Training of Graduate Students who Supervise Undergraduates

One of the recommendations for action of the 2008 QAA institutional audit was that the University should ensure that all postgraduate students with supervisory or teaching responsibilities are appropriately trained.

The General Board has agreed that it will require training of all postgraduates who teach, and the QAA will require evidence that appropriate systems have been put in place. As a first step, the Senior Tutors' Committee agreed that, from 1 October 2009, Colleges should take responsibility for satisfying themselves that all postgraduate students who supervise have received some training before setting up a CamCORS supervisor account for them. It was acknowledged that many Faculties and Departments already provide excellent training for their supervisors, but it was agreed that guidelines on best practice for training of graduate students who supervise should be produced. It should be noted that such training will double as a substantial contribution to the necessary development of generic/transferable skills for graduate students themselves.

Following a survey of current practice in Departments and Faculties, and in consultation with the Centre for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD), the General Board's Education Committee and Senior Tutors' Committee have agreed that the following arrangements should be put in place with effect from 2010-11.

Compulsory Training - what all new supervisors need to know

1. Foundation generic information (online package)

All postgraduate students intending to supervise are required to complete an on-line training package which provides foundation (generic) information about the Cambridge supervision system. The package is available at http://camtools.cam.ac.uk/join/supervisortraining and includes:

- what is a supervision? the Cambridge context;
- setting and giving feedback on supervision work;
- reporting via CamCORS (Senior Tutors' Guidance for Supervisors);
- what students can expect from their supervisor;
- what a supervisor should expect from their students;
- what to do if a student is in difficulty or fails to turn up;
- structuring a supervision or series of supervisions;
- skills training available to students via Skills Portal (including Transkills);
- information about face-to-face training courses;
- the BGS guidelines on the maximum hours of supervising permitted, and a reminder that students need to seek the permission of their own supervisor before taking on supervision work.

Departments might also wish to supplement this training with a tailored CPPD course or to encourage students to take part in one of the generic training sessions offered by CPPD as part of the open programme.

2. Subject-specific resource pack

Faculties /Departments should provide, as appropriate, the following resources for their supervisors. These might be provided either on paper or electronically, for example via CamTools or on the web:

- course handbook and/or lecture handouts;
- marking criteria and classing schemes;
- plagiarism statement and subject-specific guidance on referencing;
- agreed norms for numbers of supervisions and numbers of students per supervision;
- feedback from examiners' reports, as appropriate;
- problem sheets and answers if available;
- reading lists;
- past Tripos papers;
- the name and contact details of the Course Organiser and Departmental/Faculty teaching administrator.

These resources should also be made available to undergraduate students.

3. Training

All Departments/Faculties are asked to offer training to postgraduate students who are supervising for the first time to provide subject-specific guidance. This training might cover:

- identifying and addressing particular skills gaps in supervisees;
- conceptual/practical difficulties that students commonly have with a subject;
- course requirements;
- appropriate exam preparation and technique.

This training might be organised and run at Department, Faculty or School level.

Alternatively, working with subject academics, CPPD are also able to tailor the courses offered in supervising in the Humanities/Sciences as part of the open programme to Departmental/Faculty or School requirements.

Departments/Faculties should maintain a list of all graduate students who have attended these sessions and make this available to Directors of Studies on request.

Good practice - briefing, support and mentoring

In addition to the training identified above, the Director of Studies (or in the case of departmentally organised supervisions, the Course Organiser) might also brief their new postgraduate student supervisors on a one-to-one basis. This briefing might include more specific information about the elements of the course to be supervised, tips and suggestions for how specialist topics might be approached, and to answer any remaining questions.

It is good practice for new supervisors to be assigned a mentor who would be available to offer further advice should it be needed at a later stage. College DoSs will have access to feedback from students on the supervisor's performance, and the DoS should provide appropriate feedback to the supervisor as part of the mentoring process.

Directors of Studies and Departments might also encourage students to take one of the generic supervisor training courses offered by CPPD as part of its open programme.

Recording and Monitoring via CamCORS

Instructions that graduate students who supervise should be trained have been added to the front page of CamCORS, and Colleges requested to check that training has been given (or arrangements are in place to receive such training) before creating an account for a new supervisor on CamCORS.

Graduate students who wish to supervise need to have a supervisor account which is created by the UCS. Applications for such accounts need to be requested typically by a College or sometimes by a Department or Faculty, where the supervisions are organised a Department or Faculty.

Departments have also been notified of the requirement to ensure that supervisors have received appropriate training.

CamCORS allows information about what training has been received to be entered by the supervisor alongside their personal details. Colleges/Departments will be able to access this information and this will also allow monitoring by the STC Education Committee of the training new graduate student supervisors are receiving.

New graduate students who are supervising will be asked to complete tick boxes as follows

<u>Compulsory for all new graduate students who supervise</u>

1. Supervisor training on-line package (including a web link) Y/N
2. Subject-specific resource pack (including a web link to what the resource pack should contain): Y/N
3. Face-to-face training from the Faculty/Department Y/N

E-mail reminders will be generated that this training is regarded as compulsory if the responses to any of these self-certification questions is “no”.

<u>Non-compulsory</u>

4. One-to-one briefing with DoS/Course Organiser Y/N
5. Other (including previous experience) free-text

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