THE ARCHITECTURE
OF SUCCESSFUL
RESEARCH
SUPERVISION
Managing supervisors, supervisory teams and monitoring

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(Adapted from Taylor, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Humboldtian</th>
<th>Post-Humboldtian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student population</strong></td>
<td>Elite but homogenous</td>
<td>Mass, diverse, international</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor</strong></td>
<td>Master to apprentice</td>
<td>Student as consumer or co-producer</td>
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<td><strong>relationship</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Length and type of</strong></td>
<td>As long as it takes. Full time. Single supervisor.</td>
<td>3-4 years. Full or part-time. Supervisory team/doctoral school.</td>
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<td><strong>study</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Scope</strong></td>
<td>One part of a discipline</td>
<td>Multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary, collaborative</td>
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<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Academic reproduction</td>
<td>Production of human capital for knowledge economies: skills agenda, capitalisation.</td>
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<td><strong>Awards</strong></td>
<td>PhD by Research</td>
<td>New routes eg professional/practice-led doctorates</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Funding</strong></td>
<td>Mostly self-funded, some philanthropy</td>
<td>Political or commercial accountability</td>
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QAA Quality Code Ch. B11 (2012): Indicators require that universities:

1. Have clear regulations supplemented by subject specific advice
2. Up to date and communicated codes of practice
3. Monitor provision against internal and external indicators
4. Accept research students only into excellent research environments
5. Have clear admissions procedures
6. Provide training for staff in selection and admission
7. Clearly define student responsibilities and entitlements
8. Provide students with relevant induction
9. Appoint supervisors with appropriate skills and subject knowledge
10. Appoint a supervisory team for each research student
11. Communicate responsibilities of supervisors
12. Give supervisors sufficient time to supervise
13. Have clearly defined monitoring procedures and give timely feedback
14. Give students opportunities to develop research, personal and professional skills
15. Have open programme evaluation mechanisms in place
16. Assessment criteria are clear and available to all
17. Assessment procedures include external examiner input
18. Have independent and formal complaints and appeals procedures

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Implications for supervisors

- More regulations to be aware of and records to be kept
- Managing/meeting student expectations and needs becomes more prominent.
- More colleagues to be involved – an active research culture is important
- More supervision of groups of students
- Less time for PGRs (Post Graduate Researchers) to spend on research
- Ethical issues increasingly complex
- Lower tolerance for poor completion rates
- More overt links to academic leadership
- Higher need for a neutral language and conceptualisation of effective supervision

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My original research questions

• What conceptions of supervision do supervisors hold?
• Is there any relationship between the conceptions of supervision and the jobs that their PhD graduates subsequently undertake?
• What are the common problems faced?
• What training for supervisors, if any, is undertaken or might be helpful?
A framework for concepts of research supervision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisors Activity</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Enculturation</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Emancipation</th>
<th>Relationship Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rational progression through tasks Negotiated order</td>
<td>Gatekeeping Master to apprentice</td>
<td>Evaluation Challenge</td>
<td>Mentoring, supporting constructivism</td>
<td>Supervising by experience, developing a relationship</td>
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<td>Supervisor’s knowledge &amp; skills</td>
<td>Directing, Project management</td>
<td>Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching</td>
<td>Argument, analysis</td>
<td>Facilitation, Reflection</td>
<td>Managing conflict Emotional intelligence</td>
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<td>Possible student reaction</td>
<td>Organised Obedience Negotiation skills</td>
<td>Role modelling, Apprenticeship</td>
<td>Constant inquiry, fight or flight</td>
<td>Personal growth, reframing</td>
<td>A good team member. Emotional intelligence</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Enculturation</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
<th>Emancipation</th>
<th>Relationship Development</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Encourages standards, participation, identity, community formation</td>
<td>Rational inquiry, fallacy exposed</td>
<td>Personal growth, ability to cope with change</td>
<td>Lifelong working partnerships Enhanced self esteem</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Progress can be monitored</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Records are available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td>Rigidity when confronted with the creation of original knowledge</td>
<td>Low tolerance of internal difference, sexist, ethnicised regulation (Cousin &amp; Deepwell 2005)</td>
<td>Denial of creativity, can belittle or depersonalise student</td>
<td>Lack of focus Toxic mentoring (Darling 1985) where tutor abuses power</td>
<td>Potential for harassment, abandonment or rejection</td>
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<td>(c) Anne Lee 2013</td>
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### Dependence and independence

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<th>Relationship Development</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependence</strong></td>
<td>Student needs explanation of stages to be followed and direction through them</td>
<td>Student needs to be shown what to do</td>
<td>Student learns the questions to ask, the frameworks to apply</td>
<td>Student seeks affirmation of self-worth</td>
<td>Student depends on supervisor’s approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independence</strong></td>
<td>Student can programme own work, follow own timetables competently</td>
<td>Student can follow discipline’s epistemological demands independently</td>
<td>Student can critique own work</td>
<td>Student autonomous. Can decide how to be, where to go, what to do, where to find information</td>
<td>Student demonstrates appropriate reciprocity and has power to withdraw</td>
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</table>
Typical case studies have included:

- Approaches to recruiting students
- Planning for the first meeting
- Managing the student who consistently delivers work late
- Supporting the student who is facing burn out
- Helping the student whose work is not yet at the level expected
- Approaching the student who seems unable to focus – they are like a butterfly changing their ideas all the time
- Supervising the student whose experiments are not working, when you know the method is ok
- Managing the student who is demotivated
- Helping the student with their academic writing
- Working with a student where plagiarism might be an issue
- Managing larger groups of research students

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Some options for supervisor development

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF PROVISION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Accredited, award-bearing (examined or assessed)</td>
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<tr>
<td>programmes</td>
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<td>B Substantial programmes where attendance is mandatory</td>
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<tr>
<td>C Workshops (eg one or two days)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D Lunch-time or a short seminar programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>E Action learning sets</td>
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<tr>
<td>F Award schemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>G Mentoring schemes</td>
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<tr>
<td>H Policy development or evaluation</td>
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</table>
Observations on professional development for 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
• Combining training with support for getting grants is helpful
• Any training needs to be underpinned by evaluation and research

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Who can be included in the supervisory team?

1. Principle supervisor
2. Secondary or co-supervisor
3. Work-based or industrial supervisor
4. Specialist advisors (including post-doctoral researchers)
5. Postgraduate administrator
6. Doctoral candidates/PGRs
7. Postgraduate teaching assistant co-ordinator
8. Lab assistants/technicians
9. Specialist librarians
10. Postgraduate careers advisors
11. Director of postgraduate research/Director of postgraduate school

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Supervisory teams

Advantages
• Scope for creative problem solving
• Continuity
• Opportunities for supervisor development
• Inclusive

Disadvantages
• It's someone else’s responsibility - abandoned
• Possible conflicts
• Team meetings take time
• Requires other forms of supervisor development as well

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Using the framework:

Participating in and Developing Supervisory Teams

1. What advice would you give to this team?

Primary supervisor: Jan

Co-supervisor: Jo

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| Induction and introducing key departmental figures/inviting student to appropriate meetings | Supervisor 1 | Supervisor 2 | Grad school administrator | Other |
| Understanding student’s domestic/family background | | | | |
| Understanding work experience/commercial implications and its possible links to the research project. | | | | |
| Liaison between University and external/industrial supervisors | | | | |
| Stimulating the creation of a supportive peer group | | | | |
| Agreeing the methodology, research question and project plan. | | | | |
| Explaining institutional policies and timetables for key events/forms. Managing the transfer process. | | | | |
| Introducing key journals/articles/books/conferences | | | | |
| Organising attendance at conferences and making the student aware of specific and generic training programmes | | | | |
| Discussing the department/teams policy on authorship with the student | | | | |
| Giving detailed feedback on draft chapters | | | | |
| Preparation for the viva, organising a mock viva | | | | |
| Inviting student to appropriate social events | | | | |
| Explaining strengths, discussing what can be expected of each supervisor and what they expect of the student. | | | | |
| Careers advice | | | | |
| Funding/ financial advice | | | | |

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Monitoring and quality

‘Quality is a highly contested concept’ (Tam 2001)

1. Traditional measures of quality such as retention and completion are influenced by many other ‘presage’ variables.

2. Comparability across universities, departments (or supervisors) might be illusory.

3. What you want to know depends upon who is asking the question.

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And what is the PhD for?

• Creating excellent research?
• Creating excellent researchers?
• Creating academic capacity?
• Enhancing the reputation of the supervisor, discipline, department or university?
• National agendas eg: sustainability or defence
• Fuelling a knowledge economy?
• International development?
• Personal growth?

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Some approaches to monitoring

• Production model –
  measuring inputs and outputs
  measuring or recording interventions
• Value added approach
• Total quality experience approach (aiming to capture the entire learning experience)
What do we really want to measure?

**Symbolic quality**
- Ability to support the university’s critical mass of research?
- Exceptional contributions to original knowledge?

**Educational quality**
- Transformational education?

**Employability**
- Development of perfect researchers?

**Quality assurance**
- Consistency of supervision
- Consistency of theses
- Fitness for purpose

**Technical-rational approach**
- Value for money

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PRES (2011): What do UK PGRs think?

102 HEIs, 97,571 PGRs invited, response rate of 32%

‘The overall experience of my research programme met or exceeded my expectations’

2011: Supervision was the most important aspect of my programme
87.5% My supervisor/s had knowledge and skills to adequately support my research
80.4% My supervisor/s makes a real effort to understand any difficulties I face
77.8% My supervisor/s has given good guidance in topic selection and refinement
70.4% I have received good guidance in my literature search
78.5% My supervisor/s provided helpful feedback on my progress
79.2% My supervisor/s are available when I need them.

Transferable skills development: Research project management, Analytical, Communication, independent learning, opportunities for further development

Infrastructure (concerned about financial support, pleased with library and IT)

Intellectual climate (concerned about lack of integration into department)

Understood standard of work expected: standard of work, requirements of thesis, deadlines.

Professional development and career advice - 2009: 37%, 2011: 44%

Anticipated career in HE (44%), outside HE (43%)

Teaching opportunities and development for them

Support of friends and family very important

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Some strategic options

• Review guidelines for supervisory teams; e.g. that one of the team has to have had experience of three successful completions
• Discuss the role of strategic committees: Are they about quality assurance, recruitment, etc?
• Shift funding to reward completion
• Get senior management buy-in to any change
• Ensure monitoring carried out or reviewed by top university committees
• Build recognition of supervision into appraisal, workload and promotion models
• Follow the discussion on the university administrators shared listserv for further ideas
• Have a national/European college for supervision

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Tactical suggestions for early successes

• Have a good induction programme which meets the needs of students whenever they start
• Have a clear contact point for all for when crises emerge
• Have a good Personal Development Planning (PDP) system
• Empower students to drive the agenda: make clear what they can expect from supervisors
• Develop supporting materials for students and supervisors on-line

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Monitoring: some issues for discussion

1. Total quality issues
2. Records
3. Quality assurance

What other topics should be considered?
It is a balancing act
But it is worth it

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What do students want? Identifying student motivation, objectives and needs

<table>
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<th>What students might be seeking</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Enculturation</th>
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<th>Relationship Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certainty</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>Ability to</td>
<td>Self awareness</td>
<td>Friendship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clear signposts</td>
<td>Direction,</td>
<td>think in new</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Nurturing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence of progress</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>ways</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Equality</td>
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<td>opportunities,</td>
<td>Ability to</td>
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<td>Role models</td>
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References


• Tam M (2001) Measuring Quality and Performance in HE. *Quality in Higher Education* 7.1 47-54


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