

PhD Handbook - Supervisors and Thesis Advisory Panels (TAPs)

Supervisors

Each research student has a *supervisor* who is in day-to-day control of their work, and to whom the student should turn first for advice and guidance. Supervisors play a fundamental role in supporting research students throughout their programme. Your supervisor or supervisory team is responsible for helping you to manage your research, as well as being your primary link to your department and the University. Your main supervisor is your first point of contact for any issues that arise throughout your programme.

Formal Supervision meetings with your supervisor or supervisory team should take place at least eight times per year, with an expectation of one meeting at least every 6-7 weeks for all full-time and part-time students. At these meetings your supervisor(s) should give detailed feedback on the work you present and help you make plans for your next steps. A detailed record of your formal supervisory meetings and actions agreed will be kept through SkillsForge, and must be signed by both you and your supervisor(s).

Within three months of the start of your registration you and your supervisory team are expected to sign that you have read the 'Principles of Supervision' document, which you will find in your SkillsForge account. This summarises aspects of the Policy on Research Degrees, extracting the points which are most essential to a successful supervisory relationship. You can therefore expect your supervisor to discuss these with you in your early supervision meetings.

The Department has been designed so that research students have desks in rooms close to their supervisor's office and labs. The intention is that this will facilitate interaction between postgraduates, supervisors and other members of the research group (e.g., research assistants or postdoctoral scientists working on grants). Hence there should be a lot of informal contact, but you should also have formal supervisory meetings with your supervisor at which you discuss your work so far and plan the next steps. In the early days these should occur every week or two. They may be less frequent later on (if, for example, you are into a phase of data gathering with nothing much to discuss until the results are in), but you should have at least two meetings per term in the minimum specified by the code of practice adopted by the University.

At the outset, we choose students whose interests fit closely with those of staff members here. We are looking for students who want to join an active research team and work on a topic that falls within the interests of that team. Indeed, we would rather have a student settle on a topic after finding out what is going on in a particular laboratory or research group than arrive with a fixed, pre-set notion.

Thesis Advisory Panels (TAPs)

In addition to having a supervisor, each student's progress is monitored by a Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP). The Thesis Advisory Panel comprises the supervisor and at least two other members of the department, one of whom can be a postdoctoral fellow. The industrial sponsors of CASE students may also wish to nominate a member of the committee. The main role of the Panel is to check that progress is satisfactory and to provide broader advice, experience and expertise.

The Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) meets with the student twice a year: once in the first half of the year (**deadline: January or 4 months after the start of new academic year**) and once in the second half (**deadline: June or 9 months after the start of new academic year**). Part-time research students should have Thesis Advisory Panel meetings at least once per year. At these meetings the student shows what progress has been made in their research and in their personal development, and outlines the proposed direction of research in the coming months. Students should send all the relevant documents to their panel members at least 7 days in advance to the meeting date so the members have time to read them. Some students choose to use powerpoint to present their progress

and others prefer a more informal style, but it is important that you take charge of your own TAP meetings, plan what you want to get out of them, and feel prepared to do the talking (rather than allowing your supervisor to step in). Listen carefully to the advice you receive and use it to improve your research.

Before each TAP meeting, you need to complete the relevant TAP Form 7 days in advance of the meeting which is now available on [Skillsforge](#). Click first on 'Meetings' then on 'TAP' and generate a TAP preparation form.

Important note: Students must schedule their first TAP meeting and the second TAP /Progression meeting with the relevant members of the committees at the beginning of each academic year. This should be completed by the end of October each year for the upcoming year. Students in year 3 should schedule just two TAP meetings. Once scheduled the students should inform the graduate administrator as to the tentative date and times of the meetings.



Thesis Advisory Panel (TAP) Meetings

A thesis advisory panel (TAP) meeting should take place twice a year (once every six months) for all research students. TAP meetings are used to provide advice and guidance in relation to the student's research and graduate professional development.

A 'TAP Preparation' form must be completed by the student and supervisor ahead of the TAP meeting. SkillsForge will then create a 'TAP Meeting' record for completion by the TAP panel.

Submission of these forms to your department and Registry is automatic.

TAP Preparation Forms

[Create a new TAP Preparation form](#)

Once this is completed, a full 'TAP' meeting form will be generated which can be accessed on [Skillsforge](#) and filled in by your TAP panel during the meeting.

After the meeting, the comments of the committee are incorporated into the report and you are given an opportunity to comment on these (and then SIGN the form). You will also have a chance to comment on your supervision confidentially in a separate paper document.

It is your responsibility to make sure that these meetings are held on time and that the right information gets to the right people.

If you are experiencing difficulty with your supervision, please do speak to someone at an early stage. You could choose to talk to another member of your Thesis Advisory Panel, the Chair of the Psychology Graduate School Board, or the Head of Department.

There is a point in each meeting of your Thesis Advisory Panel where your supervisor leaves the room and you are asked to comment on the supervision you are receiving. Please do be honest about any issues that have arisen during these meetings, since your TAP members can help you resolve them through quiet discussion and negotiation. Most problems can be sorted out, but if a relationship

is really not working then a change of supervisor may be possible. This is an important phase in your career: we want it to be an enjoyable and rewarding one, and will do all we can to help if it is not going as well as it should.

Keeping track of supervision

The university requires us to keep track of your basic supervision needs, therefore you will need to record the following events using [Skillsforge](#):

1. Please record 8 supervisory meetings per year: two in each term, and two in the summer break. When you create a record of your meeting, you will be asked to sign it and your supervisor will co-sign it.
2. Please check that your TAP meetings have been entered into Skillsforge, and contact the PG Administrator if there are any problems with updating your records.

If you need help figuring out how to record these supervisory sessions, please contact the PG Administrator (andrea.woodward@york.ac.uk).

TAP Forms

[Review of Supervision Form](#) : This is the paper form that you need to bring to the TAP meeting. It is confidential - you can record things here that your supervisor will not see (although you can chose to share it with your supervisor if you wish).

All other forms are now filled in electronically via [Skillsforge](#).