

Introduction to University Teaching Skills

Session 7
Supervising students

Supervising Students

- Typically, students are at Honours, Masters or PhD level
- The purpose of their program is to develop expertise in a research field
- The role of the supervisor is to facilitate and support the student's own independent research

The Student

- General Assumptions
 - Student
 - Is a high achiever
 - Is motivated
 - Has a reason for wanting to do higher level research
 - Has good research and writing skills
 - Can work independently
 - Knows how to plan
 - Has a clear research topic
 - Knows what to expect from you as the supervisor
- BUT –Are these assumption valid??

Setting the Foundations

- Complete an 'Expectations' questionnaire
- Discuss the Results
- Complete a Supervisor/Student supervision plan
- Review annually

A 'good' supervisor

- Will be available and approachable
- Will model good behaviour
- Will have knowledge and expertise in the students' field of study
- Has an interest in the student's career
- Provides constructive feedback
- Has good time management skills
- Is a problem solver
- Knows the rules

Supervisor qualities

- Will be available
- Will model good behaviour
- Will have knowledge and expertise in the students' field of study

- Has an interest in the student's career
- Provides constructive feedback
- Has good time management skills
- Is a problem solver
- Knows the rules

(End of Part 1)

Session 7

Part 2 Expectations Questionnaire

Expectations Questionnaire

- Read the Expectations Questionnaire (provided in the course materials)
- As a supervisor, what are your expectations from students?
- Exercise: group responses to the questionnaire

Directions : Read each pair of statements on this sheet. Each expresses a standpoint supervisors and students may take. Please estimate your position and mark it on the scale. For example, with statement 1, if you believe very strongly that it is the Supervisor's responsibility to select a good topic you would put a ring round '1'. If you think that both the Supervisor and the student should equally be involved you put a ring round '3' and if you think it is the student's responsibility to select a topic, put a ring round '5'.

Student name:

Supervisor(s) name:

Date:

1. It is the supervisor's responsibility to select a research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic.
2. It is the Supervisor/s who decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should decide theoretical framework and/or methodology they wish to use.
3. The Supervisor/s should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The Supervisor/s should leave the development of the program and timetable of research and study to the student.
4. The Supervisor/s are responsible for ensuring that the student has access to the appropriate services and facilities of the element and the University.	1 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to ensure that she/he has located and accessed all relevant services and facilities for the research.

5. It is the supervisors' responsibility to advise the student of the relevant policies, procedures and requirements relating to their candidature.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for being familiar with the relevant policies, procedures and requirements relating to their candidature.
6. Student-supervisor relationships are purely professional and personal relationships should not develop.	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful supervision.
7. The Supervisor/s should insist on regular meetings with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when she/he wants to meet with the Supervisor/s.
8. The principal supervisor is responsible for coordinating all communication between the supervisors and the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should coordinate all communication between the members of the supervisory team.
9. The Supervisor/s should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should work independently and not have to account for how and where time is spent.
10. The supervisor/s should ensure that the thesis is finished by the maximum submission date.	1 2 3 4 5	As long as a student works steadily she/he can take as long as she/he needs to finish the work.
11. Supervisor/s should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the student is on the right track.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should submit drafts of work only when they want constructive criticism from the Supervisor/s.
12. Supervisor/s should assist in the writing of the thesis if necessary and should ensure that the presentation is flawless.	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the thesis should only ever be the student's own work and the student must take full responsibility for presentation of the thesis.
13. Supervisor/s are responsible for decisions regarding the standard of the thesis.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for decisions concerning the standard of the thesis.
14. Supervisor/s are responsible for deciding on the recognition received for the student's and supervisor/s contributions to publications that arise during and after candidature.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide on the recognition received for joint contribution to publications that arise during and after candidature

Student responses

- Scenario: Student A is starting a PhD in the field of Law. She is a high-achieving student. Her research topic is supported by her supervisor, an expert in the field of law and censorship. Student A is anxious about independent study. She wants to research the effects of new changes in the law, which will allow government to censor comments about religion. What do you think her expectations of her supervisor will be?
- Group exercise: Complete the questionnaire as the student.

Directions : Read each pair of statements on this sheet. Each expresses a standpoint supervisors and students may take. Please estimate your position and mark it on the scale. For example with statement 1, if you believe very strongly that it is the Supervisor's responsibility to select a good topic you would put a ring round '1'. If you think that both the Supervisor and the student should equally be involved you put a ring round '3' and if you think it is the student's responsibility to select a topic, put a ring round '5'.

Student name:

Supervisor(s) name:

Date:

1. It is the supervisor's responsibility to select a research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic.
2. It is the Supervisor/s who decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	Students should decide theoretical framework and/or methodology they wish to use.
3. The Supervisor/s should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The Supervisor/s should leave the development of the program and timetable of research and study to the student.
4. The Supervisor/s are responsible for ensuring that the student has access to the appropriate services and facilities of the element and the University.	1 2 3 4 5	It is the student's responsibility to ensure that she/he has located and accessed all relevant services and facilities for the research.

5. It is the supervisors' responsibility to advise the student of the relevant policies, procedures and requirements relating to their candidature.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for being familiar with the relevant policies, procedures and requirements relating to their candidature.
6. Student-supervisor relationships are purely professional and personal relationships should not develop.	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful supervision.
7. The Supervisor/s should insist on regular meetings with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide when she/he wants to meet with the Supervisor/s.
8. The principal supervisor is responsible for coordinating all communication between the supervisors and the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should coordinate all communication between the members of the supervisory team.
9. The Supervisor/s should check regularly that the student is working consistently and on task.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should work independently and not have to account for how and where time is spent.
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Summary

- The questionnaire helps you align supervisor/student expectations at the beginning of the research project
- Aligned expectations will support a positive supervisor/student relationship
- The best outcomes for the student and the supervisor come from a positive and supportive relationship

(End of Part 2)

Session 7

Part 3 Supervising students

Supervision and Mentoring

- Supervision involves:
 - Mentoring
 - Coaching
 - Progressing the candidature
 - Supporting the candidate
 - Sharing knowledge and experience
- SUPERVISION IS A FORM OF TEACHING!
- Mentoring
 - Have a clear interest in the wellbeing of the candidate
 - You are approachable, responsive, positive
 - You encourage publishing and networking
 - You help identify conferences and seminars to support the candidate
 - You assist with career goals

Supervisor - Student Relationship

- Different types of supervision styles
 - Master – Apprentice
 - Researcher – Early Career Researcher (ECR)
 - Lifesaver – Drowning person
 - Midwife – Mother-to-be
- The supervisor has experience of the process (assume the supervisor has been through the process), BUT every student is different and all research projects are different. The supervisor will not be an expert in all parts.

Starting a Research Project

- Ask the student to describe their research question in 2-3 sentences - if they cannot do this then the research project is not clear
- Ask them what skills they think they need to develop so they can do their research eg:
 - How to do interviews
 - Ethical research principles
 - Planning fieldwork
 - Writing questionnaires

How much help do you give a student?

- Research – how do you help a student do their research?
- Writing – what skills do you have to help students improve their writing?
- Editing – how much editing should a supervisor do?
 - Correcting arguments
 - Re-writing sentences
 - Formatting references and checking bibliographies
- Networking
 - Encourage students to submit conference papers
 - Introduce them to others in the field

Supervisor – Student Contracts

- Increasingly common in universities
- Are reviewed regularly and are changed by mutual agreement
- Annual plans are developed by the student and outline what they plan to achieve in a year
- Supervisor advises if the plan is realistic, or offers more advice
- Annual plan reviewed and supervisor decides if progress is satisfactory
- New plan put in place

Student Progress

- Need written and agreed evidence of progress
- Record notes after each student meeting
- Student to agree on the meeting notes
- Documenting progress
 - Helps highlight potential issues early
 - Good records help resolve disputes between student and supervisor

Sometimes things just go wrong

- Student and Supervisor have major personality clashes
 - Does not help supervisor or student
 - May need to change supervisor
- A mediator should be available to work through supervisory issues with the student and supervisor
- Changing supervisor
 - The supervisor should be professional when discussing a change of supervisor
 - Student should feel comfortable asking to change supervisors
- The student just cannot achieve the required standard
 - Plans for leaving the research program should be clear
 - It is not 'failure' – the student was accepted into the program
 - Sometimes personal circumstances change and the research degree is no longer a priority

Remember....

- You are the lead academic
- You are the student's role model
- Your success as a supervisor is reflected in the success of your students
- The earlier you pick up problems with the student's progress the better
- This is a professional relationship and you are training the next generation of researchers
- Research is not for everyone

(End of Part 3)