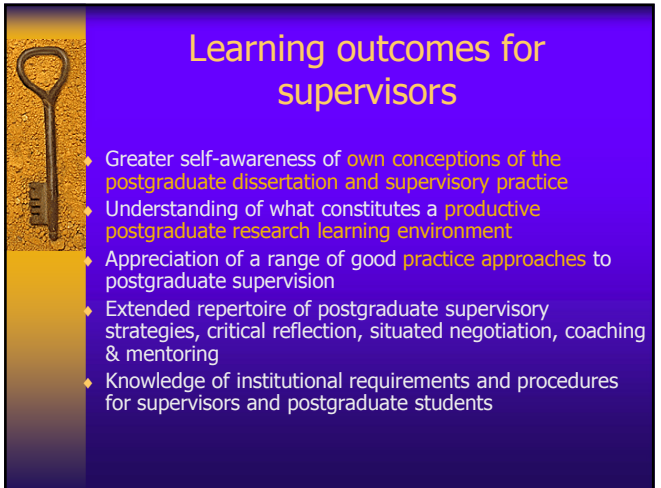


## A large, heavy-duty metal padlock, likely made of steel, with a thick shackle. It has a keyhole on the front and a small, rectangular label with some text on it. The padlock is resting on a textured, yellowish surface.

A large, ornate metal key with a circular bow and a complex bit, resting on a textured, yellowish-brown surface.

*The role of the supervisor is to provide a high-quality research and learning environment for the graduate student. The supervisor through mentoring and advising develops a professional interpersonal relationship with a graduate student that is conducive to scholarly activities, intellectual enhancement and promotes the student's professional career.*  
(James & Baldwin, 1999)



## A close-up photograph of a dark, ornate metal key with a large, looped handle, resting on a textured, light-colored surface. The key has a classic design with a large, rounded bow and a long, slender shaft. The blade of the key is visible, showing several notches. The background is a light, textured surface, possibly stone or concrete.

- 

## A large, ornate metal key with a circular bow and a notched bit, resting on a textured, golden-brown surface.

- [illegible]

100

## A large, dark metal key with a loop handle, resting on a textured, yellowish-brown surface. The key has a simple, functional design with a single bit and a long, straight shaft. The handle is a simple loop, and the bit is a standard notched design. The surface it lies on appears to be a coarse, granular material like sand or gravel.

research supervisors doctorate examination student thesis supervisory teaching progress transfer monitoring data needs context national improving practice relationships problems visits advisors resumes clarifying motivation stages development realizing ethics college ethics quality training learning www ac uk supervision social-sciences publishing presenting assurance demographic information energy various dual supervision infrastructure life involvement experiences expectations career supervisors ethics college doctorate examination student thesis supervisory teaching progress transfer monitoring data needs context national improving practice relationships problems visits advisors resumes clarifying motivation stages development realizing ethics college ethics quality training learning www ac uk supervision

## Activity (worksheet)

### Individually:

- ♦ Who do you currently supervise?
- ♦ How were you supervised yourself?

### In groups:

- What factors contribute to successful pg dissertations?
- Does your roles differ with different students and at different stages in their research, writing and submitting?

## 11 Practices of Effective PG Supervisors

1. Ensure the partnership is right for the project
2. Get to know your student & carefully assess their needs
3. Establish reasonable, agreed expectations
4. Work with your student to establish a strong conceptual structure and research plan
5. Encourage students to write early and often
6. Initiate regular contact & provide high quality feedback
7. Get students involved in the life of the dept
8. Inspire and motivate...
9. Help if academic crises crop up
10. Take an active interest in the student's future career
11. Carefully monitor the final production and presentation of the research

## Supervision Styles

- ♦ Laissez-faire style
- ♦ Pastoral style
- ♦ Directorial style
- ♦ Contractual style

Gatfield (2005)

*Which one are you?*

## Supervisors need Support!

- ♦ The supervising process is a demanding one, yet it is crucial to enable the research student to enjoy the research, learn from it and grow personally and professionally.

**S** support and advisor  
**U** universally agreed quality  
**P** project manager  
**E** research ethics  
**R** relationship with student  
**V** valued experience  
**I** input  
**S** stakeholder expectations  
**O** ownership of knowledge  
**R** responsibility

(Els, 2009)

## The First Supervision Meeting

What do you do in this?

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tLCgIidfSo&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tLCgIidfSo&feature=youtube_gdata_player)

Supervisor View

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rfmj-dAD6SQ>

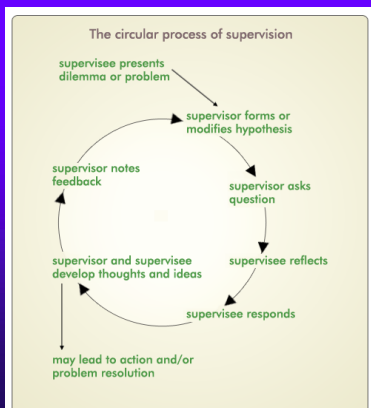
PG Student View

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zwGoyfKsohM>

## At the first meeting, discuss...

1. the extent and level of direction you will give your student;
2. the level of independence you expect of your student;
3. preparation for, frequency and the manner in which consultation will occur and the feedback that will be given;
4. frequency of submission and drafts of written work, and progress reports;
5. your role in editing your student's work; and, the manner in which differences in ideology or opinion will be managed.

## The First Supervision Meeting



## Supervisor Responsibilities

1. assist your student with the selection and planning of a suitable and manageable research topic;
2. be sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide guidance and/or have a willingness to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as a supervisor;
3. be accessible to your student for consultation and discussion of academic progress and research

(the frequency of meetings will vary according to the discipline, stage of work, nature of the project, independence of the student, full- or part-time status, etc.);

## Supervisor Responsibilities

4. respond in a timely and thorough manner to written work submitted by your student, with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation (good practice suggests that turnaround time for comments on written work should not exceed three weeks);
5. make arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision if you will be absent for extended periods, (e.g. a month or longer);
6. assist your student, when necessary, in gaining access to facilities or research materials;
7. ensure that the research environment is safe, healthy and free from harassment, discrimination and conflict;

## Supervisor Responsibilities

8. assist your student in being aware of current graduate program requirements, deadlines, procedures etc.;
9. encourage and support your student in the research & writing, and to make presentations of research results within the institution and to outside scholarly or professional bodies as appropriate;
10. encourage your student to finish up when it is not in the student's best interest to extend the program
11. adhere to the university's policy regarding ownership of intellectual property  
(Brew & Peseta, 2004; Lee, 2008; Wisker, 2005).

## PG Student Responsibilities

- work with your supervisor to select and plan a suitable and manageable research topic;
- make a commitment and show dedicated efforts to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue your research project successfully;
- develop a plan and timetable for completion of all stages of your research project in conjunction with your supervisor;
- adhere to a schedule and meet appropriate deadlines;
- meet with your supervisor when requested and at mutually agreed upon times and report fully and regularly on progress and results;

## PG Student Responsibilities

- seriously consider the advice and criticisms received from your supervisor;
- conform to institution, faculty and graduate program requirements, including those related to deadlines, dissertation or thesis style, conflict of interest;
- review the literature regularly and keep your literature survey up-to-date;
- maintain exemplary records of your experimental/theoretical work (so that others can replicate your results).

## Clarity in terms of expectations

### Student's Expectations of Supervisors:

- ♦ Students expect to be guided in terms of the research project, identifying boundaries, developing the structure, deciding on methodology and methods.

To do this you must see and discuss the work in progress with students and thus the importance of setting up meetings and having a clear agenda.

- ♦ Keep a log of meetings [online?]
- ♦ Supervisors need to give helpful information and feedback throughout the process but more time is generally needed in the early stages of a research project.
- ♦ Put students in touch with information, reading, resources etc

## Clarity in terms of expectations

- ♦ Students expect supervisors to be supportive with academic issues
- ♦ Students expect their supervisors to have a good knowledge of the research area and /or expertise in the methodology and methods being used
- ♦ Students might expect supervisors to do editing work of them in term of writing and the use of academic conventions – What is your view on this?
- ♦ Important that as a group you agree and make clear those areas that are the responsibility of the student

## Clarity in terms of expectations

- ♦ Supervisors should read students work thoroughly and in advance
- ♦ This can be helped by setting up time scales for when you expect to see finished drafts of sections
- ♦ Plan regular supervision times
- ♦ Will you be available if a student has an important question about a survey or interview they are conducting? – Inform students of when you are and are not available

## What we will discuss today...

- ♦ The role of the dissertation in your student's learning experience
- ♦ Managing the link between theory and practice in your subject
- ♦ Managing digital information resources
- ♦ Research methodologies & design
- ♦ Implications for the supervisor role

## Activity

- ♦ In groups, examine the school supervision guidelines doc and select top 4 areas to discuss in more detail today

## Rethinking the dissertation

- ♦ We need to address what we mean to accomplish during a student's sojourn within our programmes (Hamilton, 2010):
  - Why are we asking that the dissertation be produced?
  - What do we hope to find in dissertations that successfully display the characteristics associated with readiness to be graduated from our programme?



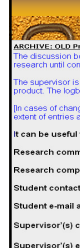
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- ♦ **Group 1** – how do you help your students with time management of their work? What do you do to help your student maintain momentum during their dissertation?
- ♦ **Group 2** – how do you advise your students in bridging the theory-practice divide in their research?
- ♦ **Group 3** – how do you deal with academic roadblocks such as poor writing skills, lack of conceptual preparation, poor command of English, and poor analytic skills?
- ♦ **Group 4** – what type of feedback do you give your students? How often?

Research Proposal	Lit Review	Data Collection	Data Collection
0	20-35	30-40	20-35


Research Proposal	Lit Review	Data Collection	Data Collection
0	20-35	30-40	20-35

[illegible]






DATE:
PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING:
what have I completed so far?
what aspects of my thesis am I working on at the moment?
what have I still to do?
what do I want to have done by the next meeting?
what issues/problems have I encountered recently?
anything else to discuss?
MATERIAL SUBMITTED:
AGREED TASKS/OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT MEETING:
SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE & COMMENTS:
DATE OF NEXT MEETING:



## Range of problems experienced by PG Students in completing dissertations


- Time management; enormity of the exercise; balancing dissertation work with other studies; self motivation; knowing what is expected (Harrison & Whalley, 2006)
- Students' management of theory-practice relationships; effective access/evaluation of online resources; understanding research methodologies & design (Rowley & Slack, 2006)
- Sequencing of dissertation process - supervisors advising students to begin empirical research before lit reviews; inability to focus on a realistic research question, to organise the dissertation, to move from 1 chapter to the next, a lack of understanding of domain specific language and academic writing; that students could not develop from being given research methods to applying it to their current research (Raiker, 2010)



## Student perceptions/concerns over the supervision process


(Todd et al., 2004)

- See supervisor as conveying academic guidance as well as motivating them by setting targets & timelines
- See it as an authentic form of assessment that requires greater personal investment than other course work; a feeling of uncertainty about what lay ahead & difficulties at the stage of identifying a research question
- Time was a key concern – the impact that the dissertation had on other course work
- Valued constructive feedback, the supervisor's subject expertise and advice related to shaping the dissertation and time management




## What can staff do?

- They need help in understanding how to apply the dissertation structure to their actual research
- As every student has different abilities & motivations, and not all have sufficient work or life experiences or networks to be able to locate a sufficiently rich context in which to conduct the research = a mismatch between student experience & horizons, theoretical perspectives & models and staff research interests
- The challenge for supervisor is to target interventions and adapt these on the basis of signals about the individual student's learning processes



## Maintaining momentum

- Plan regular supervision times
- Discuss research issues and ethical considerations
- Encourage student to keep very good notes and to keep references carefully
- Monitor the progress of the research and set up time scales for when you expect to see finished drafts of sections
- Return work with constructive criticism in reasonable time
- Inform students of when you are and are not available
- Provide intellectual support
- Arrange for students to present their work in progress
- Help tease out difficult issues and problems
- Encourage students to keep writing as they go along and to edit and refine their work



## Dissertation Structure?

Introduction	Pose an interesting question or problem
Literature Review	Survey the literature on your topic [criticality?]
Methods/data	Formulate your hypothesis and describe your data
Results	Present your results with the help of graphs & charts
Discussion	Critique your method and/or discuss any practice/policy implications
Conclusions	Summarise what you have done; pose questions for further research

(Neugeboren, 2005)

## Discuss this with your students

Once working on your research and then on your data can you:

- ♦ avoid 'busy' work which lacks conceptualisation & theorising
- ♦ avoid 'drowning in data'- excerpt, discuss
- ♦ ensure coherent linking between abstract, chapters, conclusion
- ♦ test for 'fog' in writing
- ♦ ask of the emerging dissertation - is it enjoyable to read?
- ♦ can you edit and find a voice –
  - is there an argument running throughout it?
  - what does it say to us? How does it add to knowledge and meaning?

(Wisker, 2006)

## Postgraduate dissertations good practice

- ❖ Clarify at the outset the outcomes students are expected to produce, the criteria by which they will be assessed and the rules & procedures for the dissertation (have staff that same understanding?)
- ❖ Do not limit supervision to 1 supervisor – create thematic groups, which gather supervisors/students around similar research topics – widens the support that supervisor can give students and reinforces the quality of arguments & ideas
- ❖ Arrange for students to exchange dissertations among themselves: adds extra layer of control, revision & accuracy to the work, while reducing burden on supervisors
- ❖ Assure compatibility between dissertations during their progress and at final marking

## Influence of the supervisor?



(McAlpine & Norton, 2006; Lee, 2008)

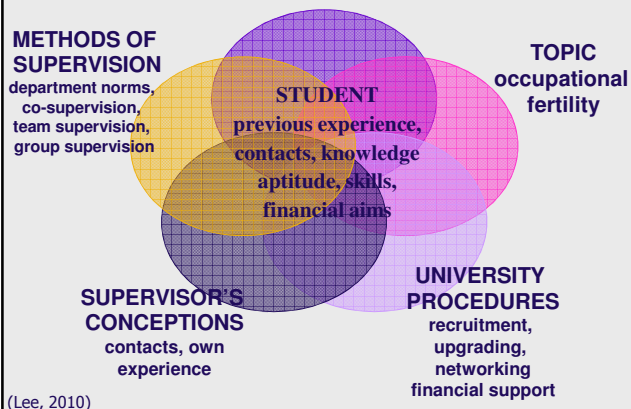
## Role of Supervisors

- ♦ Will there be one or more (joint) supervisors for each thesis?
- ♦ How many theses are a reasonable number for one staff member to supervise?
- ♦ Who oversees the coherence of standards?
- ♦ How is the second reader/examiner involved at all stages?
- ♦ Subject experts; gatekeepers of academic standards; resource person & advisor on the literature; project manager; shaper; scaffolder & supporter; editor; promoter of student self-efficacy (Rowley & Flack, 2004)

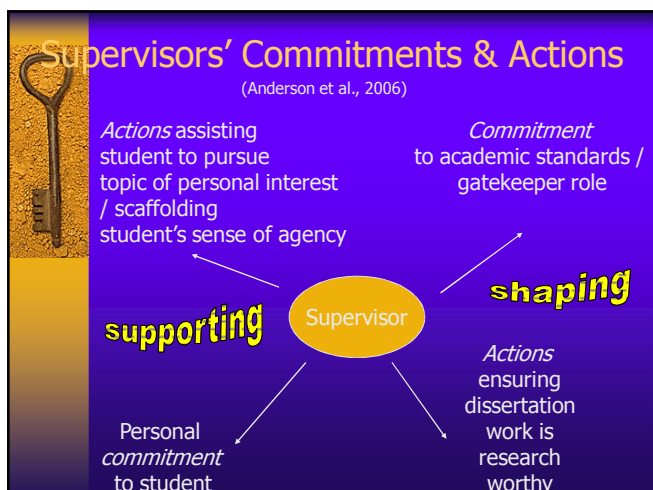
## Role of Supervisors

- ♦ Provider of subject expertise (and ready access to the literature of the subject)
- ♦ Provider of access to research contexts (organisations)
- ♦ Mentor, to support reflection on the process
- ♦ Project manager to take the student through the steps in the process in a logical order and to a timescale
- ♦ Advisor on research methodologies (in relation to their selection and appropriateness and to specific design issues)
- ♦ Editor, supporting structuring & writing
- ♦ As a learner – supervisor needs to be continually learning about the student learning process as well as developing their own subject knowledge, networks for access, ability to navigate digital resources and repertoire of research methodologies

## Occupational influences



(Lee, 2010)



## Supervisor Role

	DIRECT	INDIRECT
ACTIVE	Tend to initiate contact (set up a schedule of meetings) Tell student what to do and when	Welcome student contact, when the student wishes to make contact, provides advice, asks for opinions, explanations, justifications
PASSIVE	Make no effort to influence direction of research	Tend not to arrange meetings, adopt a listening, non-directive approach, waiting for students to think things through and solve their own problems

(Anderson, 2006)

- ## Expectations of the dissertation?
- ♦ Is there a research question?
  - ♦ Does the research test a hypothesis?
  - ♦ Is a research design required?
  - ♦ Does the dissertation outline what is already known before addressing the research question?
  - ♦ Does it need to 'reveal' new knowledge?
  - ♦ The learner determines the focus & direction of the work
  - ♦ Substantial research component to the project – requiring collection of primary data and/or analysis of existing data
  - ♦ Develop ability to work independently (needs to develop over time, and embedded in departmental philosophy)

- ## Supervision Contracts
- ♦ What procedures and mechanisms are in place for supervisors and students to agree a supervision contract?
  - ♦ How are supervision records kept?
  - ♦ Are there formal Dissertation Proposal documents that are assessed?
  - ♦ Are there seminars and work-in-progress sessions?

- ## Type of Research
- ♦ **REPRODUCTION**: does the dissertation ask a question that has already been asked in previous research so as to test its current validity?
  - ♦ **PARTIAL REPRODUCTION**: does the dissertation test an aspect of previous research?
  - ♦ **ORIGINAL RESEARCH**: does the dissertation research a new topic with a view to producing original knowledge?

## Thesis Style for your Discipline?

What expectations are there about an appropriate over-all **thesis style** for your particular discipline, subject and course?

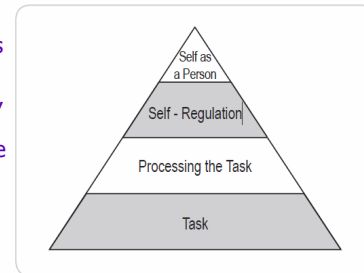


## House Style?

- ◆ Does your Department have an agreed in-house approach to dissertation research design?
- ◆ Is there an agreed style of chapter presentation?
- ◆ Is there an agreed style of referencing and technical presentation?

## Formative Feedback

Feedback about the task includes information about errors, the depth or quality of the work, the need for more info, and the format of materials presented

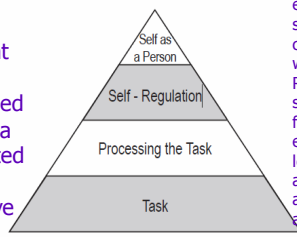


In contrast, feedback about the process provides info about the approach to the task, and about possible alternative strategies

(Adapted from: Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research* 77(1): 86-87).

## Formative Feedback

Feedback about self-regulation is effective if it enhances student self-efficacy. It is often assumed that by the time a student is admitted to graduate studies, they have achieved a high degree of self-efficacy.



Students may have excelled in highly structured and controlled environments with little self direction. Research supervision in such cases is a fundamental education in how to learn and how to appreciate their own academic accomplishments

(Adapted from: Hattie, J. & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research* 77(1): 86-87).

## Formative Feedback

- ◆ Is there a 'collective' approach to feedback on dissertation drafts?
- ◆ What mechanisms ensure coherence?
- ◆ Are students aware of the details of the assessment criteria?
- ◆ Have they a 'checklist' for self-assessment?

Raiker (2010): Examples of feedback taking the form of recording what had already been done or procedures to be followed:

*Good progress at this early stage; identified focus and drafted some key research questions; continue your lit research.*

## Summative Assessment

- ◆ What is the role of the second examiner?
- ◆ How many staff see each submitted thesis?
- ◆ How is assessment conflict resolved?

## Being more efficient with supervision?

- ◆ What ways can you suggest to achieve this?

## Group Supervision

- ♦ Will students expect individual supervision at all stages?
- ♦ Will you allow joint research by two or more students?
- ♦ How will email, Skype, Wikis, Social Bookmarking, Twitter, GoogleDocs or Blackboard be used?
- ♦ Have students access to software packages to assist with thesis format, bibliographies etc?

## Reflections...

- ♦ How is the student experience being monitored and evaluated?
- ♦ Are supervisors developing their expertise in the use of digital info resources and sharing this expertise with students?
- ♦ How are supervisors supporting students in their attempts to integrate theory and practice?
- ♦ Are supervisors open to different research paradigms and designs and continually developing their understanding of qual and quant approaches?
- ♦ Is the dissertation an appropriate vehicle for learning for all students?
- ♦ Do supervisors believe that their role is rewarding and beneficial?

## Reflections...

- ♦ How would you define good practice in YOUR support and development of students' research and writing skills?

Your supervision of their research and dissertation:

- ♦ What should I do?
- ♦ What should I avoid?
- ♦ What should the institution/others do?

[To support students through to a successful dissertation?]

## Unknowns?

What are the remaining concerns of staff regarding thesis supervision?

## Further CPD needed?

What are the remaining areas that staff would like more training/discussion in regarding thesis supervision?

## Framework of Approaches to Research Supervision

	Functional	Enculturation	Critical thinking	Emancipation	Relationship development
Supervisor's activity	Rational progression through tasks	Gatekeeping	Evaluation /challenge	Mentoring, supporting constructivism	Supervising by experience, developing a team
Supervisor's knowledge and skills	Directing, project management	Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching	Argument /analysis	Facilitation, reflection	Managing conflict, emotional intelligence
Possible student reaction	Obedience, organised	Role modelling apprenticeship	Constant inquiry, fight or flight	Personal growth, reframing	A good team member, emotional intelligence

(Lee, 2008)

Professional

Personal

## Resources

- ♦ Excellent Guide on Dissertation Supervision: [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/resource\\_guides/dissertation\\_supervision.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/hlst/documents/resource_guides/dissertation_supervision.pdf)
- ♦ Wisker paper: [http://www.seda.ac.uk/resources/files/21\\_Wisker.pdf](http://www.seda.ac.uk/resources/files/21_Wisker.pdf)
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