



Policy on Project and Dissertation Supervision

**Version 1.1
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Other documents referenced	
Related documens	University Assessment Regulations Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate

Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
V1.0	7.08.2014	G&QE	First published version (previously included as separate section of <i>Assessment & Graduation Processes</i>)
V1.1	01.09.2018	AQD	<p>Addition of Preamble (page 1)</p> <p>At 1.2.3 Addition of text to clarify that supervisors must be allocated in week 1.</p> <p>Revision of 1.2.7 and 4 to clarify process for concerns.</p> <p>Addition of text at 4.2.7 with regards to student feedback</p> <p>Revisions to 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 to clarify the role of student and supervisor and to confirm the minimum allocation of supervisory meetings and the form such meetings may take.</p> <p>Addition of Appendix 1: Elevating Project/Dissertation Concerns.</p> <p>Addition of Appendix 2: Student Project/Dissertation Record.</p>

Preamble

The purpose of a project or dissertation is to demonstrate the student's ability to complete a research project that is completed independently with guidance from their supervisor. The student needs to take this responsibility on board and needs to be self-motivated.

1 Administration of Supervision

- 1.1 The Module Leader for a dissertation/project module shall normally discharge the duties of Dissertation/Project Co-ordinator. Responsibility for the implementation of these guidelines shall (unless otherwise specified) rest with the School.
- 1.2 The duties of the Dissertation/Project Co-coordinator will normally include overseeing the processes by which:
 - 1.2.1 Research Methods are taught (where these form part of the learning outcomes of the module) (see also 2 below);
 - 1.2.2 Titles are approved (see also 3 below);
 - 1.2.3 Supervisors are allocated no later than the first week of the semester that the dissertation project begins;
 - 1.2.4 Guidelines are issued to students and supervisors;
 - 1.2.5 Students' progress is monitored;
 - 1.2.6 Students' work is assessed;
 - 1.2.7 Concerns are dealt with (see also 4 below).
 - 1.2.8 Ethical approval is given for any research, including questionnaires and surveys, involving human participants
 - 1.2.9 Enhanced disclosure is sought, if necessary
 - 1.2.10 Proposals comply with health and safety legislation;

2 Research Methods

- 2.1 Programme Boards shall ensure that the programme of study of each student who is required to submit a dissertation/project is structured so as to ensure that they are adequately prepared in research methods appropriate to their discipline and programme.
- 2.2 Programme Boards shall be required within their Approved Programme Documentation to identify where such preparation in research methods is received.

3 Approval of Outline Proposals

- 3.1 Schools shall have in place mechanisms which ensure the feasibility of a student's choice of title is established at the earliest possible date. The criteria used in the approval of a dissertation/project title include:
 - 3.1.1 Is it related to the student's own range of interests?
 - 3.1.2 Is it related to the aims and objectives of the student's programme?
 - 3.1.3 Does it combine an academic approach with some practical work?
 - 3.1.4 Is the problem reasonably open-ended?
 - 3.1.5 Will it require an original contribution from the student?
 - 3.1.6 Are the resources required readily available?
- 3.2 In cases where students are required to produce an outline proposal for approval, such a proposal should be submitted by students to the Dissertation/Project Co-ordinator as early as possible. Schools may give consideration to the outline proposal being formally assessed so as to encourage students to produce an outline proposal of high quality.
- 3.3 It is noted that in respect of certain dissertation/project modules, students choose a topic from a list of suitable topics provided by the Module Leader. In such cases the outline proposal would discuss how the student intended to approach the chosen topic.

4 Guidelines to Students and Staff

- 4.1 Schools shall ensure that for dissertation/project modules, a Module (Dissertation) Handbook is issued to students. This Handbook should also be issued to supervisors. It is required that within the Handbook there are clear arrangements for escalations of concerns and it must be explicitly stated that where the student's escalation of concern relates to the standard of supervision, no appeal against the mark awarded for the dissertation/project will be entertained unless the student has initiated the escalation of concern procedure prior to submission of the dissertation/project.

Further details regarding the University's [Academic Appeals process](https://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/study/courseandmoduleinformation/exams/appeals/) can be accessed at the following location:
<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/study/courseandmoduleinformation/exams/appeals/>

- 4.2 The Module (Dissertation) Handbook must contain a copy of this policy and also material relating to:

- 4.2.1 A timetable for dissertation/project stages and submission
- 4.2.2 The organisation and management of the dissertation/project
- 4.2.3 The procedure for approval of outline proposal and title
- 4.2.4 Supervision arrangements (internal and external as appropriate) - including a statement of the respective responsibilities of supervisor and supervisee
- 4.2.5 The presentation of the dissertation/project
- 4.2.6 The assessment schedule/statement of assessment criteria
- 4.2.7 Arrangements for:
 - Student support
 - Mechanisms for feedback from students (see page 6, 'Student Dissertation Record')
 - Escalation of concern
 - Ethical approval
 - Enhanced disclosure

5 Monitoring of Student Progress

- 5.1 It is required that supervisors keep a formal record of contact with students. Supervisors will provide Dissertation/Project Co-ordinators with progress reports for any candidate experiencing issues and/or difficulties in the completion of their dissertation/Project.

6 Respective Roles of Supervisor and Student

- 6.1 Whilst Dissertation and Project practice varies between disciplines, as a *minimum*, students should have an allocation of supervisory meeting as follows:
- Every two weeks, for Projects/Dissertations approved for completion over the course of one Trimester
 - Every three weeks, for Projects/Dissertations approved for completion over the course of two Trimesters

Supervisory meetings can be in the form of individual and/or group face-to-face meetings, Skype/telephone conversations or email correspondence. The format of meetings will be agreed by the student and the supervisor; adhering at all times to any operation guidelines contained within the programme Dissertation/Project Handbook and appropriately recorded via the meeting record (see page 6, 'Student Dissertation Record').

Email correspondence should also occur where the student has queries that can be answered by email. It is expected that emails will be responded to within a working week. The ultimate responsibility lies with the student for making contact and maintaining contact with the supervisor.

Any discipline specific requirements which exceed this minimum requirement will be captured within the programme's Dissertation/Project Handbook.

The outcome of each scheduled supervisory meeting should be captured using the 'Student Project/Dissertation Record' (page 6) to ensure an accurate record of progress and agreed actions resultant from each meeting is maintained.

6.2 The supervisor and student should agree, in advance, the anticipated date, duration and content of each meeting in line with the project/dissertation guidance.

6.3 Supervisors are expected to warn students where there is a possibility of the student failing the dissertation/project or of not realising their full potential in respect of the dissertation/project component. However supervisors must avoid raising a student's expectation of a particular classification and students should not be given any indication of the actual mark which the dissertation/project is likely to be awarded.

6.3.1 What is expected of students:

- To work independently, be responsible for ensuring general progress and for meeting relevant deadlines or demands (e.g., ethical requirements) of the dissertation project;
- To seek advice and comment on their work from others when required;
- To make contact with their supervisor, and adhere to the meeting protocol (meeting times) agreed between the student and the supervisor;
- To thoroughly proof-read and perform in-depth self-critique of any draft chapters that are sent to the supervisor for comment - the student should view the draft chapters as finalised and complete;
- If draft chapters are to be discussed at a meeting with the supervisor then these should be emailed to the supervisor at least 5 working days before the meeting;
- If the structure of the dissertation/project has elements of practical work included, then the student and supervisor will agree details of any materials to be discussed at supervisory meetings. Where this involves submission of materials, students will be expected to submit 5 days before the supervisory meeting
- To *accurately* report on progress and bring to the attention of the supervisor any problems or special extenuating circumstances that they face during the supervision process that may impede progress in their dissertation as soon as the issue arises;
- To take ultimate responsibility for the direction and content of the dissertation/project;
- To raise any difficulties/concerns with the supervisory process as soon as possible to allow the school to take appropriate remedial action if required (please refer to page 5, 'Elevating Project/Dissertation Concerns').

6.3.2 The role of the supervisor is one of giving guidance and advice. The supervisor's main concern should be the suitability of and approach to the chosen topic, and the extent to which a student is making timely progress in the intended direction.

6.3.3 What is expected of the supervisor:

- Approve the research topic, aims and objectives
- Discuss the structure, literature and methods of research for the dissertation
- Where the structure of the dissertation/project completely narrative then the expectation is that the supervisor review the draft supplied by the student in totality and give written and/or verbal feedback on the chapter within 5 working days of receipt. Feedback should be constructively critical.
- Where the structure of the dissertation/project has elements of practical work included then the module handbook for the dissertation/project should specify in detail what is expected of the supervisor with regard to reviewing the students work.
- Be available when necessary (within reason) and adhere to meeting guidelines
- Be professional, open, supportive

- Give students serious attention during meetings
- Have a good knowledge of the project/dissertation area and be willing to exchange ideas freely
- Be aware of future pitfalls in the project/dissertation topic
- If required the supervisor should direct the student to relevant support services, for example the Learning Development Team and library staff.
- The supervisor is not expected to edit or proof read the draft chapters and will only review draft work once.
- An audit trail must be maintained by the supervisor of all contact meetings with the students; progress should be recorded and agreed with the student (see page 6, Student Project/Dissertation Record).

Assessment

- 6.4 A marking schedule or statement of assessment criteria must be made available to both students and supervisors. It is required that this be included in the Module (Dissertation) Handbook.
- 6.5 There should be independent second marking of all dissertations/projects. The second examiner should have no knowledge of the mark given by any other examiner. Where there is a failure to agree a mark, it shall be the responsibility of the Dissertation/Project Co-ordinator to organise the reassessment of the dissertation/project in order to reach a formal mark.
- 6.6 All markers should be required to complete a pro-forma statement/report to justify the mark awarded.
- 6.7 It is required that a representative sample of dissertations/projects should be scrutinised by the appropriate External Examiner. Agreement should be reached with the External Examiner in respect of the nature of the sample, which will be scrutinised.
- 6.8 Students should incorporate into their dissertation/project the following statement:

“This dissertation/project is my own original work and has not been submitted elsewhere in fulfilment of the requirements of this or any other award”

- 6.9 Students are advised to retain all the data and materials relating to their dissertation/project (including lab books) until after they have graduated.

7 Deviation from these procedures

- 7.1 If there are particular reasons for not following the procedures, then approval is required at School Board, via the Programme Board that hosts the module, with clearly defined reasons minuted. Any approved deviation must be highlighted in the Module Handbook.

ELEVATING PROJECT/DISSERTATION CONCERNS

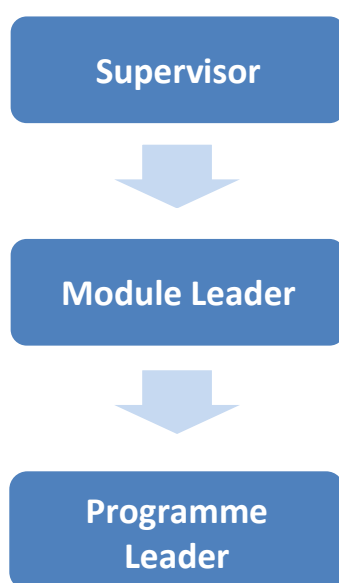
This flowchart identifies the elevation process available to you.

Any concern related to the standard of supervision must be reported to your School prior to submission of your dissertation/project. If the process below does not resolve the concern then the student should engage with the University's formal complaints process.

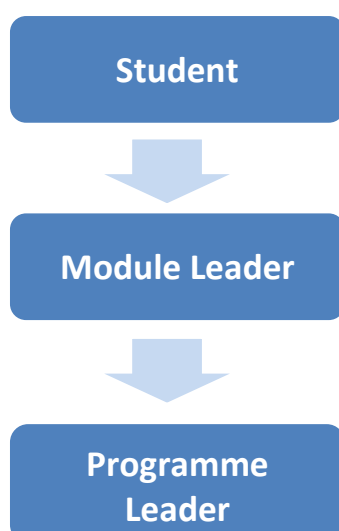
(<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/gaq/appealscomplaintsstudentconduct/complaints/>)

If your supervisor is the Module Leader and/or Programme Leader your concern can be raised with your Assistant Head of Department.

Escalation of student concerns about project/dissertation supervision experience



Escalation of supervisor concerns about student engagement in project/dissertation



STUDENT PROJECT/DISSERTATION RECORD

Date of meeting:

Student:

Supervisor(s) present:

Review of actions from the last supervisory meeting:

Topics discussed:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Identification of any issues:

- Is progress being made? Y/N (delete as applicable)
- Are goals being met? Y/N (delete as applicable)

Actions set for the next meeting:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Additional activity:

Confirmation from student and supervisor Date

Student

Supervisor

Please note

Supervisory meetings can be conducted electronically or by phone, and agreement by email is accepted in lieu of signatures.

Completing the form

Students should complete the form, adding their name and date to the Confirmation section, and forward to the supervisor(s) present. The Supervisor should add their name and date if in agreement, and retain this form as a formal record of meetings with the student.