

CRITICAL CONCERNS FOR SUPERVISION AND ELEMENTS OF INTEREST FOR MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

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The supervisory role

- Assist in finding the 'gap' that your thesis will fill
- Provide a managed environment
- Support your research effort
- Broader intellectual support
- Writing support
- Facilitate closure
- Administrative support
- Personal support

Its like taking off the training wheels



Flying solo for the first time



Complexity also arises from...

- Research is a thinking process
- Research is a social process
- Research is discovery and so can never be repeated
- Consider the names given to the academic who hosts a PG student
 - Supervisor
 - Advisor
 - Promoter

How can the PhD experience go wrong?

Selection of research topic:

- Scope is too small
- Scope is too large
- Proposed research yields no results
- Supervisor is not an expert in the field
- Co-supervisors do see eye to eye

The supervisor shall...

- Advise the student: help find a thesis topic, teach how to do research, write papers, give talks, etc.
- Provide early and clear guidance about the time frames and conditions for graduation.
- Introduce the student to the academic community, through conference talks, invited talks, letters of recommendation, etc.
- Proactively provide realistic, honest advice about post-Ph.D. career prospects.

Supervisor's Expectations

- Diligence
- Independence
- Reliability
- Creativity
- Dedication
- Contributions
- Ability to
 - Read and understand
 - Analyse
 - Conceptualise
 - Think abstractly
 - Think independently
 - Write clearly
 - Write concisely
 - Spell

The student shall ...

- Take direction
- Understand that the life of an academic is far more complicated than simply thinking new thoughts
- Work hard from day one
- Stay focused on the goal of the research
- Stay focused on the PhD degree
- Avoid the “failure to launch” syndrome

Student's expectations

- Simple registration
- Guidance with
 - Proposal writing
 - Experimentation
 - Conclusions
- Access to
 - Equipment
 - Laboratories
 - Subjects
 - Prior knowledge
 - Networks
- Safe environment
 - Field work
- Contribution to research critical mass
- Mentorship
 - Life lessons
 - Career advancement
 - Balance in social setting
- Being held accountable
 - Actions
 - Progress
 - Inaction

What students expect of their supervisors - I

- To support, encourage, guide and advise
- To read the work submitted to them
- To be friendly, open and available when needed
- To have good knowledge of the research area
- To be critical but in a constructive way
- To be flexible and understand what they are communicating
- Set aside uninterrupted time to discuss the research project

What students expect of their supervisors - II

- Attend seminars when they are presenting their work
- To have sufficient interest in their research
- To introduce them to other researchers in the same field
- To be a role model in research and publications
- Encourage independent thinking and originality
- Help students with problems that may interfere with their progress
- Review progress reports and advise accordingly
- Ensure student receives appropriate research training
- Ensure adequate research facilities and resources

Student's roles in effective supervision - I

- Set timelines for the project and review them with supervisor
- Go for the meeting with a list of topics for discussion
- Ask supplementary questions
- Ensure that you have a date, time and place for next meeting
- Be meticulous in meeting appointments

Ideal PhD Supervisor-Students perspective

In addition to having knowledge and expertise,
should be;

- Passionate about mentoring
- Has personal interest in the student welfare
- Ready to share professional experiences, wisdom and knowledge
- Appreciates that at the end of the graduate program the student will be the expert

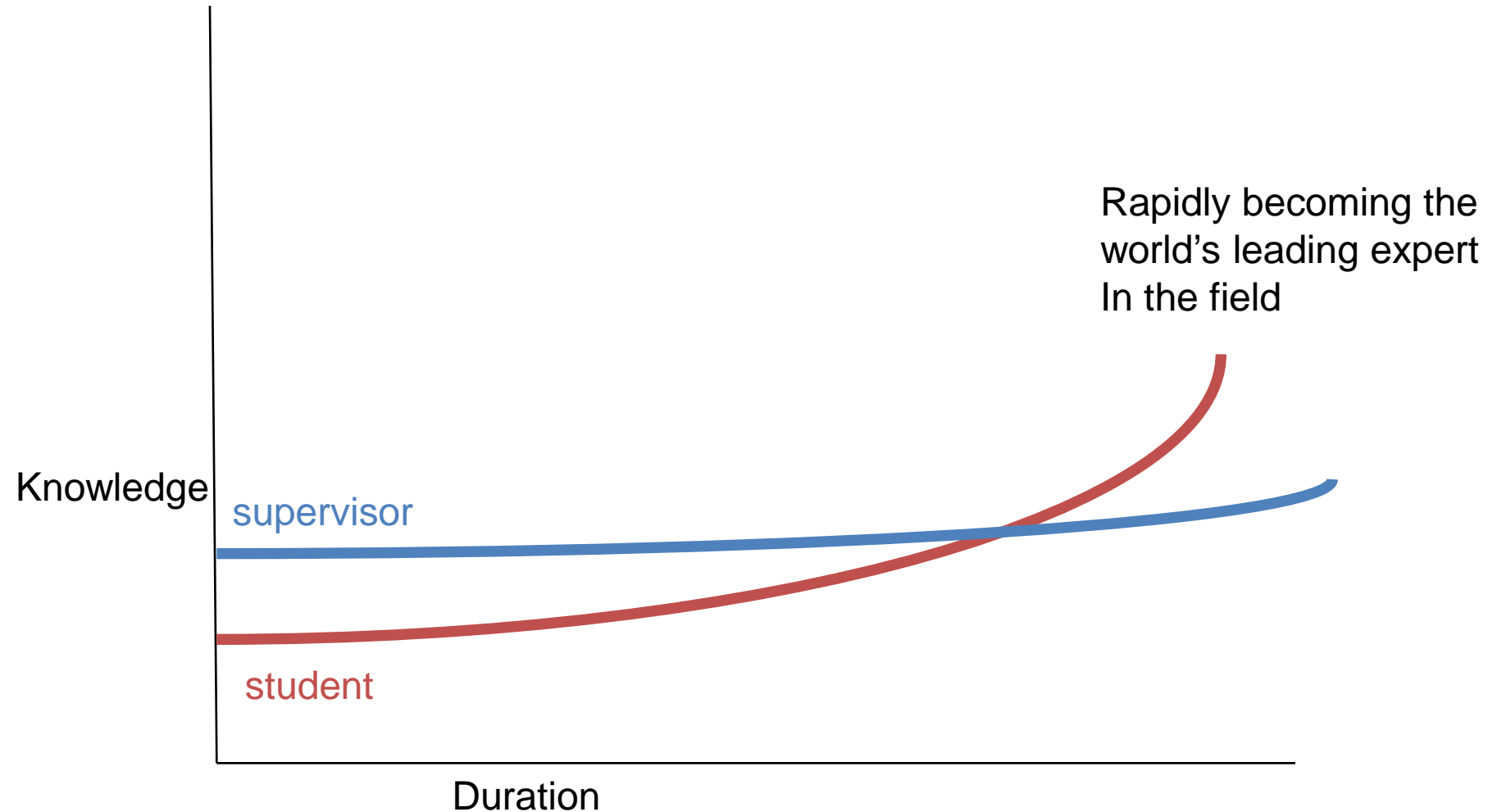
Student's roles in effective supervision - II

- Be enthusiastic about your PhD work
- Criticism is part of the PhD experience
- Be clear of what is being criticized and how to put it right
- Never leave without fully understanding what is expected of you
- Avoid inappropriate personal relationships

The supervisor-student dynamic shifts over the course of a degree

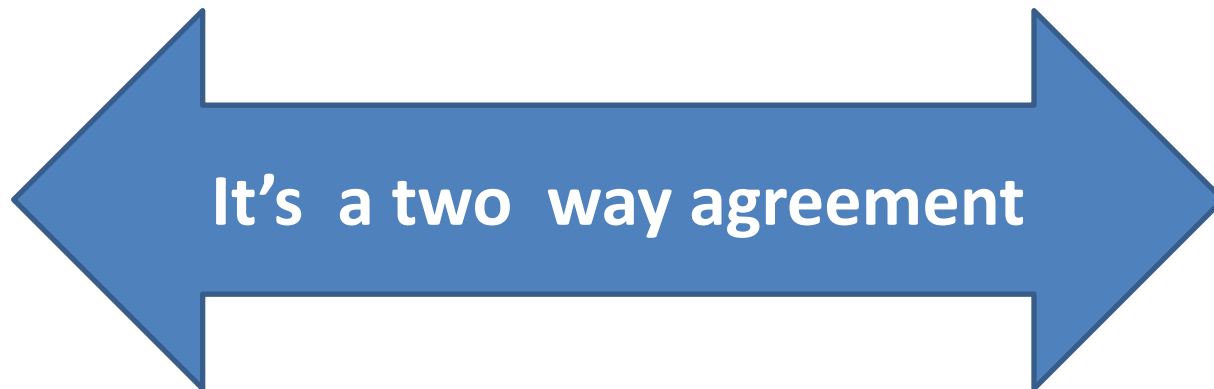
- Early on the supervisor
 - hands on, doling out specific topics, helping to craft early papers
- Toward the end the student
 - know more than the supervisor
 - Take the lead in the investigate
- The trick is getting the timing right.

Understand the dynamic nature of supervision



Supervisor-supervisee contract

- Signed by both supervisor and student
- Signed early on in the relationship
- Contains an outline of expectations
- Explicitly 'outlaws' certain behaviours
- Explicitly encourages other behaviours



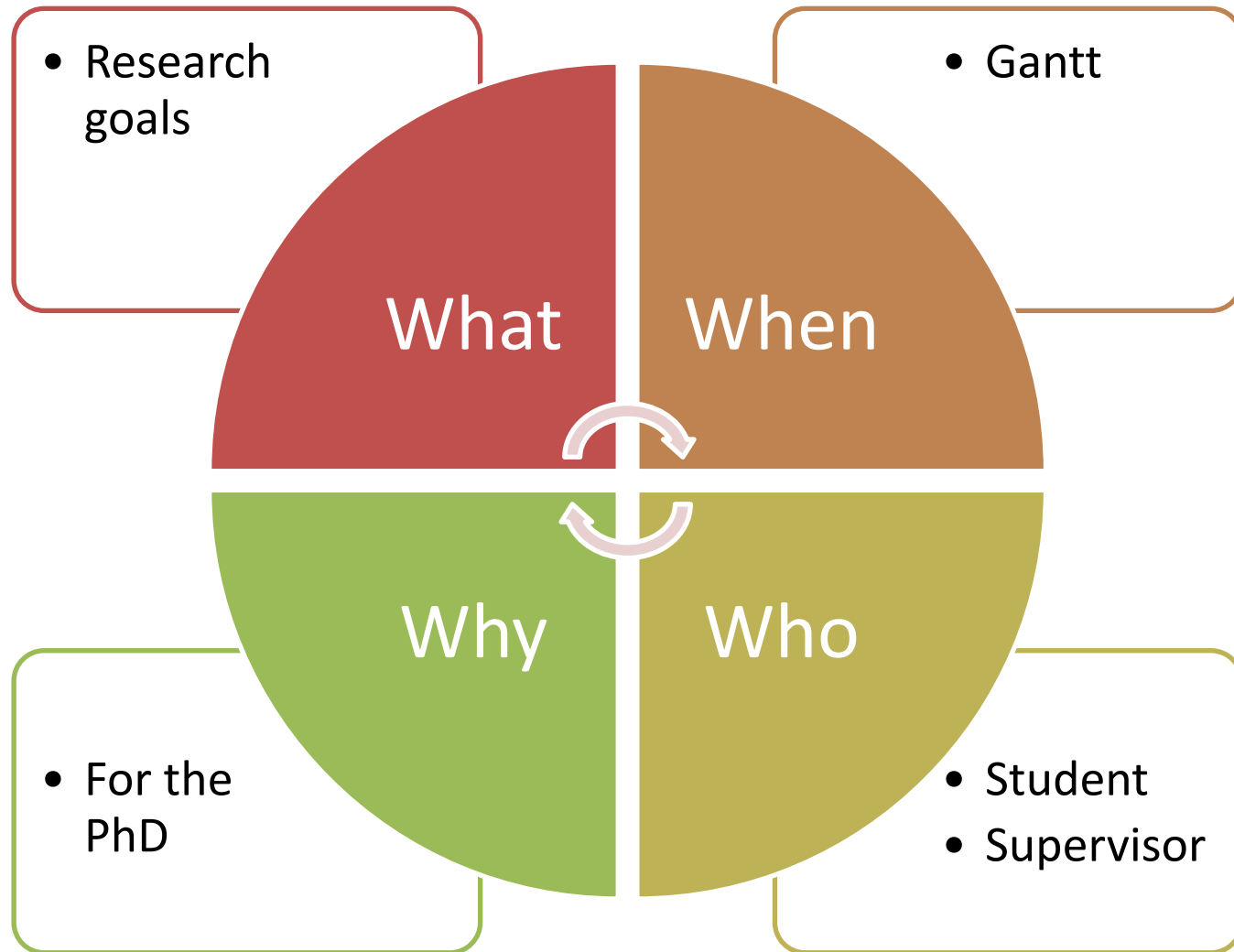
Consider the Mak Example

CONTRACT OF SUPERVISION AND ACADEMIC OBLIGATIONS

This document provides a guideline to communication and practice for the duration of the doctoral research between

_____ (PhD candidate) and
_____ (Supervisor) at
_____ (name of institution).

The contract should cover ...



This is interesting ...

What do you think is the most important component of success in the PhD student – Supervisor relationship? Communication? Hard work?

Transparency?

A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, E = 5, F = 6,
G = 7, H = 8, I = 9, J = 10, K = 11, L = 12,
M = 13, N = 14, O = 15, P = 16, Q = 17, R = 18,
S = 19, T = 20, U = 21, V = 22, W = 23, X = 24,
Y = 25, Z = 26

1 + 20 + 20 + 9 + 20 + 21 + 4 + 5 = 100%
A T T I T U D E

Conclusion

- Supervisor-student relationship is very important in the PhD process, delicate and complex
- Should be structured, with regular recorded meetings
- Requires mutual respect, openness and honest debates
- Effective supervision is a two-way process
- ETHICS = Science formula applies: Your “ETHICS” must be as good as your “Science”
- Nobody can effectively multi-task (job, research, consultancy, teaching at a go?)



Let us see the process differently