

## **POLICY DOCUMENT: POSTGRDUATE THESIS SUPERVISION**

### **SECTION A.**

#### **Policy Name**

Appointment of Research Supervisors for Postgraduate Courses

**Policy No.** KLN/P-QA/2023/1

#### **Effective Date**

13 February 2024

#### **Responsible Party**

Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Kelaniya

#### **Rationale**

The appointment of competent research supervisors is paramount in ensuring the successful completion of postgraduate degrees under SLQF levels 10, 11, and 12. This document outlines the policy, encompassing guidelines and procedures for appointing research supervisors for these courses at the University of Kelaniya. This policy's overarching objective is to uphold academic excellence and foster an optimal academic environment, facilitate the professional growth of students, and maintain the university's research standards.

#### **Scope and Audience**

This policy applies to all:

- A. graduate research courses offered by the university.
- B. University academic staff responsible for graduate research courses and candidates; and
- C. people external to the University appointed as research supervisors for postgraduate courses offered by the university.

### **SECTION B**

#### **1. Policy Purpose**

The purpose of this postgraduate research supervision policy is to:

- A. Explain the criteria for the appointment of supervisors, as well as the roles and responsibilities of supervisors towards candidates in all modes of Master's, MPhil, and Doctoral programs.

- B. Assist the research centers of each faculty in planning and maintaining a pool of potential postgraduate degree research supervisors.
- C. Ensure the quality of supervision, and that the research produced by candidates aligns with the objectives of the postgraduate study programs.
- D. Foster an ethical climate within the university regarding the appointment of research supervisors for postgraduate courses.

## **2. Policy Statement**

The University of Kelaniya is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of research supervision for postgraduate degrees.

## **3. Definitions**

**A Research Supervisor** - A research supervisor is a qualified and experienced academic staff member responsible for guiding and mentoring students throughout their research projects. They ensure the required academic and ethical standards of research.

### ***Roles and Responsibilities of a Research Supervisor***

- A. Academic Guidance: The research supervisor is responsible for providing academic guidance and support to their postgraduate student(s).
- B. Research Oversight: The research supervisor oversees research progress, ensuring alignment with the approved research proposal and ethical guidelines.
- C. Regular Meetings: The research supervisor should meet regularly with their student(s) to monitor progress, provide feedback, and address any concerns. Students are responsible for requesting meetings and keeping records of these meetings.
- D. Ethical Oversight: The research supervisor is responsible for ensuring that research is conducted ethically and in compliance with university policies.
- E. Professional Development: The research supervisor should encourage and support the professional development of their student(s).
- F. Conflict Resolution: In case of conflicts or issues, the research supervisor should follow the university's procedures for conflict resolution and seek guidance from the postgraduate course or any authorized entity.

**Postgraduate Degree** – Any degree designed at Level 10 or above per the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) 2015, including a master's degree with coursework and a research component, a Master of Philosophy degree, and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)/ Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree.

#### **4. Responsibilities and Procedures for Implementation of Policy.**

This policy will be implemented by preparing and maintaining a database for research supervisors. The procedure for the nomination of supervisors, preparation, and implementation of the database, and performance evaluation will be discussed below.

##### **4.1. Nomination of supervisors**

###### **4.1.1. Appointment**

The Management Committee / Board of Studies shall nominate supervisors for Master's, MPhil, and Doctoral programs. For degrees at Level 11 or 12, at least two (2) supervisors are encouraged, with one serving as the principal supervisor and the other as a co-supervisor. If only one (1) supervisor is appointed, that supervisor must be a full-time academic staff member with experience supervising students until graduation. The principal supervisor must be an Internationally or nationally recognized university academic.

The process begins with identifying potential research supervisors, which can be initiated by prospective postgraduate candidates or through recommendations from the Management Committee/ Board of Study in cases where students cannot identify a potential supervisor. However, student choices will also be subject to the Management Committee's approval and the nominated supervisor's consent. Priority will be given to supervisors suggested by prospective candidates if they meet the eligibility criteria outlined below.

###### **4.1.2. Eligibility criteria**

4.1.2.1. The primary research supervisor(s) shall;

- A. hold an educational qualification (Table 1 below) in a relevant area of specialisation for the specified postgraduate course AND
- B. be a Senior Lecturer - Grade II or above, AND
- C. demonstrate the experience in supervision:

- i. For the supervision of SLQF level 10: complete at least two (2) years of post-qualification experience in teaching and research
- ii. For the supervision of SLQF levels 11 or 12: be served as a co-supervisor for at least one candidate, who has completed SLQF level 11 or 12 qualification. An academic can be appointed as a co-supervisor two years after completing his/her SLQF 11 and 12 degree. <sup>1</sup>

AND

- D. Demonstrate recent active research engagement, preferably with scholarly publications in the University's list of Recognized Journals, in the relevant field of study AND
- E. should demonstrate commitment to mentoring and supervising postgraduate students<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.1.2.2. The co-supervisor shall

- A. Be an academic with the relevant level of qualifications defined in Table 1 below with two years of post-qualification experience AND/OR
- B. Be an industry expert with at least five years of experience.

Table 1 – The desired educational qualification for the supervision of SLQF levels 10 – 12 degrees

Degree level  Qualification Required	For a SLQL 10 degree	For a SLQL 11 degrees	For a SLQL 12 degrees
	SLQF Level 10 Master's degree or higher qualification	SLQF Level 11 MPhil degree or higher qualification	SLQF Level 12 degree

#### 4.1.3. Supervisor Assignment

After receiving the research proposal from the postgraduate student, the Management Committee will evaluate potential research supervisors based on the eligibility criteria mentioned in 4.1.2. After nominating potential supervisor(s), prior consent must be obtained from the respective supervisor regarding their availability for supervision. The

<sup>1</sup> This condition does not apply if the supervisor holds an external grant.

<sup>2</sup> This will be assessed through the progress (completion of milestones) of the postgraduate students assigned to the supervisor.

Management Committee formally assigns a research supervisor to the postgraduate student, ensuring that the supervisor can provide adequate guidance and support.

If a supervisor is appointed from outside the faculty cadre, they should be assigned to the research student under the supervision of a senior faculty member in the same field of study.<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.2. Preparation and Implementation of database**

##### **4.2.1. The database**

The Research Center of the faculty office should maintain an updated database of potential supervisors within and outside the university. This database should be accessible to relevant postgraduate coordinators, the Dean of the Faculty, and the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The database shall contain;

- a. Name of potential supervisor
- b. Designation and Institutional Affiliation
- c. Academic qualifications with year of award
- d. Field of study,
- e. Research experience (Number of indexed and peer-reviewed publications/h-index in google-Scholar Citation)
- f. the names of Master's, MPhil, Ph.D. and DBA students supervised over the last 5 years; with the date of successful completion of the degree.
- g. the names of Master's, MPhil, PhD, and DBA students currently being supervised.

##### **4.2.2. Supervision Limit**

**The recommended ratio of the academic post to the weight of supervision of a postgraduate candidate per year, subject to the total maximum and availability of supervisors in the department/faculty, is as follows. These limits are particularly applicable in instances where the academic concerned is the sole supervisor of a postgraduate student.**

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<sup>3</sup> The primary supervisor should be from the University of Kelaniya

	<b>Total (Max)</b>	<b>Level 10 (Max)</b>	<b>Level 11/12 (Max)</b>
Senior Professor	6	3	3
Professor/ Associate Professor	5	3	2
Senior Lecturer – Grade I	4	2	2
Senior Lecturer Grade II	4	2	2

### **4.3. Evaluation and Feedback**

#### **4.3.1. Evaluation**

The postgraduate program should conduct regular evaluations of research supervisors to ensure the quality of supervision. Students should be able to provide anonymous feedback on their supervisors to Faculty of Graduate Studies.

#### **4.3.2. Renewal and Termination of Supervision**

- A. Supervision appointments should be periodically reviewed by the Management Committee. Renewal or termination of supervision should be based on the supervisor's performance and the student's progress.
- B. Grounds for terminating supervision may include persistent neglect of duties, ethical violations, or an inability to effectively guide the student.

#### **4.3.3. Grievance Procedures**

A sound working relationship between the student and the supervisor is essential for completing postgraduate theses. Disagreements can occur; however, if this relationship breaks down, it will likely affect students' research plans and academic life. It is, therefore, important that the student contact the relevant program coordinator, dean of the relevant faculty, and faculty of graduate studies if they are experiencing serious problems with the supervisor, either in the working relationship or at a personal level. The Management Committee can then help to find a solution. As a last resort, appointing a new principal supervisor is possible.

#### **4.3.4. Change of supervisor**

To apply for a supervisor change, students must complete a special form and send it to the relevant Board of Study. It is required to enclose the written consent statement from the current and proposed new supervisor.

#### ***4.3.5. Additional supervisors or change of co-supervisor***

Sometimes, during MPhil/Doctoral/PhD programs, the principal supervisor and the student consider that additional expertise is needed for the project. This can be accommodated by attaching another co-supervisor to the project or replacing a co-supervisor with a new one. In such instances, the student needs to inform the Faculty of Graduate Studies of any changes in their supervisory team through the program coordinator and the Board of Study, with the consent of the new supervisor, principal supervisor, and the previous co-supervisor (if any), along with a written explanation.

### **5. Monitoring and Review**

This policy should be periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Necessary revisions should be made based on feedback and changing academic standards.

### **6. Forms**

6.1 Conflict of interest declaration form for students

6.2 Conflict of interest declaration form for supervisors

### **7. Conclusion**

The appointment of research supervisors is critical to ensuring the quality and success of postgraduate research programs at the University of Kelaniya. This policy provides a structured framework for the selection, roles, and responsibilities of research supervisors, ultimately contributing to the university's academic excellence. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to adhere to and uphold the principles outlined in this policy.