

University of Brighton

Approach to support and development to supervisors

The University of Brighton takes a proactive approach to the support and development of supervisors through a system of compulsory initial training and quinquennial refresher sessions. Supervisors are supported and monitored through a system of Research Student Divisions (RSDs).

The 466 research students at the University of Brighton are located within thirteen RSDs which vary in size from about 10-70 students. These are aligned with areas of critical research mass either within a School or across a number of Schools. Each RSD is managed by a Leader (RSDL) and supported by an Administrator (RSDA), who are the first point of call for both students and supervisors looking for support.

Research students on traditional research degrees are appointed a supervisory team (of at least 2) when they register for a research degree. Professional Doctorate Candidates are given a Professional Doctorate Advisor (PDA) for Stage I of the programme and are appointed a supervisory team when they progress to Stage II (the research component). Each team is designed to ensure that there is both subject expertise and sufficient experience of completion and this allows mentoring to take place for less experienced supervisors. All teams must also have at least one member on the Approved Supervisor Register, with the second joining within one academic year.

Supervisors are normally responsible for a maximum of six research students as lead supervisor. Allowances are made in academic work load planning for the time spent on supervision, defined as 45 hours per year for full-time students and 22.5 hours per year for part-time students.

The University has a well established tradition of training supervisors, a programme of workshops having run since 1995. The programme has been periodically reviewed, most recently following the publication of the QAA Code of Practice. All new supervisors must undertake this training before being eligible to apply for the approved supervisor register. Experienced supervisors who are new to Brighton must attend the section of the training relating to processes at the University of Brighton. Training is run by a small team of experienced Research Student Division Leaders and members of the professoriate including the Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

The approved supervisor register is maintained by the Research Degrees Committee and currently includes 322 members of staff and external supervisors. Supervisors who have been on the Register for five years are expected to attend a refresher workshop as part of the reapplication process. This fourth session covers amendments that have been made to the regulations and processes over the previous five years and allows supervisors the opportunity to discuss problems that they have encountered, and to consider difficult case studies.