The University of Sheffield Supervisor Statement

Preamble

This Statement outlines the expected professional qualities and responsibilities of supervisors at The University of Sheffield. Its purpose is two-fold: to provide a tool for supervisors, and to guide decisions on actions to support supervisors. The Statement does not prescribe the expected qualities and responsibilities of each of the different members of the Supervisory Team (as a minimum a Supervisory Team must include at least two academic staff, at least one of which should be a supervisor with the academic background to guide a student through their research). The Statement should be viewed alongside the University's *Research Student Offer*, the existing aspirational statement *The Sheffield Academic*, and external drivers (including the QAA Code of Practice and RCUK's commitment to training the next generation of world-class researchers).

The role of Supervisors

Supervisors guide students towards becoming independent researchers, in part through facilitating their induction into the University's research community. Supervision is a complex role in which the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee is not only variable, but *needs* to be varied over the duration of the PhD in order to be effective. This is because supervisees are individuals whose needs vary based on their educational history, cultural background, skills, approach to learning and rates of progress. Supervisees need also to adapt over time, as their project develops and they make the journey from student to independent researcher.

Student ➡️ Independent Researcher
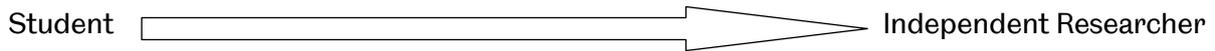
The Sheffield Supervisor is therefore not defined by a rigid set of characteristics, but by their ability to respond flexibly and effectively to the supervisee's development needs. The excellent supervisor is one who can make self-conscious, appropriate and sensitive choices about their approach to supervision, based on their ongoing diagnosis of their supervisee's circumstances, development needs and preferred career path (not all students will want to pursue an academic research path beyond their PhD).

The excellent supervisor can make appropriate decisions about the student-supervisor relationship, to guide the supervisee on their Doctoral journey:

a) Adapting their approach over the duration of the Doctorate as they provide guidance on managing the research project.

Whilst acknowledging that no two research students share exactly the same development needs, the University's expectation is that over the duration of the Doctorate the supervisee will become more confident and independent, taking the lead, managing their time, determining the direction and progress of their Doctorate and writing independently.

b) Adapting their approach over the duration of the Doctorate as they provide guidance on personal development.

The University's expectation is that the supervisee is expected to be proactive in accessing opportunities to acquire relevant professional skills, knowledge, and careers advice.

Supervisors can adapt and/or combine a range of supervisory approaches over the duration of a student's research studies, including:

Directing/Functional	Facilitating cultural integration	Encouraging critical reflective thinking	Mentoring	Pastoral
Focus: Timely completion of the thesis (e.g. progress meetings, Confirmation Review, milestones).	Focus: Helping PhD students to understand and integrate into the discipline (eg. discussing discipline norms, access to researchers).	Focus: Helping PhD students to understand and use intellectual, philosophical and analytical approaches to problem solving.	Focus: Guiding research students to find their own direction, offering support and challenging their thinking without prescribing solutions.	Focus: Strengthening personal relationship, demonstrating empathy, building trust, and enhancing the self-esteem of the student.

The Sheffield Supervisor is:

1. **Professional**, and expected to display professional behavior at all times. Professionalism provides a necessary but not sufficient foundation for effective learning and development:
   - Keeping appointments and being punctual;
   - Offering feedback and accepting feedback within a reasonable time;
   - Giving appropriate time to supervisor-student meetings;
   - Agreeing deadlines;
   - Assessing and checking progress.

2. **Responsible for provision of appropriate guidance**, adapting to the nature and needs of the modern doctorate:
   - Establishing an effective supervisory relationship, recognising that the relationship is variable and needs to be varied. This includes:
     o Setting clear expectations from the outset;
     o Agreeing the frequency of progress meetings, clarifying expected progression milestones (e.g. confirmation and submission dates), and agreeing record keeping;
     o Supporting the timely completion of the research thesis.

   - Encouraging an independent approach to research;

   - Advising on the conduct of research, and providing a role model for conducting research; displaying at all times the highest standards of research ethics and integrity;

   - Supporting the supervisee to develop scholarly qualities, in particular to prepare for and enable the publication of scholarly outputs;

   - Supporting the supervisee to communicate their research to audiences outside the University and demonstrate the public benefit of their research on the wider world;

   - Being an advocate for training, providing guidance on personal career aspirations and the acquisition of skills. This includes:
     o Undertaking training needs analyses (TNA) with the research student;
     o Encouraging opportunities to develop skills that benefit the research and which are relevant to careers outside of research;
     o Encouraging opportunities to develop enterprise skills, including, where appropriate, an ability to identify and exploit commercial benefits from research;
     o Encouraging opportunities to develop teaching skills.

   - Providing information on and/or facilitating access to a wide range of exciting opportunities. This includes, but is not limited to:
     o Highlighting departmental and Faculty activities that research students can get involved in and/or lead (e.g. research seminars, forums, away days, social events, newsletters);
     o Highlighting opportunities to find out about the ground-breaking research going on;
     o Highlighting the *Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes*;
     o Highlighting the importance of contributing to opportunities to provide feedback, since the University is always looking for ways to further enhance research student provision.

The research student has a responsibility to work with the supervisor to establish an effective supervisory relationship and is expected to take note of guidance and feedback and, with the supervisor's encouragement, develop those qualities that independent researchers display (e.g. being critical, inquisitive, motivated, proactive, passionate & rigorous).