HOW TO GUIDE YOUR PH.D. STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This editorial discusses the issues and challenges of Ph.D. student supervision. Several academic colleagues with much experience in Ph.D. supervision were asked to contribute their thoughts on this important task. We present the tasks of supervision, including how these may be adapted depending on student characteristics such as extent of managerial experience. Then we explore the challenges faced by Ph.D. students, and discuss how these can be addressed. Following that, we examine the role of the supervisor in helping build student capabilities in publishing and teaching. Furthermore, we address the benefits of taking on supervisory responsibility. In the conclusion, the co-authors of this editorial provide retrospectives on their own experiences as Ph.D. supervisors.

Keywords: Ph.D. program formalities; Ph.D. program guidelines; Ph.D. student; Ph.D. supervisor; supervision.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As business academics, one of our tasks is to train the next generation of educators. We ourselves entered our Ph.D. programs years ago, full of enthusiasm about an academic career, but still in need of training and experience in research and lacking in teaching skills. Many of us think back to our time in the Ph.D. program, recalling the incredible amount of work that was required, and the guidance provided by our supervisors. In the succeeding years, we have paid it forward, and have attempted to emulate our supervisors and provide the same kind of support to our own students. In this editorial, we explore the challenges of Ph.D. student supervision. We have turned to several of our colleagues, who have collectively supervised many Ph.D. students who have gone on to successful academic careers, and have asked them to contribute their thoughts on the Ph.D. supervision process.

To focus our presentation, we asked contributors to reflect on the following series of questions:

- Will you share your Ph.D. guidelines with us?
- Is there anything unique about your school/university, or country, regarding the Ph.D. programs?
- What are your expectations of Ph.D. students? Have your expectations changed over the last 5-10 years—and how?
- What kind of challenges/difficulties do Ph.D. students face, and what is your role as supervisor? What are the typical 'mistakes' that Ph.D. students make?
- What are Ph.D. students' expectations of you (academics in general, as well as the school/university)? Have their expectations changed over the last 5-10 years?
- Will you share a brief positive story of a Ph.D. student you supervised in terms of what attributed to his/her success?
- Will you share a brief 'negative' story of a student you supervised, and how/why the relationship/collaboration deteriorated, and how you handled this situation?

We stated that a few lines for each piece of advice would be sufficient; but also that it would be wonderful if the contributors could share a short story or two to illustrate their points for each of the topics.

This editorial presents summarizes the collective thoughts of our colleagues. The remaining parts of this editorial are structured as follows. We first discuss the tasks of supervision, including how these may need to be adapted depending on student characteristics such as number of years of managerial experience. Next, we explore the challenges faced by Ph.D.

students, and discuss how the capabilities of both student and supervisor can be employed to address these challenges. A later section discusses the role of the supervisor in helping build student capabilities in publishing and teaching. We then turn to a reflection on how one can measure the contribution of a Ph.D. thesis, and a discussion of the benefits of taking on supervisory responsibility. In the conclusion, the co-authors of this editorial each provide a personal retrospective on their own experiences as Ph.D. supervisors.

2. SUPERVISION AND MANAGING THE CAREER TRANSITION

Anyone who has supervised Ph.D. students knows that this is time-consuming work, which requires much flexibility and adaptation to different student capabilities and work styles. Conventional students, entering a Ph.D. program early in their professional careers, have different expectations, expertise, and weaknesses relative to mid-career executives seeking a career change. To supervise effectively, one must be ready to adapt to these differences and anticipate the issues that may arise. In any case, a major responsibility of the supervisor is to oversee the student's transition to a career academic. This section explores the challenges in effective supervision.

2.1 Meetings and Supervision

Supervision and guidance of a Ph.D. student is a major time commitment for both the PhD. student and the supervisor. Business schools will vary on the number or duration of meetings or other requirements, but there is general agreement that close supervision throughout the program is required to get students on track early so that they can reach their thesis goals, and keep them on track.

Matthew Robson notes that some flexibility often is built into the supervisory task, which is designed to keep the student moving forward incrementally and not lose research momentum:

> In terms of guidelines for supervisory arrangements, this is quite loose. In my previous School, Leeds University, students were meant to upload meetings records every month. This was checked by administrators. At Cardiff Business School, the meetings logs are uploaded to feed into a six-monthly progress review. This system is not so prescriptive in terms of how often supervisors would see their student and for how long. It can flex to suit the circumstances, for example, the evolving nature of the student–supervisor partnership and stage of the work. However, the Leeds system had the advantage of creating record logs that the next meeting can launch off, which gives those involved the sense of incremental forward momentum. (Robson)

The requirements at Copenhagen Business School are quite detailed, with several progress milestones along the way. The process requires the Ph.D. student to develop a research proposal

very early and receive feedback from Ph.D. supervisors. Updates are required every six months to ensure the student maintains momentum:

> At CBS, the requirements of the Ph.D. students and the Ph.D. supervisors' roles are outlined and continuously monitored in great details. Within the first three months, the student has to present and have approved a research plan for the entire Ph.D. study with tentative courses listed (30 ECTS in all), when to fulfill teaching/advising obligations, and a research plan (in addition, when/where a three-six months stay abroad takes place. Apart from having a primary supervisor from within CBS (minimum associate professor level), a secondary supervisor is required and can be from CBS or from outside of CBS. The research proposal has to be presented at a faculty meeting within the first six months of enrollment. Every six months, the student enters a progress report online, which is signed off by the primary advisor, the Ph.D. School's department representative, the head of department, and the head of the Ph.D. School in sequential order. Any of aforementioned individuals can request additional information and/or question the entered attained course ECTS, as well as the overall progress of the student's plan. The supervisors meet regularly with the students, who, by the way, is referred to as Ph.D. candidates because they are considered research colleagues and also salaried with a significant pay as a research assistant. There is no requirements in terms of physical meetings, but each six months, the students allocate up to 30 hours to their advisor based on their ongoing engagement (at CBS, all activities are measured in hours). The Ph.D. can be terminated if not sufficient progress is evidenced. That is, if the primary supervisor cannot document sufficient academic and/or administrative progress, the six-month progress report is left unsigned. That signals a potential for termination of the enrollment if the student does not rectify the situation within an additional three months. (Ringberg)

2.2 Transitioning to a Career in Research and Teaching

An important characteristic of any Ph.D. program is transition: from graduate student to career academic with research and teaching responsibilities. Ph.D. supervisors not only guide Ph.D. students in writing and defending their thesis research; they also ensure that students leave the program with a wide range of research skills that they can access in the future. Many research skills and capabilities cross disciplinary boundaries, so multi-disciplinary classes can efficiently be offered. Often, students also will have teaching opportunities, which allows them to develop teaching skills and also claim teaching experience on their resumes. Audhesh Paswan describes this aspect of supervision, as it is handled at University of North Texas, which is typical of many Ph.D. programs in North America:

> At University of North Texas, we have a single Ph.D. program with seven concentrations. This allows us to combine some of the common skills and knowledge across different concentrations and enhance our efficiency in terms of faculty resources, especially in the domain of research tools and techniques. This is based on an assumption that areas such as marketing, management, IT and decision science, and behavioral accounting and finance need a combination of psychometric and econometric skills and capabilities, whereas others like accounting and finance and some from decision science that use more archival data would need more of econometric modeling skills. These integrations, I hope, also help Ph.D. students see some commonality across different concentration areas. I also hope that it helps

break down functional silos and barriers, and develop a cross disciplinary approach to business research. I am sure that a lot of schools follow this structure and philosophy. We also try to emphasize the teaching aspect of an academician's life by getting our students to participate in a teaching seminar and actual teaching activities through teaching assistantship and fellowship assignments. (Paswan)

This transition process is handled differently at Copenhagen Business School, where students become accustomed to life as a career researcher at the outset of their program. While details may vary across departments, the objective is to get Ph.D. students involved early in all faculty activities:

At CBS, Ph.D. students are regarded as research colleagues, which means they participate in academic activities, meetings, outings, and discussions. They also form a Ph.D. union across CBS in which they discuss their general work conditions, their interaction with and support from supervisors, and they take initiatives to useful activities that might advance their academic careers (e.g., invited guest speakers, access to a psychologist, work/life balance, and general course requirements). The Ph.D. life can be stressful, in spite of being well salaried, due to the short duration of the program (i.e., three years) during which the students have to fulfill a number of teaching and course requirements in addition to show research progress and submit the final thesis (typically three publishable academic manuscripts). Each department sets its own requirements in terms of which courses the students need to take. In some departments, there are cohorts that go through a very structured program while in other departments the students can take courses not only at CBS but across European institutions. Similarly, it varies considerably how many students are enrolled within each department, which also determines their work environment and inter-personal dynamics. (Ringberg)

2.3 Supervision of Conventional Ph.D. Students

Most Ph.D. students fall into one of two categories: the conventional student, with strong academic capabilities and possibly some relevant work experience, seeking a career in research and teaching; and the mid-career professional, with years of middle- or senior-level supervisory and managerial experience, who perceives research problems from a practical, decision-making perspective. This section discusses providing guidance for conventional students; the next explores the challenges when supervising experienced professionals.

Ken Peattie provides an interesting starting point, recognizing that conventional students differ in significant ways, and recommending that the supervisor's role can be tailored according to the apparent requirements of the individual student:

My experience in the role of Ph.D. supervisor could be summarized using the 2x2 matrix beloved of marketers, with 'confidence' and 'capability' (relatively speaking, they are all bright) providing the two axes. For the low confidence/high capability student, your primary role is that of cheerleader to stop insecurity preventing progress. For the high confidence/low capability candidate, you act more as guardrail to counter thoughts like 'Of course, CEOs of FTSE companies will want to be interviewed by me!' or 'I'm assuming a 50% response rate for my survey'. For those in the high/high quadrant, you are mostly a

sounding board helping them to articulate their ideas and providing a little guidance, whereas in the low/low quadrant you more play the Jedi Master, contributing motivation, direction, philosophy, (sometimes harsh) lessons, hopefully a good example to follow, and even the odd mind-trick! Working out early on which quadrant a student leans towards can be very helpful in getting your supervision style right. (Peattie)

Echoing these sentiments, Peter Naude stresses the importance of understanding conventional students as individuals, recognizing when to apply pressure and when to back off and allow for student creativity:

As far as I am concerned, it is largely about getting two things right. The first is the selection process, identifying bright, curious, hard-working students (and I have not always got that right!). And then, once they are on board, it is to walk the middle road of not sitting on their shoulders telling them what to do, but also not leaving them feeling so lost that they do not know which way to turn. It is an important balancing act: providing guidance, while allowing and encouraging, autonomy, creativity, and personal investigation. (Naude)

2.4 Supervision of Experienced Professionals

The professional who decides on a mid-career change carries a different set of tools. Unlike the conventional student, the experienced professional has first-hand knowledge of business decisions developed over many years. To best manage these students, John Nicholson advises to focus on theories that has pragmatic applications, allowing the students' wealth of experience to be channeled effectively into their research process. The supervisor should therefore remain open and pragmatic in the selection of research paradigm and method:

Supervision of experienced professionals should differ from that of more conventional Ph.D. students. I believe that the ambition of Ph.D. programs for experienced professionals should be to produce theories that are performative in practice, that is, that drive practices to converge with the theory derived during the period of study (Kelly et al., 2020). Accordingly, supervisors should respect the experience of such students and find ways to inculcate that experience into the research process, rather than seeing this as an unhelpful encumbrance to be erased in order to achieve a value-neutral approach to a subject matter that the student may now much better than the supervisor.

Supervisors should not dominate experienced professionals for rigor, but allow them to bring in their vision of relevance as of at least equal importance to rigor. A key element is to allow research questions to emerge from a practical problem rather than from a traditional gap-spotting method grounded in academic literature. Who is to say that academic incrementalism is in step with practice and that taking inspiration from a practical trajectory could be anything but rewarding for our discipline? Is there not the opportunity here for a democratic cocreation of knowledge between the supervisor and the experienced professional in this arrangement?

Experienced professionals should not be inculcated into a paradigm, potentially that of the supervisor, and then working down from that ontological fixed position to the problem. An alternative is to follow a methodological pluralism (Midgley et al., 2017) that allows for a more pragmatic approach to the choice of methods and methodologies, which nonetheless maintains a strong ontological position. (Nicholson)

Another alternative is for the experienced professionals to maintain their position with their company, where company management and academic supervisor may share supervisory duties, an arrangement that presents challenges, but which may benefit both student and company. This is an option offered at the Copenhagen Business School:

> At CBS, the industrial Ph.D. students spent half their time at CBS and the other half at their company that contributes financially to their salary (often in a 50/50 arrangement). Supervision of industrial Ph.D. students typically is done by a represnetative from the companay and a CBS researcher (who is the primary supervisor). The academic requirements to the academic rigor of the thesis is the same as for normal Ph.D. students, but the industrial students do not have to teach. The focus is to match the academic rigor with an applied and relevant issue that might also benefit the company. At times, the coordination and especialy the intergration of these students into the daily department environment and activities can be logistically challenging and difficult. (Ringberg)

3. CAPABILITIES

The Ph.D. program is challenging for both student and supervisor. This section explores the major challenges faced by Ph.D. students, including unclear expectations and lack of research focus. We discuss how some students handle these challenges, and why others seem to have difficulty overcoming the roadblocks. We also reflect on the characteristics of the Ph.D. supervisor that are most appreciated by students in guiding them through the difficult moments.

3.1 Challenges that Ph.D. Students Face

Regardless of their academic background or work experience, all Ph.D. students face challenges and enter the Ph.D. program with uncertainties. Ph.D. supervisors should anticipate these issues and be prepared to handle them. Perhaps more now than ever before, supervisors take a more active role (both in guiding students and helping them achieve work-life balance) as the expectations of Ph.D. students have intensified over the years. Markus Reihlen notes that:

> Ph.D. students generally expect to receive insightful and timely feedback on their work. Have the expectations changed over the last decades? I think on average yes, they have. Students increasingly ask for how to balance a demanding research project with private life arrangement. They also demand more guidance, as well as feedback through which they hope to reduce uncertainty of their research venture. Highly independent research of students increasingly is replaced by close collaboration and feedback. They also demand more services and support of their Ph.D. research by the universities. (Reihlen)

Reihlen identifies some of the most common challenges confronting Ph.D. students, as they progress through their program:

- *Unrealistic scope of the research project*: This could be the case because there is a lack of focus, a lack of a clear academic conversation the Ph.D. research would like to

contribute to, or a lack of methodological skills that would not allow a rigorous mixed method approach.

- *Unaware how to make a real contribution*: Students sometimes envision to make a study, but do not ask themselves under what conditions this study is truly interesting, engaging, and novel.
- *Unrealistic expectations of what it means to work on Ph.D. research*: Students should be prepared to go on a rollercoaster ride and not a merry-go-round.
- *Bad project management*: In some instances, students do not plan their research well. For instance, they may start to generate data for a cross-sectional study and then change their mind and jump on the process organization studies bandwagon. Yet, they did not adjust their research design towards a process study design. (Reihlen)

Some students will enter the Ph.D. program with a good idea of what they want to study, but this is not case for other students. They may possess a general thought, but have difficulty developing it into a meaningful research question. The supervisor can play a supporting role in the creation of a worthy research study. Audhesh Paswan often recommends to Ph.D. students to think about their own realities and find inspiration there: he calls it a "slice of life" approach:

In my mind, the most daunting challenge confronting Ph.D. students is how to imagine, create, and tell a story. In our seminars, we expose our students to a lot of tools and techniques and 'so and so said this' from the literature. However, we often do not teach them or have a platform that teaches them how to imagine, create, and tell a story. As a result, most of the students turn into technicians and develop a research question based on 'slice of literature', that is, read the literature till the cows come home, and then try to fill a gap in the literature. There is nothing wrong with this approach, except that it often results in a research that may not have much to do with real life. I like to tell my students to develop a research idea based on 'slice of life': look at what is going in our lives, society, and focal business context, and then develop a research question that tries to solve a life problem. Personally, I have had fun with this approach, and my students who take to it love it. I also look at this as the exploitation versus exploration approach. While I agree that we need both, I feel that we more of exploration mindset in our students. (Paswan)

All Ph.D. students know that they will be facing publish-or-perish pressures in their careers, and some may enter the review process for the first time fearfully. Audhesh Paswan reminds the Ph.D. supervisor of the importance of supporting their Ph.D. students through this challenging task and help them learn the ropes for future success:

I believe the second biggest challenge for Ph.D. students is to overcome their fear of failure and the nightmarish review process. In our seminars, we expose our students to all the literature, which are the results of several failed attempts and trial and errors. We do not put the students in a situation where they can fail without paying a heavy price. As a Ph.D. supervisor, I see my role as getting my students to take that first step, that is, put their manuscript in the review process, and be supportive when it comes back rejected or gets a revise and resubmit. Most of my students who work with me get their first manuscript through this process. (Paswan)

Like many other schools, Copenhagen Business School places high publishing expectations on their Ph.D. students, whose thesis' chapters may be three publishable manuscripts tied together with overall implications. Close supervision is required to guide students through this challenging process for the first time, and to ensure that they are on the right path for producing future research on their own:

> At CBS, the challenge is to reframe the Ph.D. students' way of thinking toward producing new research, and not merely consuming, and in addition finding something that contributes significantly to what experienced researchers already are producing in well-regarded journal outlets. That is a task that requires close and continuous interaction between the Ph.D. students and their supervisors. The Danish system is quite demanding on students, as they only get three years to submit their thesis. During this time, they need to take courses (30 ECTS), teach courses (624 working hours), ideally do a research stay abroad, and develop, write, present, and preferably submit three publishable manuscripts for medium- to high-level journals, which are included as part of their thesis, in addition to overarching chapters that ties it all together. It is quite a challenging task given that international Ph.D. students often have four-five years at their disposal. (Ringberg)

Markus Reihlen summarizes many types of challenges faced by Ph.D. students, and outlines the kind of support that can be provided by the Ph.D. supervisors to help students to cope. While some of these challenges pertain specifically to the German university system, many are familiar to academics in Ph.D. programs worldwide. He lists the following categories of challenges and how he personally has dealt with them:

- *Committing Ph.D. students to the ethics of science*: While in general this is not necessarily an issue, I put clear emphasis on ethical principles as laid out by the German Research Foundation. Among them are clear rules concerning co-authorship, methodological, and citation practices, etc. These are important prevention measures.
- *Aligning Ph.D. students' motivation with an interesting topic*: Not every hot topic is a good topic for an individual student. Therefore, a key task for me is to find out and guide students in their venture, especially negotiating the right topic that fits for them and their deeper interests.
- *Dealing with a lack of scientific skills*: This is an issue, but usually less problematic because either I try to skill them by myself—starting with a reading list, meeting to explore interesting topics, etc.—and/or sending them to good Ph.D. courses, conferences, and summer schools.
- *Dealing with personal challenging situations*: Finishing a Ph.D. thesis can become a rollercoaster ride for students. Going on this ride means that students have to learn how to deal with the lows, rejections, and critical feedback, while enjoying the acceptance and positive feedbacks of their work. However, sometimes stress is unrelated to the Ph.D. research, but rather located in particular contextual conditions such as private relational issues or that the students have decided to found their own start-up venture. Conducting these talks as counsellor go beyond the normal supervision.
- *Dealing with a lack of ambition*: A lack of ambition is critical, and this is not always clear from the start. One way of dealing with this is a clear signaling strategy in the beginning and intensive talks before the person is accepted as a Ph.D. student. In the German system, you are not 'simply' accepted into a program, but you have to be

accepted by a specific supervisor before you can enter the program. In addition, a lack of ambition will trigger intensive face-to-face talks and more formal feedbacks that document the lack of engagement.

- *Dealing with non-collaborating practice partners*: Especially students who work in close collaboration with companies, or are financed by their companies, sometimes face challenges. For instance, the company was supposed to be the subject of the empirical study, but in the process is unwilling to do so. As a supervisor, I try to save the topic by arranging talks with the company gatekeeper, which sometimes works, but sometimes, we have to invent a new topic, which does not require company data in order to save the Ph.D. research. (Reihlen)

3.2 Characteristics of Capable Ph.D. Students

Experienced Ph.D. supervisors can reflect on their Ph.D. students over the years, and recognize which ones stood out. What do they look for in a student? Perhaps not surprisingly, many contributors favored ambitious students with positive attitudes who successfully made the transition from graduate student to research colleague. Here are some of the thoughts on this topic:

My expectation of the Ph.D. students are usually threefold:
- *Individual attitudes and skills*: I expect my Ph.D. students to show a great commitment, curious for their field of research, and a high intrinsic motivation. Do they really have the taste of science? In addition, the CV should indicate a high level of commitment to research.
- *Ambitious research*: I expect the students to work with my help on research that is truly ambitious and can make a real impact to the field. The metaphor 'try to reach out for the stars' has been commonly used, although we know that it will not always happen. Yet, this should be the level of ambition.
- *Realistic contextual conditions*: It is important that the Ph.D. research operates under realistic contextual conditions. For instance, I have had a number of students who worked in the industry. Having clear arrangements with the employer that gives students enough time to explore their research topic independently and with the necessary depths is critical. (Reihlen)

I try to accept Ph.D. students with the aspiration to want to be an academic at a good place, which ultimately means to publish well. After a couple of years in the process, these students should 'kick on' and want to work on manuscripts. My style is not to haul them in and force this, but rather is to leave the door ajar. Students should take ownership of matters and the opportunity to use a co-author who has the experience to guide the crafting of one or more manuscripts. Probably, if a student is not kicking on in this way it is a bad sign…

The best students are the ones who can manage the transition seamlessly into being staff members. Good students know their literature, are strong methodologically, and can write. But because they wanted to be academics throughout their Ph.D. journey, they have learnt broadly about the profession. As such, there is no hiatus in their research when they take their first job. This said, sometimes such students get a first job that involves too much teaching emphasis. They should know how to protect their margins if this is the case. In sum, positive stories tend to involve students who mature quickly as professionals. (Robson)

I expect Ph.D. students learn to become an independent scholars/researchers. My best students will have at least two manuscripts accepted while doing their Ph.D. research. (Brodie)

Also, many collaborators reflected positively on students who showed an ability to work independently, and to take an idea and run with it:

My Ph.D. students, the ones who opt to work for me, happen to be more independent and do not like too much of hand holding. In turn, I like to treat them as adults and not mollycoddle them. I respect their crazy ideas and help them develop their own ideas. Some of my students still come back after several years and ask me to work with them. I can think of three students in the last five years who asked if I would work with them, and would I give them a topic that they can work on. I turned around and said that is a bad idea. I asked them what they were interested in. When they started talking, I could see that they were not sure to start with but became very excited. I asked them to tell me a story. In turn, I just doodle and give back drawings of crazy models. They took those crazy drawings and ran with it. We went back and forth, and eventually they all ended up getting a publication in *Industrial Marketing Management*. (Paswan)

My first Ph.D. student had some negative experiences with other faculty and ended up with me, as last resort. I took the student reluctantly, but he ended up being great, out of sheer determination. The student was not the best trained initially, but in the end was able to learn by doing and became fairly successful. (Luna)

My latest Ph.D. student is a very positive and also unusual example. She worked for five years in the industry, in the end as a senior product manager for a large multinational company. She started her Ph.D. program with a scholarship, which paid only a fraction of her former salary. By blending her curiosity in science with her industry background, she became a great and very valuable person of my research team. She finished her Ph.D. with a *Journal of Management Studies* publication (as first author), won the best Ph.D. paper award from the Research Methods Division of the Academy of Management and is now shortlisted for the EGOS best Ph.D. thesis award in 2020. She will now continue her academic career at Leuphana. (Reihlen)

3.3 Characteristics of Less Capable Ph.D. Students

What, then, about the cases where the Ph.D. student's experience was not as positive? Are there signs that can be recognized early, and is there anything that can be done by the Ph.D. supervisor? Typical problem areas include lack of effective collaboration, difficulties with English as a second language, or an inability to maintain focus after a promising start, sometimes because of personal reasons:

It is not so much the case that the collaboration deteriorates. It is more likely that the collaboration never really fired on all cylinders in the first instance—it did not kick on. A Ph.D. student needs to be good at each step of the way. I am not familiar with a case where the literature review, conceptualization, and fieldwork were accomplished with aplomb, and then the work deteriorated. Usually, the signs are there. This said, sometimes you get a student who is absolutely brilliant at specific aspects of a study. Probably, such a student

has real value as a member of a high-quality publishing team that includes complementary colleagues, although not in terms of producing sole-authored work. (Robson)

We have international Ph.D. students who have English as a second language. Learning to write well for these students is challenging. (Brodie)

The main challenge is that Ph.D. students may lose focus throughout their years as students. Five years is a long time for an adult person, and life has a way of derailing initial plans. Divorces, abusive relationships, deaths, all kinds of things can happen. The result is that the investment we put into a student may not pay off with a good placement in the end. That is totally outside of our control, though. (Luna)

One of my Ph.D. students started on an externally funded research project. He was very ambitious, skilled, and well socially embedded in our research team. A first manuscript was successfully published, and it looked like that things would continue that way. Yet, in his private life things radically changed (I keep it here in abstract terms), and this disrupted his Ph.D. program. For three years, we met regularly, yet more for counselling than research guidance meetings. Unfortunately, the research has not advanced and is likely to be terminated soon. It started out as a very promising research program with a highly talented person, and then life took a wrong turn, and we could not set the program on the right track again. (Reihlen)

A Ph.D. student who had a lot of promise ended up dropping the ball and would disappear for long periods of time. He did not accept suggestions very well, and ended up not publishing any of his thesis work. He claims he ended up hating his thesis topic, which probably had something to do with his lack of follow through. (Luna)

I have had a Ph.D. student who did all right while in the program. However, after graduation and getting his first job, he fell into the trap of 'I will do research because I have to.' This led to that person getting into a tight spot in his three-year evaluation. Thankfully, he woke up, reached out to me, and we were able to salvage the situation. That particular student will probably not be a stellar researcher, but he will probably be fine. Such people are adults and must find their own place in life that they are comfortable with. My role is to help them find that place in life. (Paswan)

Procrastination, perfectionism, occasional inability to deal with life's pressures, and other human failures can also inflict damage on a Ph.D. student's progress. If the Ph.D. supervisor can recognize such issues early and take action, perhaps the student can get back on track:

A common mistake is to wait too long to start a research program. These days, it seems like most of the Ph.D. students see the need to hit the floor running and get started on research during their first year, but it is hard to get the students up to speed on the literature and methods fast enough, unless they come to us with some research background. As a result, we really try to admit new students only if they have previous research backgrounds. (Luna)

Serving both in the capacity of the department's Ph.D. representative and as Ph.D. supervisor for numerous Ph.D. students, I have experienced many types of students. The procrastinator, the blame others, the perfectionist, and the realist types. At times, you come across a Ph.D. student who possesses several of these types (excluding the realist type), which makes it next to impossible for the interaction, as well as the Ph.D. research to end

on a positive note. Each type requires very different strategies from the supervisor. Yet, in spite of extensive efforts by supervisors, I have yet to see any successful outcomes from the 'blame others' type. The next in lines are the procrastinator, the perfectionist, and the realist in terms of being successful. I have experienced successful outcomes in all of these cases, but with an inclining likelihood toward the realist students (who realistically assesses their chances for fulfilling the requirements and finishing up). I have personally experienced all four types, and it does feel uphill when one recognizes too late in the process what one is up against as supervisor requiring having to make an assessment of whether to proceed or consider it sunk costs. In addition, there are some students who, when under pressure, experience sudden mental black outs, depression, borderline personality, etc. and require professional psychological intervention to get back on track. (Ringberg)

3.4 Characteristics of Good Ph.D. Supervisors

So what is a good Ph.D. supervisor? Certainly, it is not a one-size-fits-all position, as some Ph.D. students may thrive under one supervisor and be a very poor match for another. Laura Peracchio talks about the 3Cs: Cultivate well-being, Create your team, and Connect with community. Audhesh Paswan addresses this point, noting that some students will require more guidance, while others will be fine with a lighter touch. He implies that it is up to us to recognize and adapt to these differences:

> In the last 5-10 years, I do not think the expectation of our Ph.D. students have changed. I still feel that they expect us to mentor them in both research and teaching. The level and type of mentoring desired may differ from person to person. Some may expect a lot of hand holding, while others like to be gently guided and nudged, and not taken by hand through every corner. (Paswan)

Peter Naude provides details on the kind of guidance the Ph.D. supervisor needs to provide, including academic guidance, network building, and emotional support, noting that this work can be a major time commitment. He also stresses the need to challenge the Ph.D. student to keep the on the right path and making progress:

> A good Ph.D. supervisor should provide conceptual and methodological guidance and advisement; offer guidance in terms of the process (e.g., where to start, what to focus on, how to move on to the empirical sections of the Ph.D. research, literature review, and conceptual grounding); open up for networking opportunists (putting the student in touch with experts in terms of the topic, as well as methodologies); open up for networking and relationship-building opportunities with other students; respond to the students' questions; and, finally, directing the students to the appropriate resources… It is a time-consuming exercise. Do not think you can do it on a half-time basis. You have to be committed to the process. You have to offer regular contact and availability, as well as emotional support… A supervisor should not be afraid of challenge students, for example in terms of their rate of progress. (Naude)

Peter Naude shared some of the feedback he has received over the years from Ph.D. students he supervised. The comments showed that he had provided value in many different ways, for which students were very appreciative. These include:

- *Being a mentor*: providing support and help beyond expectation.
- *Knowledge of the subject*: asking challenging questions and giving direction.
- *Networking*: introducing academic colleagues, encouraging presentation at conferences, which provided experience and aided in further development of research ideas.
- *Getting published*: helping in the preparation of manuscripts for submission and throughout the review process.
- *Attention*: Always giving full attention, being available for in-person or Skype meetings, traveling for face-to-face meetings with students who were studying abroad; quick turnaround time for feedback.
- *Creativity*: Always encouraging of student creativity, avoiding judgmental comments, letting the student decide on research direction.
- *Encouragement*: Providing positive commentary, but being ready to correct when necessary.
- *Gatekeeping*: Helping the student through administrative issues, such as arranging for a work-abroad opportunity, cutting red tape on behalf of the student.
- *Collaboration*: Being more of a collaborator than manager; developing ideas jointly and encouraging research direction.
- *Reliability*: Showing total commitment to the student, providing timely feedback and reliable advice.
- *Innovativeness*: Ready to identify innovative frameworks or theories that the students might be able to integrate into their work, while not diminishing the students' own creative contribution.
- *The right amount of guidance*: An experienced researcher might be too passionate about their chosen subject and oversteer the student's research; this temptation is avoided and guidance is offered which is sensitive to the student's interests and passions.
- *Coaching*: Sound advice on the selection of external examiners, and suggestions on how to prepare for the thesis defense and not be intimidated.

4. PUBLISING AND TEACHING

During their program, Ph.D. students develop essential skills in conducting research, academic writing and publishing, and effective teaching. In this section, our contributors offer their thoughts on the role of the Ph.D. supervisor in developing publication skills, while ensuring that the Ph.D. program provides opportunity to grow as an effective communicator in the classroom.

4.1 Monograph vs. Publishable Articles

Once the Ph.D. thesis is defended successfully (and sometimes even before that), the Ph.D. student has to convert the research into one or more publishable manuscripts. Ph D. supervisors can play a major role in helping their students get their work published in the best possible (journal) outlets. As Matthew Robson explains, this supervisory task may be particularly challenging in a more traditional setting, where the student is expected to produce one large

piece of research (as opposed to the newer trend of requiring three chapters, which are meant to be distinct research manuscripts):

> Cardiff Business School seems to be a typical UK place in how it treats its Ph.D. students and program. Students ultimately are tasked with producing one large document, rather than a set of individual manuscripts. This has pros and cons. The pro is that such a magnum opus type Ph.D. can really advance the state of the art—it is amazing what a student can learn and achieve with the time and a liberal word count. The downside is that it is difficult to then turn such a piece of work into publications. Students are not developing skills to write in the most succinct and efficient way possible, and they are not focusing on how to craft publishable manuscripts. Going from 80,000 words down to 6,000 words is a tall order even for experienced academics. I like the three-/four-manuscript Ph.D. model that some other academic systems follow. Still, this can raise issues with a lack of thematic focus. The storyline that is meant to unite the manuscripts commonly does not hold up. (Robson)

In today's academic work environment, the expectations of graduating Ph.D. students are higher than ever. The supervisors' role is even more critical in this environment: they need to set up realistic expectations, and also help the student establish a strong track record upon graduation that leaves the student poised for future publishing success:

> Modern Ph.D. students face the depressing realization that (1) they must publish to get a good job that gives them the academic freedom to continue as active researchers, and (2) scholarly journal space is at a premium, as review funnels have become clogged with increasing submissions from all parts of the world. To get a job, a student now needs an early publication, coupled with medium-term work that shows a quality trajectory. For early career researchers, the learning never really stops. It is no longer the case that you can do good Ph.D. research and be set for the next five years. (Robson)

> Expectations keep increasing. The timeline has accelerated because of the need to start projects early on. We expect Ph.D. students to have two-three essays (three is the normal expectation). We also hope they will have at least a publication or a manuscript in advanced review at a top journal. (Luna)

Article publication and job placement, ultimately, are intertwined. The Ph.D. students are under time constraints to complete their thesis and publish articles, develop teaching skills, and meet their responsibilities in their personal lives. Ph.D. supervisors can only do so much, but they can provide opportunities for their students to develop their skills, and eventually create and communicate knowledge themselves. Hans Baumgartner and Audhesh Paswan offer their thoughts on this point:

> I think the main challenge these days is to find a good job in academia. This means that you have to start working on publications as soon as you join a Ph.D. program, so you have publications by the time you go on the market. I do not think that necessarily is a good thing because Ph.D. students do not have the time to take courses and read widely. (Baumgartner)

> We would like our Ph.D. students to become future change agents through knowledge creation and transfer, and, even more important, capability developers. Accordingly, we

expect our students, at least in the area of marketing to have (a) at least one journal article and (b) taught a couple of classes by the time they go into the job market. (Paswan)

4.2 Building Teaching Skills

While much of the supervisor's time is taken up in providing research and writing guidance, many universities provide opportunities for Ph.D. students not only to teach, but also to develop their teaching skills through seminars or courses in pedagogy. Initiatives of this type ensure that the students have built up the required capabilities and is ready to take on teaching duties.

The teaching capability enhancement part is taken care of through our teaching seminars and the Teaching Assistantship/Fellowship assignments. The research expectation is taken care of in our research tools seminars, as well as seminars that focus on major and/or minor areas. For example, in my business-to-business seminar, one assignment is to have Ph.D. students develop a publishable quality manuscript, and most students do eventually end up with either a conference or a journal article with a focus on business-to-business marketing. Several of my students have published in *Industrial Marketing Management* because of this initiative. This also boosts a student's confidence. I also encourage the students in my seminar to volunteer for reviewing for a journal and/or a conference. (Paswan)

At CBS, we require that full-time employed Ph.D. students (who are paid as research assistants) contribute with 624 hours of teaching, advising (e.g., of master's theses), and/or co-examiner (oral/written). The students are not (as of yet) required to take a course in pedagogics and thus often have to do 'the best they can'. Most often, it goes quite well, although at times the students end up dredging the experience, which can be quite intimidating when standing in front of 100+ undergraduate students in a big auditorium. Teaching academic material is demanding, as it requires the ability to go beyond the textbook material to make the material come alive with other examples while providing additional academic depth. It is a sink or swim experience, but surprisingly many students survive the process and do quite well (based on teaching ratings). It is not an ideal situation, but with so many other chores at hand, as well as serving their dues (financially to CBS), it is probably the best set-up. I had similar experiences when I was a Ph.D. student at Penn State where I taught undergraduate courses. (Ringberg)

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUPERVISION

In this section, we gather some of our contributors' overall reflections on the supervision process. How can we assess the contribution to knowledge made by our Ph.D. students? How should one handle the student who is not planning a traditional academic career? And what are the long-term benefits of taking on supervisory responsibility?

5.1 Contributions of a Ph.D. Thesis

Once the Ph.D. thesis has been defended, how can its contribution to knowledge be measured? John Nicholson suggests a novel way for the Ph.D. student to assess the type(s) of radical or incremental contribution that has been made. This technique can be used to

enumerate the expected contributions in the introductory section, then to close the circle in the concluding section to show how these contributions have been achieved.

> One of the key measures of whether a thesis is awarded is the affirmation that a contribution to knowledge has been made. (For a comprehensive framework for writing contribution sections in journals, see Nicholson et al., 2018). However, I believe we should number contribution claims in the same way that we number objectives and questions. Why do we leave contributions vague when these are the essential measures of a Ph.D. thesis' quality? For example, a grid could be placed in introduction sections relative to the two main contribution types, that is, incremental (gap-spotting) and revelatory (assumption challenging). In an introduction, and in a simple table, the Ph.D. student could number each contribution, stating in which section of the literature review the gap is exposed or the assumption identified; then where the thesis' material fills that gap, or challenges that assumption; and, finally, that this table is returned to in the conclusions to complete the loop. These leaves an examiner few places to go in terms of the communication of the thesis' contribution, leaving only its substance to be challenged. (Nicholson)

John Nicholson also reminds Ph.D. supervisors that one should not discount publications in non-traditional targets, such as trade journals, especially when working with experienced professionals. For this category of Ph.D. students, a publication that is widely read by practitioners in their field may be viewed as just as impactful (if not more so) than a publication in an A-journal. In fact, the experienced professional's objective in entering the Ph.D. program may be to return to industry with newfound understanding and knowledge. A good supervisor is receptive to these different goals and will be willing to adapt to them:

> Ph.D. supervisors should accept that the ambitions of experienced professionals may not be the same as those of a career academic. An engaged supervisor should accept that impact in such students' community of practice may be a greater drive than publishing in highly ranked journals and building citations. Engaged supervisors should not see publications in trade journals as 'wasting' good material. Equally, engaged supervisors should not see their role as assimilating a practitioner into academia where the student may wish to return to practice as a better practitioner. (Nicholson)

5.2 To Supervise or Not to Supervise

As a final topic, our contributors weighed in on the responsibilities of the Ph.D. supervisor, and what one is 'getting into' when agreeing to serve as a Ph.D. thesis committee chairperson or member. The job is time-consuming and is perhaps not for everybody. However, it can be very rewarding for those who want to see their graduates make a real difference in the academic community. A further benefit is that some will become co-authors, possibly for years to come:

> I expect my students to go on to become research active scholars. Simply, I expect 'to bump into them on the conference circuit'. This is my base expectation, and I have not changed it over the years. Our responsibility is to leave something behind. This can be taken as advancing knowledge through publishing, but also it involves building the academy. Hence, I have supervised 17 students to completion thus far, which is a high number for someone with just over two decades of academic experience. There are professors who do very little

supervision, viewing this as a distraction from their core business of publishing few, good manuscripts with other senior academics and professing generally. I won't criticize that approach too much. Each to their own. (Robson)

Although I have served on the committees of many Ph.D. students over the years, I have only been the main advisor for a relatively small number. Over the last 20 years or so, I have increasingly become interested in methodological issues related to survey research, and we do not have a lot of students who are interested in this topic and it is probably not a good topic for students if they want to find a tenure-track position. Almost all the students that I have worked with have exceeded my expectations, and I have worked with most of them long after they left Penn State. (Baumgartner)

Those who undertake Ph.D. supervision need to be aware of the time commitment and level of bureaucracy, which can vary by university or host country. They should be aware of the bureaucratic requirements, which can be quite strict:

Ph.D. advising at CBS represents less of supervision and more of a collegial process during which the supervisors are rewarded with hours (max 30 per semester) by the Ph.D. students based on their active contribution to the Ph.D. process. Obviously, supervisors do not take on students due to the additional hours (which count toward their own 840 hours of yearly obligations), but the opportunity to develop a productive collaboration that benefits both the student's and the supervisor's publication records. The students have the upper hand in terms of deciding whether they will change advisor during the process, whether they will change topic of the Ph.D. thesis, etc. In fact, I have seen students whose salary has been financed by a grant attainted by a faculty, request and get another faculty person and keep the salary part of the grant, to the great frustration of the grant holder. That is part of Danish law. We have had several students who have changed supervisor mid-stream, but we try to amend the situation such that any manuscripts the supervisor has contributed to will include the supervisor as one of the authors. This is not an ideal situation for the supervisor. On the other hand, the student could end up with a supervisor (who might have been recommended by the department when accepted into the program) who is a bad fit, in which case the department's Ph.D. representative and head of department will try to find another person. The collaboration between the supervisors and the Ph.D. students is both based on a legal arrangement (Danish law) and a moral arrangement, which involves a fair give-and-take by all parties involved. Most of times, it goes quite well, but at times, a resolution might require quite some work and involve multiple administrative processes and time. (Ringberg)

6. CONCLUSIONS

After having considered the comments of our contributors, this editorial's co-authors took the time to reflect on their own experiences as Ph.D. supervisors, and our role in guiding our students and responding to their requirements.

As a Ph.D. supervisor, I expect that Ph.D. students are critical thinkers who also are interested, curious, and willing to put in the time it takes to produce academic work, and last, but not least, willing to entertain advice I provide to their research path going forward. It is quite discouraging to spend time and effort guiding students with very relevant advice, only to realize that they either did not grasp the depth of the advice, or that they still want to go ahead with their idea without structure or hope of any contribution to the literature.

That said, I expect students to engage critically with what I say, and, of course, appreciate if they constructively revise and further improve such advice.

It can be discouraging when students 'think they know best' and continue down the path against advice without being able to substantiate any academic support for their plan. It has only happened once with a colleague who decided that he/she was not able or willing to provide the necessary support this student apparently needed. It turned out that the next supervisor had the same problem and also ended up opting out, still without the student recognizing this being his/her issue. I have very much enjoyed the collaboration and back-and-forth discussions with students about their research, which often turned in to a shared publication of articles and even books.

I do expect to be a co-author of my student's manuscript when submitted to a journal provided, of course, that I have contributed to the overall content at a level similar to when I engage in collaborative research projects with other colleagues.

In one case, I entered as supervisor after the previous supervisor left. Here, I only helped change the format and structure from a three-manuscript submission to a monograph. In this case, I did not contribute to the content, only to the structural changes, and did not co-author later work based on the thesis.

On a more foundational level, I expect the students to have sufficient maturity to be in charge of their Ph.D. process, so I do not have to be the controlling (i.e., supervising) force that requests ongoing meetings and deliveries beyond the semi-annually requirements although in some cases it has been necessary. More broadly, I try to be compassionate when needed, as well as have patience. I would rather err on this side than being too authoritarian or rigid, as I think, ultimately speaking, part of the Ph.D. process requires the students to be responsible for reaching the end goal. This is probably very different from the German model!

That said, it is not easy to determine how good a student is from the onset, and it can lead to a situation where neither I, as the supervisor, or the student benefits much from the entire Ph.D. process. Thus, it might be useful with more rigorous admission processes to save everyone from only later finding out that achievement of a Ph.D. is not realistic for the student. In the U.S. many universities rely extensively on graduate admission tests (e.g., GRE, SAT, or GMAT), which I believe have been shown to correlate the best among a range of other predictive variables (e.g., GPA, motivation letter, research proposal, etc.) with the potential for successful completion.

More generally, I find it intriguing and inspiring to interact with the vast majority of my students with whom I often engage in quite close academic collaborations. In some cases, it has led to long-lasting academic collaborations and friendships.

What students expect from me vary depending on their particular training, personality, and research topics. Most of the students I have worked with appreciated my active engagement in helping them refine and develop their research topics, and also me being part of two of their three thesis manuscripts (the third has to be single authored). They typically have cherished our ongoing and more informal interaction, in contrast to more strictly 'planned ahead' interactions (although some personality types and perhaps younger students might benefit from more structure). The students also appreciate to be shown compassion/sensitivity during stressful times. We have all been there, and it is only human to feel out of sorts during a Ph.D. process, and they may request some personal advice on how to handle such situations. (Ringberg)

I believe that Ph.D. students need to be curious, critical, and creative (Lindgreen et al., 2001). Although Ph.D. supervisors have gone through a Ph.D. program themselves and subsequently published in academic journals, students soon should know more about the

intricacies of their chosen topic than do their supervisor. In contrast, the supervisors should be able to provide guidance that is more general in nature, for example, suggestions on how to identify original and courageous ideas; how to collaborate with practitioners; and how to undertake cross-disciplinary research. If the students need to apply for research funding, the supervisors also can provide sound advice from their own research-funding experience. Similarly, because the supervisors have a past record of publishing in academic journals, they are able to guide the student on how to develop a conceptual framework, to write up the methodology, to present and discuss research findings, and, generally, to frame a manuscript.

In addition to these three personality characteristics, students should demonstrate independence, energy, and determination. Equally important is that the students have self-discipline, persistency, and organizational skills. Put it on the rocker, the supervisors already have a Ph.D. degree whereas the students do not. Thus, students need to mobilize all their energy and determination, make the best of all their intelligence, knowledge, and skills, and, ultimately, find their wow factor that will enable them to go through three to five years of incredible hard work.

When supervisors find a student (or *vice versa*) with the above personality characteristics, building blocks are in place for a fruitful research collaboration because experience (in research and supervision) has been paired up with creativity, energy, and determination. What could be better than to have highly motivated students who write up, for example, their thoughts on an original and courageous idea and outlines possible avenues for future research on that idea? Such shared documents between supervisors and their students allow them to meet as equals early on in the Ph.D. program. Oftentimes, the research collaboration between a supervisor and a student continues long after the student has graduated! And in some cases, a former supervision turns into a friendship. (Lindgreen)

The Ph.D. student enters the program as a graduate student, and is familiar with graduate-student activities (attending classes, writing manuscripts, and taking exams). The first couple of semesters in the Ph.D. program will be familiar ground. By the time of the thesis defense, however, students have transitioned into a junior researcher, capable of identifying a research topic, conducting the research, and publishing the results. The graduate student skills may get the student to the ABD (all-but-dissertation) stage, and no further. One of the roles of the supervisor, and indeed the entire Ph.D. program, is to manage this transition so that the student acquires the skills to succeed as a career academic. Different schools do this differently, but at Temple's Fox School and many others, the student will be assigned to a mentor when entering the Ph.D. program. This assignment is based on general student areas of interest, and as the student progresses, it may become clear that another mentor's research interests are a closer match, in which case the student can change. (Often, the student will not switch, and the mentor becomes the thesis supervisor. But from Day 1, the students will have someone they can work and share ideas with.) Working with the mentor, the student begins roughing out a research progress report in the first year, gradually getting this into the form of a required research proposal. This process eases the transition from term-paper-writing graduate student to independent-thinking researcher.

As my colleagues pointed out earlier, Ph.D. programs attract both conventional students and experienced professionals, and these two groups are in many ways mirror images of each other. Conventional students are knowledgeable and excited about conceptual models and analytical techniques, but lack much business experience; experienced professionals can formulate a realistic practical problem easily based on their years of experience, but may have difficulty creating a satisfactory conceptual model. The supervisor needs to recognize the individual strengths, be aware of where the weaknesses will appear, and be

prepared to help the student overcome weaknesses. In working with students with 20 years of senior management experience, I start almost immediately with helping them build a sound conceptual model. Often, they will build a model that is really more like a 10-year research agenda, and the challenge is to get them to focus on the part that will make a good academic contribution and will become the basis of the thesis. The rest can come later!

Finally, one needs to be very sensitive to individual differences in work style. Our collaborators spoke of the need to find a balance between too much and not enough supervision, and that has been my experience. Some students thrive when left alone, with a rough idea of what research to look up, and will do most of the work on time with the occasional check-in with the supervisor. Others will make no progress in this environment. The supervisor may need to give some students explicit, monthly deadlines for every step of the Ph.D. research, and hold the student to those deadlines. The constant pressure, which is unnecessary and even distracting for some, might be a requirement for others to meet deadlines and ultimately pass. (Di Benedetto)

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