



## PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR DISINTEREST

### Relevant Literature

The majority of new supervisors list subject expertise as an essential requirement for supervising dissertations (McMichael, 1993) and supervisor subject expertise is also highly valued by undergraduate dissertation students (Todd, Bannister & Clegg, 2004). However, Rowley and Slack (2004) note that while ideally undergraduate dissertation supervisors supervise students on topics within their own area of expertise, often they are required to supervise in areas in which they are not specialists, sometimes driven by workload requirements (Armstrong, Allinson & Hayes, 2004). This situation is likely to increase as the number of students completing dissertations increase (Marshall, 2009). Further, where students are given freedom to choose their own topics, supervisors may be 'forced' to supervise across a wide range of areas (Marshall, 2009). Where the supervisor does not have subject expertise, the role of the supervisor may include providing access to research settings; project, methodological and writing advice; and support and mentoring. The supervisor will also need to develop their own subject knowledge (Rowley & Slack, 2004).

Research on supervision in doctoral dissertations highlights the importance of subject expertise as a factor contributing to student satisfaction and progress (Ives & Rowley, 2005). Ives and Rowley (2005) noted the difficulties one student faced in obtaining useful feedback when the supervisor was not familiar with the subject area. However, general knowledge of the area rather than specific topic-expertise was seen as satisfactory with the interpersonal relationship between the supervisor and student viewed as more important (Ives & Rowley, 2005; Fraser & Matthews, 1999).

### References

Armstrong, S. J., Allinson, C. W., & Hayes, J. (2004). The effects of cognitive style on research supervision: A study of student-supervisor dyads in management education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 3, 41–63. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40214230>





Fraser, R., & Mathews, A. (1999). An evaluation of the desirable characteristics of a supervisor.

*Australian Universities' Review*, 42, 5-7. Retrieved from

<http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf1999/fraser.html>

Ives, G., & Rowley, G. (2005). Supervisor selection or allocation and continuity of supervision: Ph.D. students' progress and outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30, 535-555.

doi:10.1080/03075070500249161

Marshall, S. (2009). Supervising projects and dissertations. In H. Fry, S. Ketteridge & S. Marshall (Eds.), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education: Enhancing academic Practice* (3rd ed.) (pp. 150-165). New York, NY: Routledge.

McMichael, P. (1993). Starting up as supervisors: The perceptions of newcomers in postgraduate supervision in Australia and Sri Lanka. *Studies in Higher Education*, 18, 15-26.

doi:10.1080/03075079312331382428

Rowley, J. & Slack, F. (2004). What is the future for undergraduate dissertations? *Education and Training*, 46, 176-181. Retrieved from <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/4/>

Todd, M., Bannister, P., & Clegg, S. (2004). Independent inquiry and the undergraduate dissertation: Perceptions and experiences of final-year social science students. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 29, 335-355. doi:10.1080/0260293042000188285

