



# **Handbook on Graduate Supervision: Nurturing and Managing the Supervisor and Doctoral Student Relationship**

Prepared by the Inter-University Doctoral Administrative Committee (IDAC)  
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NOTE - all forms mentioned in this document are available at the PhD website.

## Introduction

Doctoral studies is greatly affected by the nature of the supervisor and doctoral student relationship. Good relationships are associated with (a) higher completion rates, (b) faster times to completion, (c) and more successful career trajectories for new doctorates, not to mention an awarding and positive learning experience. The supervisor and doctoral student relationship is a partnership that extends over several years. It is characterized by a recognized power imbalance, which adds complexity to a process that has different things at stake for the doctoral student and the supervisor.

This relationship is personal, long-term and by its nature, a potential source of conflict (as well as mutual benefit). To best manage and nurture this relationship, it is useful to distinguish between what it means to be a student and a supervisor at the doctoral level (compared to undergraduate or master level scholarship). Doctoral students are more than someone studying at a higher education institution and supervisors do more than oversee and direct someone's work and performance.

### Doctoral Student as Researcher

Doctoral students/Candidates are *early stage researchers* who also should be recognized as *early career professionals*, poised to make key contributions to the creation of new knowledge. Through substantial effort and initiative, doctoral students commit fully to the generation of new knowledge through original research such that their field of study is advanced and enriched. This knowledge generation process requires close supervision by disciplinary-related scholars.

### Supervisor as Pedagogue

Supervising doctoral students is a unique and multifaceted form of teaching - a *pedagogy in its own right*. The intent of supervision is to guide the transformation of the doctoral student from a consumer of knowledge to a creator of knowledge. Doctoral students need to learn how to be researchers, how to be the purveyors of new knowledge. Supervision, an intensive form of teaching, entails the fundamentals of good teaching, with good supervisors exemplifying the characteristics of a good teacher and mentor. The sustained complexity of doctoral supervision involves extended time and energy, and a deep commitment to doctoral students under supervision.

This handbook is predicated on these understandings of what it means to be a doctoral student and a doctoral supervisor - the student is a researcher and the supervisor is a pedagogue. Through the socialization of a new generation of researchers, while concurrently refreshing and revitalizing middle- and late-career scholars, the doctoral student and supervisor relationship contributes to the fulfilment of the obligations of doctoral-level scholarship.

The best way to have an effective relationship between doctoral student and supervisor is to define the roles and expectations clearly and early. To that end, the next section sets out the roles and responsibilities of the student, the supervisor and the supervisory committee, followed by a discussion of how best to manage and nurture the supervisor/doctoral student relationship, given the existence of multiple roles and responsibilities.

Researchers have to be self-starters and self-managers, and the effort of will required over an extended period of time demands their prolonged genuine engagement and personal commitment. To that end, there must be effective supervision and a healthy, productive working relationship, with pathways to dispute resolution if needed because, occasionally, the relationships can become challenging.

## **Overview of Roles and Responsibilities of Various Parties**

This section discusses what is involved: (a) in the doctoral student choosing a supervisor (and the roles of the doctoral student); (b) in a faculty member deciding to be a supervisor (and the roles of the supervisor); (c) the instance of co-supervision; and, (d) the constitution of the supervisory committee (and their roles). The committee supports and serves both the supervisor and the doctoral student.

**Residency** - This doctoral program entails a **14-month full-time residency**. The purpose of residency is to provide doctoral students with significant time for sustained and intense participation with peers and faculty members in scholarly/creative activities. The primary activity for doctoral students during their residency is *full-time commitment* to the doctoral program. Residency is expected to be a vehicle for socialization into the shared community of professional life. Expected outcomes are the acquisition of skills of intellectual inquiry, development of understandings of research methodologies/paradigms, theories and research techniques, the incorporation of professional values, and socialization into what it means to be an educational researcher. At the heart of the academic community lies a commitment to continued inquiry and intellectual growth that extends beyond the period of doctoral preparation and into the doctoral student's lifetime work.

### **Doctoral Student - Selecting a Supervisor**

Selecting a supervisor is an extremely important decision, one that will determine success in doctoral studies. Different institutions have different processes in place for selecting or appointing a supervisor. The Inter-University PhD in Educational Studies employs a combination of applicant preference and faculty member agreement, mediated through the Doctoral Program Coordinator and approved by the IDAC (Inter-University Doctoral Administrative Committee).

In more detail, applicants are expected to carefully and thoughtfully peruse the research interests of faculty to determine their goodness of fit with the applicant's preferred research interests and theme(s) of study, possibly involving preliminary consultation with relevant faculty member(s).

Then, on the Application Form, the applicant chooses a theme(s) and normally identifies a preferred faculty member to supervise the research, as well as providing a *Letter of Intent* and a preliminary research plan. The Doctoral Program Coordinator at each home institution engages in conversations with said faculty member(s) to determine their availability and willingness to be a supervisor. If there is agreement, the Coordinator recommends the arrangement to the IDAC. If approved by the IDAC, the identity of the supervisor is contained in the *Letter of Offer* to the applicant, sent by the respective home institution. If the applicant accepts the offer, the pro tem

researcher (likely the supervisor) is tasked with arranging the first meeting with the doctoral student.

At this first, of what may be several meetings, the pro tem research advisor (likely the Supervisor) confirms and signs the *Final Program Plan of Study* form (affirming courses and special topics/independent studies as specified in the *Letter of Offer* and required by the IDAC, and the doctoral student's full-time status for the 14-month residency). The *Final Program Plan of Study* form is submitted to the IDAC for approval by August 15<sup>th</sup>. A copy of the form is housed in the Doctoral Program Office.

Concurrently, the pro tem research advisor will begin to work with the doctoral student to refine the doctoral student's research area (theme(s) and plan laid out in the *Letter of Intent*. The doctoral students' informal research plan will evolve and emerge from a synergistic collection of: (a) course work, (b) the portfolio, (c) ongoing discussions with Supervisors and committee members, and (d) dialogue with fellow doctoral students and other faculty members. This intellectual evolution and synergy will materialize in the formal *research proposal* developed in GEDU 9100/EDUC 899Z and publically defended, six months to a year after defending the Portfolio (GEDU 9010/EDUC 8109).

The Supervisor and the doctoral student will complete and file an *Initial Portfolio Agreement* form by April 30<sup>th</sup> of the first year, after completion of course work. The elements of the portfolio will stem from the *Letter of Intent*, orientations for the portfolio process provided during the July session, discussions with the Supervisor (in consultation with committee members), and engagement with subsequent doctoral courses and interactions within the doctoral community of learners.

## **Roles of the Doctoral Student**

The main role of doctoral students is to commit themselves to devote the time and intellectual and physical energy required to engage in doctoral-level research and to prepare a Dissertation. In this process, all doctoral students are guided by the rules, procedures and standards in place at their home institution and are encouraged to check the University calendar for regulations regarding academic and non-academic matters.

Doctoral students are expected to:

- make a commitment and show dedicated efforts to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and predispositions needed to pursue a doctoral-level research project to successful completion;
- contribute fully to the scholarly and intellectual life of the University;
- undertake a self-assessment to clarify learning styles, knowledge skills sets (e.g., creative, analytical, statistical, organizational) and personality because these affect one's perception of: required frequency of meetings; level of guidance needed; type and frequency of feedback; meeting types;
- make a concerted effort to learn about the supervisor (e.g., career plans (sabbaticals, retirement, changing universities), publications, conference attendance and venues, likelihood to joint publish);
- be clear and realistic about what one expects from the relationship with the supervisor, and appreciate that these expectations should be jointly clarified and may change over time;

- develop a plan and a timetable for completion of all stages of the Dissertation, adhere to a schedule (which includes clear milestones denoting progress) and meet all appropriate deadlines (which, ideally, are realistic and flexible);
- meet supervisor when requested (or at doctoral student's own initiative) and report fully and regularly on progress and results - it is the *doctoral student's responsibility* to keep in touch with the supervisor and/or committee members;
- give serious and timely consideration and response to any advice and constructive criticism/critique received from the supervisor and/or the committee member(s);
- inform the supervisor or Doctoral Program Coordinator, in a timely fashion, of any serious difficulties that may arise in supervision (e.g., conflict of interest, interpersonal conflicts, or professional academic disagreements);
- review the literature regularly and keep the literature review section of the Dissertation up-to-date;
- follow the home institution's policy regarding ownership of intellectual property;
- adhere to the highest standards of ethical behaviour;
- clarify with the supervisor the reasonable level of confidentiality expected from meetings;
- comply with the acceptable style and form of the Dissertation (e.g., style manual, formatting, duplication, binding);
- when applicable, comply with University policies governing human research;
- when applicable, meet the terms and conditions of financial contractual agreements for teaching and/or research assistantships;
- maintain continuous registration in the program and keep documentation current;
- read and understand all forms to be signed, keep copies and accept responsibility for all agreements signed;
- keep everyone informed of current personal contact information; and,
- return borrowed materials in a timely manner.

### **Deciding to be a Supervisor (Choosing a Doctoral Student)**

Potential supervisors have a responsibility to choose doctoral students with whom they think they will have *a good fit*. If one or more of the following criteria is in question, the potential supervisor should think hard about agreeing to supervise *a particular* doctoral student:

- match one's expertise and methodology and method approaches with the applicant/doctoral student's research interests;
- consider availability (sabbaticals, teaching, research, administrative commitments, service commitments and/or other supervisory/committee obligations);
- determine if the doctoral student's interest correlate with one's own research agenda (or one's willingness to move in a new direction); and,
- conduct a preliminary assessment of the doctoral student's personality and learning styles to determine if these correspond with one's teaching and supervisory styles.

For the Inter-University PhD in Educational Studies, applicants are encouraged to carefully and thoughtfully peruse the research interests of faculty to determine their goodness of fit with the applicant's preferred research interests and theme(s) of study. Applicants have a choice of identifying, or not, a preferred supervisor, indicating this choice on the Application Form. This option means some faculty members will know ahead of time if they have been

identified by an applicant to be a supervisor and others will not find out until after the applicant has submitted the Application Form and the Doctoral Program Coordinator advises the faculty member of the situation. Regardless, the previous four criteria should inform the faculty member's decision of whether or not to supervise a particular student.

## **Roles of the Supervisor**

The main role of the supervisor is to provide guidance, instruction and encouragement regarding the research activities of the doctoral student. Supervisors are sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide exemplary guidance and/or have a willingness to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as supervisor. The supervisor is both a pedagogue (teacher) and a mentor. Supervisors have a responsibility to help doctoral students find a balance between needing help and guidance and taking on more responsibility as they develop independence as a researcher and as an early-career professional.

Supervisors should be available to help doctoral students *at every stage*, from discussions of methodologies and research philosophies and the formulation of the research topic and research program (including a theoretical or conceptual framework) through to establishing a suitable and manageable research design, and presenting the results for a successful defense and for publication(s) (during and after the research process). Early in the program, the supervisor should inform doctoral students of the phases through which they must pass towards the achievement of their doctoral degree, the approximate amount of time for each phase, the criteria for its successful completion, and any deadlines relating to these phases. Doctoral-level supervisors also are responsible for ensuring the doctoral students' work meets the academic standards of the home University and of the academic discipline.

Supervisors are expected to:

- get to know their doctoral students, judiciously inquiring about their educational and professional experiences and aspirations;
- respect that doctoral students' identities shape the graduate experience and the latter shapes their identities;
- be clear and realistic about what one expects from the relationship with the doctoral student, and appreciate that these expectations should be jointly clarified and may change over time;
- suggest courses or experiences that doctoral students need to improve their skill sets, knowledge and attitudes or to gain broader exposure to the field and to the research process;
- establish a supervisory committee (see below);
- be accessible for consultations and discussions, with an appreciation that the frequency of meetings will vary according to stage of work, academic discipline, nature of the research, independence of the doctoral student, full-or part-time status, on-site or e-distance learning, etc.;
- explain what first drafts should look like in order for you to review them and advise doctoral students to highlight revised sections in subsequent drafts;
- help doctoral students learn the *voice or style* associated with the discipline, including specialized forms of writing, conventions, tone - this helps mitigate writer's block;
- advise doctoral students regarding the process of seeking ethical approval for human research *before* starting their research;

- protect doctoral students from arbitrary changes in the research direction (at the discretion of the supervisor), which may be detrimental to the timely completion of the Dissertation;
- discuss with doctoral students one's co-authorship philosophy and expectations;
- clarify one's willingness, or not, to help doctoral students prepare submissions to journals and conferences;
- acknowledge appropriately the contributions of the doctoral student in presentations and in published material, in many cases via joint authorship (scholarly credit);
- uphold and transmit the highest professional standards of research, scholarship and integrity;
- judiciously choose externals for the Portfolio and the Dissertation defence in a timely manner;
- clarify with doctoral students the reasonable level of confidentiality expected from meetings;
- clarify with doctoral students the preferred modes of communication (e.g., in-person, in or out of office, phone, email, social networking, weekends, non-public or public spaces);
- clarify with doctoral students one's accessibility when one is away from campus;
- explain to doctoral students how feedback is specifically intended to help their intellectual and professional growth;
- respond in a timely and thorough manner to written work submitted by the doctoral student (normally within 2-3 weeks), with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation;
- make arrangements to ensure continuity and supervision when absent for extended periods (e.g., a month or longer) due to sabbatical leave, retirement, resignation and/or if the supervisor changes universities;
- endeavour to achieve consensus and resolve differences when there is a conflict of advice or expectations on the part of the supervisor and the committee member(s);
- assist doctoral students in being aware of current graduate program requirements, deadlines, sources of funding, Dissertation format and style, et cetera;
- encourage doctoral students to make presentations of research results within the University and to outside scholarly or professional bodies, as appropriate;
- encourage doctoral students to get involved in the life of the department/school/faculty and the University;
- encourage doctoral students to participate in activities that enhance their academic experience, such as attending seminars, meeting with seminar speakers, participating in Graduate Doctoral student organizations, attending conferences, and developing their skills and experience in teaching and mentoring;
- help doctoral students if personal or academic crises arise (including guidance and encouragement in areas relating to their growth in scholarship, professional development, and career planning);
- work respectfully with relevant coordinators and offices in the event the doctoral student petitions for a change in supervisor;
- encourage doctoral students to finish up when it would *not* be in their best interests to extend their program of studies; and,



- assist doctoral students to comply with any changes that need to be made to the Dissertation after the public defence.

## **Co-Supervision**

Co-supervision, a common university practice, serves several purposes. Sharing supervisory responsibilities can enable interested and/or over-committed academics to share workloads, of which the mechanics are a function of local conditions and traditions. Co-supervision can provide doctoral candidates with enriched intellectual contributions; they benefit from two complementary sets of expertise and experience. Co-supervision also opens the door for cross-disciplinary cooperation and knowledge sharing with doctoral students (Shannon, 1995). When the co-supervision arrangement entails a seasoned academic and someone new to the university (an early-career academic, see Oosthuizen, McKay and Sharpe, 2005), the doctoral student benefits from the former's experience and the latter's recent lived experience of being a doctoral student.

In some instances, the Supervisor may wish to *temporarily* involve another faculty member or expert who has valuable expertise pertinent to the doctoral student's research program (different from the co-supervisor model). In this instance, the Principal would be the IDAC-appointed Supervisor, and the person invited to sit on the committee is the Associate Supervisor, who may or may not remain on the committee for the duration of the doctoral student's studies. The Associate Supervisor may be from the three participating universities or elsewhere, and cannot serve as an External. The Associate Supervisor would be in addition to the other two committee members, and normally is tenured.

## **Constituting the Supervisory Committee**

Working together, the doctoral student, the supervisor and the Doctoral Program Coordinator *normally* constitute the members of the supervisory committee by December 1<sup>st</sup> of the first year. This timing is required for several reasons, but mainly (a) because committee members may wish to be involved in the development of the doctoral student's portfolio (*Initial Portfolio Agreement Form*) and to share initial thoughts around the plans for research, and (b) because doctoral students are expected to register in GEDU 9010/EDUC 899Z (*Comprehensive Research/Scholarly Portfolio*) in July of the first year and begin work on the Portfolio in full consultation with their Supervisor and their committee.

Normally, discussions about who will serve on the committee happen during or shortly after the *Final Plan of Study* form is signed by August 15<sup>th</sup> and the *Initial Portfolio Agreement Form* is signed by April 30<sup>th</sup>. Normally, the committee will comprise three people, including the supervisor (likely the pro tem research advisor) and two other members. Normally, the other members will have expertise in the theme(s) or the focus of the research, and they must be accredited by the Inter-University Doctoral Governance Committee (IDGC).

Once the pro tem advisor has secured/affirmed the approval of committee members, using the IDGC-approved list of accredited doctoral faculty, the supervisor, committee members and the doctoral student will sign the *Approval of Supervisor and PhD Committee Membership Form*. A copy of this form is given to the doctoral student and filed with the Doctoral Program Office. If any faculty member(s) identified on the form becomes unavailable, additional people will be identified and approached until a committee has been constituted.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Supervisory Committee**

Research shows that establishing a research committee early in the process, and meeting regularly with said committee, leads to higher completion rates and shorter time to completion. The main role of the supervisory committee is to assist the supervisor with the process of monitoring the doctoral student's progress on completing degree requirements. They do this by broadening and deepening the range of expertise and experience for providing advice about, and assessment of, the doctoral student's research. The committee members complement the expertise of the supervisor by providing constructive criticism, advice and by discussing the doctoral student's ideas as they develop (including course selection, planning the research and preparing the Dissertation).

Members of the committee should be reasonably accessible to the doctoral student and the supervisor when called upon for input. Some committee members may want to be actively involved while others want only to see the final product. Their respective expectations should be clarified at a very early stage. The supervisor should monitor any major discrepancies in advice given by committee members to the doctoral student and attempt to mediate any disagreements or inconsistencies.

The role of the committee members includes working with the supervisor (and the doctoral student) to:

- develop the portfolio,
- develop a research plan,
- report on the progress of doctoral student's work required to complete the degree,
- participate in at least an annual meeting (likely more frequently),
- provide general guidance and degrees of expertise, and
- serve as a core member of the supervisory committee.

Faculty member's decisions about whether or not to serve on a dissertation committee are commonly based on: (a) the collective experiences of the people involved, (b) one's ability to contribute to the intended study (good fit), and (c) one's availability and willingness to serve.

Once the committee is established, the doctoral student and the supervisor (a) must keep the committee members apprised of the research progress (where one is and what one is planning to do next) and (b) must provide notification of when the committee members can expect to receive the next instalment of the work, and their anticipated turn-around time. This notification is courteous and it serves to keep the committee members up-to-speed so their contributions can be more meaningful and productive. Regular communication with the committee members also keeps the doctoral student's research on track, given that multiple perspectives and agendas are being served aside from the completion of the actual Dissertation. The committee is committed to the doctoral student's academic progress as long as the doctoral student continues in good standing.

Members of a doctoral supervisory committee are expected to:

- be available at every stage for consultation with the Supervisor and the doctoral student about plans of study, the portfolio and the dissertation (including the research proposal);
- appreciate that their different types of expertise can bring an objective perspective to the progress of the doctoral student's research, augmenting that of the supervisor and other committee members;

- expect regular contact from the doctoral student and Supervisor as the research progresses, as they are developing ideas;
- provide constructive criticism and assessment of doctoral students' ideas as their programs develop and evolve, thereby broadening and deepening the range of expertise and experience of doctoral students;
- evaluate drafts of artifacts of the portfolio and drafts of the proposal and dissertation or creative product in accordance with the IDAC supervisory procedures;
- aid in the arbitration of problems that may arise between the Supervisor and the doctoral student;
- to, after due process has been followed, withdraw from the committee if their continued membership is impeding satisfactory academic progress or completion of the degree; and,
- to work with the Supervisor, other committee members and the doctoral student to find a replacement in order to minimize, to the extent possible, any negative impact their withdrawal may have on the doctoral student's program.

## **Nurturing and Managing the Supervisor and Doctoral Student Relationship**

Once the supervisor has been assigned to a doctoral student, their relationship becomes a real, tangible thing. They now have to learn how to work together for four or more years, even longer if the doctoral student requires letters of recommendation and career guidance upon graduation (on-going mentoring). The literature is clear: the best way to nurture and manage this relationship is to clarify and manage expectations, to communicate clearly and often, and to exhibit a high level of professional integrity (see Bibliography).

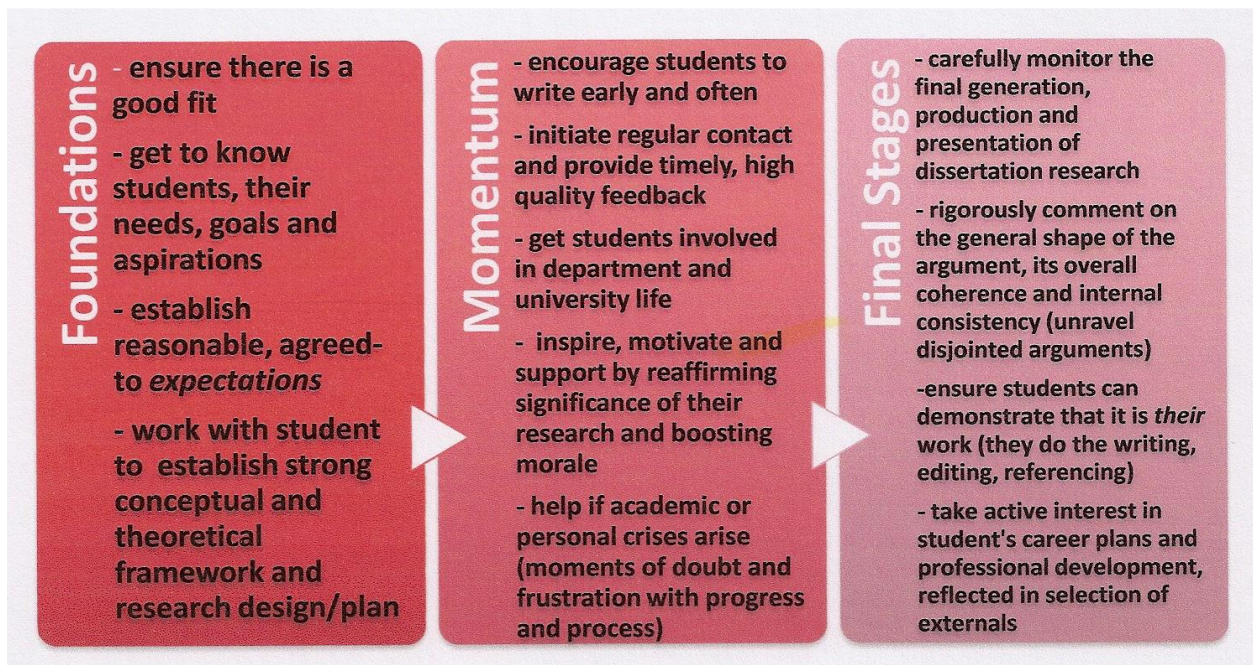
A lack of communication leading to mismatched expectations is the number one reason the graduate supervision experience gets derailed (Skarakis-Doyle & McIntyre, 2008, p.6). More than the disciplinary expertise of the supervisor is required to navigate the complexities that an imbalance of power can create (p.5). The relationship or partnership can break down if expectations are not understood and not well communicated. If, *very early on in the process*, issues of trust, respect, availability, flexibility, confidentiality and other dimensions of working relationships are mapped out, chances are good that the relationship can prosper and evolve to the benefit of all, to the successful completion of the dissertation, and to solid footing for future career advancement of both parties, especially the early-career professional.

James and Baldwin (1999) organized 11 practices of an effective supervisor into three dimensions (see Figure 1). Their model identified three key stages of the supervisory relationship: (a) setting the foundations of the relationship and the research program; (b) maintaining the momentum and the focus of the research and of the doctoral candidate; and, (c) bringing the relationship to an end, with the successful completion of the Dissertation and possible future mentoring.

Their guide (James & Baldwin, 1999) is a very valuable tool for orienting doctoral students and supervisors to the myriad of details involved in closely working together for an extended period of time. They prefaced the guide book with a collection of six principles that underpin the 11 practices they identified for effective supervision and doctoral student efficacy:

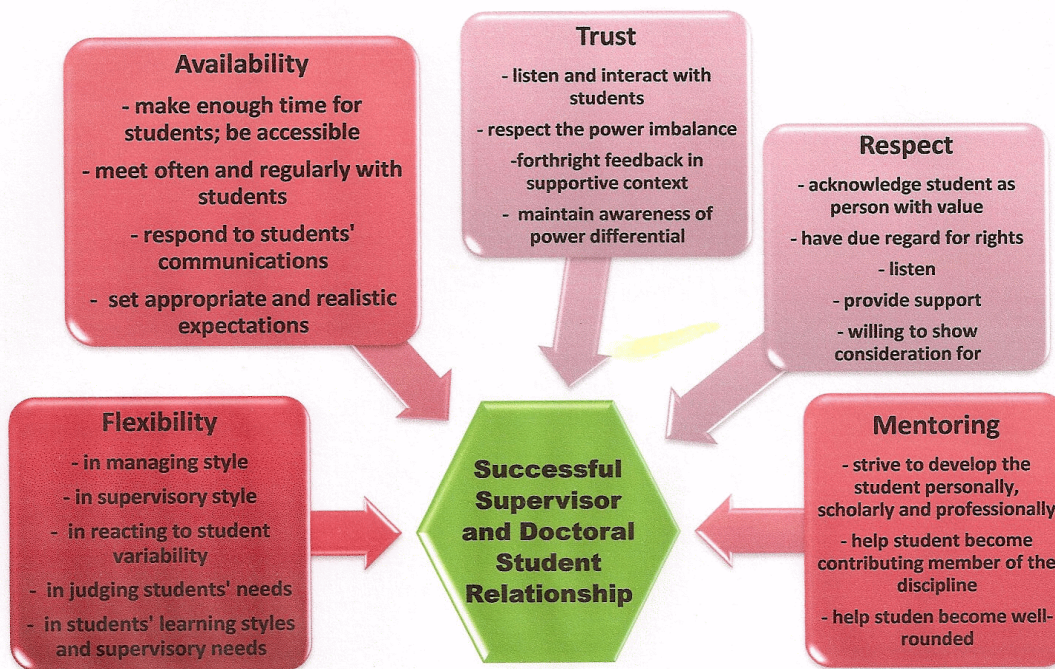
- supervision is grounded in the fundamentals of good teaching;
- supervision is an especially intensive form of teaching that requires a supervisor's prolonged professional commitment to the doctoral student;

- the intense supervisory relationship has a particularly personal dimension, especially when the doctoral student faces crises of confidence or personal problems;
- doctoral research students are all different - they are highly individual, meaning a cookie-cutter approach will not be effective;
- effective supervisors will set very high but realistic standards, always pushing the doctoral student to become an independent researcher and scholar; and,
- good supervisors are conscious of their mentoring role, in addition to their teaching role.



**Figure 1:** Eleven Practices of an Effective Graduate Supervisor (James & Baldwin, 1999)

While James and Baldwin (1999) organized 11 practices of an effective supervisor into three dimensions, based on six underlying principles, Skarakis-Doyle and McIntyre (2008) maintained there are five fundamental characteristics of effective supervisors: (a) flexibility, (b) availability (accessibility), (c) trust, (d) respect, and (d) mentoring (see Figure 2). Their guidebook offers different insights into the supervisor and doctoral student relationship. They conducted a study at their university and used their results (in the form of quotes and discussion) to prepare a guidebook on the supervisory relationship informed by insights garnered from the literature as well as from supervisors and graduate students. Predicated on the assumption that the supervisor is a pedagogue and a mentor, they identified fundamental traits exhibited by the supervisor that better ensure a good working relationship (Figure 3). When both the supervisor and the doctoral student are aware of these dimensions of their relationship, it is more likely that the supervision will be effective and that the doctoral student will have a good experience and actually finish his or her degree in a timely manner.



**Figure 2:** Five Characteristics of Effective Graduate Supervision (Skarakis-Doyle & McIntyre2008)

## Dispute Resolution

Open communication and awareness and respect for the various roles and responsibilities for each of doctoral student, supervisor and committee member(s) are key to ensuring a good, healthy working relationship. Unfortunately, there can be situations where doctoral students and their supervisors (and perhaps committee members) have conflicts. Issues at hand may include:

- (a) assessment of seminars and written work (including Dissertation (re)drafts);
- (b) incompatibility of research interests, working styles or personalities;
- (c) access to resources or other supports required to complete the research;
- (d) unsatisfactory progress of the research;
- (e) focus and approach to research question, methodology and research design (methods, theories and results reporting);
- (f) ownership of intellectual property, including co-publication authorship and copyright;
- (g) the supervisor or committee member(s) unexpectedly leaves the University or goes on an extended leave, interrupting the supervisory relationship; and/or,
- (h) inability to establish a respectful working relationships (impacted by personalities, learning, working and supervisory styles, and ill-communicated expectations) (see School of Graduate Studies, 2010a).

If a conflict arises, the first step is for the doctoral student and the supervisor to sit down and try to identify the source of the problem and create a solution. If this cannot be done, then a supervisory committee meeting should be called and the committee members, working with the

doctoral student and the supervisor, should try to resolve the conflict. If no resolution is met, then the situation should be brought before the home institution's Doctoral Program Coordinator and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies for appropriate action. Each home institution will have its own dispute resolution procedures and protocols.

**Note** that if those affected agree that their supervisory relationship has broken down or if the doctoral student and the supervisor cannot agree on a suitable research topic, the doctoral student is permitted to seek a new supervisor (upon discussion with the Doctoral Program Coordinator and the IDAC where needed), although it should be understood that the IDAC cannot, in every circumstance, guarantee a suitable replacement. As well, the supervisor can seek termination of the supervision if the doctoral student is not displaying a reasonable effort, if he/she fails to heed advice on changes deemed essential, or if the doctoral student changes the agreed thesis topic without consent.

## **Summary**

It bears repeating - the best way to nurture and manage the long-term supervisor and doctoral student relationship is to:

- clarify expectations;
- strive for clear, open, frank and frequent communications;
- value trust and respect;
- clarify levels of confidentiality and availability (as well as flexibility); and,
- be very aware of the complex collection of roles and responsibilities of the various
- stakeholders: the doctoral student (the early stage researcher and mentee), the supervisor
- (the pedagogue and mentor) and the supervisory committee (supportive consultants).

All parties must appreciate that the relationship will move through various stages, from laying its foundations, through ensuring momentum to bringing it to a successful closure, which includes the completion of the research and the Dissertation. Realistically, this complex relationship and process will experience tension and conflict necessitating pathways to informal and formal dispute resolution. Open communications, in an atmosphere of collegiality, respect and trust, are the keystones of successful doctoral studies.

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