



**Monash University procedures for gaining accreditation as a
main supervisor of doctoral students**

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Table of contents

Introduction	2
Overview of supervision arrangements at Monash University	2
Eligibility of staff members to be a main supervisor	2
Options for seeking accreditation as a main supervisor	2
1. Completion of the Research Supervisor Training Program	3
2. The 'apprenticeship' model of being an associate supervisor	3
3. Prior extensive experience as a supervisor of doctoral students	4
4. A successful case based on 'exceptional circumstances'	4
Recording of accreditation by the Monash Research Graduate School	4
References	4

Introduction

Staff members who wish to be 'main' supervisors of doctoral students at Monash University need to be accredited as such with the Monash Research Graduate School (MRGS). This document describes the major categories of supervisor, their respective eligibility requirements, and options for gaining accreditation as a main supervisor.

Overview of supervision arrangements at Monash University

A supervisor of doctoral students guides and assists a student during his or her period of research candidature. The most common types of supervisor are described below.

- **Main supervisor:** an academic staff member or research fellow who has appropriate research experience and a continuing active involvement in the area of research. Such supervisors would normally be members of the school or centre in which the student is enrolled. Accreditation is required to be a main supervisor.
- **Associate supervisor:** a person who need not be an academic staff member or research fellow but someone of recognised standing in the relevant research field(s). An associate supervisor would be appointed in addition to a main supervisor. Accreditation is not required to be an associate supervisor.
- **External supervisor:** a person with appropriate expertise who acts as a supervisor to students based at locations outside of Monash University. An external supervisor would be appointed in addition to a main supervisor. Accreditation is not required to be an external supervisor.

Eligibility of staff members to be a main supervisor

A main supervisor must be either:

- **An academic staff member** with appropriate research experience and a continuing active involvement in research; or
- **A postdoctoral research fellow** whose fellowship would be likely to exceed the period of doctoral candidature.

Staff members who are themselves doctoral students may not supervise other doctoral students. However, in exceptional circumstances, an academic staff member who is a staff candidate under PhD regulation 5 (see www.monash.edu.au/pubs/calendar/facultyregs/Heading41) may be permitted to supervise students in research areas other than that being pursued through their own candidature.

Options for seeking accreditation as a main supervisor

Staff members may seek accreditation via the following avenues:

1. Completion of the Research Supervisor Training Program;
2. The 'apprenticeship model' of being an associate supervisor of a doctoral student from enrolment through to successful completion;
3. Prior experience as a supervisor of doctoral students; or
4. A request being made from the head of school citing 'exceptional circumstances'.

Most prospective supervisors will undertake the Research Supervisor Training Program. Recent changes to this program now also affect staff members wishing to gain accreditation by other means. An account of each of the four options is given below.

1. Completion of the Research Supervisor Training Program

The MRGS implemented the Research Supervisor Training Program in 2002 with the aim of decreasing the time required to gain accreditation compared with the traditional 'apprenticeship model'. In the new 'fast-track' model, intending supervisors instead complete a series of training activities.

As of 1 July 2005 the Research Supervisor Training Program comprises two levels.

- **Level 1: Provisional accreditation to supervise up to 4 full-time doctoral students**

Intending supervisors complete a series of nine training 'modules' that comprise self-directed reading or participation in workshops and actual or simulated meetings with doctoral students. The majority of these modules may be completed at a one-day Research Supervisor Training Program Workshop run by either the MRGS or by faculties, with trainees completing the remaining modules or module parts at a later stage. The time taken for a trainee to complete the program and be accredited as a main supervisor with the MRGS following attendance at a workshop may be less than four months.

Staff accredited as level 1 supervisors may supervise no more than 4 full-time equivalent doctoral students / up to 6 individual students as a main or associate supervisor.

- **Level 2: Full accreditation to supervise up to 8 full-time doctoral students**

Five master classes must then be completed for accreditation as a Level 2 supervisor.

Staff accredited as level 2 supervisors may supervise no more than 8 full-time equivalent HDR students/ up to 12 individual students as a main or associate supervisor.

2. The 'apprenticeship' model of being an associate supervisor

In the 'apprenticeship' model, trainee research supervisors need to first undertake the role of associate supervisor for the duration of a candidature, from admission through to submission of thesis, before being eligible to be a main supervisor in their own right. An advantage of this model is that new supervisors will have already participated in the supervision process for upwards of four years, depending on the length of the candidature, and gained a significant amount of practical supervision experience. The main disadvantage of this system is that prospective supervisors may not be accredited for several years. In a university with increasing higher degree by research enrolments, academic units may experience a shortfall in current accredited supervisors.

As of 1 January 2006, all staff who have overseen one or two successful completions under the apprenticeship model will be accredited as Level 1 supervisors. They will require three successful completions to be credited as Level 2 supervisors.

3. Prior extensive experience as a supervisor of doctoral students

Staff members who have previous experience as a supervisor of at least three doctoral students may apply for an exemption from the Research Supervisor Training Program. They need only indicate their prior experience on the application form for the student they wish to supervise in order to be given accreditation. Staff with less experience may be eligible for an exemption on a case-by-case basis with support from their head of school. They may be deemed level 1 or level 2 supervisors depending on their experience.

Please direct all requests for exemption to Dr Anna Lucas (Administrative Officer, MRGS) at Anna.Lucas@adm.monash.edu.au, including the following details:

- Name and title of staff member;
- School or centre;
- Previous experience as a supervisor of doctoral students, including dates and the number of students;
- Whether the staff members was a supervisor for the entire candidature (enrolment to successful completion) or a portion thereof;
- The percentage of supervision for each student (for example, Main Supervisor at 100%; Associate Supervisor at 25%); and
- The institution(s) where supervision occurred.

4. A successful case based on 'exceptional circumstances'

In very exceptional circumstances a person who does not otherwise qualify for accreditation may be permitted to supervise a student provided that the relevant school can make a convincing case for such an appointment (for example, previous equivalent experience in supervising research masters students). A strong case would need to be made to the Director of the MRGS.

Recording of accreditation by the Monash Research Graduate School

Staff who are accredited following completion of the Research Supervisor Training Program will be issued with a certificate for both levels 1 and 2 and their names recorded on a spreadsheet maintained by the MRGS. Staff who are accredited through exemption will also be recorded on this spreadsheet. Staff already eligible to supervise as full (level 2) supervisors through previous supervision experience will already be recognised as supervisors by Callista and are not recorded on a central list. Likewise, the details of staff with extensive experience at other universities will continue to be entered directly on Callista as eligible supervisors once approved by the head of school.

References

Monash Research Graduate School, Handbook for Doctoral and Master of Philosophy Degrees, <www.mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/doctoral/index.html> 26 May 2006.

Monash Research Graduate School, Changes to Accreditation of Doctoral Supervisors, <www.sci.monash.edu.au/staff/postgrad/docs/supervisionchanges.pdf> 3 June 2005.

Monash Research Graduate School, Research Supervisor Training Programs, <<http://mrgs.monash.edu.au/research/staff/supervision/>> 1 May 2006.

Monash University, Research Graduate School Committee regulations, <www.monash.edu.au/pubs/calendar/facultyregs/regs-doct.html> Accessed 3 July 2006.