

Pathways for Dealing with Problems in Supervision

Supervision, just like independent research, is a complex process. Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed, out of our depth, beset by problems or just plain frustrated by the supervisor or student we are working with. These kinds of situations are not unusual in working life.

When they arise, there *are* pathways available.

Before turning to any of the options below, consult the University's policy, *Resolution of Student Academic Disputes and Complaints Statute*. The policy recommends that student and supervisor try to resolve difficulties through informal processes in the first instance. This document does not over-ride the policy in any way but, along with the *Self-Help Options for Dealing with Problems in Supervision* document, it provides more detailed suggestions for how to handle informal dispute resolution processes.

Self-Help Pathway

The first pathway is to try self-help processes: see *Self-Help Options for Dealing with Problems in Supervision*. When self-help strategies do not seem possible, or they have not worked, there are further options that involve other people helping.

Pathways that Involve Advice from Others

Which pathway you choose will depend on the particular situation and the impact of the problem on you. There are no right or wrong answers and all of the options have some benefits:

Start with self-reflection: Give yourself some quiet time and space to think about what is happening and to write it down (see *Self-Help Options for Dealing with Problems in Supervision*, for some suggestions as to how to structure your thinking process.)

Talk the situation over with one or more of the following people (in no particular order). Make sure you ask anyone you talk with to keep the discussion confidential and not to take any action on your behalf without your consent.

- a friend or someone in your family or community whose advice you trust
- your Departmental Graduate Adviser, HoD, or Faculty Associate Dean (Postgraduate), all of whom are named in the policy as potential sources of help
- a University Counsellor if you are a student or the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if you are a staff member
- a University Chaplain
- Graduate Centre
- Student Learning Centre or Academic Practice Group
- the Student Advice Hub (AUSA) advocate if you are a student, or a TEU representative if you are a staff member
- the University Proctor

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If, as a result of advice, you decide to deal directly with the person who is part of the problem, then prepare for that discussion as if you were going to a meeting or tackling an assignment. (See *Self-Help Options for Dealing with Problems in Supervision, Acting on your decision.*) You should probably let someone know what you're planning so that if a further problem arises, or if the situation escalates, or if you just want to debrief afterwards, then you've got support. You could take your supporter with you, although that is likely to make the situation appear more formal and may raise the anxiety of the other person.

Formal Pathway

The move to a formal process is fully described in the University's policy, *Resolution of Student Academic Disputes and Complaints Statute*.