**Departmental Guidelines for Supervision of Research Students**

*(Available on Department website)*

**1. Coordination**

The Convenor of the Postgraduate Research Student Programme provides assistance with academic administration of the research students in the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine (PSM). The Convenor also organises Research Student Seminars, and chairs the Department’s Research Advisory Committee (RAC) which reviews and approves research projects. The Research Student Administrator provides administrative support.

The RAC is made up of experienced researchers from the Department, and meets once a month from February to December. The RAC is responsible for the Department’s policy on research students, including their admission and supervision.

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**2. Early development of student research projects**

When students are exploring the possibilities for a research degree in the department, they must meet with the Research Student Convenor early in the process, even in cases where the student is already involved with one of the research groups or involved in an existing project. This applies to students at Master’s and PhD levels. Prospective supervisors should advise their students to make contact with the Convenor.

**3. Research Advisory Committee (RAC) review of proposals – internal students**

All research students based in PSM need to have their research proposals approved by the RAC, which meets monthly on a Thursday. Meeting dates and a template for the format of the proposal are available from the Research Student Convenor, the Research Student Administrator, or the [Department website](https://www.otago.ac.nz/dsm-psm/index.html). The student must submit a RAC proposal to the Research Student Administrator as part of the enrolment process. It must arrive by midday on the Monday preceding the Thursday RAC meeting.

The proposal submitted to the RAC must be endorsed (signed) by all named supervisors by signing prior to submission. Feedback from RAC is provided by letter within a week of the meeting.

***Biostatistics:***Biostatistical advice should be sought early in the planning phase of quantitative research projects. Depending on the nature of the project it may be appropriate to have a statistician named as a supervisor or advisor on the proposal, and to include a data analysis plan in the proposal for the RAC.

***Coursework:***The benefits of further coursework as part of the research degree should always be considered. The RAC may recommend that students take a relevant course as part of their overall degree. This would be in cases where it is felt that the student had insufficient skills or background in an important aspect of their project or there is an opportunity to enrich the training of the student.

**4. Research Advisory Committee (RAC) review of proposals – external students**

Students based in other departments, Schools or Universities, but who are co-supervised by staff of PSM, also have their projects reviewed by RAC – but use a different process. The PSM supervisor is responsible for submitting the proposal to RAC and any feedback from RAC goes to the student’s team via this supervisor.

**5. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for supervision**

The Department requires an MoU for supervision to be completed between each new research student and their supervisors. A copy of the MoU form is available on the [Department website](https://www.otago.ac.nz/dsm-psm/index.html), the Research Student Convenor, or the Research Student Administrator. The MoU conveys Department expectations of both students and supervisors, and should be used in preference to the general University MoUs. Students and supervisors should look at the MoU form independently before meeting to complete (and sign) their MoU jointly.

A research degree represents a significant investment from both student and supervisors. While the production of a good quality thesis and subsequent degree is likely the prime focus for the student, the publication of peer-reviewed research papers is one way in which supervisors gain from their contribution. There is also an ethical imperative to make the findings of publicly-funded research available. The need to plan for publication, including authorship, should be discussed early in the supervision arrangements and outlined in the MoU.

**6. References from previous supervisors (PhD only)**

Students seeking admission to PhD study in the Department will usually be asked to arrange for their Masters, or other appropriate supervisors, to send a confidential reference to the Research Student Convenor. The referee will be asked for an outline of their experiences with supervising the student and their opinion on the student’s suitability for PhD study. The Research Student Convenor or HOD may request the reference if the student is not comfortable doing so.

**7. Resources for new research students**

The Research Student Administrator has information packs for Master of Public Health (MPH) and PhD students in the Department. Students with specific enquiries should contact the Research Student Administrator in the first instance or email the Research Student Convenor.

Further resources for Master’s and PhD students are available on the Department’s website.

**8. Supervisors’ workload considerations**

Supervision workloads have the potential to become very unevenly distributed in the Department. Potential supervisors are asked to consider this when thinking about taking on a student and when choosing a second supervisor. The Research Student Convenor has a role in overseeing the distribution of supervision work and can help identify suitable second supervisors. The Department teaching workload model requires that no more than half of all teaching hours (i.e. 350 hours for full-time teaching staff; pro rata for others) should be spent in postgraduate research supervision.

Potential supervisors who are looking for a research student, or would be willing to supervise one, should inform the Research Student Convenor. Details of any specific student research topics can be advertised under Postgraduate research opportunities on the [Otago Medical School website](https://www.otago.ac.nz/medical-school/postgraduate/research-opportunities/). Academic staff can submit new listings via the [online form](https://secure-www.otago.ac.nz/forms/pg-research-opportunity-submission-form/).