

Code of Conduct for Supervisors and Research Students

Preamble

Supervision of research students is a key component of doctoral education, which is a core activity of research-intensive universities that support the advancement of knowledge-based societies. Effective and mutually beneficial supervision relies on a supportive institutional culture and strong structural frameworks.

This Code of Conduct serves as a guiding resource for both supervisors and research students, establishing clear expectations and principles that promote mutual respect, effective communication and professional integrity. Recognising the inherent power dynamics in the supervisor- research student relationship, the Code of Conduct outlines appropriate boundaries and behaviours that safeguard academic and personal development.

The Code of Conduct is not a standalone resource but exists within a comprehensive suite of conflict prevention and resolution resources designed to support research students and supervisors throughout the supervision relationship. These resources include, amongst the others, [Supervision of Research Students Best Practice Guide](#), [Research Student Handbook](#), [Supervisor – Research Student Agreement](#), [Thesis Committee Guidelines](#) and a [Conflict Resolution Flowchart](#). Together, they provide structured guidance to prevent misunderstandings, clarify roles and responsibilities, and offer pathways for resolving conflicts should they arise.

Adhering to the principles outlined in this document and engaging with the broader suite of supportive guidelines, tools, and resources, supervisors and research students at Trinity reinforce a research culture that cherishes collegiality, academic freedom, integrity, and a shared commitment to knowledge creation. Together they can proactively address any issues that arise, ensuring a collaborative and supportive environment for everyone.

Purpose

The Code of Conduct aims to promote a positive, safe environment for both supervisors and research students. It aims to foster a professional, respectful and productive research environment that upholds academic integrity and excellence.

Scope

The Code of Conduct applies to all supervisors of research students (including adjunct supervisors) and to all research students (structured PhD, Masters by research and professional doctorates). The Code is aligned to the principles of research supervision as presented in the university's Research Supervision Policy.

This Code of Conduct should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies and procedures as referenced in the Preamble and section [Related Documents](#) on page 6.

Responsibilities and Standards of Conduct

The following section outlines responsibilities of supervisor(s) and students in establishing a respectful working environment. It highlights responsible and ethical behaviors, both in-person and online, to foster mutually positive and respectful relationships.

Conflicts of interest can arise within the supervision relationship for several reasons. In all instances, potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed to the relevant Head of School (or where the conflict is associated with the Head of School to the Faculty Dean) as soon as they arise.

Any relationship between the supervisor and student beyond the academic supervision relationship (including a prior friendship or an employment relationship) represents an inherent conflict of interest and must be declared.

	Joint responsibilities of the supervisor(s) and the research student
<i>Managing the Relationship</i>	• Treat one another with professionalism, courtesy and respect. • Conduct all interactions in line with College Equality policy – with no unfavourable or favourable treatment regarding any characteristics related to ethnicity, gender, religion, family status, sexual orientation, disability status, age, race, membership of the Traveller community or any other equality grounds. • Agree the framework of your cooperation including meeting frequency, format (online/in-person) and communication methods to ensure effective monitoring of progress, frequent feedback and engagement throughout the academic year (the Supervisor – Research Student Agreement may be a useful tool to set your mutual expectations). ○ Be punctual and prepared for meetings and other activities. ○ Advise in advance if not available to meet. • Maintain open and transparent communication channels. • Maintain regular contact throughout the research project and provide fair and constructive feedback in a timely, accessible and courteous manner. • Embrace effective, frequent and two-way communication and proactive expectation management. • Advise the other party when personal or medical difficulties may impact your progress or the ability to meet agreed goals or deadlines. • Maintain appropriate boundaries in your interactions, avoiding any behavior that could be perceived as inappropriate or romantic. • Respect the confidentiality and privacy of sensitive information shared during the course of your collaboration. • Agree a method or process by which issues such as queries, concerns or disagreements may be raised by either party.



	Responsibilities of the supervisor(s)	Responsibilities of the research student
Supporting Well-being & Health	• Provide and support a safe, inclusive and healthy environment and signpost appropriate support and guidance for the mental health and well-being of the student. • Encourage help seeking and point towards potential sources of support in times of personal difficulties. • Encourage a positive work-life balance and taking breaks from research (students can take up to 30 days holidays per year exclusive of public holidays). • Value diversity of views, perspectives and backgrounds, without presumption or judgement. • In the event of dispute or disagreements, seek to resolve them in a healthy respectful way, seeking support/guidance from relevant College services and encouraging the student to do the same.	• Value diversity of views, perspectives and backgrounds, without presumption or judgement. • Seek help from confidential sources of support in College in times of personal difficulties (especially if encouraged to do so by your supervisor), acknowledging that your supervisor is not primarily a pastoral/ wellbeing support expert. • In the event of dispute or disagreements, aim to resolve them in a healthy, respectful way, seeking support/guidance from relevant College services.
Academic Development	• Uphold the principles of academic integrity and ensure a shared understanding of what constitutes academic integrity and academic misconduct as outlined by the University; avail of resources from Academic Practice. • Create a high-quality supervisory experience for the student, in which they feel supported and seen, but still intellectually challenged, and are guided to meet the agreed milestones for thesis completion. • Make the student aware of the authorship conventions (Intellectual property, publication) within their School or Discipline. • Recognise and acknowledge the contributions and achievements of your student and give credit where credit is due.	• Uphold the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical conduct in all aspects of academic / research work; avail of training workshops offered by Student Learning Development. • Work collaboratively with fellow students and colleagues, where possible and suitable for the project. • Discuss, and seek guidance on authorship conventions relevant to the Discipline and/or the research domain (Intellectual property, publication) and comply accordingly. • Actively seek guidance and feedback from the supervisor, while also respecting their time and expertise. • Recognise and acknowledge the contributions and achievements of your supervisor and give credit where credit is due.



	Responsibilities of the supervisor(s)	Responsibilities of the research student
		• Take responsibility for your own progression, being mindful of expectations and aware of stipend implications.
Professional Development	• Encourage your student to engage in multidimensional skills development opportunities and facilitate participation in multidimensional skills training. • Introduce other staff and students to build community within College. • Assist the student to understand the impact of their work and encourage them to articulate their professional goals after the PhD. • Guide, support and mentor your student, helping them develop research skills and professional networks.	• Actively seek out opportunities to engage in multidimensional skills training and modules to develop competencies identified in your Personal Development Plan (PDP). • Take responsibility for your own professional development, and proactively seek out opportunities for mentorship and career development. • Collaborate and share research findings with the wider College community. • Develop networks outside immediate research group.
Procedural	• Recognise that the supervisor's role is to advise and guide, not prescribe. • Discuss the relevant University policies, guidelines, procedures and timelines. • Advise in advance of any anticipated absence and make suitable arrangements for supervision during the absence. • Coordinate with co-supervisors/supervisory team to ensure clarity of responsibilities and facilitate collaboration where possible and suitable to the project. • Adhere to timelines on correction of work and subsequent discussion on feedback. • Provide clear expectations on pay for providing related teaching and learning supports and stipends for the full duration of the PhD.	• Recognise that the supervisor's role is to advise and guide, not prescribe. • Familiarise yourself with and discuss with your supervisor(s) the relevant University policies, guidelines, procedures and timelines. • Agree and adhere to timelines on submission of work and milestones throughout the academic year and subsequent discussion / engagement on annual reviews and confirmation. • Proactively communicate with your supervisor where agreed timelines on submission of work and milestones may need to be revised.

Unacceptable Conduct

Unacceptable behaviours by **supervisors and/or students** must be avoided to ensure a supportive, equitable, and respectful academic environment. The unacceptable conduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Any form of harassment, defined as unwanted conduct related to any of the discriminatory grounds, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment (e.g. acts, requests, spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials). For more information, please refer to the [Dignity and Respect](#) and [Sexual Misconduct Policies](#).
- Discrimination, bullying, violence, or the threat of violence are strictly prohibited, as is any coercive, abusive, or malicious behavior that crosses the line into unacceptable conduct.
- Abuse or taking advantage of the inherent power imbalance in the supervisor – student relationship including influencing situations or outcomes unfairly.
- Failure to declare a conflict of interest to Head of School/Faculty Dean in the first instance should a consensual romantic or sexual relationship begin during the supervision.
- Sexual harassment or sexual assault as criminal offences will be addressed in accordance with institutional policies and legal frameworks.
- Withholding of supervisory support or access to spaces or resources for reasons other than academic or health and safety, or other issues which could delay student progression, without engaging with established conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Breaches of academic integrity and refusal to acknowledge contributions in academic dissemination.

Unacceptable conduct will be addressed with the appropriate disciplinary action as detailed in [the 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College Dublin and of University of Dublin](#).

If you have concerns related to bullying, harassment, or sexual harassment and violence you can seek support and guidance on relevant policy/procedure through the [Dignity, Respect and Consent Service](#).

How to Access Help

Escalation routes for complaints and/or disputes related to supervision of research students have been provided on the [website of the Dean of Graduate Studies](#).

Guidance on how to seek help from appropriate authorities and support services is outlined in the following University policies:

- [Dignity and Respect Policy](#) (for instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination);
- [Equality Policy](#) (for issues related to equality matters);
- [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) (for cases of sexual harassment, sexual assault);
- The Supervisor Complaints Process outlined in Calendar Part III (Section II, § 24, p. 41)

College support services that can be contacted for confidential advice include:

Supports for students	Supports for supervisors
Postgraduate Advisory Service Officer	Head of School
Student Counselling	Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)
Student Learning Development	Employee Assistance Programme
Trinity Careers Service	
DR&C Support Adviser	DR&C Support Adviser
Equality Office	Equality Office
TCDSU Welfare and Equality	Trade Unions
Speak Out Supports	Speak Out Supports
Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)	
Graduate Studies Office	Graduate Studies Office

Speak Out

[Speak Out](#) is an online anonymous reporting tool to help direct those speaking out to find supports relevant to their experiences.

Related Documents

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)
[Supervision of Research Students Best Practice Guide](#)
[Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy](#)
[Off-site Supervision of Research Students Policy](#)
[Research Student Handbook](#)
[Supervisor – Research Student Agreement template](#)
[Trinity Policy on Good Research Practice](#)

[College Ethics Policy](#)
[Policy, Practice and Regulations on Intellectual Property](#)
[Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
[Student Complaints Procedure](#)
[Grievance Procedure](#)
[The 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity College Dublin and of University of Dublin](#)
[Disciplinary Procedures Relating to Academic Staff](#)