1 Purpose of Supervision

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 are an important part of this personal contact and play a key role in helping students make the most of their studies and other opportunities for personal development while at University.

1.3 Students can expect that their Department will ensure:

- clear and appropriate arrangements for their supervision;
- that their Supervisor takes an active interest in their overall academic and personal development;
- accessible advice on academic progress and guidance on module choices;
- support for the development of academic and employability skills;
- the provision of general pastoral guidance and information concerning specialist services should the need arise;

and that the above will be detailed in the Department’s policy, web pages, student handbooks and via other appropriate methods of communication.

1.4 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 their Department’s policy and practices 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.
The Role of 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, personal development and employability, and welfare.

2.2 The particular role of the Supervisor is to take a personal interest in the student’s overall progress, to be alert and responsive to signs of difficulties or problems and, where these may arise, to advise students on how best to address them, and/or to refer them to the appropriate specialist expertise in the Department, the Careers Service, the College system, YUSU, and Student Support Services.

2.3 The Supervisor:

- schedules and urges Supervisees to attend at least one individual meeting per term, and in addition is available for further meetings or events as appropriate, as set out in the Department’s policy (in the case of sponsored students, attendance at two supervision meetings per term should be recorded and unauthorized non-attendance should be acted upon, in accordance with the University’s Attendance Management Policy for Sponsored International Students);
- monitors and discusses the Supervisee’s academic progress and feedback in order to help the Supervisee improve performance, progress throughout the academic year; identify issues, skills gaps and any needs for further support, and advises how these can best be addressed;
- keeps a record of meetings to help the Supervisee and Supervisor reflect on progress;
- liaises with administrative staff within the Department who assist with the management of the supervisory system;
- liaises as appropriate with colleagues in the International Office, Colleges, Student Support Services, Careers Service and YUSU;
- provides 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).

2.4 In addition, the Supervisor has responsibilities in the following areas.

Academic Support

2.4.1 The Supervisor:

- will access their Supervisees’ marks and, where possible, feedback to assist discussions;
- gives advice on course decisions such as module choices to help the Supervisee to make a considered decision;
- supports and guides the student in their progression as an independent learner;
- refers and introduces Supervisees to other members of academic staff with specific skills or knowledge that a Supervisee may need;
• refers combined degree students to their programme advisor within the other participating department as and when necessary (see Role of Department);
• represents the interests of Supervisees to Examination Boards and other bodies within the University, when appropriate (e.g. mitigating circumstances and disciplinary cases);
• gives permission for Supervisees to be absent up to a maximum of three days and consults as appropriate for longer periods of absence (with the Chair of the Board of Studies for absences of more than three days and up to four weeks and the Special Cases Committee for longer periods of absence), ensuring in all cases that the Supervisee understands the possible consequences when making a request for leave of absence.

Personal Development Support

2.4.2 The University’s Employability Strategy describes the University’s aims and objectives for supporting the personal development and employability of students, and the roles of different staff and systems in delivering this.

2.4.3 The Careers Service will support the introduction of the PDP (Personal Development Planning) process. The Supervisor:

• encourages Supervisees to think through and articulate personal ambitions and possible career paths;
• supports Supervisees 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;
• encourages Supervisees to seek relevant advice and guidance on these matters from other academic staff, the Careers Service, the College System and YUSU;
• signpost Supervisees to the wide range of opportunities for personal development that is available within and beyond the curriculum;
• reviews plans, and considers reflections that are completed by the Supervisee as a means of capturing and presenting their activities.

Pastoral Support

2.4.4 The Supervisor:

• is aware of the wide-range of pastoral support available to students through Colleges, Student Support Services and YUSU;
• is alert to signs of personal problems in the Supervisee;
• offers the Supervisee guidance as required on general pastoral matters and directs Supervisees to those with more specialised skills if and when appropriate.

3 The Role of the Department

3.1 The Department ensures that:

• it develops, publishes and promulgates to students and staff a Departmental 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 meets the needs and expectations of students in their discipline;

- the Departmental policy describes and explains the model of supervision adopted by the Department, 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 policy describes the procedures for monitoring and reporting on the process and outcome of supervision in the Department;

- where there are Combined degrees, the relevant Combined Board Executive Committees are supported to ensure they function effectively and support the single Supervisor/Programme Advisor model (see Policy on Combined Degree Programmes);

- Departmental 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;

- students are allocated to Supervisors so as to maximise continuity and synergies with the College System. Departments should wherever possible plan ahead to avoid disruption to Supervisees resulting from research leave, and allocate a Supervisor to students from a single or small number of colleges so that liaison between the Supervisor and the College system is facilitated and Supervisees have the opportunity to work together in College-based learning sets within and across years;

- 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 (currently available within the online learning module, ‘Diversity in the Workplace’) and know who the Department’s Disability Officer is and that they are available to provide advice on the needs of students with disabilities;

- administrative support is available to ensure that Supervisors can carry out their duties effectively and efficiently and that students receive a high quality service;

- the Board of Studies reviews annually the Department’s policy and practice in relation to supervision, taking account of data from the National Student Survey and wider feedback from students in the Department, draws up recommendations for appropriate actions to improve the operation and outcomes of the system, and includes information on this in the appropriate section of the Annual Programme Review.

4 The Role of the Supervisee

4.1 The Supervisee is required to:

- understand the purpose of the supervisory relationship and the principal requirement to meet at least once per term (or twice per term in the case of sponsored students);

- understand that the supervisor’s principal role is 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 specialized advice but rather be signposted to these specialized services;
• attend supervisory meetings with appropriate marks and feedback if required.