



CASE STUDY

Implementing *Supervising Doctoral Studies* as part of a mandatory development programme at the University of Sheffield

Background

In 2019 the University of Sheffield joined the Development Group for the second edition of *Supervising Doctoral Studies*. Emma Suret, Researcher Development Manager at the university, came to the Development Group workshop on only her second day on the job. Emma is also the Lead for PGR Supervisor Development. Over the past two years, she has developed and coordinated a full programme of workshops and online materials for PGR supervisors, as well as a university-wide recognition scheme for early-career research staff to support their development as supervisors.

The experience of being part of a Development Group was one that Emma enjoyed – despite coming into the workshop late, she found it easy to get involved in and valued being able to help shape the course. As Emma put it, “one of the best parts of the whole process is Epigeum involving us in the design of it” and she valued “giving feedback and helping to see different iterations of [the course]”.



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Implementation

Supervising Doctoral Studies has now been introduced as a mandatory part of the ‘new’ supervisor Continuing Professional Development programme at the university. New Supervisors must undertake two modules, ‘The Doctoral Context’ and ‘Supporting your Candidate’, although many complete more. This online learning is accompanied by ten hours of live workshops led by Emma, making Epigeum’s course a useful component of Sheffield’s wider development programme. The course also comes with an instructor manual and detailed learning outcomes, which Emma found useful when planning her own live sessions as she could ensure there was no overlap, and that her live sessions complemented the online course.

Epigeum’s course will soon be extended to experienced supervisors on an optional basis, as “it’s a really valuable resource to have.” Emma and her team will advertise the course through staff newsletters and direct email, expanding the programme’s reach. Epigeum provides a range of materials for universities to use for such course promotion, including flyers, banners, adverts, and introductory text.

Supervising Doctoral Studies is delivered through Epigeum’s platform. However, Emma and her team have personalised the course

by adding their own internal context and information through a public-facing webpage on their site. Signposting the resources in this way has offered a unique solution to time restraints when implementing the programme.

Outcome

Emma would recommend the course to other institutions, as *Supervising Doctoral Studies* tackles more issues than she can cover during her own sessions, and provides up-to-date, and visually pleasing content. The flexibility of the online course further makes the content accessible for academics who “really appreciate that type of learning,” particularly as the modules are non-linear and packed full of discipline-specific videos and content which offers balance for different disciplines within the course. In Emma’s words, “everyone understands why it’s so important”, and is glad the training provision is there.

To sum up in Emma’s words, “the course is brilliant and the support as well from Epigeum has been great”, and “to any other institutions who want to take it on themselves, it’s been much easier than many other things I’ve done!”. The *Supervising Doctoral Studies* course will continue to be “an intrinsic part” of the wider programme at University of Sheffield.



Find out more about *Supervising Doctoral Studies 2.0* and how it can support both new and more experienced supervisors at your institution.