

Guidance on the Appointment of External Supervisors

INTRODUCTION

Research students should normally have a Principal and a Joint or Second Supervisor. In some cases it may be appropriate to appoint an External Supervisor who is a member of another academic institution or a collaborating body. At least one of the supervisory team must be a Birkbeck member of staff.

CIRCUMSTANCES

The following are examples where the need for external supervision might arise:

- Where a current primary or secondary supervisor leaves Birkbeck but is willing to continue the supervisory relationship and be contracted as an External Supervisor
- In cases where the expertise of a supervisor external to Birkbeck would provide essential additional supervisory support in a specialist subject e.g. an External Supervisor employed within a non-HEI partner such as a museum or an industrial partner.
- Where a supervision arrangement is part of a formal collaborative programme e.g. Research Council or other funded collaborative doctoral training programmes.
- In cases where a current Birkbeck supervisor is absent for a significant period e.g. due to extended sick leave, maternity or adoption leave where an alternative Birkbeck supervisor cannot be identified.

PRINCIPLES

If an External Supervisor is to be appointed then the following must be adhered to:

- An External Supervisor is any individual who is not currently employed by Birkbeck. Jointly appointed academic staff are considered internal supervisors if they have a Birkbeck contract.
- External Supervisors must be made fully aware of the responsibilities and requirements as specified in the [Birkbeck MPhil/PhD Regulations](#) and the [College Code of Practice for Postgraduate Training and Research for Research Degrees](#). External Supervisors will be expected to fulfil their duties in full as specified in these documents and Departments are responsible for ensuring this.
- Departments must ensure that any External Supervision arrangements comply with the College's Tier 4 Monitoring processes.
- Departments should be confident that any External Supervisor will be available to fulfil the supervisory role for the duration of the required period. External Supervisors are usually expected to hold a contract of employment with an institution other than Birkbeck and the period of their contract should extend beyond the expected period of supervision. Their contract of employment would usually be expected to include responsibility for research, however departments may propose External Supervisors from outside of Higher Education or whose contracts are not primarily focussed on research provided that they are confident that their supervisory responsibilities can be met in full.
- External Supervisors should not exceed a maximum of 8 supervised students at any one time – as specified in the Birkbeck Code of Practice for Postgraduate Training and Research for Research Degrees. This maximum includes supervision responsibilities in their home institution and any other current PhD supervision arrangements they may be responsible for. If the External Supervisor's home institution

specifies their own limitations on supervisor load these must be complied with.

- No-one should appoint an External Supervisor for a student without having read and adhered to the [College's Policy on Conflict of Interest](#) and being assured that no conflict of interest or perception thereof exists. If you are uncertain as to whether or not you need to declare a relationship you may seek confidential advice from the College Secretary.
- Additional requirements may arise from external supervision involving industrial partners (e.g. negotiation of CASE studentship agreements) or other external partners (e.g. requirements set by philanthropic donors or other funders).

PROCESS

Approval

The School PGR Committee (or equivalent) is responsible for approval of all External Supervisors. The form in *Appendix A* may be used for this purpose. Departments should follow the appropriate process for recording details of External Supervisors in accordance with guidance provided by the Graduate Research School.

Contract

For advice on agreeing a contract for External Supervision please contact [Human Resources](#) (humanresources@bbk.ac.uk)

External Supervision Fee

Schools who wish to make arrangements for External Supervisors will be responsible for agreeing any fee for this supervision and for providing the funding for this fee (normally from the School's "bought-in teaching" budget). The current recommended external supervision fees are:

- Principal Supervision: £500 per annum per student supervised
- Secondary Supervision: £400 per annum per student supervised

External Supervisors will not normally be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred to carry out supervision.

SCOPE OF GUIDANCE

This guidance is not intended to cover the following arrangements:

Co-tutelle/joint PhD

This guidance above is for use where students are enrolled only at Birkbeck and where Birkbeck is the sole awarding institution. Proposals for delivering a joint PhD or co-tutelle with another University, where it is proposed a student would be registered at more than one institution, and may be awarded a joint or dual award, are not governed by this guidance. Please refer instead to the *Policy and Procedure for Joint Registration Research Degree Programmes*.

Informal mentoring

In some cases, it may be appropriate for a student to have an informal mentoring relationship with a researcher from a different institution. Under normal circumstances this would not constitute a supervisory arrangement and would not need to be registered in this way.

FORM FOR APPROVAL OF EXTERNAL SUPERVISOR

Student details	
Name of Student	
Student number	
Department	
Year of Study	

External supervision requested by	
Birkbeck Supervisor – Name	
Supervisory role	Principle / Joint principle / Second supervisor
Role if different to BBK supervisor	
Rationale for Appointment:	

External Supervisor details	
Name of Proposed External Supervisor	
Title	
Employing Organisation	
Employment address	
Email address	
Telephone	
Total Number of research students they are currently supervising	
Supervisory role for the named student	Principle / Joint principle / Second supervisor
Expected period of external supervision	

Approved by Head of Department/ Departmental Graduate Committee	NAME:
	DATE:

Please return this form to graduateresearchschool@bbk.ac.uk