



INTERPERSONAL ISSUES

Interpersonal skills are central to the supervision process. Supervision needs change over the course of the dissertation and detecting and responding to the changing needs of the student characterises good supervision (Nulty, Kiley & Myers, 2009). Further, picking up on cues that a student is experiencing problems enables issues to be dealt with in a timely manner (Manathunga 2005). Students also view supervisor responsiveness, guidance and support when facing issues as central to meeting their needs and advancing learning engagement (Brydon & Flynn, 2013).

The increased growth and diversity of students undertaking dissertations presents challenges in establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships between supervisors and students (Hammond, Ryland, Tennant & Boud, 2010). Based on interviews with doctoral supervisors, Hammond et al (2010) noted great variability in interpersonal relationships between supervisors and students in terms of the degree of support and involvement in the personal lives of students.

Interpersonal relationships can also be the source of problems in a supervisory relationship. Gunnarsson, Jonasson and Billhult (2013) identified interpersonal relationships as one of five categories of disagreements between students and supervisors, noting the role of personality differences, emotions and preconceptions. The dual supervisory roles of supporting the student while demanding work to an acceptable standard can strain interpersonal relationships between supervisor and student.

References

- Brydon, K., & Flynn, C. (2013). Expert Companions? Constructing a Pedagogy for Supervising Honours Students. *Social Work Education*, (ahead-of-print), 1-16.
- Gunnarsson, R., Jonasson, G., & Billhult, A. (2013). The experience of disagreement between students and supervisors in PhD education: A qualitative study. *BMC Medical Education*, 13, 134. doi:10.1186/1472-6920-13-134.
- Hammond, J., Ryland, K., Tennant, M., & Boud, D. (2010). Building research supervision and training across Australian Universities. *University of Technology, Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council*.





Manathunga, C. (2005). Early warning signs in postgraduate research education: A different approach to timely completions. *Teaching in Higher Education* 10, 219–33.

Nulty, D., Kiley, M., & Meyers, N. (2009). Promoting and recognising excellence in the supervision of research students: an evidence-based framework. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 693-707.

