

# GUIDE TO QUT HDR SUPERVISION

## BACKGROUND

Involvement in higher degree research supervision is an expectation for QUT teaching and research academic staff. Optimising the quality and capacity of academic staff to supervise research students is consistent with a number of QUT's Blueprint (strategic plan) priorities to grow its research presence. The University policy informing supervisor quality assurance is the [Good Practice guidelines for HDR Research Studies & Supervision](#) and relevant policies and guidelines originating from the [Council of Deans and Directors of Graduate Studies Australia \(DDOGS\)](#) and [Federal Government standards](#).

All QUT Higher Degree Research (HDR) students require two supervisors (a Principal and at least one Associate) who must be currently accredited, paid QUT academic staff members.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

QUT has a responsibility to ensure that you are provided with a quality experience during your course and with quality supervisors who can provide exceptional guidance and support for your research experience. To ensure that QUT utilises quality supervisors, guidelines have been established which verify:

- All Principal and Associate supervisors are QUT academic staff members whose supervision is regularly monitored;
- All supervisors, as far as practicable, will be appointed for the duration of your candidature;
- The Head of School is aware of staff performance and manage loads effectively;
- All supervisors continue to attend professional development courses/training;
- Conflicts of Interest are managed appropriately;
- Supervisors with less experience in research supervision are afforded guidance through mentoring;
- You have a minimum of two QUT supervisors (one Principal and one Associate who can undertake Principal duties if required).

## APPOINTMENT OF QUT SUPERVISORS

Your supervisory team are the most important people you'll work with during your research degree. Having the right supervisory team is crucial to your success.

Some faculties allow you to choose your supervisors, while others will assign one to you.

Supervisors chosen by faculty	Supervisors chosen by student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative Industries</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Law</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science and Engineering</li> </ul>

The faculties that choose to assign supervisors are in a unique position as they are smaller and have the capacity to allocate the best matched supervisor or supervisory team to your project when they assess your application. The faculties assess a number of factors when assigning supervisors and will look for supervisors who have an interest in your topic and can guide you throughout your candidature. This practice also saves you time and effort and can expedite your application for admission.

When considering your admission application, the faculty will determine:

- whether your supervisory team is the best fit for your proposed research project;
- if a supervisor or supervisory team indicates a willingness to support you and your project;
- confirm that all potential supervisors are accredited to supervise;
- whether the potential supervisors have the capacity to support the term of candidature in light of other existing commitments and contractual arrangements.

The faculty are ultimately responsible for the final approval of your supervisory team.

## OTHER SUPERVISORS

Besides the QUT Principal and Associate Supervisor/s, other specialists can be appointed to your supervisory team. If they are not QUT paid academic staff but play a key role in supporting your research project they can be recognised and listed as external supervisors.

Some examples of external expert supervisors include:

- adjunct professors or visiting fellows who have an honorary position at QUT
- academics from another institution (either in Australia or overseas)
- experts in the discipline area
- key researchers employed outside of QUT
- Industry fellows.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

You and any potential supervisors should be aware of potential conflicts of interest relating to research and to the student–supervisor relationship.

While having a conflict of interest does not imply wrongdoing or inappropriate activity, conflicts do require review and management to ensure that the conflict does not improperly influence, or appear to improperly influence, how your research is conducted or reported. Transparency is the cornerstone of effective conflict oversight and management.

You, the university and your supervisors are all responsible for ensuring and promoting the highest ethical standards in situations where conflicts of interest may occur in the conduct of research. QUT policies on Conflict of Interest are located in the [MOPP](#) (B/8.7, E/2.1 and B/8.1.3). Some examples of conflict of interest in relation to supervision are in Appendix 1. Supervisors are primarily responsible for declaring conflicts of interest using the [appropriate form](#) and must receive the approval of yourself and the relevant Head of School. Final approval of supervisory teams is an executive decision made by the Chair, Research Degrees Committee.

## RELATED POLICY & OTHER INFORMATION:

- Finding a supervisor
  - <https://www.qut.edu.au/study/phds-and-research-degrees/finding-a-supervisor>;
  - <https://www.qut.edu.au/research/study-with-us/our-experts>

## Approval & modification history

DATE	AUTHORITY	DETAILS
18 August 2017	QUT Research Degrees Committee	Establishment of guide for prospective HDR students

**Responsible Officer:** Secretary, Research Degrees Committee

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Circumstances that can give rise to conflicts of interest include but are not limited to research, business, financial or other vested interests between the HDR supervisor and another party, including (but not limited to) a HDR student, research participant or a decision maker (eg. Head of School, Administrator, Journal Editor, funding body, Government Department, Industry partner). QUT's policy on Conflict of Interest is contained in Manual of Policies and Procedures (MOPP) Section B/8.7. All QUT researchers are expected to make full disclosure of any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest in their research. The University maintains a Register of Disclosed Interests for Research for this purpose.

### **Identifying conflicts of interest**

A conflict of interest exists where the personal or financial activities of a member of the University community may impact on their University duties or responsibilities. Perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest in research activities may arise as a result of:

- a personal relationship with a key member of a research activity (for example, a peer reviewer, research student, fellow staff member, project team member or supervisor)
- a professional relationship with a key member of a research activity (for example, being a director or board member of a relevant company or professional association)
- a pecuniary relationship with a key member of a research activity (for example, holding shares in a particular company, personal financial dealings with a potential research sponsor, sponsorship of a research project by a company having a pecuniary interest in the outcomes or research findings)
- a committee member considering for approval a research project of which they are a team member.

### **Managing conflicts of interest**

Conflicts of interests are usually managed by avoiding, reducing, transferring or retaining the conflict. In the research context, management of conflicts may include making alternative arrangements for supervision or decision-making relating to the research project or disclosing sponsorships in published papers. The appropriate management of the conflict will be agreed between the staff member and their supervisor, and should be reviewed on at least an annual basis.

### **Recording of conflicts of interest**

All disclosures of interests which may lead to a conflict of interest must be notified to a researcher's supervisor on the appropriate form. This form must also record the actions taken to avoid or otherwise manage the conflict situation. The disclosure must be recorded in the Register of Disclosed Interests for Research and reviewed on an annual basis. When conducting research involving the participation of humans, the research team must disclose any potential conflicts of interest in the recruitment / informed consent materials. This includes the disclosure of any sources of external funding for the research.

## CONFLICTS IN THE SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

The Research Degrees Committee has identified the following conflict of interests. Note that these scenarios are not exhaustive:

- Faculties and schools must be made aware of privileged relationships between students and supervisors or between supervisors (such as marriage or other close personal relationships) which might potentially create a conflict of interest in the supervision role. Where possible, the appointment of supervisors having privileged relationships should be avoided. Such an appointment will need the student's informed approval and the approval of the Head of School and the Dean of Research & Research Training.
- Personal relationships - relationships with individuals or people that extend outside of the university or university duties, or a relationship where a reasonable person might perceive that there could be some bias, either positive or negative, resulting from that relationship. These include relationships with:
  - immediate family eg. spouse or partner, parents, children, step-children, etc.;
  - close relatives eg. aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces etc.;
  - friends where the friendship extends outside the workplace;
  - sexual partners; or
  - rivals eg. competitors or persons with whom one has a history of serious conflict or enmity.
- Faculties and schools must be aware that a conflict of interest may arise where a supervisor oversees the employment of their student as a staff member of the University, whether this be in a teaching, research or other capacity, and must have in place mechanisms to allow recourse for students in the event that such conflict interferes with the progress of their research program.
- Students and their supervisors must fully disclose to each other and their respective Heads of School any affiliation or financial involvement with any organisation sponsoring or providing financial support for a project undertaken by the student and the assignment of Intellectual Property (refer to MOPP D/3.1). Financial involvement includes direct financial interest, provision of benefits (such as travel and accommodation) and provision of materials or facilities.