3.4.4 Supervision

In this section, we focus on PhD supervision, but much of what follows can be applied in the Master's context – the principal differences being the scope and the duration of the research project.

Supervision is a form of teaching that ideally is linked to your own research interests, as Catherine describes here in relation to a Master's supervision:

> I had sole supervision …last summer of an MSc student, who did a very good dissertation, on my topic…it was the first time I'd had someone who was …doing something that was very directly related. It was really a very nice experience …we both really got quite a buzz out of what he was discovering, and he did such a nice piece of work.

Brookeye talks about the intrinsic motivation in a slightly different way:

> You need to [think] …I'm not just interested in saving this particular species, I'm interested in what is it about the species that makes it so vulnerable?' …that is something I would want to pass on to students as a training perspective and also …maintain myself.

Many institutions have guidelines to support academics becoming supervisors. For example, you may be required to undertake successful supervision at Master's level before progressing to PhD supervision or first time supervisors may need to pair with an experienced co-supervisor. Most universities also offer workshops or online resources to provide guidance.

Co-supervision can be particularly helpful for new supervisors as Trudi notes:
> I'm co-supervising, and I think that's important …for a beginning academic to be solely responsible …that's just ridiculous, but to be given the opportunity to co-supervise with a very experienced supervisor is…a huge learning …you actually …see another style.

Co-supervision is also a good strategy to support candidates with many universities encouraging or requiring co-supervision. Co-supervisors may come from within or beyond your department, and may include collaboration with other academic institutions or professionals from the non-academic sector. In all cases, it is important to agree the nature of the co-supervisory relationship, communicate regularly and ensure that you have a plan to handle any disagreements.