

**University of York**

**Teaching Committee**

**University Policy on Taught Student Supervision**

**1. Scope and Purpose**

- 1.1 The University aims to offer students outstanding and distinctive learning and teaching in an environment that encourages them to become independent thinkers and learners, where they are supported in acquiring the skills and attitudes to achieve their ambitions through further study and lifelong learning, and success in society and the world of work. The University seeks to provide the opportunity for all students to realise their full potential during their studies and in their later lives. The University also provides a comprehensive system of support and advice to help students maintain their well-being and address any personal problems that may arise, particularly where those may affect their academic progress.
- 1.2 The University is a friendly, inclusive, supportive organisation and actively promotes contact between staff and students to ensure that students can get the help they need for their academic and personal development. Supervisors play a key role in helping students to make the most of their studies and other opportunities for personal development while at University.
- 1.3 In line with the University's aim to promote the development of independent thinkers and learners, students are primarily responsible for their own academic and personal development, progress and achievement. Students are therefore expected to be aware of the policy and practices of their Department / School on supervision and to work constructively with their Supervisor and other University staff to ensure they take full advantage of the support that is available to them.
- 1.4 This policy applies to all taught programmes at the University of York, with the exception of Hull York Medical School, York Online programmes, Lifelong Learning programmes and validated provision.

**2 The Supervisor**

- 2.1 The Supervisor provides students with accessible, supportive and confidential advice and guidance. The Supervisor's primary role is in relation to academic matters, but the Supervisor also supports students in their personal development and wellbeing and in the understanding and development of the skills that underpin success in and beyond their work at University. In all these areas, the Supervisor is part of a wider network of professionals with specific knowledge and duties for teaching and learning, welfare, personal development and employability.
- 2.2 The Supervisor should take a personal interest in the student's overall progress, be alert and responsive to signs of difficulties or problems and, where these may arise, advise students on how best to address them, and/or refer them to the appropriate specialist expertise in the Department / school or the University's professional support services.

### *Holding sessions*

2.3 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- Schedule at least two meetings per supervisee in each of Semesters 1 and 2. At least one meeting per semester should be on an in-person<sup>1</sup> and individual basis: the other meeting in the semester can be delivered on an individual or group basis and may be conducted virtually (e.g. over Zoom), as appropriate within Department / School policy. Sessions should be about 15 minutes.
- Schedule supervision meetings over the summer if required by their department / school to meet the requirements of the Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing policy (for the summer semester, departments / schools are required to schedule three engagement points for PGT students. These could be capstone project supervision, academic supervision, broader pastoral support).
- keep a record of meetings in e-vision, with records made not later than two weeks after the scheduled meeting;
- monitor student attendance as required by the Department / School, in accordance with the University's Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

### *Discussing Progress*

2.4 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- review and discuss their Supervisee's academic progress. Marks and feedback should be discussed in general terms, but students seeking more detailed advice should be advised to contact module or programme leaders;
- advise on course decisions such as module choices to help the Supervisee to make a considered decision;
- review plans, and consider reflections that are completed by the Supervisee as a means of capturing and presenting their activities;
- support and guide the student in their progression as an independent learner;
- refer and introduce the Supervisee to other members of academic staff and professional support services with specific skills or knowledge that a Supervisee may need;
- refer students on combined programmes to their Programme Advisor (see section 4) within the other participating department as and when necessary;
- review any personal development plans which have been developed following a Supervisee's failure to meet stipulated thresholds of attendance, in accordance with the Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing Policy .

### *Helping with Problems*

2.5 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- be alert to signs of personal problems in the Supervisee;
- offer the Supervisee guidance as required on general pastoral matters and direct them to those with more specialised skills if and when appropriate;
- Discuss options with a Supervisee who may wish to apply for a leave of absence
- liaise as appropriate with appropriate support services and YUSU/GSA;
- ensure that their levels of involvement in Supervisee's problems do not exceed professional boundaries.

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<sup>1</sup> The Student Academic Engagement and Wellbeing policy / procedure details what to do in the case of students whose study requirements mean they are off-campus (e.g. due to placements or years in industry).

### *Signposting*

2.6 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- Be aware of the wide range of pastoral support available to students;
- encourage the Supervisee to seek relevant advice and guidance on matters from the University's professional support services and YUSU/GSA, as appropriate
- signpost the Supervisee to the wide range of opportunities for personal development that are available within and beyond the curriculum.

### *Promoting activities*

2.7 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- talk to the Supervisee about their life at University and encourage them to take part in non-academic activities;
- if a Supervisee plans to undertake a placement or internship, remind them of the key people in their department / school (and the Visa Compliance team if a student Visa holder) they should engage with before their departure and on their return;
- liaise as appropriate with colleagues in appropriate support services and YUSU / GSA.

### *Planning for employability*

2.8 It is the Supervisor's responsibility to:

- encourage the Supervisee to think through and articulate personal ambitions and possible career paths;
- support the Supervisee to think about the skills and attributes that they will need to develop and demonstrate in order to achieve their personal, academic and professional aims;
- provide references when requested for Supervisees while they are at York and for a reasonable period after they have left (at least three years and possibly longer in particular cases, e.g. where the student has not been engaged in a subsequent academic or work activity where a more appropriate referee could be found);
- liaise as appropriate with colleagues in Careers and Placements.

## **3 The Department / School**

3.1 *The Department / School is responsible for ensuring that:*

- It develops, and makes available to students and staff a Departmental / School policy and agreed practices for supervision that support the University's policy and goals for teaching and learning, employability, student welfare and other relevant areas, and meet the needs and expectations of students in their discipline;
- the Departmental / School policy describes and explains the model of supervision adopted by the Department / School, the allocation of students to Supervisors, frequency of meetings, office hours, procedures and systems for accessing marks and record keeping, as well as procedures for changing Supervisor when this is required. It should also make clear how supervision is provided for any distance learners and part-time students;
- the Departmental / School policy describes the procedures for monitoring and reporting on the process and outcome of supervision in the Department;
- Departmental / School websites provide relevant and up to date staff profiles, to help Supervisors and students identify members of academic staff with expertise that may be relevant to their needs;
- Departments should wherever possible plan ahead to avoid disruption to Supervisees resulting from research leave.

- it supports Supervisors by providing effective staff induction on the role of the Supervisor and responding to requests for appropriate training, and that the review of academic staff performance includes the quality of their work as a Supervisor;
- all Supervisors receive disability awareness training and are able to direct students to Open Door and Disability for further advice and support. Supervisors should also be aware that each department / school has their own disability contact and disability representative within the department who provide a crucial role linking Student and Academic Services, predominately the Open Door and Disability Service, with the academic and professional support staff in the Department / School. Most importantly they oversee the sharing of information with staff supporting disabled students and in administering the process of implementing 'Reasonable Adjustments';
- administrative support is available to ensure that Supervisors can carry out their duties effectively and efficiently and that students receive a high quality service;
- Combined programme students have a single Supervisor from one department and access to a Programme Advisor from the other. Each department should manage the allocation of supervisors and programme advisors to ensure an even distribution where possible. Programme Advisors should be recompensed for their time according to the Department's Workload Model and will normally be members of the programme team.
- Up to date lists of supervisors and programme advisors are maintained and shared appropriately in the case of combined degrees.

#### **4 Programme Advisors (for students on combined programmes)**

##### *4.1 The Programme Advisor is required to:*

- familiarise themselves, as far as possible, not only with the combined degree programme and the combined degree course regulations, but also with the teaching programmes and cultures of both departments;
- hold an introductory meeting with combined programme students at the beginning of each academic session and at other key moments in the programme e.g. in advance of module selection;
- ensure that students are properly informed of programme regulations;
- liaise with Supervisors to ensure that students receive support in a cohesive manner.

#### **5 The Supervisee**

##### *5.1 The Supervisee is required to:*

- understand the purpose of the supervisory relationship and the principal requirement to meet with their supervisor twice per semester;
- understand that the Supervisor's principal role is as an academic advisor who will oversee their progress, discuss feedback, advise on module choices and liaise with other colleagues involved with their academic progress;
- keep their Supervisor informed of any events which may compromise their academic progress (e.g. illness) which may necessitate emails and/or meetings in between formalised supervisory meetings;
- be aware that they might expect generalised advice regarding pastoral matters but should not expect their academic Supervisor to solve problems requiring specialised advice but rather be signposted to appropriate services;
- attend supervisory meetings with appropriate marks and feedback if required.

5.2 In rare cases where a Supervisee's relationship with their Supervisor breaks down, students may make a request to change supervisor to their Department / School, which should be actioned.

**Related policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations:** [Online Taught Student Supervisor Resource](#)