

# **Supervision standards for postgraduate research projects**

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- **Introduction to St George's, University of London**
- **Setting the scene**
- **Learning from the doctoral supervision process**
- **Supervision standards for postgraduate taught (PGT) students**
- **Conclusion**



St George's  
University of London



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OF LONDON

St George's

Part of the University of London



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Supported by the Voluntary Subscriptions  
and Benefactions, of several of y<sup>e</sup>. Nobility,  
Gentry, and Others.

# Improving health for over 250 years

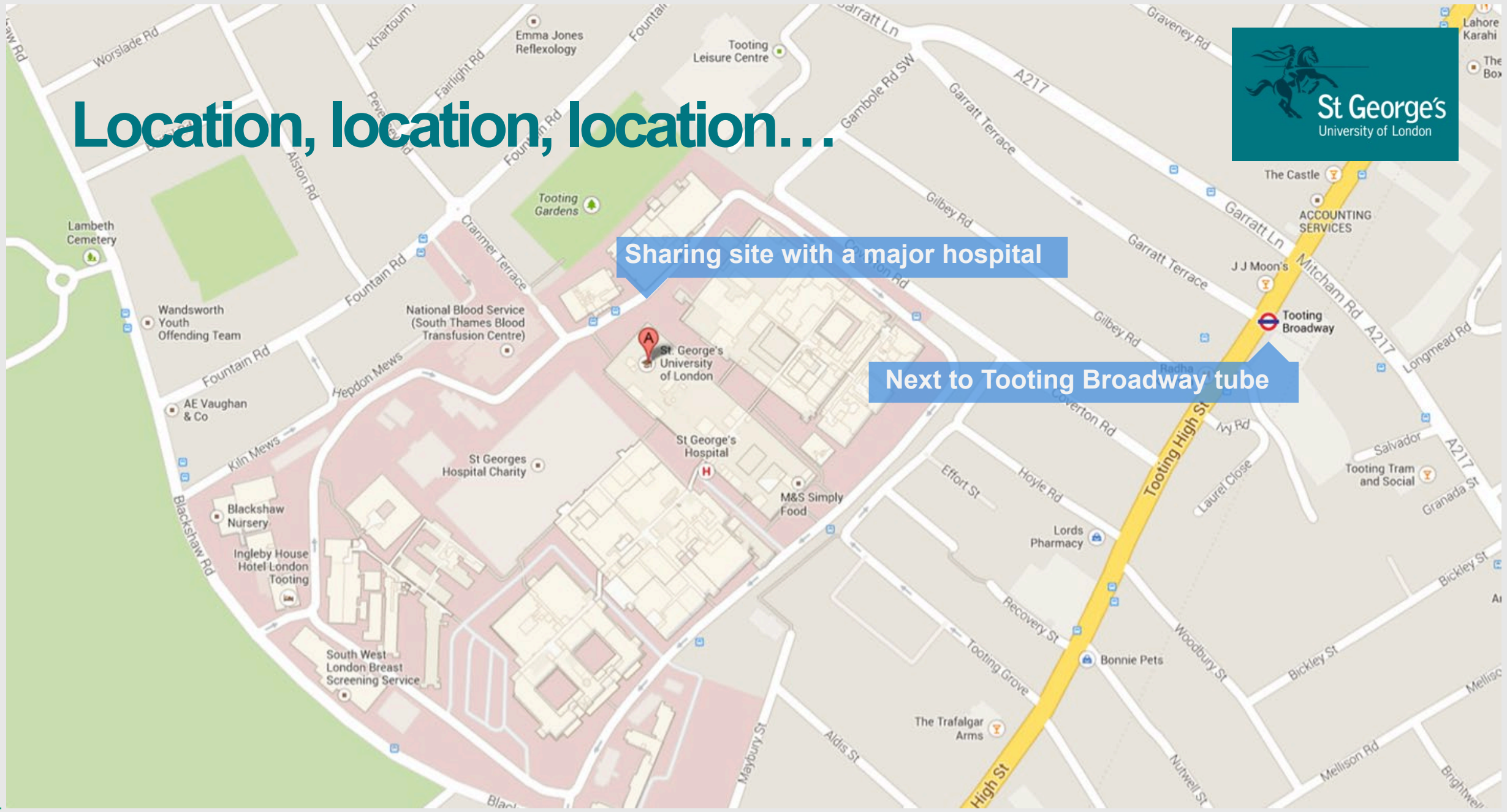


# Location, location, location...



Sharing site with a major hospital

Next to Tooting Broadway tube

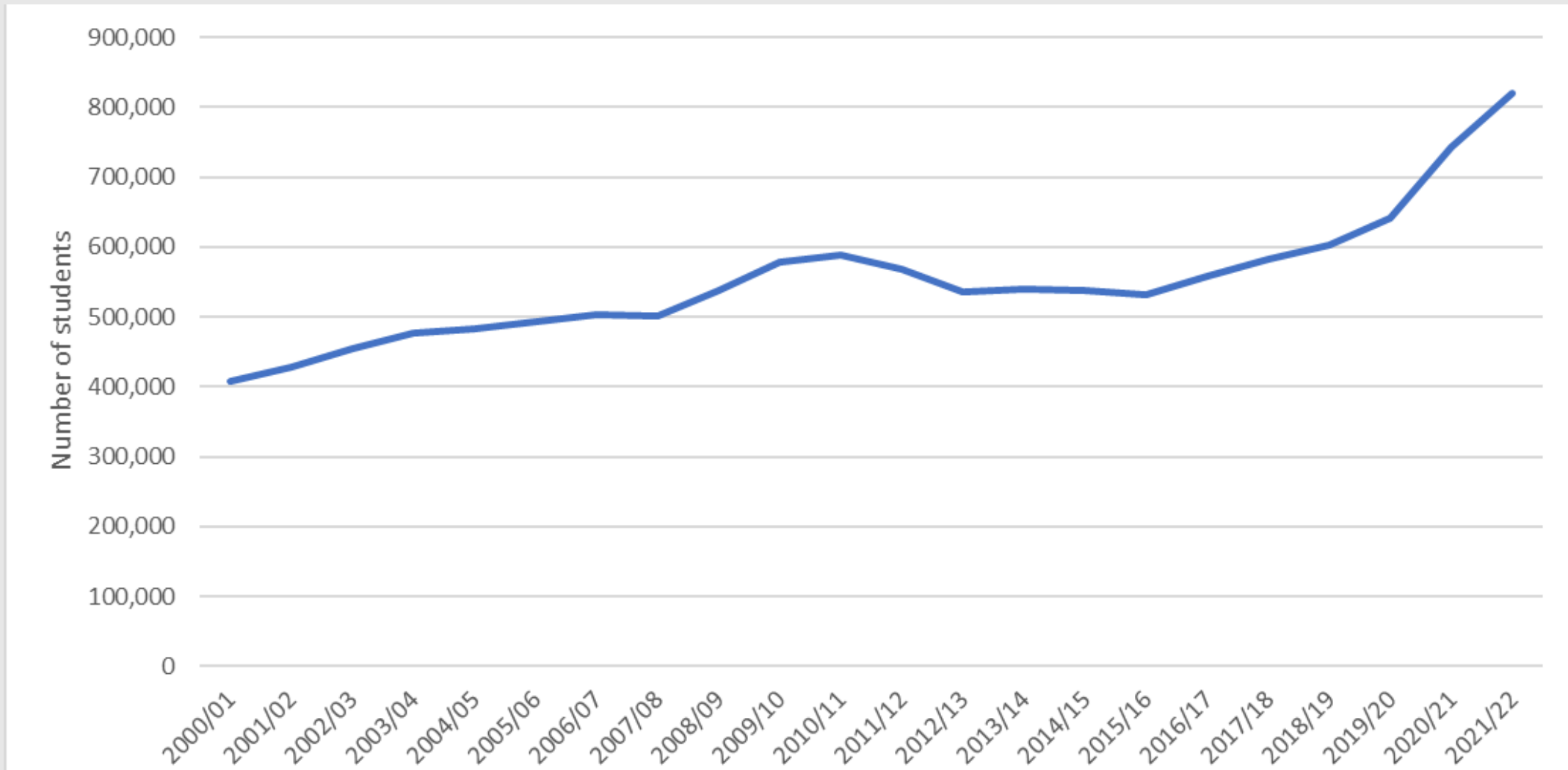


- **Unlike many other universities, the Graduate School at SGUL is responsible for taught and research degrees...**

- Biomedical Science MRes
- Translational Medicine MRes / MSc / PgDip / PgCert
- Genomic Medicine MSc / PgDip / PgCert
- Global Health MSc
- Sports Cardiology MSc / PgDip / PgCert
- Heart Failure MSc
- Physician Associate Studies MPAS
- Physiotherapy MSc
- Occupational Therapy MSc
- Advanced Breast Practice MSc
- Advanced Clinical Practice MSc
- Healthcare Research Skills and Methods PgCert
- Healthcare and Biomedical Education PgCert
- Clinical Neurosciences Practice MSc
- Medical Ethics, Law and Humanities MA
- MD(Res)
- MPhil/PhD

- **Student projects are key component of most PG taught courses**
- **PTES reveals variable experience**
- **Varying expectations of staff and students**
- **Challenge of finding sufficient projects**
  - **Increasingly challenging given the increase in students (see next slide)**
- **Aims:**
  - **Develop set of supervision standards**
  - **Develop a Student and Supervisor Agreement document**
  - **Devise and deliver training**

# Postgraduate taught students in UK HE providers



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- **SGUL has long made use of supervision standards and accompanying forms for PhD supervision**
- **This has buy-in from all stakeholders and both student and supervisors engage with the process**
- **The process enables the Graduate School to quality assure supervision and the audit trail helps with appeals and complaints**
- **The possibility of adapting the PhD standards and process for postgraduate taught (and undergraduate) students provided the initial spark**

# Supervisor standards for PGT (i)

Key Points	Purpose
All academic staff, with at least a masters, must propose student projects annually	To address shortfall in project availability and student choice
Supervisor training compulsory for all new staff	Provide less experienced staff with confidence and awareness
Refresher training every 3 years	Ensure all staff are aware of any policy changes
Supervisor should be available for whole period of project	Ensure students do not feel “abandoned”

# Supervisor standards for PGT (ii)

Key Points	Purpose
All supervisors should have an initial introductory meeting with their student(s) to agree details of the Supervisor and student document	To clarify the expectations of both supervisor and student
Record formal supervision meetings	To identify any issues
Supervisors should provide timely feedback on drafts	Ensure student has time to re-draft

# Supervisor and student agreement for PGT (i)

- Key elements for both:
  - Have read appropriate documents
  - Attended training
  - Attended introductory meeting
  - Agreed frequency of meetings
  - Agreed timetable for progress reports
  - Agreed initial workplan
- Both parties sign the document



# Student and supervisor agreement for PGT (ii)

## STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT DEGREE AGREEMENT

### Responsibilities of the Supervisor

I agree to adhere to the St George's, University of London Supervision Standards and [General Regulations for Students and Programmes of Study](#) and Code of Conduct for Research.

#### Including:

- I am appropriately prepared to act as a supervisor. I have attended/will attend\* the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degree project supervisor training within the last 3 years or will attend on (\_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_)\*.
- I have completed the required activities with the student:
  - Initial introductory meeting
  - Frequency of meetings agreed
  - Timetable for progress reports agreed
  - Initial work plan of project, research methods and timetable agreed
  - Research ethics application, end of study notification (if applicable)
- I will ensure that the schedule of meetings, agreed to at the initial meeting with the student, is adhered to.
- I will support the student in undertaking a formal assessment of their progress against their research project plan on a regular basis (or as required by the course team) by collaborating with the student to complete a progress report. Where there is insufficient progress, this will be documented.
- I will ensure that the student is made aware of any concern about progress in relation to project milestones or when the standard of work falls below that generally expected. I will then work with the student to develop an appropriate action plan.
- I will, in the first instance, discuss any problems, anticipated absence, or changes, with the research project module lead.
- If there are any concerns or difficulties in completing this agreement form, I will contact the research project module lead in the first instance.
- If written work is required, I will return such work with constructive criticism within times mutually agreed, although it is suggested that 10-15 working days is reasonable.
- If I am going to be absent during term time, I will notify the module lead and the student, and I will ensure that there is continuing alternative and appropriate supervision.
- I will retain a copy of this form and will upload the definitive version of this form to the relevant Canvas page.

	Print Name	Signature	Date
Supervisor			
Student			

# Student and supervisor agreement for PGT (iii)

## Responsibilities of the Student

I agree to adhere to St George's, University of London Regulations as detailed on the SGUL website. Including:

- I have read the information provided about the research project module on the relevant Canvas pages
- I have completed the initial required activities with my supervisor:
  - Introductory meeting
  - Frequency of meetings agreed
  - Timetable for progress reports agreed
  - Initial work plan of project, research methods and timetable agreed
  - Research ethics application, end of study notification (if applicable)
- I will maintain the progress of the work, in particular the presentation of written material in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion.
- I will maintain adequate records of the progress of the work and of development of the project (e.g. laboratory note books)
- In consultation with my supervisor(s), I will complete a formal assessment of my progress on a regular basis by completing a progress report. I will ensure that reports are commented on and signed by my supervisor(s).
- I will take the initiative in project management, including the identification and addressing of any problems arising in the work.
- I will behave professionally, with honesty and integrity, and take responsibility for the quality of the work being carried out as a responsible member of SGUL's academic community.
- I will make appropriate use of teaching and learning facilities made available by St George's, University of London.
- I will keep my supervisor(s) informed of any changes in personal circumstances which might affect the progress of my work.
- I will maintain regular contact with my supervisor(s) throughout the period of research study.
- I will approach the research project module lead if a problem cannot be resolved with my supervisor(s). I will ensure that problems do not go unattended.
- If there are any concerns or difficulties in completing this agreement form, I will contact the research project module lead in the first instance.
- I will retain a copy of the definitive version of this form.

	Print Name	Signature	Date
Supervisor			
Student			

# Supervision meeting record for PGT

Tutorial number:	Date of meeting:
Identify progress so far - what have you achieved since last meeting?	
Compare improvements to the planned timeline and objectives.	
Identify any problems that have arisen.	
Aspects you need advice on or help and support with?	
(To be completed with your tutor) summary of meeting and action plan:	
Signed and dated (student)	
Signed and dated (supervisor)	
Date, time and place of next meeting	

# Possible stumbling blocks

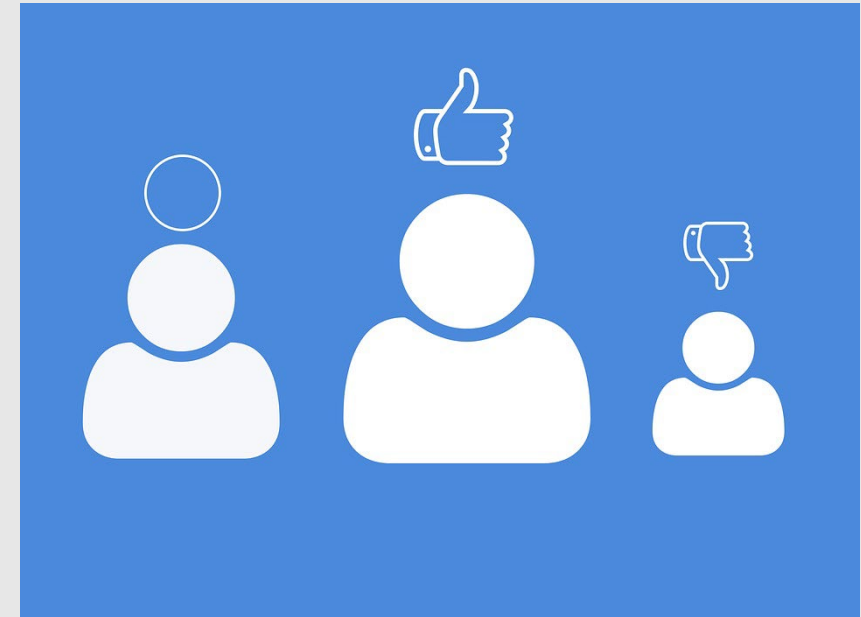
- Academic staff “buy-in”
- Support from senior management (on the research side)
- Workload of academic staff
- Increased bureaucracy
- Challenge to design and deliver training (and to ensure that supervisors engage regularly with the training)



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- **Quantity**
  - Comparison of number of projects with previous years
- **Quality**
  - Analysis of PTES data relating to research projects
  - Focus groups with PGT students
  - Feedback from supervisors
  - Other 'quality' metrics?



- **This is the first year that we have implemented the new policy and many students are still mid-way through their research projects. Thus, a full analysis will have to wait until the next academic year.**
- **However, initial feedback suggests that many course team are engaging with the process well and anecdotal feedback from both supervisors and students suggests that the standards and forms are helping to set and manage expectations**

- **With thanks to all members of the Supervisory Standards Task and Finish Group**