Supervisory Panels at UniSA: Framework & Guidelines

1. Introduction

UniSA's Strategic Action Plan, Crossing the Horizon, identifies 3 distinct elements in a transformed PhD: supervisory panels; suitable coursework and transferable skills components; and a video defence of the thesis, drawing participation from international researchers. UniSA's Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2016-2020 has a clear focus on enriched PhDs through collaboration and end-user engagement, and seeks to have all HDR students undertaking at least 2 elements of the transformed PhD by 2018.

This Framework focuses on supervisory panels. It provides staff who are directly and indirectly involved with HDR supervision with a guide to the establishment and maintenance of supervisory panels.

The Framework has been informed by:

- A review of Australian, European and American models of panel supervision, and of panels with end-user involvement;
- Research Degrees Committee;
- Deans Research Education, or equivalent;
- Research Leadership Committee;
- Student focus groups; and
- Supervisor feedback

2. Supervisory Panels: Description & Benefits

A supervision panel is a team-based approach to supervision, with each member of the panel having an agreed role in supporting the student and/or the project. All students commencing in 2016 and beyond are expected to have a supervisory panel. Panels make provision for expert and multidisciplinary supervision teams, with the inclusion of end-users where meaningful and appropriate.

The intent of having end-users involved on panels is to involve them early in the co-creation of research projects and to take active roles in advising and mentoring research students. An increase in the number of supervision panels with end-users will also demonstrate an increase in the number of partnered projects involving HDR students, which is an objective of the Research and Innovation Strategic Plan 2016-2020.

Some of the *student* benefits of panel supervision include:

- Opportunity to enrich the project with multidisciplinary expertise & perspectives

- Continuity of supervision

- Engagement with end-users of research

- Opportunity to get workplace experience

- Broadened networks

Some of the *supervisor* benefits of panel supervision include:

- Working in a supervisory team

- New collaborations with colleagues from other disciplines

- Development opportunities for less experienced supervisors

- Increased flexibility in arrangements for staff leave

- Optimising research outcomes that are relevant and usable

- Incorporation of market knowledge – via end-user adviser – to research project design.

Some of the *end-user* benefits of panel supervision include:

- Development of new knowledge to assist end-user organisation

- Shaping research projects, to achieve real-world outcomes

- Access to technology pipeline

- Exposure to talented students, and

- Formation of networks and collaborations in the University

- Access to research that is evidence-based, rigorous, and future-focused

3. Supervisory Panels: UniSA Policy

Supervisory panels are now broadly defined in the Academic Regulations (see boxed extracts below).

The Higher Degree by Research Supervision policy and the Code of good practice: research degrees management and supervision have also been updated to support formation of supervisory panels, and to make the formation of panels and participation of external parties as easy as possible, removing unnecessary barriers.

Consequently, steps to implement supervisory panels include:

- encouraging formation of panels early in candidature;

- encouraging participation of end-users of research on supervisory panels (in advisory roles); and

- encouraging the inclusion of early career researchers on panels, to support research career development.

Appointment of Supervisors

7.1.1 Supervisors are appointed on the basis that their research expertise is appropriate to the research outline indicated in the application. Students will be supervised by a supervisory panel, with the panel composition determined as appropriate for the student's research and intended career path. The panel will consist of a minimum of 3 supervisors, made up of:

    a.   a principal supervisor (mandatory),

    b.   one or more co-supervisors/associate supervisors from the student's discipline area,

    c.   one or more co-supervisors/associate supervisors from other disciplines,

    d.   one or more advisors who are end users of research in the discipline.

7.1.2 At the time of application, the relevant Associate Dean: Research Education is responsible for ensuring that each PhD and Masters by Research student has a principal supervisor appointed. Where possible, other panel members should be appointed at the same time.

7.1.3 For Professional Doctorate by Research students, supervisors will be appointed at the commencement of the degree. The requirements will be as specified in the appropriate professional doctorate program information.

7.1.4 A minimum of two UniSA supervisors must be appointed to a research degree student within three months of commencement. It is expected that every effort will be made to appoint remaining panel members between that time and confirmation of candidature.

Relevant extract from Higher Degree by Research Supervision policy

2. HDR students will receive excellent supervision from people who are qualified to supervise, who are appropriately inducted into supervision, and who demonstrate commitment to ongoing development and training of supervisory practice.

3. HDR Students will be supervised by a panel to ensure appropriate breadth, depth and continuity of supervision.

4. Supervisors and advisors are appointed on the basis that their expertise is appropriate to the student's research. Involvement of multidisciplinary expertise and advisors who are end-users of research and/or who are from relevant industries on supervisory panels is encouraged.

4. Formation of Supervisory Panels

All students commencing in a research degree at UniSA from 2016 should have a panel of supervisors, appointed as early as possible in candidature.

Supervisory panels make provision for expert and multidisciplinary supervision teams, with the inclusion of end-users where possible and appropriate. End-users can be drawn from a wide range of industries, including, but not limited to, private enterprise, federal, state or local government, and the not for profit sector.

Panels may be formed to supervise a single research degree student, or may, due to the nature of the collaboration, be suitable for supervising a number of students over time.

Table 1 notes some of the attendant issues to consider when forming a new supervisory panel, or adding or removing members to an existing panel. Consideration of these questions will assist with forming the panel, and with setting expectations with panel members and students.

Table 1: Some of the issues to consider when forming or changing supervisory panels

Issue	Questions to consider	Notes and Resources
Membership	- Who are the most appropriate members for the supervision panel? - Could an expert from another discipline add value for the student? - What industry is the most appropriate end-user of the research? Can an end user from this industry be included on the panel? - Is it appropriate to include an early career researcher on the basis of their expertise, and to aid in their supervisory development?	
Intellectual Property	- How will IP be managed and assigned? - Are there requirements for IP due to funding of the project?	Refer to Intellectual Property: Ownership and Management Policy

	• Are all panel members aware of their responsibilities around managing project IP?	
Authorship	• How will authorship of publications from the research be managed? • Are any restrictions on publication likely?	Refer to Authorship Policy Decisions on authorship should also be documented in the student's Statement of Agreement and Reviews of Progress
Management of students	• Have the role and responsibilities of each panel member been discussed and agreed? • Who will take the lead in organising and conduction panel meetings? • Who will be responsible for ensuring the student meets milestones? • Who will the student meet with (i.e. individuals, or the panel as a whole)? How often? • Will the panel meet in the absence of the student? Under what circumstances?	All members on supervisor panels should participate regularly. The nature and frequency of participation can be determined as appropriate for each panel member, and their agreed role. Panels may meet in the absence of the students to prepare for meetings with the student such as reviews of progress. Panels which are supervising more than one student may also wish to meet to discuss the progress of all students.
Conflict	• How will potential conflicts be managed? • Do any of the proposed panel members have a conflict of interest? If so, how can this be managed to ensure the panel operates in the best interest of the student?	Refer to Conflicts of interest, UniSA Framework for the Responsible Conduct of Research

5. Guidelines for panel membership, roles and responsibilities

The panel requires a minimum of 2 UniSA supervisors, one of whom will be the principal, but should comprise of 3-5 total members, from within or external to UniSA, as appropriate for the student's discipline and project. The inclusion of 3-5 members in a supervisory panel is consistent with the model used for panels at several other Australian universities, including Australian National University, Charles Darwin University and the University of Sydney, and also shares similarities with European collaborative doctoral programs, and the American supervisory committee model.

Table 2 identifies the key roles and responsibilities of supervisors and advisors in the context of the supervisory panel, and the role of an advisor, as distinct from a traditional academic supervisor.

Table 2: The role and responsibilities of supervisors and advisors

		Role	Responsibilities
Research Supervisor	Principal	Take the leading role in guiding the student to undertake a successful research project; Lead discussions around the formation and organisation of the panel.	Ensure the supervisory panel and student are familiar with their responsibilities; Fulfil the responsibilities of supervisors, as detailed in the Code of good practice: research degrees management and supervision; Be the primary contact for the supervisory panel.
	Co (s)	Play an active role in guiding the student to undertake a successful research project, in collaboration with the Principal Supervisor.	Fulfil the responsibilities of supervisors, as detailed in the Code of good practice: research degrees management and supervision, in collaboration with the Principal supervisor.
	Associate(s)	Provide advice in specialised aspects of the research program.	Participate in the supervision of the student, as agreed with the panel and the student.
Advisor (end-user)		To be involved in the co-creation of student research projects; and/or	Likely to include some of the following, depending on the needs of the student, and the role of the advisor: - Regular meetings with the student and/or the panel; - Provision of mentoring throughout the student's candidature;

	To actively mentor the research student; and/or	-	Provision of end-user linked experiences, such as invitation to company board meetings, placement opportunities, or other exposure.
	To provide end-user linked exposure and experience to the student.	-	Assist student in gaining access to relevant research resources within an end-user's organisation/company/community
		-	Reading and providing feedback on the research proposal and/or on draft thesis chapters;

6. Support and Resources

The following resources are available to assist you in the development of supervisory panels for newly commencing, or continuing research degree students:

- Speak with your Associate Dean: Research Education (or the equivalent in your division);
- Speak with your Research Education Portfolio Leader/ Research Degree Coordinator/ Associate Head of School: Research (or the equivalent in your division);

Support and development resources now available include:

- amendments to the supervisor induction program to include advice on panels;
- new training to support supervisors, Research Education Portfolio Leaders, Research Degree Coordinators and Associate Head of School: Research in effective operation of panels (currently being offered in each Division);

Support and development resources being developed include:

- identification of supervisor panel champions and case studies;
- induction resources to support new advisors to understand their role and responsibilities
- resources to support staff to increase end user involvement.

To formalise the inclusion of panel members, University forms have been amended:

- For new students before commencement, the panel can be captured on the recommendation form;
- For students completing their research proposal panel members can be included on the confirmation of candidature and statement of agreement;

- For supervisors or advisors identified after confirmation of candidature the change of supervisor form can be used. The change of supervisor form also provides an opportunity for students who are already working with end users to have this detailed on their student record.

7. Frequently Asked Questions

Who is the lead in arranging supervisory panels?

The Principal Supervisor.

Are panels compulsory?

All students commencing from 2016 onwards should have a panel.

Do all panels have to have end-user advisors?

Where appropriate and meaningful. Try to think laterally about potential end-users to involve.

Can a panel continue over time with different students?

Yes.

Should ECRs be on panels?

What will be their role? It's a supportive way to learn the craft of supervision.