Supervising Postgraduate Research

SEDA Professional Development Framework at the University of West London

Course Guide Autumn 2014
Supervising Postgraduate Research
SEDA Professional Development Framework

Session dates: Friday 10th October; Friday 14th November; Friday 5th December

Course Leader: Dr Jannie Roed
Head of Academic Practice
Jannie.Roed@uwl.ac.uk

Course venue:
PR604, 10.00-16.00
Background

This programme is accredited through the Staff and Education Development Association’s (SEDA) Professional Development Framework (PDF) in the category of Supervising Postgraduate Research and is underpinned by the SEDA-PDF value base.

The quality of Master’s programmes which include a requirement for a research-based dissertation and of PhD theses is relevant to the QAA agenda in the context of the development of professional skills for those who are concerned with the design, implementation and assessment of postgraduate programmes in Higher Education. The Professional Development Framework (PDF) offered by SEDA in conjunction with the specific requirements for the named award in Supervising Postgraduate Research offers the opportunity for University of West London staff to participate in an accredited course in supervising research students.

Introduction

The philosophy of this course reinforces the significance of continuing professional development of staff who may have engaged in research processes themselves, but have not undergone a formalized process of evaluation of their skills and knowledge in relation to supervision. The focus is on the generic skills required for effective supervision with an emphasis on the supervisor as a member of the academic community engaged in continuing professional development. It is not a course that will give specific and detailed research methods training, other than as part of the supervision process. The course is specifically adapted to University of West London staff in that it addresses the context of supervising research in a modern University. It focuses on the necessity to pay attention to issues of inclusivity, and to consider the diversity that students bring to the research context.

The course runs for three full days, in three days in consecutive months. The rationale for this format is in line with the philosophy of the course that successful participants will need to provide evidence of their attainment of the outcomes and therefore need time between sessions to collate this evidence, and to reflect on their experiences.

Audience

The course is for those who hold academic posts which involve duties and responsibilities for postgraduate supervision. Participants will be currently supervising at least one research student. Participants must be supervising postgraduate research-based dissertations, projects or PhD theses and by the end of the course be able to show evidence of the completion of one student research project.
The Learning Approach

In addition to the presentation of information, contact time will include a variety of action learning techniques such as discussions of case studies, literature, and theory; self-assessment checklists; and reflective tasks. Tasks will be set for the time outside contact hours so it is essential that participants have at least one current research student that they are supervising.

The approach to attainment is holistic as it is recognized that participants’ experiences will vary and that there are opportunities to meet the criteria by offering a range of evidence in context. It is understood that supervision periods can vary and this will be taken into account in the process of evidencing good practice.

The process of the evaluation involves the submission of a portfolio that offers evidence that the competencies required of a supervisor of postgraduate research have been attained. To assist in this process you are required to complete a ‘patchwork’ text after each of the first two sessions, and to keep a reflective diary during the course period. The aim is to use the ‘patches’ (including the reflective diary); to draw upon for the final summative essay of 3,000 words that will accompany the ‘evidence’ in the portfolio. Time will be set aside for portfolio work through Action Learning sets in the second and third sessions.

Programme Outline

Detailed course outlines are provided at the start of each day of the course, and copies of exercises and handouts are available regularly so that each participant can build up a supervisor’s resource folder.

| Session 1: 10th October 2014 | 1. Presentation of institutional framework & procedures  
2. National and international trends in postgraduate programmes  
3. Explanation of course assessment requirements  
4. Tasks and skills of a supervisor  
5. Audit  
6. Selecting research students  
7. Managing expectations  
8. Recognising learning approaches and styles + learning theory  
9. Managing time |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Session 2: 14th November 2014 | 10. Developing your supervisory style and listening skills  
11. Dilemmas in supervision  
12. Giving student feedback  
13. Assessing dissertations  
14. Evaluating your own supervision – action plans, including reflecting on disciplinary input in an interdisciplinary team |
| Session 3: 5th December 2014 | 15. Preparing for final submission and vivas (Crossouard, 2011)  
16. Supervising international students (Wisker, 2005 Chapt 2)  
17. Developing communities of research, supervision groups |

FINAL UPDATE ON ASSESSMENT TASK
The Assessment

The assessment comprises the production of a portfolio that contains the following:

The programme is assessed through a portfolio containing evidence of practice, and a reflective statement that illuminates how the outcomes and values were achieved:

A 3,000-word summative essay and accompanying evidence setting out:

1. How the core outcomes have been met (see Core and Specialist Outcomes below)
2. Evidence of engagement with the underpinning values of:
   - An understanding of how people learn
   - Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
   - Working and developing learning communities
   - Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity
   - Continuing reflection on professional practice
   - Developing people and processes.

This is supported by 2 patchwork writing exercises at the end of session 1 and of session 2. Both will be peer-reviewed and discussed to inform the final output.

In class exercises and ongoing feedback also serve as preparation for the final assessment.

Core Outcomes

By the end of the programme, participants will have:

1. Identified their own professional goals, directions and priorities
2. Planned for their initial and/or continuing professional development
3. Undertaken appropriate development activities
4. Reviewed their development and their practice, and the relations between them
5. Shared their experience of supervision within different disciplines/subjects

In addition, participants will show evidence of a commitment to the programme values:

1. An understanding of how adults learn
2. Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice
3. Working in, and developing, learning communities
4. Continued reflection on professional practice in the context of research supervision
5. The development of both people and of educational processes and systems
Specialist Outcomes

Additionally, to justify the award in postgraduate supervision, participants will have:

1. Monitored and evaluated their own supervisory practices with a range of self, peer and student monitoring and evaluation techniques
2. Used interpersonal, organisational and learning management skills
3. Used their specialist knowledge and skills appropriately in the higher education context
4. Planned and implemented an appropriate strategy for the supervision process
5. Performed effectively their student support and academic administrative task
6. Used an appropriate range of methods (and skills) to monitor, examine and assess student progress and attainment and give feedback on work
7. Supervised production and assessment of the research project /thesis
8. Enabled the development in their students of key skills for lifelong learning

Evidence to illustrate such achievements should be referenced in the summative essay, and examples of such evidence produced in the portfolio. Examples of such evidence can include items such as: student/supervisor contact, supervision notes, examples of feedback given to students, assessment report forms, group supervision notes, reflective diary entries.

The course is structured to assist in the process of portfolio construction and to assist participants in formulating the materials relevant to the summative assessment. A Patchwork Text approach is taken which means that during the course, two short pieces of writing are completed by each participant. Each of these pieces of work is shared within a small group of students as part of the teaching/learning process. These short texts can be used to complete the summative assessment. In addition, over the three-month period, participants are encouraged to keep a reflective diary about their experiences of supervision. This reflective commentary can be added to the summative assessment and portfolio if desired.


Submission date for the portfolio and summative essay is:

Friday 20th June 2014
Programme Mapping against the SEDA Professional Development Framework

The requirements for programme recognition are that the course team must:

1. demonstrate that the programme encourages formative and developmental activities to enhance professional practice;
2. show how participants develop and demonstrate the outcomes of the named award, in a way which is underpinned by its values;
3. manage systems which monitor, moderate and review any assessment systems such as external examination and appeals procedures;
4. demonstrate that, if assessed, the assessment strategy is appropriate to support professional learning.

This programme was originally validated by SEDA in 2012.

What are the aims of the programme?

The course aims to build on participants’ current experience of supervising research projects and expand their knowledge and skills to enable them to develop their supervisory style.

What processes are used to monitor / evaluate the programme with regard to quality assurance?

The programme is evaluated through a written questionnaire. The process of evaluation will continue and will be enhanced by the assessment strategy.

Participants’ assessments are marked by tutors on the course and the summative essay is evaluated by an appointed External Verifier.

How will a participant develop and demonstrate the outcomes of the named award in a way which is underpinned by its values?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Outcomes</th>
<th>How they are met</th>
<th>Evidence and reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Identify their own professional development goals, directions or priorities | Skills audit session 1  
Exercises 1 to 4  
Patchwork texts  
Reflection and evaluation of own progress through the course  
Specifically topics 3, 4, 9,13 above | Patchwork texts  
Notes from action learning sets |
| 2. Plan for their initial and/or continuing professional development         | Reflection and planning  
Reflective diary /course discussion notes  
Patchwork texts  
Planning contribution to | Course exercises session  
Reflective diary /course discussion notes  
Patchwork texts  
Action plans discussed in |
### Session 3. Undertake appropriate development activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Evidence of individual development within UWL or outside, including through research&lt;br&gt;Summative essay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attending the SEDA programme</td>
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<td>Setting up supervision groups, research seminars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise on dialogic supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending research related professional development sessions</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Session 4. Review their development and their practice and the relations between them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Evidence and reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through reflection, discussions, and evaluation of role of supervisor</td>
<td>Reflective Diary&lt;br&gt;Supervision notes&lt;br&gt;Discussions summaries&lt;br&gt;Patchwork texts&lt;br&gt;Summative essay&lt;br&gt;Exercise on role of supervisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audit and planning</td>
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<td>Developing supervisory style</td>
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<td>Dealing with difficult situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specifically topics 4, 9, 10, 13</td>
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### Programme Values

#### How they are met

Values reflect an approach to practice that is not easily amenable to translating into explicit measurable outcomes. They represent a kind of philosophy which permeates through in the way a tutor engages with students, with peers, and with his or her own practice. The SEDA values represent practice approaches that are collaborative, scholarly and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on the developmental dimension of any form of engagement. The team will assess these values in terms of how they permeate your approach throughout. We recommend that you explicit show where the values have been met by physically introducing in brackets the value a specific aspect of your essay addresses – eg. Xxxxxxx(Value1)xxxxxx

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Values</th>
<th>How they are met</th>
<th>Evidence and reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. An understanding of how people learn</td>
<td>Session 1 presentation + exercises&lt;br&gt;Independent reading&lt;br&gt;Overview of main adult learning theories&lt;br&gt;Specifically topics 6, 4, 9, 11</td>
<td>Evidence of engagement with adult learning theories in process of supervision</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice</td>
<td>Awareness of the role of research supervisor, one-to-one relationships, and engagement with the wider academic community&lt;br&gt;Independent reading&lt;br&gt;Reflective diary, course notes, case studies, seminar discussions&lt;br&gt;Specifically topics 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14</td>
<td>Reflective diary, course notes, real case studies and case study exercises sessions 2 and 3 Seminar discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Working in and developing learning communities</td>
<td>Developing a research culture within their context of practice Vitae PDF Specifically topics 3, 5, 10, 14, 15</td>
<td>Evidence of engagement in research community by encouraging students participation e.g. conferences, local initiatives Discussions on student professional development (reference to Vitae RDF)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity</td>
<td>Demonstrating awareness of need for inclusivity and diversity Specifically topics 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15</td>
<td>e.g. UWL profile and profile of students supervised; working with overseas students, students with special needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Continuing reflection on professional practice</td>
<td>Engagement in the processes of reflection and evaluation of self as supervisor Specifically topics 4, 9, 13</td>
<td>Feedback from students Supervision notes Patchwork texts Action learning sets Summaries of class discussions Summative essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Developing people and processes</td>
<td>Engagement with the management, monitoring, and administrative tasks required of a supervisor Specifically 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16</td>
<td>Evidence of assessment of and feedback to students Evidence of protocols set-up for managing the supervision experience and administrative tasks required of a supervisor Work with internal and external examiners and/or other internal supervisors</td>
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**Specialist outcomes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How they are met</th>
<th>Evidence and reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Monitor and evaluate own supervisory practices with a range of self, peer, and student monitoring and evaluation techniques</td>
<td>Use of self evaluation and feedback tools Specifically 5, 7, 9, 10, 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Use interpersonal, organisational and learning management skills</td>
<td>Supervision practice, both academic and pastoral Specifically 3, 7, 8, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Use specialist knowledge and skills appropriately in the higher education context</td>
<td>Supervision practice either single, joint or group supervision, discussion of graduateness, contribution of specific discipline to an interdisciplinary setup Specifically 5, 12, 13</td>
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<td>4. Plan and implement appropriate strategies for the supervision process</td>
<td>Supervision and planning timetable of action with student. Notification of key supervision stages Specifically 8, 10, 11</td>
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<td>5. Perform effectively their student support and administrative tasks</td>
<td>Activity related to student support and smooth administration of the research process Specifically 3, 5, 8, 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Use an appropriate range of methods (and skills) to monitor, examine and assess student progress and attainment and give feedback on work</td>
<td>Supervision practice, student feedback on progress, assessment activity Specifically 9, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Supervise production and assessment of the research project/thesis</td>
<td>Supervised a minimum of one student to completion (or imminent completion)</td>
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<td>8. Enable the development in their students of key skills of lifelong learning</td>
<td>Encouragement of student to develop key skills and lifelong learning – including through publication Specifically 9, 16</td>
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The aim of the assessment is to meet the outcomes in a holistic way, rather than meeting specific competencies. This allows the course member to adapt the requirements to his or her own situation and context.

Revised and adapted with kind permission from Dr C.Popovic's Programme of training for UWL Supervisors October 2011.
Suggested reading on student learning, research supervision, and supervision skills


**Suggested reading on reflection and reflective practice**


**Suggested reading on action learning and learning sets**


Notes/Reflections