

CODE OF PRACTICE: SUPERVISION OF POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS DURING THE DISSERTATION PERIOD

2025-26

BACKGROUND

1. This Code of Practice sets out the University requirements covering Academic Department and School (“Department”) and supervisor responsibilities during the dissertation period for postgraduate taught students. Students’ responsibilities are outlined in their departmental student handbooks. The Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with relevant University Regulations.
2. As a holder of a licence to sponsor international students to study in the UK, the University is required to implement Home Office immigration rules that are subject to change at any point during the year for students who hold a Student visa. Changes to the rules are considered by the Academic Registrar as the University’s Authorising Officer for the sponsor licence and implemented and communicated by the International Services Team, working in partnership Departments. It is sometimes necessary to implement an ‘in year’ amendment to the Code of Practice to align with our regulatory and compliance obligations, including as a sponsor of international students. For students at Partner Institutions, additional local policies and procedures may apply.

DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

3. Each Department with Postgraduate Taught students is required to:
 - provide all Postgraduate Taught students with documentation, which sets out:
 - the date of a meeting with all Postgraduate Taught students to outline the expectations of the Postgraduate Taught dissertation;
 - the required length of the dissertation and its weight in the overall assessment of the scheme;
 - the nature and timing of any dissertation-specific training that will be provided;
 - how and when supervisors will be allocated;
 - the supervision that will be available to students. This must amount to at least four hours per student;
 - what reading, if any, of drafts will take place;
 - the final deadline for the submission of the dissertation, which must be no earlier than two weeks before the course end date unless there are other academic engagement requirements beyond the submission deadline.
 - ensure that all Postgraduate Taught students are allocated an appropriate supervisor. If a student is allocated a supervisor who is likely to be unavailable for some of the dissertation period, the Department must ensure that adequate arrangements are made for supervision to continue, and the student is informed how supervision will be provided during any period of absence.
 - support compliance requirements for international students sponsored by the University to study in the UK that are a condition of retaining our sponsorship licence. The University’s engagement monitoring and reporting duties include:
 - Retaining evidence to demonstrate active monitoring of all students’ attendance and engagement, and
 - Where a student breaches 60 days without in person engagement on one of the campuses, an obligation to report to the Home Office to withdraw sponsorship for the student.

Supervisory meeting records are a crucial element for the University to meet these duties and any instance of non-engagement by students with immigration sponsorship must be reported promptly to the International Services team.

- maintain records of supervisory meetings and attendance in accordance with agreed Department processes and procedures, and the University's [Student Engagement Policy](#). Engagement with supervisory meetings must be recorded on an authorised spreadsheet, or via a timetabled session captured through tap-in attendance. The full record of on-campus attendance for sponsored students must be sent on the first working day of the month (providing data for the previous month) to the International Services team to compliance@essex.ac.uk during each month of the dissertation period.

SUPERVISION AND THE FREQUENCY OF SUPERVISORY MEETINGS

4. Make clear to all supervisors the requirements in relation to the frequency of formal supervisory meetings between students and supervisors and ensure they are followed by supervisors. A supervisory meeting must take place at least once per month during the dissertation period, including the summer vacation, and all supervisory meetings must take place face-to-face on campus. In exceptional circumstances, the Department may agree that contact can be via video link at their discretion. Even where this is arranged exceptionally students with immigration sponsorship must participate in the meeting from one of the University's campuses.
5. Supervision should normally be provided until the student has submitted a final version of their dissertation for the award of their degree, including any resubmission period.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

6. Supervisors have a responsibility to:
 - Maintain regular contact with the supervisee, with at least monthly meetings as set out in paragraph 4 until the dissertation has been submitted, and during any resubmission period. It is particularly important when supervising a student with immigration sponsorship to ensure that all contact is face-to-face on one of the University's campuses and that a record is kept to confirm that the student attended on campus.
 - Keep a record of dates and attendance of formal supervisions with the student in accordance with the Department process or procedure and the [Student Engagement Policy](#).

INFORMATION AND REGULATIONS AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE

Registration as a Postgraduate Taught student is governed by the Principal Regulations for Taught Masters Programmes. These can be found on the University website at:

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/governance/regulations>

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX STUDENT HANDBOOK

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/resources/student-handbooks>

STUDENTS WITH SPONSORED IMMIGRATION PERMISSION

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/your-responsibilities>

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/academic-engagement>