



MOTIVATION

Student Perspective

I'm working with other students on a project closely related to my supervisor's area of expertise. It's not a project that initially I was interested in. And when it's a topic that you're not that interested in, it also makes a difference in how much motivation you yourself have. I mean, initially starting the project, it really was something I wasn't all that enthusiastic about, so I was like, "Ugh." Doing the lit review, it was a bit harder to get motivated. But I think as the project's progressed we've all settled down with the area and we're a bit more interested. At the start we were feeling a little bit disappointed but we got over it quite quickly. I think my supervisor still has that mentality that we're not that interested in the topic. When we get told off for something she will often start with, "I know this is not your first choice of project ...". I think somewhere she's still thinking about this.

I know one supervision meeting I felt underprepared because I didn't quite have my head around what I had to do for that week and I was busy with all my other assignments and everything like that and I just – I went to supervision feeling horrible and dreading it because I didn't want to disappoint my supervisor and I basically just told her. I was like, "Oh, I haven't done that much work on my dissertation this week past and I'm really sorry but I don't have much to bring to the table this week". I was just lacking in motivation and I didn't have anything to say about the dissertation.





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New Supervisor Perspective (2)

I co-supervise a student who, how do I put it tactfully, who has come from a situation where she just doesn't seem to have the cognitive background to complete an honours dissertation. She is having trouble moving from the undergraduate mindset to post-graduate mindset and is railing against, is fighting against being asked to do some research, self-directed work. We're having challenges getting that person to move from that.

I find some of the students are focusing too much on their other course work, at the expense of their dissertation research. They do pretty much bugger all about their research project. I have one now that I'm supervising and every time he comes he says "I haven't done much, you know. I had to do this and this for my other units, so I haven't done much, but I'll do it next week" and then next week we have the same story.

At the end of the day if you've got a student who is not doing anything and basically being lazy then that's their problem. If they're struggling to understand it for some other reason then obviously you're more inclined to step in and see if you can help, but if they're just being lazy, then that's their responsibility.





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Coordinator Perspective

A common problem brought to me by supervisors is what to do when a student seems to lack motivation. So I had a supervisor say just this morning, "I've problems with the student progressing". Many of the students don't want to do research, they want to be learning skills, and if they don't engage with their research project and they don't feel that they're getting anything from it or feel it's worthwhile, or don't feel ownership of it then it's very hard to supervise if they're not well engaged.

Sometimes if a supervisor is experiencing difficulty with a student I'll talk to the student myself. You know, you've always gotta play good cop, bad cop. And if the student has a supervisor, that supervisor has to be the good cop as they have to take on that role of continuing to work with students very closely. So, sometimes if a student is in trouble, I will come in with my role as coordinator and say, "Pull your socks up, get your act into gear or you will not continue".

Sometimes the lack of progress is due to the prioritising of other commitments. Some of our students have got families. Some are mature age students as well, so they're working, they've got families, they've got their dissertation, and guess which takes the lowest priority? Part of my strategy is to give supervisors hints, or tips, or whatever on how to deal with that, and I guess being fairly tough about people getting things in on time. It's very easy to be kind of overwhelmed by people's lives and go, "Okay. We'll see what we can do about putting in defers and things like that", and they just get really taken for a ride, and I learned that the hard way. And I think it's helpful for the students, too. I really do. If you give them deadlines, they may not meet those deadlines, but they're gonna come pretty close, much closer than if they felt as if there wasn't gonna be any.

