HDR Supervision

The rollercoaster ride from teacher to colleague

OR: Tips for supervisors
Overview

“The role of a supervisor is critical to the successful outcome of the candidate”
(Delamont et al., 200)

Workshop Topics
- Supervision is a skill
- Policies and procedures
- Responsible research
- Being an effective supervisor
- Choosing examiner
- Supervising HDR challenges
Supervision is a skill

- Best way to become skilled is to practise
- Learn practically via reflective experience & demonstrated through practice
- It cannot be learnt in the short term (weeks, months or even years)
- Trial & error ... learn from mistakes

Hussin, 2007
So why policies & procedures

- UOW must meet legal requirements set by external bodies (E.g. DEEWR)
- Funding – completions & EFTSL
- UOW policy & procedure framework
  - Code of Practice – Research
  - Code of Practice – Supervision
  - Research Misconduct
  - HDR Handbook
  - Intellectual Property
  - Authorship
Responsible research

- Safety
- Ethics
- Best practice
- Methodologically sound
- Original work
- Acknowledges previous work & contributions from colleagues

These principles are incorporated into University Policy
Research misconduct

3 broad categories

- **Misappropriation**: plagiarism; misuse of information; misleading assignment of authorship; falsely claiming IP
- **Interference** with another’s research
- **Misrepresentation**: fabrication or falsification of data

Penalty can be termination of enrolment &/or scholarship
Issues that cause the most problems

- Initial selection of students – know who you are signing in
- Mismatched supervisor/student expectations
- Deliberate plagiarism by struggling students
- Supervisor awareness during thesis write up - Inappropriate referencing within thesis
- Poor selection of thesis examiners
Activity

- Remember when you were a HDR student
- Discuss in your groups:
  - Write down 2 best and 2 worst experiences when you were a PhD student
  - What did you want in a supervisor?
  - Identify 5 important characteristics of a good supervisor
Being an effective supervisor

- Each HDR student is different
- No one approach or strategy works for every student
- There is no typical student
HDR Supervision Roles

Directing Roles

- Manager – ensures milestones are met, progress sufficient
- Director – points the student in the right direction, setting goals
- Professional Development—a requirement (see Code of Practice-Research Sec 4.11)

Bruce & Stoodley, 2009
HDR Supervision Roles (cont...)

- Collaborative Roles
  - Partner – adopts a position of fellow-learner alongside the student, forming a research partnership/team
  - Colleague – treats the student as an equal academic, with high expectations of the student as a significant contributor to the project

Bruce & Stoodley, 2009
HDR Supervision Roles (cont...)

- Responsive roles
  - Coach – helping the student’s thinking rather than solving problems
  - Mentor – guiding, challenging, supporting, providing feedback

Bruce & Stoodley, 2009
Other roles

- Master – orienting the student to the profession
- Custodian – monitoring their content knowledge
- Quality Assurer – meeting expected academic standards
- Counsellor – helping the student maintain motivation - BUT refer to experts
- Parent – keeping an eye on the students’ personal needs - BUT refer to experts

Bruce & Stoodley, 2009
Effective Supervision

Foundations

Momentum

Final Stages

Richardson & Neal, 2008
Foundations

- Ensure partnership is right:
  - Supervisor and student should interact *BEFORE* application submitted

- Who should you accept?
  - Is this in your area of expertise?
  - Are you “motivated” to supervise this candidate?
  - Do you have the resources?
  - Does the student have your preferred qualities?
  - Are you “comfortable” working with him/her?
Foundations

Getting started:
- Get to know him/her, family, background, interest etc..
- Understand what is motivating them to complete their PhD
- Clarify PhD expectations
- Share your expectations
Foundations

- First 4 weeks
  - HDR Orientation
  - 1st Interview Checklist (COP – Supervision Appendix 1)
  - Confirmation of Candidature (COP – Supervision Appendix B; Send copy to RSC)
  - Other vital information e.g. Lab policy book
  - Other written agreement
Momentum – Keep Going

- Year 1 is critical
  - Establish a trusting relationship
  - Establish a 3 year completion mindset!!
  - More frequent meetings
  - Remind re PG policies & regulations
  - Ensure attendance at seminars and/or training
  - Assess student’s competency, motivation, commitment
  - Encourage student to ‘explore’ domain area
  - Prepare and complete proposal
  - First Year Progress Review
Some First Year Tips

After Discussion and initial work specific outcomes should emerge ASAP eg:

- Student should prepare project or GANT chart, and then stick to it except for agreed changes
- Aim for a clear pithy abstract inside 6? months
- Student should prepare draft chapter headings
Some First year Tips

- The first year review is vital - must be a convincing case by then - otherwise progress is NOT satisfactory.

- 1st year Annual Progress Report (APR) is your only chance to raise a red flag early enough to fix a serious problem.

- If you say ‘Progress is Satisfactory’ when it isn’t, you’ve made a rod to break your own back.

- It’s a lot easier to be frank and accurate at Year 1 than Year 3!!!!
Some First Year Tips

- Progress must be defined with quantifiable outcomes and bar charts.
- If ‘Progress is Unsatisfactory’ in 1st Year APR, put in place recovery strategy for Year 2
- Be tough and accurate on the outcomes required in Year 2
- Ensure ‘originality’ is part of Year 2 bar chart requirements and outcomes
- Better to be frank than to raise unrealistic expectations
- 1st Year APR your only real chance!
Some Tips

There is considerable support available eg free courses on:

- EndNote + Bernie! (Key words, searching data bases, etc)
- Research at UoW
- Thesis Structure
- Writing thesis proposal and literature review
Some Tips

If progress is unsatisfactory there are many options;

- Tighter (quantitative and measurable) definition of progress and outcomes
- Define more frequent outcomes (monthly, 2 weekly)
- Probation
- Advice to change to a lesser degree (formally in Code of Practice-supervision, Clause 6 (m))
Some Tips

- All activity should aim to produce something in one or more chapters; if it doesn’t, don’t do it!
- Thesis is a story with a theme and a strong structure—does student know?
- But provide for ability to make some changes—it is research after all
- Develop a publication policy; eg: conference then journal(s); define draft paper titles
- Which conferences/journals? Helps student and supervisor target research
Some Tips

- Milestones on GANT or any other charts are useless without specific quantifiable outcomes eg
- Chapters, Surveys, Literature search, etc written up as you go
- Experimental rig built and performance demonstrated
- Words like ‘Familiarise’, ‘Understand’, ‘Run Software Package’ etc useless without definite outputs, such as, at least, specific problems or exercises completed
- Originality from the STUDENT is a MUST. So should be in project chart and milestones.
Momentum – Keep Going

- **Annual Progress Report (APR)**
  - Released to students in October
  - Students on LOA must complete APR
  - No APR, no enrolment
  - Must enrol before 31 march/31 August
  - What should you include in the APR?
    - Changing supervisors, thesis titles
    - Changing FT/PT
    - Measurable Milestones for next year
    - True Assessment of satisfactory/unsatisfactory progress
    - Don’t be wishy washy-in the long run you’re not doing the student any favours by being less than frank
Momentum-keep going. APR’s

- Again-don’t be wishy washy
- It is up to you to ensure documentary evidence of unsatisfactory progress (eg via quantifiable unmet outcomes)
- If progress is unsatisfactory, DON’T wait until the next APR
- You are required to bring unsatisfactory progress to attention of HoS or HPS before APR time (see 8.1 of HDR Handbook)
Momentum – Keep Going

- Identify students at risk
- Various resources available to HDR students:
  - Research Student Centre - HDR seminars and conferences
  - Research training librarian
  - Student Support Advisor (previously SEDLO’s)
  - Learning Development
  - Disabilities & Counselling Services
  - Careers Services
  - International Student Programs
  - Statistical assistance
  - English Language assistance, Commercial Editing is possible: see sec 21.7 P29 of HDR Handbook
Rollercoaster of Emotions

- HDR students experience both positive & negative emotions towards their research
- “The actual process of doing the PhD ... it’s just hard work. It’s the emotional side of it that’s difficult” (Megan)
Anxiety and the research process

Degree of anxiety

Time: full-time sessions

1 2 3 4 5 6

Success!

Present proposal
Collect data
Write up
Final Stages

- Graduate Attributes
- Thesis submission guidelines
- Thesis submission seminars
- Appropriate selection of examiners
- HPS and Supervisor responses to examiner recommendations
- TEC Recommendations
- Graduation
- Honorary Postdoctoral Research Associates (HPRA)
Examiners - certification

- Choose correct examiner
  - Finding potential examiners can take considerable time
  - Make sure you are aware of the requirements of examiners
  - Nomination of examiners is confidential, supervisors should not give nomination form to student to deliver to RSC
  - Encourage students to think about this early as this is who they are writing to!
Realities of a thesis

- The only good thesis is a finished thesis!
- It is a thesis, not a Nobel prize
- JaFPhD (Just a flipping PhD)
- Achieving a PhD is 90% persistence; 10% intelligence
- Completion rates in Australian Universities is approximately 65% (Kearns, 2009)
Panel Discussion

- Hints & tips on Effective supervision
Challenges

- **Student behaviours**
  - Constantly changing topic or planned work
  - Avoiding all forms of communication with the supervisor
  - Isolating themselves from the Faculty/Centre and other students
  - Avoiding submitting work for review
  - Not accepting guidance

- **Culture**
- **Personal issues**
- **Motivation**
- **Other**...
Effective supervision tips

- Only supervise students you have an interest in & who demonstrate CAPACITY
- Set mutual expectations
- Project management – do not overload – small steps, 1-2 pages often
- Provide positive & constructive feedback
- Flexibility & firmness/discipline
- Self motivated & motivator of student
Effective supervision tips (cont..)

- Keep mutual formalised records
- Be proactive with problems – act sooner rather than later
- Encourage students to take ownership – it is their HDR
- Supportive NOT directive
- Know what support is available
Supervision requires commitment, patience and skill.

Effective supervision is achieved through practice and reflective exercise.

Effective supervisors wisely use appropriate strategies, taking into consideration individual student needs.
HDR supervision is challenging but very rewarding!!!