3.4.4.1 What the doctoral supervision research tells us: Some guidelines

We often supervise based on our own experience of being a doctoral candidate. However, doctoral supervision is well researched, so it is easy to generate practice guidelines that go beyond personal experience. The following suggestions are based on research findings:

1. When co-supervising or working with a committee, discuss expectations and agree upon responsibilities. This helps you to communicate clearly with research candidates about overall expectations, responsibilities, and the nature and quality of the expected work.
   - When co-supervising,
     i. Discuss with your co-supervisor how your supervisory expectations align or differ.
     ii. Agree practical arrangements, e.g., frequency of meetings, protocol for supervision sessions, recordkeeping, ongoing communication between supervisors, etc.
   - When working with a committee, discuss with members their expectations about involvement, e.g., in research decisions, reading the candidate's work, etc.

2. Make sure to understand your institution's approach to and requirements for supervision. Find out about:
   - University, departmental regulations regarding supervision, completion and examination
   - Administrative requirements, e.g., reporting frequency, confirmation of candidate status
   - Formal roles and expected responsibilities of co-supervisors and candidates
   - Expectations of number and type of supervisees
   - Roles and procedures for examiners
   - Expectations of thesis quality, structure and presentation

3. Early in the relationship clarify expectations with the candidate. Do not assume any similarities with your own ideas and schedule regular discussions since expectations may change. Compare expectations of:
   - Motivations for doing the PhD
   - Relationship and responsibilities
   - The doctoral timeline

4. Provide concrete, constructive and timely feedback. The quality, content and frequency of feedback all influence candidate motivation.
   - The focus of feedback:
     - i. Current work, progress of agreed tasks and future plans.
     - ii. Progress in relation to institutional policies and expectations – otherwise candidates may be uncertain whether they are on track.
   - Frequency: Meet at least once a month and agree upon timeliness of written feedback.
   - Quality:
     - . Ensure undivided attention.
     - i. Begin by hearing the candidate's report of their successes and concerns followed by the supervisor's feedback.

NB Consider local practices to ensure some consistency, especially in frequency of meetings

5. Ensure that the candidate and your co-supervisor are advised in good time of any absences or unavailability.
   - To help candidates plan ahead, keep them well-informed about your deadlines, absences and response times.
   - Foreshadow changes in availability, e.g. research leave, parental leave and make appropriate alternate arrangements to meet your responsibilities.

6. Provide instruction/guidance on reading. NB Many doctoral candidates have not been taught how to read strategically.
   - Describe how you make decisions about what to read, how you approach reading a text, and how you keep records.
   - A useful exercise is to discuss an article from a range of perspectives: its similarity to other papers, the persuasiveness of its argument, the clarity of the description of data collection and analysis, etc.

7. Provide instruction/guidance on writing. This can assuage a beginning researcher's anxieties about both writing and receiving feedback.
   - Set regular writing tasks and acknowledge the difficulties of writing.
   - Provide opportunities for candidates to see the kinds of writing tasks you engage in.
   - Seek feedback from them about your own writing, e.g., review of a manuscript.

- Be aware of the support available within your institution for writing, e.g., thesis writing groups or specialist learning advisors.

8. Discuss career intentions and related requirements.
   - If students wish to pursue an academic career, encourage investment in a range of academic experiences beyond production of the thesis.
   - For those people intent on a non-academic career, direct them to resources such as careers services and consider how to organize the PhD to provide relevant experiences.

9. Provide instruction/guidance on ethical practices. Supervisors have a responsibility to help candidates understand a broad range of ethical issues, e.g., consent, data management, authorship, conflict of interest, bias, publication protocols, etc.
   - The Ethics Education Library is a resource focusing on applied and professional ethics; It includes useful case examples to discuss with your supervisees: http://ethics.iit.edu/eelibrary/case-study-collection
   - You may also want to check out the Singapore Statement on Research Integrity and if you are in Europe, a similar EU statement.

10. Candidates may be reluctant to reveal financial or personal concerns, yet these can influence motivation and progress. Without being intrusive, show an interest in their lives beyond the immediacies of research.
    - Be knowledgeable about the resources available to support candidates through difficulties, e.g., emergency funding, counselling services, specialist support for international students.
    - Agree with any co-supervisors your approaches to responsibilities for candidate welfare and support.

Useful resources
Reading resources (medical sciences)
- Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP): https://casp-uk.net/casp-tools-checklists/
- CEBM (Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine) (protocols in different languages): https://www.cebm.net/2014/06/critical-appraisal/

Some writing resources

- https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/679/01/
- Writing Across Boundaries
- for scholars using English as an additional language:
    - http://www.ease.org.uk/publications/author-guidelines
      http://www.authoraid.info/resource-library;
- mostly undergrad but nice use of annotated assignments and lecturer comments:
    - http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/index.xml
- Lillis, T., & Curry, MJ. (2010). *Academic writing in a global context: The politics and practices of publishing in English*. London, UK: Routledge.

Some non-academic career websites

- http://versatilephd.com/ (community on non-academic jobs and development
- http://www.prospects.ac.uk/your_phd_what_next_non_academic_jobs.htm
- http://chronicle.com/article/Transferring-Your-Skills-to-a/46430 (examples of PhD skills in non-academic settings)
- http://www.columbia.edu/cu/tat/pdfs/academic%20administration.pdf (Exploring the potential of university administrative positions that often call for a PHD)
- http://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/cshop/AdvancedTechniques.pdf: Very helpful PDF.
- https://www.findaphd.com/advice/doing/phd-non-academic-careers.aspx: Useful re positions outside the academy
- http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/CareersAndVacancies/careersService/PhDsResearchStaff/AlternativeCareers/Home.aspx: Jobs outside the academy for PhDs
- http://www.helpguide.org/articles/work-career/job-networking-tips.htm: Good networking ideas & articles re job hunting
- http://www.helpguide.org/articles/work-career/interviewing-techniques.htm: Preparing for interview
- https://www.roberthalf.com/job-seekers/career-center: Range of resources for job-seekers