

# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A SUPERVISOR

- signposting to relevant literature
- to help develop + refine a research question
- to provide guidance <sup>on good practice in research</sup> - sounding board
- <sup>often</sup> more than guidance - some students require 'teaching' of skills, methods
- different roles for different students
- EXPERT ON TOPIC + AWARE OF NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES  
+ LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN FIELD  
<sup>for method</sup>
- SUPPORTIVE & APPROACHABLE - encourage critical thinking
- Enthusiastic
- to support the student to submit his/her best work, not the supervisor's
- develop & apply research skills ~~learn~~ learnt during taught courses
- to keep expectations realistic ie. scope & scale  
confidence to encourage autonomy

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## Co-creating Dissertation Guidance

# MPH programme



- Programme team:  
Director: Niall Anderson,  
Coordinator: Margaret Douglas  
Administrator: Stuart Mallen
- Diverse courses:  
Public health, epidemiology, statistics,  
research ethics, qualitative methods and  
systematic reviews; health promotion,  
global health, advanced epidemiology,  
statistics modules, sociology of health etc
- Diverse Student cohort (n 65)  
Age, nationality, academic discipline and  
experience
- Diverse group of Supervisors (n 30-40)  
Age, nationality, academic discipline and  
supervision experience

# Dissertation learning outcomes

The dissertation (60/180 credits) gives students the opportunity to gain research experience while undertaking an extended piece of scholarship ( systematic literature reviews; quantitative analysis projects; qualitative projects, policy analysis/brief).

Students should demonstrate:

- A critical understanding of their chosen public health topic and the relevant literature
- Application of appropriate research methods to address the research question
- Critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation of the research results
- An ability to present research as a well-structured, clear and coherent dissertation, in line with expected standards of academic writing

# Purpose of workshop

- Promote and encourage wider participation in MPH dissertation supervision for the on-campus MPH: the benefits of supervision
- Share information about the MPH programme and dissertation component
- Co-creating guidance on role boundaries supervisor/student expectations formative feedback to students

# Why co-create guidance?

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- Draw on and highlight the skills and practices of our supervisors to improve guidance
- (Re)setting expectations for new and old supervisors
- Align practices to promote equity of supervision for students
- Because as academics, we don't like being told what to do; if involved more likely to adhere to guidance
- Encourage reflection on a key teaching practice often done without collegial support or input and where there is limited/no training



# Reflective Pair Activity

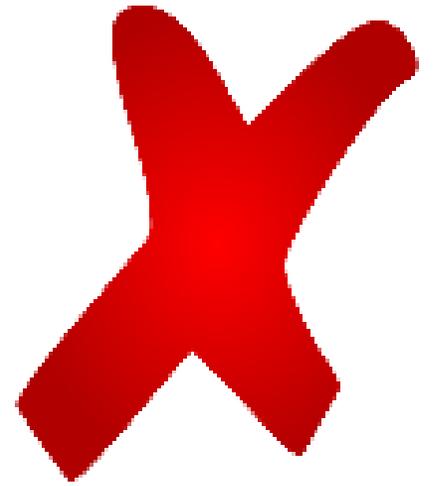
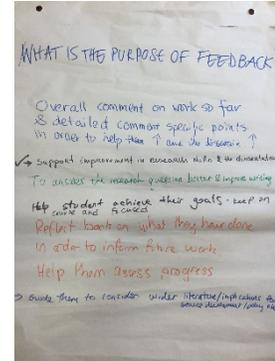
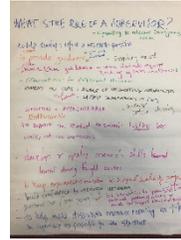
Supervisors are asked to think back to how they were supervised as a student and tell their neighbour:

- What did your supervisor(s) do which was helpful and less helpful?
- Which of those supervision practices do you use as a supervisor and why? Which would you not use and why?

# Good supervision practice & feedback

## Group activity

- Supervisors pair up with someone they know less well and work with them to record thoughts on the flipchart sheets
- Agree / disagree and add to/tweak notes by others
- **What is the role of a supervisor?**
- **What does good feedback look like and achieve?**



# Agreed roles and responsibilities

## Supervisor

### **Provide guidance (6-10 hrs in person) on**

- Project development and process
- Ethics including overseeing the submission process and ensure approval is in place

### **Providing timely feedback**

- Once on draft chapters
- Once on a full draft

### **Encourage student autonomy**

- Guide rather than direct
- Comment rather than re-write

**Pastoral role** but signpost to others more qualified if needed

## Student

### **Agree a project timeline with supervisor, taking into account supervisor's other commitments**

- Design and conduct the project under guidance
- Write the ethics application and adhere to ethical research practice

### **Write chapter and full dissertation draft**

- Submit drafts according to the agreed timeline
- Take supervisor feedback into account when re-drafting

### **Take responsibility for progress**

# Providing good formative feedback

**Purpose of feedback: to help students understand what is required of them in time for them to improve their academic work**

For example, feedback should:

- Focus on the work, not the student
- Provide a way forward
- Consider the emotional response to feedback
- Feedback should reflect the quality of the work
- Beware the 'feedback flood'
- Early feedback
- Encourage dialogue and reflection



DOES GOOD FEEDBACK LOOK LIKE/  
ACHIEVE?

encouraging reflection ✓  
building confidence by highlighting strengths ✓✓  
helps student understand process of academic writing  
Be consistent & clear & straightforward

Be positive. Don't say "Don't do that" ✓  
say "Try doing x, y, z"  
Constructive

Timely • Organised • Constructive  
encouraging autonomy thro' feedback.

reflective in what, why + how you  
feedback.

...ing w/ ... at once. eg. p...

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Comments and questions?

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