



Academic Supervision

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Academic Supervision

Supervising doctoral students is one of the most satisfying things that anyone in Higher Education can do.

Helping a new scholar to become an independent researcher is a significant achievement.



The reality of doctoral candidature is that it rarely progresses in an idealised way.

Life outside the doctorate continues and has an affect on what happens within the doctoral context (Green and Bowden, 2012, p. 66).



Vilkinas (2002) proposes that good supervisors have research knowledge, management and interpersonal skills, and are:

Innovative; problem solvers; resource orientated; work focused; technical experts; decisive; and dependable.

Deuchar (2008) proposes that the relationship between doctoral supervisors and candidates is a complex one.



Supervisors and students see the relationship as having both a professional and a personal dimension.

A good supervisor is one who possesses professional knowledge and is capable of exhibiting care and concern for the personal well-being of the student.



While on the surface it may appear that the relationship is a simple dyadic one, many subconscious feelings and desires may complicate the relationship and create unexpected reactions.



The supervisor starts with a set of assumptions about how to supervise, and this is based on their experience of being supervised.

This is similar to parents, who may modify their approach for each child but whose overall understanding of parenting is based on their experience with their parents (Belsky and Jalfee, 2006).



- **Doctoral study is that it is essentially a system of training in both technical and intellectual skills, the possession of which will ultimately lead to original contributions.**
- **In addition, doctoral studies regularly result in supervision duties; therefore, the system/structure of doctoral programmes must reflect the need to develop a supervision skillset.**
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- **Doctoral graduates are expected to be professionally trained researchers, rather than purely academic scholars.**
- **But there is a need to provide training in research supervision beyond the understanding of supervision that emerges from the student's experience of their relationship with their supervisor.**
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Supervisor Characteristics and Duties



- Encouraging, reliable, knowledgeable, informative and sharing.
- Active listening, being encouraging of debate.
- and providing continuous feedback and support (Mainhard et al 2009).
- Commenting on the student's written work and providing continuous support.
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The majority of supervision experiences are very positive. Many students and supervisors stay in contact for the rest of their academic careers; some even become life-long friends.

However, we are not all born with an innate ability to provide high quality supervision the first time we take on a student. Most of us need some guidance.



In order to have a lively and vibrant postgraduate research community it is essential to recruit and select high quality students who have the aptitude to complete a strong PhD in the required time period.



Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- Giving guidance regarding all aspects of the project;
- Helping students to carry out an analysis of training and learning needs,



The responsibilities of the supervisor include:

- Ensuring they participate in appropriate training events;
- Maintaining contact through regular meetings;



- **Being accessible to the student at other appropriate times when advice may be needed;**
- **Giving advice on the necessary completion dates of successive stages of the work so that the thesis may be submitted within the scheduled time;**
- **Requesting written work as appropriate, and returning such work with constructive criticism and in reasonable time;**



- **Arranging as appropriate for the student to talk about the work to staff or graduate seminars;**
- **Reporting in writing at least annually on the student's progress to the School Director.**
- **Advising on appropriate dissemination activities (including publication), external engagement, networking etc;**
- **When the thesis is submitted, sending a written report to the examiners via the Doctoral Examinations Officer in the Graduate School;**



- **Preparing students for their viva, and advising on any subsequent corrections they may have to undertake;**
- **Undertaking training and other development events to help undertake the role of the supervisor effectively.**



The responsibilities of the student include:



- Adhering to the University's regulations governing research integrity, academic misconduct, and ethical standards;
- Discussing with the supervisor preferred ways of working and agreeing a schedule of meetings;
- Taking the initiative in raising problems or difficulties;



- **Agreeing and observing any necessary health and safety precautions;**
- **Carrying out a Learning Needs Analysis and attending appropriate training and development events;**



- **Carrying out research in an ethical way and in line with University procedures for Good Practice;**
- **Maintaining the progress of the work in accordance with the stages agreed with the supervisor, including in particular the presentation of written materials as required in sufficient time to allow for comments and discussion;**



- **Providing at least annually (as required in University regulations) a formal written report to the School, outlining progress during the preceding year, the contents of which should normally be discussed with the supervisor/s before submission;**



- **Being honest when reporting on progress;**
- **Deciding when he or she wishes to submit within the prescribed period of registration, taking due account of the supervisor's opinion,**
- **Shortly before submission of their thesis, informing supervisor(s) of any special circumstances which they believe may have adversely affected their research;**



- **Showing their supervisor(s) the final draft of their thesis before submission.**



Joint supervision

- It is a normal University practice for there to be more than one supervisor for each research student.
- This might be a second member of staff from within the same school / department, or from a different one.



Joint supervision

- The additional supervisor may be part of a small supervisory team, which provides advice and oversees the progress of the student.
- Where joint projects involve an external organisations (for example, as is usually the case for Professional Doctorate students), a supervisor from within that organisation is often appointed as the second (or sometimes third) supervisor.



Supervisory meetings

- There are various different types of supervisory meeting, including face-to-face, email exchanges, Skype, and other forms of digital communication.
- At the outset, supervisors and students should agree on the appropriate frequency and nature of meetings and other communications.



- **Students must appreciate what is a reasonable expectation in terms of access to supervisors' time, and supervisors must ensure that they will have enough contact with students to allow the appropriate level of guidance and knowledge about student progress.**



Supervisory styles

- The same supervisor may need to adapt his or her personal style to suit the needs of particular students.
- Decide on the right style for you and your student; Find an appropriate balance between heavy-handed dominance and hands-off neglect;
- Consider questions such as; How much should you push your views as opposed to giving them freedom to learn from their mistakes? How much should you do for them?



- **Be sensitive to how students respond to your style and be prepared to adjust it, if appropriate.**
- **Seek help from more experienced colleagues if you have any concerns.**



The ups and downs of doing a PhD

You should be aware that most PhD students will experience a range of emotions throughout the life of their PhD and that these can have an impact on their performance and their needs from your supervision.

Phillips & Pugh (2000) describe a common pattern:

Year 1 Enthusiastic – at the start of the project with lots of expectations and ambitions;

Anxious – am I clever enough, when will they spot I am a fraud;

Disappointed – I have not achieved as much as I expected

Isolated – feeling alone even when other PhD students are at hand.



The ups and downs of doing a PhD

Year 2 'Getting nowhere syndrome' –

Boredom with the routine of research;

Interested – really involved and having the confidence to solve problems;

Frustrated – time constraints impact on capacity to follow all areas of interest.



The ups and downs of doing a PhD



Year 3 Independent – less reliance on supervisor for knowledge of field; Job to be finished – the thesis becomes a task;

Stressed!



Providing feedback

Show that the purpose of the feedback is to make progress;

State positive aspects first;

Maintain a balance between appreciation and constructive criticism;



Present criticism impersonally;

Present feedback clearly to reduce ambiguity;

Ensure students understand it;

Discuss how to address any negative aspects; i.e. agree a way forward



Examination Preparation



The University Code of Practice on Research Students requires that:

- **Students should decide when he or she wishes to submit within the prescribed period of registration, taking due account of the supervisor's opinion, and informing the graduate school.**
- **Shortly before submission of their thesis, students should inform their supervisor(s) of any special circumstances which they believe may have adversely affected their research;**



- **They should also show their supervisor(s) the final draft of their thesis before submission;**
- **When a thesis is submitted, supervisors should send a written report to the examiners via the Examinations Office.**



Challenges and Difficulties



Challenges and Difficulties

- **Communication difficulties in communicating with supervisors.**
- **Control and engagement: mainly related to the research being in the supervisor's field of expertise or a project identified by the supervisors.**



- **Lack of trust in supervisors: most supervisors have been through the PhD process and should be sources of great support and guidance.**
- **Academic bullying: although universities unanimously state that they do not tolerate bullying, much of the bullying reported or discussed by the students involved supervisors**



- **Desertion 'Desertion' was a common theme that appeared to be caused by all parties: supervisors, students and the universities themselves. The desertion of a supervisor can be damaging.**



Plagiarism

- In 1999, the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE)^{5,6} defined plagiarism as
- “Plagiarism ranges from the unreferenced use of others’ published and unpublished ideas including research grant applications to submission under new authorship of a complex paper, sometimes in a different language.
- It may occur at any stage of planning, research, writing or publication; it applies to print and electronic versions.”



How to Detect plagiarism?

- It is generally difficult to detect plagiarism, but information technology has made available few websites which can detect/catch plagiarism. Few of them are:
 - <http://www.ithenticate.com>
 - <http://www.turnitin.com>
 - <http://www.plagiarism.org>
 - <https://www.plagscan.com>



APA Citation Style

- **The American Psychological Association is credited with creating their own specific citation style, which is a popular way to create citations.**
- **This citation format is used by individuals not only in the psychology field, but many other subject areas as well. Education, economics, business, and social sciences also use this citation style quite frequently.**



APA

- This format was first developed in 1929 in order to form a standardized way for researchers in the science fields to document their sources.
- Prior to the inception of these standards and guidelines, individuals were recognizing the work of other authors by including bits and pieces of information, in random order.
- There wasn't a set way to format citations. You can probably imagine how difficult it was to understand the sources that were used for research projects!



- This citation style is currently in its 6th edition and was released in 2009.
- In 2013, the American Psychological Association released a revised manual just for electronic resources.
- This was released due to the increase in the amount of technological advances and resources.



- Delamont, s., Atkinson, P, & Parry, O. (2004). Supervising the Doctorate: A Guide to Success. 2nd Ed. Maidenhead. Open University Press .
- Stephens, Simon (2014). The supervised as the supervisor. Education þ Training Vol. 56 No. 6.
- Yarwood-Ross L, Haigh C (2014) As others see us: what PhD students say about supervisors. Nurse Researcher. 22, 1, 38-43.
- The University of Reading, UK, GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE SUPERVISING PHDS AND OTHER RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES.
- <http://www.citationmachine.net/apa/cite-a-book>