Guidelines for Engagement for Postgraduate Supervision and Informal Feedback

This policy will document student and tutoring responsibilities concerning supervision and the provision of informal feedback. We provide a unique pastoral system with tutors on hand to deal with your queries and concerns from Monday to Friday.

The QAA MA Characteristics Statement makes clear what is expected of a postgraduate student:

All master's degree graduates have in-depth and advanced knowledge and understanding of their subject and/or profession, informed by current practice, scholarship and research. This will include a critical awareness of current issues and developments in the subject and/or profession; critical skills; knowledge of professional responsibility, integrity and ethics; and the ability to reflect on their own progress as a learner.

Graduates of research master's are likely to be further characterised by their ability to study independently in the subject, and to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the subject. Graduates of specialist or advanced study master's are likely to be characterised in particular by their ability to complete a research project in the subject, which in some subjects includes a critical review of existing literature or other scholarly outputs. Meanwhile, graduates of professional or practice master's are able to apply research and critical perspectives to professional situations, both practical and theoretical, and to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to their professional activities.

In accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, at the end of Level 7:

Students should be able to demonstrate: a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline or area of professional practice; a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship; originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline; conceptual understanding that enables the student to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses. They will be able to deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences. They will demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level to continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level. They will develop the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility; decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations/professional environments; and the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

Please read the above statement several times, as your work will be assessed using these criteria.

You are free to schedule tutorials as needed and submit drafts for feedback; we value the nature of this support and view it as fundamental to your progress. We also need to provide a learning system that facilitates development and growth by encouraging autonomy and independence. The wording above repeatedly mentions independence and autonomy. We hope this document provides important boundaries that allow these two potentially oppositional elements to work together harmoniously. There may be times when they stand in conflict with one another, and a document

such as this is designed to provide clarity. While we aim to support you, we also owe a duty to nurture and facilitate your independence.

We acknowledge that each student will have an individual supervision experience as each dissertation/project undertaken is tailored to the needs of the student and the nature of the research. The outline below presents the expectations for both the student and the supervisor in undertaking a dissertation/project.

There are two types of Supervision:

Group Supervision: designed to facilitate your communication as a cohort and engage interactively with your supervisor. It is an opportunity to share ideas and work towards group goals.

Individual Supervision: where you meet for a period of time to follow-up ideas and plan your programme of study.

Both forms of supervision will be used throughout your course, and their dominance will vary between your modules.

Responsibilities of the Supervisor
Meetings/email contact and availability

1. **To maintain contact through email where appropriate.** There are times when an email can provide an important speedy resolution. Supervisors will respond within two working days, but they will not be available to respond beyond their non-contracted hours or during their holiday periods. Please note that supervisors will take holidays at different times throughout the year due to the long-running year schedule of the MA programme.

2. Where a tutor is unavailable, and you need your email query to be answered, you may contact the administrative team, who will forward your email to another supervisor who will answer it within a reasonable time frame.

3. **To maintain contact through project meetings.** The supervisor should be available to meet with the student several times over the course of the module. The meetings will be conducted online.

4. A record will be kept, between supervisor and student, of all such formal meetings, including dates, actions agreed upon, and deadlines set.

5. It is not the responsibility of the supervisor to contact the student who chooses not to arrange or attend meetings. Please be assured that we do care about your engagement and our student support team will reach out to you where concerns are arranged regarding engagement.

6. If the module supervisor is granted a leave of absence, an alternative supervisor will be provided.

7. Tracy Theobald is our Head of Student Support and is independent of the teaching team. She will email you at regular intervals to check your progress and liaise with you regarding any issues that arise. You can contact her via email at Tracy@voicestudycentre.com

8. Group tutorials are also a dynamic form of supervision, answering a range of questions that you may not think of when working individually. They also facilitate group cohesion and the sharing of ideas and practices. These will be available to watch on catch-up. To structure your learning, your supervisor may ask you to prepare tasks for each group tutorial.

Guidance and feedback

1. The topic and proposal of work should be agreed upon with the student via email or face-to-face. This should also include any consideration of additional resources and any research ethics approval that will need to be obtained. It is not the supervisors' responsibility to contact a student who does not make contact to discuss the project to be undertaken. Where a student falls out of contact, *Student Support* will email you to check your progress and arrange a Zoom meeting to discuss any problems that may arise. They also works closely with the supervisory team and will be aware when you are not engaging with the course.

2. Supervisors will provide advice during the development and implementation of the work. It is not the supervisor's responsibility to request meetings or for them to ask to view work.

3. Tutors will provide assignment feedback and will suggest a draft deadline. Please note the following detailed guidance regarding feedback. The above benchmark statements in italics emphasise that students should be independent scholars at the completion of the MA. You will notice that we provide intensive support at the beginning of your journey and we continue to build self-efficacy as you progress.

- Multiple drafts **may** be submitted for the initial **pre-course assignment** as this is integral to your academic development. Your supervisor will provide thorough feedback on the first draft and then summary feedback on any subsequent drafts.

- The draft deadline **will always be** before your submission deadline. Your supervisor may choose to mark a draft submitted later, but this will be at their discretion. Where there is a late submission, the supervisor may not be able to provide thorough feedback and may opt to provide a summary of comments. If you fall short of the draft deadline, it is still worth submitting it to the team for some feedback. Our staff work very hard to work around your pressures, but they have their own pressures too. Just be aware that a draft mark can take several hours to complete and an unexpected late draft can cause issues for your supervisor. Students who receive feedback gain significantly higher grades than those who do not. If you fall short of the draft deadline, let your module supervisor know.

- Multiple drafts **may not** be submitted for **summative assignments.** Your tutor will mark and comment on **a section of the draft.** The following will provide feedback on what to expect from your draft mark. **Please also consider that the aim of an undergraduate, level 6, is supported independence in contrast to level 7, which is full independence aiming for originality.** The granular guidance aims to satisfy the benchmark statements italicised/bold above. We aim to provide a safety net of support while developing your self-efficacy.

    A) **Module 1 –** Your supervisor will focus intensively on 1,500 words of part 1 and 500 words of part 2.

B) **Module 2 -** Your supervisor will focus intensively on 1,000 words of the rationale and they will give feedback via a synopsis for the practical component of the module. They will also examine a short excerpt of the reflective section.

C) **Module 3 –** Your supervisor will give intensive feedback on:
Component 1: 1,000 words
Component 2: 500 words
Component 3: 500 words

D) **Module 4 –** Your supervisor will give feedback on 2,000 words of your assignment and 1,500 words of your research proposal.

E) **Module 5 –** Your supervisor will give intensive feedback on excerpts from each section (5,000 words total). Please do not submit your draft in sections unless your supervisor agrees with you to do so as your supervisor will need to see how the chapters connect to one another.

- Your tutor should not provide guidance on content inclusion as it is for you to engage in the appropriate research for your essay. They can suggest potential areas for further research. Developing research skills is part of the academic process. Your tutor will encourage analytical development and comment on your writing.

- It is not the responsibility of the supervisor to provide any content for inclusion in the dissertation/assignment or for any solutions to be provided in respect of the work undertaken. If you have chosen a topic with a sparse research base, you will need to cross synthesise from other areas. It is your responsibility to source those other areas and to appreciate that this is sophisticated MA level work.

- It is not the responsibility of the supervisor to **proof-read** through the dissertation/project.

- It is **not** the responsibility of the supervisor to identify **referencing issues** or to correct them when marking your work.

- It is not the responsibility of the supervisor to indicate any grading of the work in progress, as it is only the final submission that will be formally assessed. Please be aware that grading occurs after a second marking/internal moderation process. Supervisors will not give an indication of your grade. They are expressly prohibited from doing so.

- When your mark is formally assessed, your assessor will review your work and make constructive suggestions for improvement. It is important to understand that there are many ways in which an assignment can be improved and no one reviewer's comments will be the same as another. Remember that you are working towards an original paper and there is no exact formula for the content. Our internal moderation processes ensure grade continuity between multiple assessors but there may be a divergence of opinion in the comments. Please view this as healthy aspect of academic discourse and as we are preparing you for either doctoral study and/or publication, you will need to be prepared for the nature of academic feedback.

Responsibilities of the Student
Meetings and availability

1. To arrange supervision meetings within reasonable time frames and to attend these meetings.

2. To provide an agenda in advance of each meeting covering the topics and/or issues to be discussed; these can then form the basis of the recorded minutes for the meeting.

3. Record action points discussed during the meeting with the supervisor; these can then be included as a part of the recorded minutes in item (2) above.

Project Management and Delivery

1. To lead on the identification of a suitable topic and development of the research proposal/assignment direction.

2. Together with the supervisor, create a timetable with milestones to ensure the timely completion of the dissertation/assignment

3. To manage day-to-day running of the work, including meeting and all deadlines agreed with the supervisor.

4. To submit the research ethics application by the set deadline(s), if applicable.

5. To read and review relevant literature, undertake all necessary development work and author the assignment/dissertation.

6. To conduct the research/assignment in a manner that complies with issues of a legal, safety, data protection, ethical and professional nature.

7. The student should address any concerns relating to the dissertation/assignment as early as possible with the supervisor.

Tutorials

We will offer a series of group seminars as well as individual mentoring sessions. We urge you to book a tutorial when you need one. We do track engagement and we will reach out to you if we notice that you have disengaged from your studies.