UNIVERSITY OF YORK

TEACHING COMMITTEE

University Policy on Taught Student Supervision

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. Regular academic supervision is a principle of Together York and 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 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.

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 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, the GSA, the International Relations Office or Student Services.

Holding sessions

2.3 It is the Supervisor’s responsibility to:
• Schedule at least one individual meeting per term (sessions should be about 15 minutes) and to be available for further meetings or events as appropriate, as set out in the Department’s policy. (In the case of students studying with a Tier 4 Visa, attendance at two supervision meetings per term should be recorded and unauthorised non-attendance should be acted upon, in accordance with the University’s Attendance Management Policy for Sponsored International Students);
• keep a record of meetings;
• monitor student attendance as required by the Department, in accordance with the University’s Attendance Monitoring 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 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 Attendance Monitoring 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 colleagues in the International Relations Office, Colleges, Student Services and YUSU/GSA;
• ensure that their levels of involvement in Supervisee’s problems do not exceed professional boundaries.

Signposting
2.6 It is the Supervisor’s responsibility to:
• Be aware of the wide-range of pastoral support available to students through Colleges, Student Services and YUSU/GSA;
• encourage the Supervisee to seek relevant advice and guidance on matters from other academic staff, the Careers Service, the International Relations Office, the College System 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 they should engage with before their departure and on their return;
- liaise as appropriate with colleagues in the International Relations Office, Colleges, Student 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 the Careers Service.

3 The Department

3.1 *The Department is responsible for ensuring that:*

- it develops, and makes available 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 meet 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;
- 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 on-line 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, the Postgraduate Taught Education 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;
• combined programme students have a single Supervisor from one department and access to a Programme Advisor from the other. Each partner department should manage the allocation of supervisors and programme advisors to ensure an even distribution where possible.

4 Programme Advisors (for students on combined programmes)

4.1 The Programme Advisor (as described in the Policy on Combined Degree Programmes) 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 at least once per term (or twice per term in the case of those studying on a Tier 4 visa);
• 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 are advised to talk to their Head of Department or the Chair of Board of Studies.

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Related policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations:
Online Taught Student Supervisor Resource: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/themes/supervisor/

Contact for queries and alternative formats of this document: email address: aso@york.ac.uk