

What is a formal supervision meeting?

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A supervision meeting is any meeting between a research student and their supervisor where the supervisor undertakes their supervisory responsibilities towards the student, as set out in the [University's Statement on Research Expectations](#): '[supervisors] should act as the project sponsor of the student's research project, providing the necessary advice and support to ensure the project is completed on time and to a high standard. In addition, they should provide guidance, support and encouragement for the student to develop their personal and professional skills in order to enhance their career prospects'. Supervision meetings will, therefore, often cover a range of topics and may sometimes include little or no discussion of the specifics of the research project.

What is different about a formal supervision meeting?

A formal supervision meeting may (particularly in some disciplines and departments) be very similar to any other (i.e. informal) supervision meeting, but in order for it to count as a formal supervision meeting, it should:

- be an individual meeting between the student and their supervisor(s) i.e. not a research/laboratory or other group meeting
- be recorded as a formal supervision meeting on SkillsForge (see below)
- normally be in person (or by video-conferencing for students on distance learning programmes and those away from York on approved academic business e.g. field work)
- normally include substantial discussion of, and feedback on, research progress and plans but may additionally, or alternatively, focus on development and training needs.

There is no minimum duration for a formal supervision meeting but it is unlikely that such a meeting could ever be less than 30 minutes and will normally be substantially longer.

Why do formal supervision meetings need to be recorded on SkillsForge?

A record of each formal supervision meeting should be drawn up using the 'Create a Formal Supervision Record' function in SkillsForge (see: [SkillsForge: Getting Started](#) on the YGRS web pages); anything recorded as a 'General Meeting' will not be regarded as a formal meeting for the purposes of the student's central record. The record will normally be drawn up by the research student, and then approved by the supervisor(s) present at the relevant meeting. The record will remain accessible in SkillsForge for both the student and supervisor(s) to view after submission. The record should include the date of the meeting, a summary of the content, and future actions to be performed, including agreed training. The record will also note if the student was present in person.

The purpose of the SkillsForge record is to serve as a useful reminder for the student and the supervisor(s) of what was agreed, but it also provides a reference point should disagreement arise in future.

How often do supervision meetings need to be held?

The University requires that **formal** supervision meetings are held at least every 6-7 weeks throughout the calendar year for both full-time and part-time students (including visiting students) during the normal enrolment period and more frequently if a department prescribes. This equates to a minimum of eight formal supervision meetings per calendar year.

There is no University requirement for the frequency of informal supervision meetings, although this may be prescribed by a department. In practice, the frequency of informal supervision meetings will depend on a range of factors including disciplinary and departmental norms, the relationship between the student and supervisor, and the needs of the student.

Pastoral support and supervision meetings

Supervision meetings (whether formal or informal) will normally include a pastoral element, with the supervisor checking that a student feels supported and encouraging the student to develop resilience to deal with the inevitable challenges associated with undertaking a research degree. In addition, the supervisor and the student should identify any non-academic issues (e.g. physical or mental ill-health, financial or welfare concerns) that could have a negative impact on the student's progress through the research degree and consider how these issues might be addressed (e.g. through access to a support service or a leave of absence).

Where non-academic issues prove difficult to address and/or pastoral support dominates supervision meetings (to the exclusion of the research project and/or personal and professional development), the supervisor and student should seek further advice. Supervisors should contact the Chair of their Graduate School Board Chair (or equivalent), and students the Chair of their GSB and/or the Graduate Students' Association.

Mentoring for a student's personal and professional development

A key role of the supervisor is to support each student in their personal and professional development: working with the student to enable them to consider, prioritise and access opportunities for training (for research and transferable skills), networking (including conferences, international mobility), publication, teaching, outreach/impact (e.g. 3MT), and career development (e.g. internships, careers advice). Supervisors and students may find it beneficial to adopt a mentoring/coaching approach, where there is a greater focus on the supervisor guiding the student, rather than directing them. Advice on mentoring and coaching is available from [Vitae](#).