Innovative & Quality Research Methods for the 21ˢᵗ Century Workshop
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Research Supervision –
Post Graduate

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Considerations for this Workshop

- **Supervisors' approach** to supervising research has a profound influence on how they will supervise.
- **Shared experience**, there are often no right or wrong answers, but there are a range of approaches from which we can choose.
- **Discussion**, and taping from experiences of AAU will help to create a range of approaches.
- **Approach** to supervision can be linked to core beliefs about what research is.
- This is only **the beginning of a dialogue**. If, as is likely, at the end there are still unresolved questions AAU will bring them together and find the best way forward.

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The Supervisor

Typically a supervisor acts as a guide, mentor, source of information and facilitator to the student as they progress through their research project.

Occupational influences
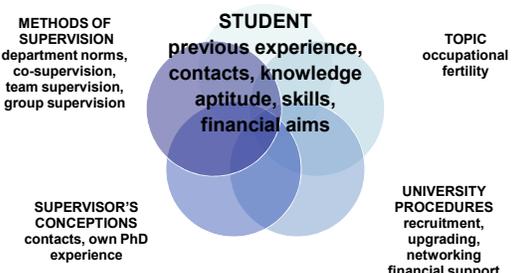
METHODS OF SUPERVISION
department norms, co-supervision, team supervision, group supervision

STUDENT
previous experience, contacts, knowledge aptitude, skills, financial aims

TOPIC
occupational fertility

SUPERVISOR'S CONCEPTIONS
contacts, own PhD experience

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES
recruitment, upgrading, networking financial support

Some Influences on Supervision

- Disciplinary pedagogy
- Departmental practices
- Conceptual approach of supervisor
- Codes of practice
- Employers/funders' requirements

- Full or part time students?
- Experienced or inexperienced students?
- International or home students?
- MSc / MTech or PhD, professional or practitioner doctorate?
- Supervisor/co-supervisor

Initial questions

- As a post graduate supervisor: what are the problems that you have faced? Do they fall into any categories?
- As a post gradaute student: what were the problems that you faced? Do they fall into any categories?

Characteristics of good supervision

- **Good teaching**: showing "concern for students, interest in their progress," and providing "timely and thoughtful feedback."
- **Professional commitment**: understanding that supervision is an intense and sustained effort that involves large investments of time and energy.
- **Personal involvement**: accepting that supervisory relationships with students have a personal as well as academic dimension, "especially when students face crises of confidence or personal problems."
- **Recognizing and valuing diversity**: seeing students as individuals with different preferences, expectations, and approaches to their studies, and adjusting practices accordingly.
- **Setting high standards**: encouraging students to go beyond what they thought possible "by setting high but realistic standards" and encouraging independence by "building students' confidence in their personal research capabilities."
- **Serving as a model:** keeping in mind the role of supervisor as mentor and always striving "to be a model of first-rate scholarship" (James & Baldwin, 1999).

Problems that students face – the supervisors' view

- Dependency
- Not admitting to problems
- Poor progress. Not understanding the required standard of work and showing insufficient initiative
- Supervisor not interested in topic
- Conceptual difficulties
- Differences between supervisors

Situations where students may OR may not expect help from a supervisor

➢Consider whether the students are being :

Realistic
Too demanding
Problematic

What issues are raised?
What should you do to set up good practice from the start?

Students expect supervisors to be available when needed. Although you can plan regular supervisions, students need to know you are approachable in between more formal sessions, if necessary to ask key questions.

Students expect supervisors to be friendly, open and supportive with academic issues and establish a consultative, supportive relationship.

Supervisors need to be constructively critical, giving praise where relevant and informative (not harsh) criticism, so they can develop their work further.

Gradually students should need less explicit guidance and criticism as they develop autonomy and their own sound judgement.

Supervisors need to know to ask open questions, how to draw out ideas and clarify or define problems, and how to elicit information.

Your student will need to interact with other students you supervise, those researching similar topics, students supervised by other supervisors, and the broader academic community.

Functional approach

- *"I have a weekly timetabled formal slot for them and follow-up if they do not turn up"*
- *"3 months: literature search*
  6 months: focus fixed,
  12 months transfer report completed…"
- *"In the 2nd year we see them monthly and they produce 5000 words before each meeting"*
- *Regular pair or small group meetings with supervisor to present findings*

Enculturalisation

- *I would feel I had failed if they did not stay in the field*
- *My students all know their academic grandfather*
- *I give my book to all my students*
- *Students need to know what 'good enough' looks like*
- *You need frequent meetings for international students*
- *The international student especially can implement all your corrections and think that is good enough.*
- *Some cultures expect you to tell them what to do*

Critical thinking

- *"I avoid dependency by getting them to think about some problems and giving them resources"*
- *"I want them to stand on their own feet and challenge the thinking"*
- *"My tutor was not confrontational, she encouraged me to be critical of my own ideas"*
- *"They need to explain to me why, what and how"*
- *"I ask them to email me a question about their project every week"*
- *"I use 'magic' words to help them identify the thread in their argument eg arguably, conversely, unanimously, essentially, early on, inevitably etc"*

Emancipation

- *"Your job as a supervisor is to get them knowing more than you"*
- *"I try to get the students to take the initiative"*
- *"My supervisor encouraged me to read widely, thinking critically, find examples in newspapers"*
- *"I try to get them to admit and confront their problems"*
- *"You get a lot of satisfaction, you have facilitated that growth in them"*

Checking the student's progress

- Make sure you help your student break down the work into manageable chunks, agreeing deadlines and asking them to show you work regularly.
- Give your student feedback on the work they submit

Checking the student's progress...

- Ask your student for evidence that they are building a wider awareness of the research field
- Check they are getting the relevant ethical clearance for research and/or risk assessments.

Checking the student's progress...

- Encourage your student to meet other research students and read each other's work or present to each other.
- Encourage your student to write early and often.

The supervisor's skeleton of rhetorical move

The study builds on and contributes to work in _____ .

Although studies in _____ have examined_____ there
  has not been an _____ . As
  such, this study provides additional insight into _____ . The
  analytic focus on _____ enables another contribution. This
  study analyses _____ .

Although numerous studies (_____) have identified _____
_____ ,
little analytic attention has been paid to _____ .
I address this issue by demonstrating _____

Another useful skeleton

The thesis differs from other _____ . It owes a factual and
interpretative debt to _____ , _____
and_____ . In other respects it has benefited from the
_____presented by _____ and from _____'s treatment of
_____ ( ). In these writings it is possible to find descriptions and analyses of_____
_____ which this thesis does not intend to match. What it rather does is
to present a broader perspective on _____ than is usually managed, with a more
consistently maintained _____ _____ , a greater attention to _____ , a
fuller sense of the range of _____within a framework which conveys _____
_____ . If it is successful in these respects, then much is owed to
_____ _____ .

Genres

Thesis segment	Narrative	Genre
Introduction	Here is my experience. Here is what I am going to do and why	Factual recount Factual recount plus argument
Literature Review	This is what other people have said about the topic. Here is how my research fits in	Summary Analysis (possibly) Argument (some)
Methodology	Here is what other people have said about methodology. Here is what I did.	Summary Factual recount
Findings	Here is what I've found themes, graphs, summary. questionnaires, results	Factual recount and summary. Possibly small pieces of argument
Discussion	Here is what this means and why it is important	argument
Conclusion	Here is what I did, what I found and some things that might happen next.	Summary argument

Checking your own performance

Regularly review progress with your co-supervisor (for doctoral research supervision). Discuss any problems you might be having, and whether you need to revise the roles you agreed with your co-supervisor at the star

Literature search

- Functional approach (Wisker 2005, Eley and Jennings 2005 Taylor and Beasley 2005)
- Qualities approach (Wisker 2003a, Zuber Skerrit & Roche 2004)
- Critical thinking (Barnett 1997, Wisker 2005)
- Enculturalisation (Leonard 2001, Pearson & Brew 2002, Lave & Wenger 1991)
- Mentoring (Pearson & Kayrooz 2004, Brew 2001)
- Feminist approach (Leonard 2001)

A framework for concepts of research supervision

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Supervisors Activity	Rational progression through tasks	Gatekeeping Master to apprentice	Evaluation Challenge	Mentoring, supporting constructivism	Supervising by experience, developing a relationship
Supervisor's knowledge & skills	Directing, project management	Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching	Argument, analysis	Facilitation, Reflection	Managing conflict Emotional intelligence
Possible student reaction	Organised Obedience	Role modelling, Apprentice-ship	Constant inquiry, fight or flight	Personal growth, reframing	A good team member. Emotional intelligence

Developing a relationship

- **Enthuse**: *You need to fire the imagination, it is different for different students*
- **Altruism**: *My supervisor helped me with my writing but never pressed me to publish.*
- **Encourage**: *Need to inspire and encourage them to be brave in what they are thinking*
- **Recognise achievement**: *I wanted to call my supervisor the moment I solved the tough maths*
- **Pastoral support**: *this was as important as intellectual support to get me through*

Advantages and Disadvantages

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Advantages	Clarity Consistency Progress can be monitored Records are available	Encourages standards, participation, identity, community formation	Rational inquiry, fallacy exposed	Personal growth, ability to cope with change	Lifelong working partnerships Enhanced self esteem
Disadvantages	Rigidity when confronted with the creation of original knowledge	Low tolerance of internal difference, sexist, ethnicised regulation (Cousin & Deepwell 2005)	Denial of creativity, can belittle or depersonalise student	Toxic mentoring (Darling 1985) where tutor abuses power	Potential for harassment, abandonment or rejection

Dependence and independence

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
Dependence	Student needs explanation of stages to be followed and direction through them	Student needs to be shown what to do	Student learns the questions to ask, the frameworks to apply	Student seeks affirmation of self-worth	Student depends on supervisor's approval
Independ-ence	Student can programme own work, follow own timetables competently	Student can follow discipline's epistemolog-ical demands independen-ly	Student can critique own work	Student autono-mous. Can decide how to be, where to go, what to do, where to find information	Student demonstrates appropriate reciprocity and has power to withdraw

Links to conceptions of research

(Brew 2001, Lee 2008)

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical Thinking	Emancipation	Relationship Development
	DOMINO	TRADING	LAYER	JOURNEY	
IN THE FORE-GROUND IS:	Solving problems in a linear fashion	Publications, grants, social networks	Data is linked together with hidden meanings	Personal existential issues, linked to career	
RESEARCH IS:	Process of problem-atising or solving problems	A market place for exchanging ideas	Discovering hidden meanings	A personal transformative journey	

Observations on training supervisors

- Supervisors have learned most from how they were supervised themselves
- Understanding a range of approaches is important
- Co-supervision can be helpful if the roles are clearly allocated
- Those who need training can be the most affronted when the suggestion is made that they need it

Thank You for Listening

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