supervisors can be:

1. Any person eligible to be a primary supervisor can be a joint supervisor, noting the requirements for academics new to supervision detailed in Section 3.3.

2. Any person that holds an adjunct appointment at UNSW that meets the requirements for primary supervision eligibility.

3.5. Secondary supervisors can be:

1. Any person that holds an appointment that satisfies the eligibility conditions for the appointment as primary supervisor, except for Section 3.2.1 (c) or Section 3.2.2 (d); or

2. Any person that holds a contract or has an adjunct, visiting or honorary appointment at UNSW; or

3. Emeritus Professors or retired academic staff members of UNSW who remain research active.

3.6. External supervisors can be:

1. Any person that has an appropriate combination of qualifications, professional experience, knowledge and expertise to assist in supervision of the candidate's research. They are not required to have a doctoral degree.

3.7. Conflicts of Interest

1. Any potential, perceived or actual conflicts of interests, as defined in the *Conflict of Interest Disclosure and Management Policy & Procedure*, must be declared and an appropriate management plan be developed.

2. In the case of supervisors who are in a relationship and wish to supervise candidates together, they must:

    a. Inform the candidate of the relationship, and

    b. Have an additional UNSW academic, who is independent of the supervisors, on the supervisory team, and

    c. Have a management plan approved by the Head of School.

3.8. Exclusions

1. A person is not eligible to be a supervisor if they are enrolled in a PhD or Professional Doctorate program at UNSW or another institution.

4. Professional development

Supervisors must be actively engaged in the development of their professional practice in supervision.

1. All staff must engage in appropriate supervisory professional development activities as directed by the Dean of Graduate Research.

2. All staff new to UNSW are welcome to undertake 'Essentials of Supervision' to ensure that they have the knowledge of policies and procedures related to supervision and candidature at UNSW.

5. Supervisor registration

The Dean of Graduate Research has delegation to appoint all categories of supervisors and approve changes to supervision arrangements for candidates in HDR programs. This includes responsibility for appointing HDR supervisors to the UNSW Supervisor Register.

5.1. Registration

1. The Graduate Research School maintains the UNSW Supervisor Register.

2. Applications to be registered must be recommended by the Head of School or delegate to the Dean of Graduate Research for approval. The recommendation needs to address the eligibility requirements detailed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3. For academics new to UNSW but who have prior supervision history, they must provide to the Dean a portfolio of supervision and professional development activities or otherwise enrol and complete Essentials of Supervision.

5.2. Deeming provision

Any primary, secondary or joint supervisor actively engaged in supervision as at 2 October 2020 was added to the UNSW Supervisor Register.

5.3. Maintaining registration

The registration of UNSW staff, affiliates, visiting honorary or emeritus staff will continue unless one of the following conditions applies:

1. They cease employment at the University;

2. They are no longer actively engaged in research, as defined by ongoing research as a major part of their academic activity; or

3. They have their registration revoked as outlined in Section 5.4 below.

5.4. Revoking registration

A supervisor may have their registration revoked in the following circumstances:

1. Where an employee has engaged in "misconduct" and/or "serious misconduct" in their employment;

2. Where a supervisor has engaged in "misconduct", or "serious misconduct" related to the *Research Code of Conduct* which has been investigated in accordance with the *Research Misconduct Procedure*;

3. Failure to undertake their supervision responsibilities, including professional development requirements as outlined in the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy* and this Procedure.

5.4.1 Process for revoking registration

The Head of School or Associate Dean Research/Research Training (in consultation with Head of School) makes a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research to revoke registration of a supervisor. This recommendation is either based on performance or misconduct.

Performance-based matters

a. The Head of School must have discussed concerns with the supervisor, and together they have developed a plan and reasonable timeline to address concerns.

b. If the performance-related concerns have not improved following the agreed timeline, the Head of School may make a recommendation to the Dean of Graduate Research that registration be revoked.

c. The recommendation from the Head of School must include a plan for managing the supervisor's current candidates.

Misconduct-based matters

d. Pending the outcome of an investigation of "misconduct" or "serious misconduct", the Head of School will liaise with the Dean of Graduate Research regarding the suitability of the supervisor's ongoing registration.

e. The Head of School must include a plan for managing the supervisor's current candidates.

5.4.2 Decision by the Dean of Graduate Research

The Dean of Graduate Research has the final decision on deregistration matters. If the decision to revoke registration is made, the supervisor will be notified by the Dean of Graduate Research. In forming a decision, the Dean may consider:

a. There is a record of candidates failing to complete related to poor supervision, as substantiated by the Head of School;

b. There is evidence of multiple requests to change supervision by HDR candidates, where the standard of supervision is cited as the main reason;

c. Two or more informal and or formal complaints regarding supervision have been substantiated after investigation;

d. There is evidence of non-compliance with HDR policies, procedures and guidelines;

e. There is a failure to complete supervisor professional development within the appropriate timeframe.

5.5. Re-registration

A supervisor who has had their registration revoked under Section 5.4 may apply to the Dean of Graduate Research for re-registration. The application must demonstrate the following:

1. That the conditions leading to revoking registration, including training requirements, have now been resolved; and

2. The Head of School has confirmed that performance is satisfactory.

6. Supervisory load

All supervision should be monitored and accounted for by the Head of School to ensure there is adequate time for supervision considering the academic role and responsibilities.

6.1. Primary/joint supervisor

A primary/joint supervisor may not supervise more than six candidates (full time equivalent) at any one time unless they can demonstrate the following:

1. Evidence of adequate time available for additional supervision considering teaching, research and administrative responsibilities;

2. A track record of timely completions within 4 years for a Doctorate and 2 years for a Masters; and

3. Approval by the Head of School.

7. Responsibilities

7.1. All supervisors are responsible for:

1. Adhering to the principles of supervision outlined in the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy;* and

2. Providing advice and support to candidates to complete an original and feasible research project in a timely fashion.

7.2. Primary/joint supervisors are responsible for:

1. Providing the appropriate level of support, resources and guidance for the candidate and their research;

2. Ensuring that the administrative and reporting requirements of the candidature are met;

3. Ensuring that the candidate understands their rights and obligations under relevant UNSW research training, research data management, and related policies;

4. Ensuring that the candidate understands the requirements and complies with all relevant UNSW health and safety policies;

5. Maintaining frequent communication with candidates in a manner agreed to by all parties;

6. Reporting the progress of the candidature to the Head of School via the formal research progress review process;

7. Making a recommendation to the Postgraduate Coordinator on the appointment of thesis examiners as soon as possible after the candidate has submitted their notice of intention to submit;

8. Certifying that the thesis is in the correct format, has been checked in iThenticate, and is ready for examination; and

9. Arranging replacement supervision if absent from the University for four weeks or more.

7.3. Secondary supervisors are responsible for:

1. Supporting the candidate and other supervisors to allow the candidate to progress towards a timely and successful completion of the HDR program;

2. Acting in a mentoring capacity to candidates and/or supervisors when requested;

3. Acting in place of the primary supervisor when they are absent from the University;

4. Maintaining frequent communication with candidates in a manner agreed to by all parties; and

5. Providing feedback to candidates as part of the research progress review process

7.4. External supervisors are responsible for:

1. Providing advice and support to the candidate and other supervisors on matters related to the candidate's research;

2. Acting in a mentoring capacity to candidates and/or supervisors when requested;

3. Maintaining frequent communication with candidates in a manner agreed to by all parties; and

4. Providing feedback to candidates as part of the research progress review process

7.5. Higher Degree Candidates are responsible for:

1. Adhering to the principles outlined in the *Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy*;

2. Conducting an original, feasible research project in a timely fashion;

3. Maintaining frequent communication with supervisors in a manner agreed to by all parties; and

4. Engaging in identifying supervisory team members if changes are required.

8. Replacement supervision

8.1. Principles of changes to supervision

Whenever a supervision change is required the candidate must take an active role in the process of finding replacement supervision and agree to the appointment and roles of new supervisors in accordance with the *Variation of Candidature Procedure*, which outlines the process for changes to supervision. Such candidatures will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the candidate is appropriately supported.

8.2. Supervisory relationship breakdown

1. If there is a breakdown in the supervisor and candidate relationship, the Postgraduate Coordinator or Head of School must mediate to attempt to resolve the issues.

2. If no resolution can be found, the Associate Dean Research Training (or equivalent) will mediate to attempt to resolve the matter. If this is not successful, the matter must be referred to the Dean

of Graduate Research. In such cases, independent mediation may be sought.

3. Where appropriate replacement supervisor/s have not been identified within a reasonable timeframe, the Dean of Graduate Research may require the candidate to take program leave until the matter is resolved.

4. If no alternative suitable supervision can be found within a reasonable timeframe, the Dean of Graduate Research may discontinue the candidature on the grounds of lack of appropriate supervision.

Accountabilities	
Responsible Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Training and Dean of Graduate Research
Contact Officer	Director Graduate Research School

Supporting Information	
Legislative Compliance	This Procedure supports the University's compliance with the following legislation: *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (Cth) *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000* (Cth) *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015* (Cth)
Parent Document (Policy)	Higher Degree Research Supervision Policy
Supporting Documents	Higher Degree Research Supervision Guidelines
Related Documents	Code of Conduct Conditions for Award of Master of Philosophy Conditions for Award of Master by Research Conditions for Award of Doctor of Philosophy Conditions for Award of Professional Doctorates Conflict of Interest Policy Facilities and Resources to Support Higher Degree Research Candidates Guideline Health and Safety Policy Intellectual Property Policy Oral Examination Procedure Research – Authorship and Resolving Disputes Between Authors Procedure Research Code of Conduct Research Data Governance & Materials Handling Policy Research Misconduct Procedure Research Progress Review and Confirmation of Research Candidatures Procedure Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy Student Code of Conduct Student Misconduct Procedure Thesis Examination Procedure
Superseded Documents	Higher Degree Research Supervision Procedure, v2.1
File Number	2018/26928

Definitions and Acronyms	
No terms have been defined	

Revision History

Version	Approved by	Approval date	Effective date	Sections modified
1.0	Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)	23 May 2016	23 May 2016	This is a new Procedure

1.1	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research Training)	18 September 2018	18 September 2018	Amended to clarify supervisor eligibility.
2.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research	2 October 2020	2 October 2020	Full review
2.1	Vice-Chancellor and President	12 December 2023	12 December 2023	Amended to outline required supervisor professional development trainings and clarify supervision register process