

Guidance

Doctoral Researchers and Doctoral Supervisors Roles & Responsibilities

1. Purpose

This document outlines the key obligations and responsibilities for both doctoral researchers and supervisors during a doctoral programme of study. It is intended to support a strong professional relationship between doctoral researchers and their supervisors leading to a positive PGR experience, and a successful and timely completion. It is recommended that a discussion should take place at the beginning of the programme about the responsibilities of all those involved in doctoral student supervision.

The roles and responsibilities listed below are intended to be indicative and there will be many others agreed locally between the doctoral researcher and supervisor for specific aspects of the programme of research. (For Professional Doctorates please refer to any research module specifications for details). It should be recognised that there is no single agreed approach to successful supervision and that many factors can affect how it is carried out. For example, supervision might be different in a large research group with many interlinked projects compared to a single project.

2. Roles & Responsibilities

a. Doctoral Researchers

All research at City St George's must be carried out in accordance with the university's regulations and policies, including seeking ethical approval if required and considering how data is handled. You are expected to:

- Engage with your doctoral research for at least 35 hours per week if a full-time doctoral researcher, (16 hours for part-time), except when on approved Annual Leave.
- Maintain good and regular contact with your supervisors (at least once per month, if full-time).
- Take responsibility for the timely progression and completion of your research.
- Flag issues and concerns early and engage constructively in the development of solutions.
- Attend appropriate training.
- Engage with your local research community and more widely in the University as appropriate.

There are specific responsibilities at different parts of your doctoral research programme that are outlined in the following sections:

Induction and Registration

Each student at City St George's is required to (re-)register annually, and pay fees if necessary, to remain on their programme of study. Students have 21 days to complete registration after their start date. Re-registration should take place on the anniversary of the student's start date, or their return date if they have been on a period of suspension. As a doctoral researcher you should:

- Respond in a timely manner to communications about induction and registration and seek answers to anything you are unsure about using your university email address.
- Attend local and institution-wide induction sessions.
- Ensure that fees are paid at the appropriate times (if relevant).
- Contact the university if you are unclear about any aspect of registration/induction.

Supervisory Meetings

Meetings with your supervisors are the backbone of your development as a researcher. You should take responsibility for:

- meeting your supervisor at least once per month (if a full-time student).
- organising these meetings by contacting your supervisor(s) to arrange suitable dates and times.
- recording notes and action points of all meetings in the university's doctoral researcher management system, which your supervisor(s) will review and approve.

Training and Development

Training and development of doctoral researchers is fundamentally important to support your future aspirations. City St George's has a well-developed set of resources called the Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP), which you can find on [the doctoral researcher management system](#). You should engage with this programme, any local and external development opportunities, and take responsibility for your own development. Specifically, you should:

- Complete the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) on our doctoral researcher management system and update it annually. The TNA will indicate areas where development would be useful by pointing you to specific training sessions.
- Sign up using the [online system](#) for, and attend, relevant DRDP sessions and any other development opportunities, (e.g. Graduate Teaching Assistant training), available to you in your School or outside the university.
- Keep your supervisor updated about what training you wish to undertake or have taken.
- Maintain good and timely communication with organisers, particularly if you become aware you cannot attend sessions.

Progression

Your progress is assessed in three ways on your doctoral research programme:

- **Annual Progress Reviews.** These should be completed approximately two months prior to the anniversary of your registration and you/your supervisor will be prompted to organise the review by a message from the doctoral researcher management system. Successful completion of the Annual Progress Review allows you to re-register for the next academic session. Your supervisor(s) will advise you on the format and content of the Annual Progress Review. Your responsibility is to prepare any required written work for the review and engage in a timely manner with all parts of the review process.
- **Upgrade.** Doctoral researchers studying for a doctorate by major thesis or prior publication will initially be registered for a MPhil degree. You should discuss with your supervisor the timing of your upgrade from MPhil

to PhD, which should be no later than 18 months for full-time students and normally at 24 months and no later than 36 months for part-time students. Your supervisor will advise you on the School requirements for upgrade and what you need to do to prepare.

- **Examination.** Once you have successfully completed upgrade, you should have a clear plan for your doctoral studies. The final examination, which involves producing a thesis and having a viva voce examination, should be as close to three years as possible (or five years for a part-time student) and no later than four years from initial registration for a full-time student (seven years for a part-time student). You are responsible for writing your thesis, with input from your supervisor(s), and also completing an “Intention to Submit” form on the doctoral researcher management system 3-6 months prior to your intended submission date. This will start the examination process and your supervisor(s) will now organise examiners and the viva date in discussion with you.

Annual Leave

It is important you take leave and get a break from your studies to maintain your mental and physical health as carrying out a research programme is likely to be very intense at times. Full-time doctoral research students are entitled to 30 days of annual leave to a maximum of eight weeks per year to include public holidays and University closure days. This is pro rata for part-time doctoral research students. All leave must be agreed upon and approved by the supervisor(s) via the online system. Compassionate, parental and sickness leave are dealt with separately.

Support

All of the university's Student Support Services are open to you as doctoral researchers and you are advised to use them if and when appropriate. City St George's also has policies in place to support you should your progress been affected by factors beyond your control. You should:

- Familiarise yourself with the support available at City St George's ([Your health and wellbeing • City, University of London](#) and [Student Health & Wellbeing | Student Hub | City, University of London](#)).
- Speak to one of your supervisors if you need help or support.
- Look to build a network of friends who are doctoral researchers for peer support.
- If, for any good reason, you feel you cannot speak to your supervisors, please speak to your Senior Tutor for Research (STR).

b. Supervisors

City St George's requires that at least two supervisors are appointed for each doctoral researcher. One supervisor, who must be a Category A supervisor, will be the First Supervisor and takes ultimate responsibility for the supervision and for working with you and colleagues on the management of your journey. Other supervisors can play a major role in providing academic support and advice but are not ultimately responsible for timely progression and completion of the doctoral researcher.

Responsibilities of all members of the supervisory team

All supervisors are responsible for:

- Supporting the doctoral researcher to make an original contribution to the field and gain a systematic understanding of a substantial body of knowledge that is at the forefront of their academic discipline.
- Contributing to the doctoral researcher gaining knowledge of research project management and research methods.
- Acting as a research mentor assisting doctoral researchers to learn what is expected when carrying out research at City St George's and within their subject area.
- Respecting and supporting the doctoral researcher's research goals and career aspirations (e.g. supporting them to build a network).
- Providing timely, honest and actionable feedback that supports the development of the doctoral researcher.
- Providing pastoral advice and support and be the first point of contact should a doctoral researcher have a problem.
- Promoting a healthy work life balance and to be understanding to doctoral researchers facing challenges.
- Maintaining a current knowledge of Regulations and Policies, and the support services available at the University.

First Supervisor

The First Supervisor:

- Takes ultimate responsibility for the direction of the research, development, and timely progress of the doctoral researcher.
- Sets the framework for supervision by determining the frequency of meetings and key responsibilities within the supervisory team.
- Ensures all records are maintained correctly using the University's doctoral researcher management system.
- Provides timely feedback, including adding supervisor notes to the doctoral researcher management system following supervision meetings.
- Supports any recommendations submitted by the doctoral researcher, for example, an interruption of studies, if appropriate.
- May delegate responsibility for sections of the research programme to others in the supervisory team to lead.
- Takes primary responsibility for, but may delegate tasks connected to, annual progress reviews, upgrade and examination.
- Refers serious concerns about progress to the STR or Doctoral College, providing necessary evidence.
- Provides advice to students to support identification and engagement with appropriate internal and external development opportunities.

Ensure that an appropriately constituted supervisory team is in place throughout the programme to support the doctoral researcher, including working with STRs on any changes to the supervisory team should they become necessary.

Second/third supervisors

Second, and sometimes third supervisors, in addition to those responsibilities listed above for all members of the supervisory team, should:

- Carry out any tasks discussed and agreed within the supervisory team allocated to them.
- Support the lead supervisor, as appropriate, including potentially leading supervision meetings.

- Carry out the bulk of the supervision under the guidance of the lead supervisor should this be agreed and appropriate.
- Defer to the First Supervisor in cases of disagreement about the direction of the doctoral researcher's project unless the second supervisor has relevant specific expertise or has a very strong concern.

External supervisors

An external supervisor is a member of staff at another research organisation who provides guidance to a doctoral student in a specialised research area that is not available at City St George's. External supervisor should:

- Agree how to communicate with the doctoral researcher and the frequency of attendance at supervision meetings.
- Lead supervision in areas of research specific to their expertise.
- Provide timely feedback on research carried out that falls within their area of research expertise.
- Contribute to the doctoral researcher's development as appropriate.

Consultants

A consultant is appointed to provide specialist advice on a particular area of a doctoral researcher's project (e.g. assist with a publication) for a short period of time in area that is outside the expertise of the supervisory team. A consultant is not expected to be involved in the student's development or provide input/feedback long-term.

3. Resolving Conflict

The responsibilities laid out in section 2 provide a set of expectations that support a healthy working relationship between supervisors and doctoral researchers. However, there might be instances where communication breaks down. Should conflict arise, and the supervisor/supervisee are unable to reach a resolution that is satisfactory to both parties, the doctoral researcher or supervisor should speak to their Senior Tutor for Research who would look to resolve the situation with additional support from the Doctoral College if needed.

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