

Graduate School

A photograph of a man and a woman sitting at a table in a bright, modern office or library setting. The man, wearing glasses and a grey sweater, is smiling and gesturing with his hands while talking to the woman. The woman is seen from the back, wearing a dark blazer. There are papers and a pen on the table. In the background, other people are working at tables near large windows.

# PHD SUPERVISOR ESSENTIALS: 10 KEY AREAS

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CONNECTING PEOPLE **CONNECTING MINDS**

## 1: Recruitment

- Recruiting more doctoral students is a key strategic priority for Reading, and is essential for our reputation as a strong research intensive university. Responding quickly and helpfully to enquiries and applications has been shown to significantly benefit recruitment. Try to reply promptly to any email enquiries from prospective students. If you are not interested in supervising the applicant then forward enquiries to your designated PGR administrator.
- PhD applicants should not be rejected simply because they do not have funding (and are not suitable for any studentships on offer). Being offered a place is independent of whether or not they have funding.
- Evidence shows that research students are also more likely to take up offers of a place if they have been in communication with Schools, and particularly prospective supervisors, following their 'Offer of Admission'. A positive email can make a lot of difference. Your PGR administrator can send out messages on your behalf if requested.

## 2: The first term

- Many new PhD students find the transition from UG or PGT study difficult, particularly if they are from overseas. It is important they understand what is expected of them, in terms of working patterns and time management, as well as milestones and deadlines. It can be helpful to set them specific tasks to complete (such as reading and critiquing one or more papers) in the early stages in order to bring some structure to their studies.
- You also need to be clear with them how your relationship will work, what they can expect from you and what you will expect from them. It is important that they understand how co-supervision will work and what the roles of the two supervisors are. It is useful to get them to take a lead in arranging meetings and in taking notes of such meetings. Supervisors are expected to meet with their PhD students a minimum of 10 times per year.
- Whilst being supportive and taking an interest in their welfare, it is important that you respect boundaries and do not become too close to your students, or require them to take on tasks that are not directly related to their studies.
- You should draw their attention to the section on Supervisor and Student Responsibilities in the *University Code of Practice on Research Students*<sup>1</sup> and to the Graduate School guide, '*You and your Supervisor*'<sup>2</sup>, both available on the Graduate School website. A good practice guide for new supervisors is also available on the website<sup>3</sup>.

1 [www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/cop\\_resstudents.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/cop_resstudents.pdf)

2 [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-studentguides.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-studentguides.aspx)

3 [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gs-good-practice-guides.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gs-good-practice-guides.aspx)

- All new students should attend the Graduate School's Welcome / Induction event. These are held in mid October, early January and early May each year. Dates are advertised on the Graduate School website.
- By the end of their first term, students should have a clear idea about what research questions they are addressing and how they are going to address these. It can be helpful to set them one or more pieces of written work during this period, to give you a better feel for how they are doing. You should also be prepared to meet with them more frequently during the initial stages of their programme.
- If any of your students has any difficulties with their English language skills, the Graduate School, in conjunction with the International Study & Language Centre, now offers a range of support from one-off sessions to six week courses aimed at various levels of ability. A full guide is available on the Graduate School website<sup>4</sup>. It is important (for their sake and yours) to pick up on any English writing difficulties early in their studies.
- The Reading Researcher Development Programme (RRDP) comprises around 70 different courses covering a wide range of generic research and professional skills training. A full-guide is available on the Graduate School website<sup>5</sup>.
- It is a mandatory requirement that research students attend at least a specified minimum number of RRDP sessions in each academic year to enable them to develop the skills they need to carry out their research effectively and to be successful in their ongoing career. Current requirements are:

#### Full-time PhD

Year 1 FT	At least 5 RRDP sessions
Year 2 FT	At least 3 RRDP sessions
Year 3 FT	At least 3 RRDP sessions

#### Part-time PhD

Year 1 PT	At least 3 RRDP sessions
Year 2 PT	At least 2 RRDP sessions
Year 3 PT	At least 2 RRDP sessions
Year 4 PT	At least 2 RRDP sessions

### 3: Reading Researcher Development Programme

During their first two or three weeks, new students should carry out a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) using the template on the Graduate School website. This enables them to reflect on their existing competence and to identify areas in need of further development. Once they have completed this, they need to discuss it with you to ensure you are happy with it, before it is signed off by the School / Department Director of PGR Studies.

- School / Department Directors of PGR Studies can reduce requirements in exceptional cases (e.g. where students have significant professional experience, are working away and appropriate training is available through other means, or where Schools / DTPs provide some elements of **generic / transferable** research training).

<sup>4</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/Graduate\\_School\\_English\\_Lang\\_Support\\_for\\_Doctoral\\_Researchers\\_spring\\_2018.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/Graduate_School_English_Lang_Support_for_Doctoral_Researchers_spring_2018.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-reading-researcher-development-programme.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-reading-researcher-development-programme.aspx)

<sup>6</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-preparing-to-teach.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-preparing-to-teach.aspx)



#### 4: Other Development opportunities

- In addition to RRDP, the Graduate School also runs a Preparing to Teach programme in conjunction with CQSD<sup>6</sup>. All students who will be undertaking teaching in their School or Department should take this one-day programme.
- In their second or third year, students can also take the very popular PGR Leadership programme<sup>7</sup>, run in collaboration with Henley Business School. This is a three-day programme that helps PhD students to understand and develop their leadership skills.
- The Graduate School also offers a PGR women's development programme called SPRINT<sup>4</sup>, which is based on the well-known Springboard programme.
- Students who are lecturers in overseas Universities can sign up for PhD Plus<sup>8</sup>, which is aimed at helping them to gain a better understanding of the UK Higher Education system and develop their teaching and learning skills, whilst studying for their PhD.
- Finally, the Graduate School's Annual Doctoral Conference (which is held in June each year) provides students with a number of opportunities to present their work through a number of different competitions (e.g. Three Minute Thesis, Poster, Image, etc.). You should encourage students to attend the conference each year, and to enter one or more of the various competitions once their work is at the appropriate stage. The Graduate School's Fairbrother Lecture and associated research display also provides an opportunity for students to present excellent and relevant research to members of the public. A call for nominations is sent to Schools early in the Autumn term each year.

## 5: Monitoring of progress

- Details of how this process is implemented might vary from School to School but the following general procedures should be observed.
- There should be at least an annual review of progress of each student (including those studying PT and those studying for PhD by Distance) by an agreed School / Department monitoring team (one member of which must be independent of the student's supervision)
  - In Year 1, the annual review normally takes place in term 3;
  - In Year 2 FT (Year 3 or 4 PT), this takes the form of the Confirmation of Registration assessment.
- For each annual review, students and supervisors are required to produce written reports, which are considered by the monitors. Supervisor reports should cover:
  - Whether progress is satisfactory and, if not, any necessary remedial actions;
  - Standard of written work;
  - Whether student has given an oral presentation;
  - Appropriateness of training activities undertaken by the student.
- A standard template form is available from your PGR administrator.
- Students normally meet with their monitoring team during the review process; this is essential at the Confirmation of Registration stage.
- Given the importance of keeping students on track, it is strongly recommended that additional informal monitoring takes place between the annual formal meetings. The earlier problems can be picked up and addressed the better.
- Students are also required to complete an evaluation of their supervisory arrangements. This is sent out by the Graduate School and students return completed questionnaires directly to the Graduate School. Any significant concerns raised are followed up with the student and, provided the student gives consent, are discussed with the supervisor and / or School / Department Director of PGR Studies.
- If you feel that a student might be experiencing some difficulties that are affecting his or her progress, you should contact the Doctoral Research Office at the earliest opportunity. It is much easier to address issues at an early stage. We are seeing increasing numbers of students with mental health problems; please be alert to these and contact us for advice and support as soon as possible if you are at all concerned.
- Further guidance is available in the *Code of Practice on Research Students*<sup>1</sup> and the *Graduate School Good Practice Guide on Monitoring and Assessing Progress*<sup>3</sup>. This includes the criteria for assessment for Confirmation of Registration and procedures to be taken where progress is not deemed to be satisfactory.

7 <http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-leadership-programme.aspx>

8 <http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/training-and-development/gs-phd-plus.aspx>

9 [www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/gradschwritingthesisisacollectionofpapers.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/gradschwritingthesisisacollectionofpapers.pdf)

## 6: Enabling timely submission

- Timely submission is essential for students and the University. Submission rates are published and monitored externally.
- You should get your students to plan from the outset for completion in the minimum / expected (as opposed to maximum) registration period (3 years for FT students; 4/5 years for PT).
- It is important that you keep in regular contact with your students, particularly when they are writing up.
- It is also important that students get into the habit of writing up as they go along and that you provide timely and constructive feedback.
- It might be more productive for your student to include one or more articles within the body of their thesis. A guide on Writing Your Thesis as a Collection of Papers is available on the Graduate School website<sup>9</sup>.
- An increasing number of students take on paid employment whilst studying for their PhD. It is important that you monitor the extent of this to ensure that it does not interfere with their studies. The University maximum allowance is 20 hours per week, but we strongly advise PhD students against taking on anywhere near this much work.
- Students need to notify the Doctoral Examination Officer of their 'Intention to Submit' around four months before their intended submission date. A form is available on the Graduate School website<sup>10</sup>.

- All students who register on programmes on, or after, 1 October 2012 are required to deposit an electronic version of their thesis alongside two hardbound copies. When the student is ready to submit, you will need to sign their Thesis Deposit Form as this must accompany the thesis when it is handed in. Further information is available on the Graduate School website<sup>11</sup>.

## 7: Suspensions / extensions

- Cases need to go through Doctoral Research Office (DRO), using the standard forms (available from your PGR administrator), for approval by Dean of PGR Studies.
- Students can normally only suspend for a total of 24 months over course of their PhD programme. However, there is a limit of 60 days for Tier 4 students.
- Extensions are only approved in very exceptional circumstances (and must be received by Dean of PGR Studies a minimum of 28 days prior to maximum registration date).

## 8: International students: monitoring of attendance

- In line with UKBA regulations, supervisors are expected to know the location of their research students and to be in frequent contact with them.
- If you lose contact with any of your students, you need to contact the DRO immediately.
- You need to discuss and agree periods when they will spend time away from the University (including for holidays).
- Your School / Department Director of PGR Studies, or Rachel Willis in the Graduate School, can provide further information / advice.

<sup>10</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-pgrexaminations.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gs-pgrexaminations.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gs-ethesessupervisors.aspx?#Role\\_of\\_the\\_supervisor](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gs-ethesessupervisors.aspx?#Role_of_the_supervisor)

## 9: Studentships

- The Graduate School runs and / or coordinates a number of studentship schemes each year; some of these are open to all disciplines whereas others are associated with particular Doctoral Training Partnerships (e.g. AHRC and ESRC).
- Those open to all disciplines include:
  - University International Studentships (one full award and six fees-only awards)
  - Regional Bursaries – Fees only awards for students living within a 25 mile radius of the University
  - Wilkie Calvert awards – Fees only awards for early / mid-career professionals
  - University Strategic awards – in support of DTP / CDT bids, large grant bids, and co-funding with a strategic partner.
- Full details of these schemes can be found on the Graduate School website<sup>12</sup>.
- If you are planning to recruit to a research studentship funded by some other source, you should contact the Graduate School (Joanna John) as we can assist with, and advise on, advertising, appointment and the ongoing management of these awards.
- Schools should also contact the Graduate School if you need to advertise, and appoint to, a new GTA position.

## 10: Key documents and information sources

- It is important that you familiarise yourself with the Code of Practice on Research Students, which includes all the relevant procedural and policy-related information. It is best to consult the version which is on the Graduate School website<sup>1</sup> for the latest information, as it is often updated more than once a year. Other relevant policy documents and key information for supervisors can also be found on the Graduate School website in a designated section<sup>13</sup>. You should ensure that you keep abreast of policy changes and are aware of which procedures to follow, particularly when students are experiencing difficulty.
- An increasing number of Schools / Departments now include taught elements in their PhD programmes. Programme specifications for all PhD programmes can be found on the Graduate School website<sup>14</sup>.
- A list of the Graduate School Services can be found in the Graduate School Service Statement<sup>15</sup> on the Graduate School website, together with a list of which staff to contact in relation to different areas of responsibility<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/funding-and-fees/gf-funding-and-fees.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/funding-and-fees/gf-funding-and-fees.aspx)

<sup>13</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gf-sr-home.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/supervisorsandresearchstaff/gf-sr-home.aspx)

<sup>14</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gf-programmespecifications.aspx](http://www.reading.ac.uk/graduateschool/currentstudents/gf-programmespecifications.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgrPAS\\_service\\_statement\\_Aug2017.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/pgrPAS_service_statement_Aug2017.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> [www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/gradsch\\_responsibility\\_holders\\_nov2017.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/graduateschool/gradsch_responsibility_holders_nov2017.pdf)

## **PHD SUPERVISOR ESSENTIALS: 10 KEY AREAS**

**i** For more information, please contact:

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