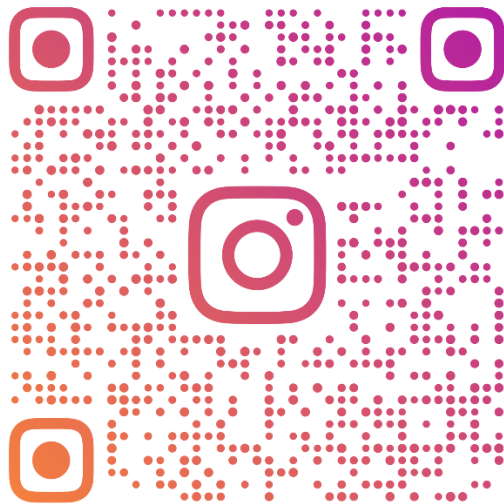


The Supervisor-Student Relationship

Postgraduate Advisory Service
Martin McAndrew (he/him)



TCDPGADVISORY



postgrad.support@tcd.ie

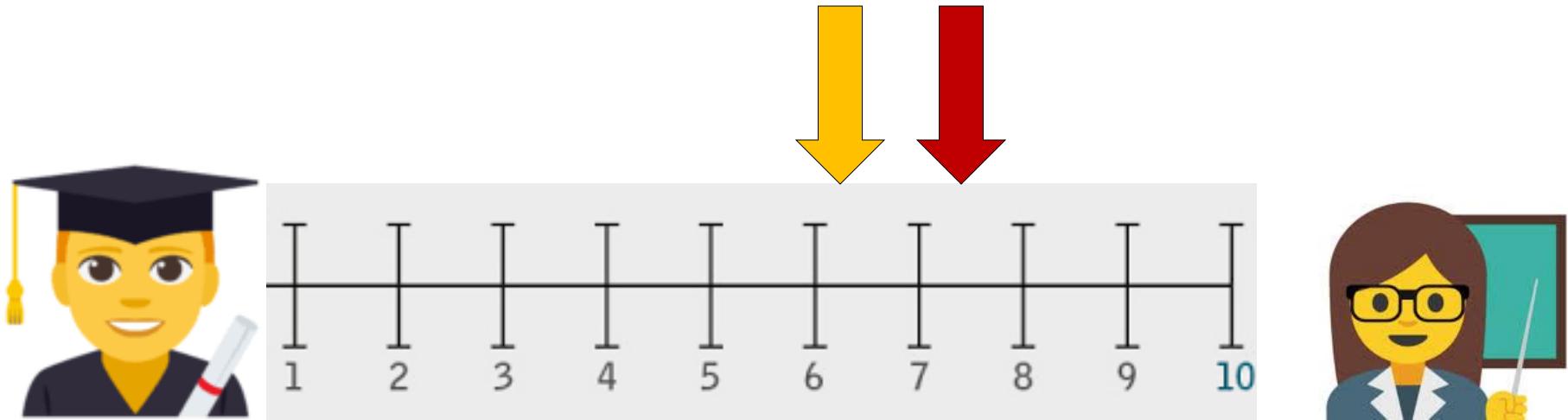


@TCDPGAdvisory



What's different about supervision?

- What are the common concerns around supervision?
- Is there a power imbalance in the supervision relationship?



What's different about supervision?



**Guide not a travel
companion**

**Not an expert in
your topic:
You Are!**

**Academic & Professional
Relationship
NOT
Pastoral & Personal**

Let's build the ideal supervisor

Provides constructive feedback

Patient

Good communicator

Available

Friendly

Knowledgeable



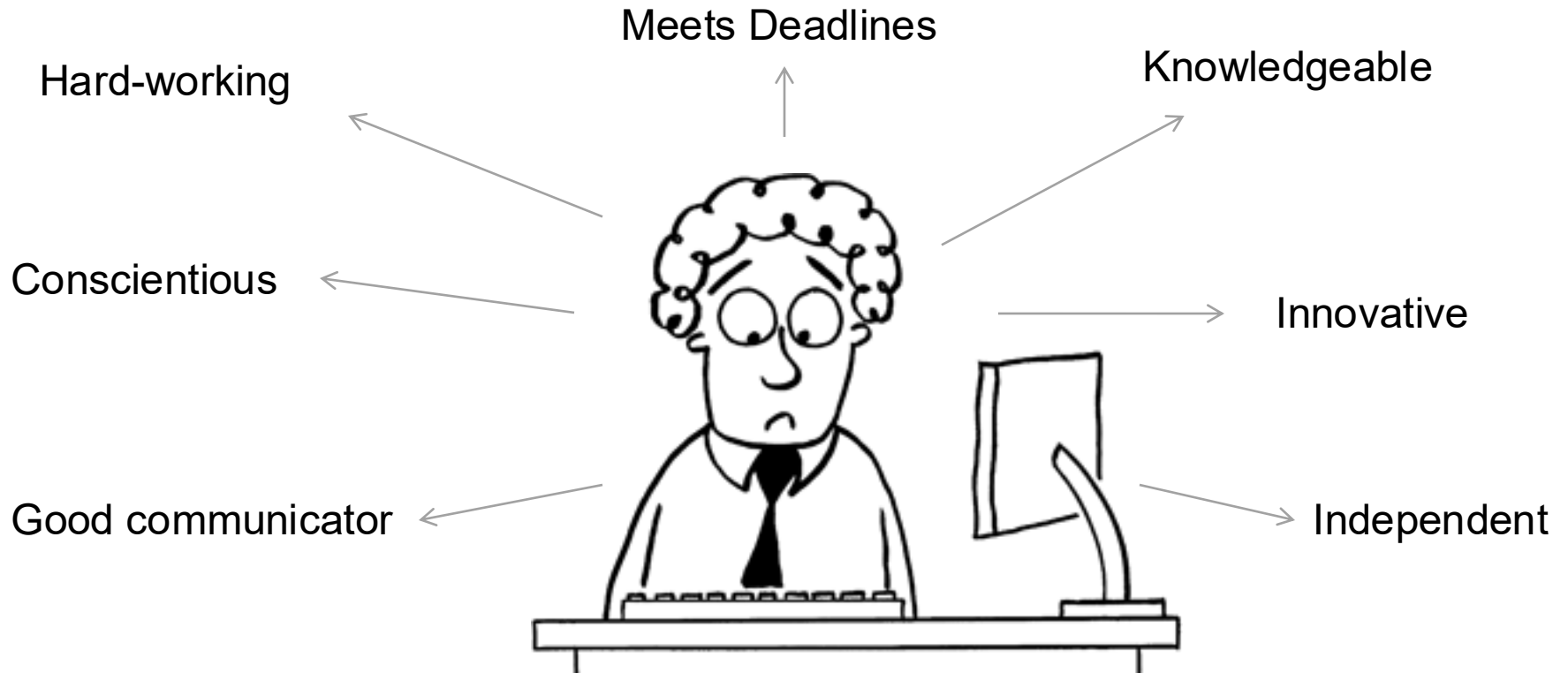
Supervisor's Responsibilities

➤ Below is what Trinity expects of supervisors:

- **Guidance throughout**
- **Advice on quality**
- **Regular communication**
- **Regular meetings**
- **Sabbatical replacement**

- **Constructive Feedback**
- **Guidance on structure**
- **Guidance on writing**
- **Final reading**

Are you the ideal student?



Your Responsibilities

- You take full responsibility for work submitted
- Undertake training as agreed
- Produce written work as agreed
- Ensure compliance with regulations/ethical requirements
- Stay in regular communication
- Come prepared to meetings
- Manage time effectively
- Seek support early



Responsibility

But...

These are the high-level guidelines

Structure and quality of supervision varies

So...

How do you ensure that you get the most from your Supervisor?

What do you do if things aren't going to plan?

Empower yourself



Change your perspective

Supervisor as a hired consultant:

- **Paid to guide you and answer your queries**
- **Use their expertise**
- **Make the most of their time**
- **Ask the right questions!**

The supervisor is not the expert on your topic!

Be Proactive

1. Find out what to expect **from them** (different styles)
2. Find out what is expected **of you**
3. Organise and agree **process, timelines, diaries**
4. Tackle concerns **early on**
5. **Take the initiative**



Know Your Supervisor

1

Before the first/ your next meeting find out:

Research **Interests**, Recent **publications**, **Experience** supervising

2

During the first/ your next meeting find out:

How much **time** they will have?

What kind of **role** does your supervisor expect to have?

3

After your next meeting decide:

What do you need to do to work within this paradigm?

Know Yourself

What are you good at?

What areas need improvement?

e.g. Communication style?

Organisation?

Training?

How do I feel about feedback:

Opportunity v Criticism?

Are you a perfectionist?



Receiving feedback constructively

Sit with the emotion: you aren't a superhuman

Look past your initial reaction – it nearly always hurts

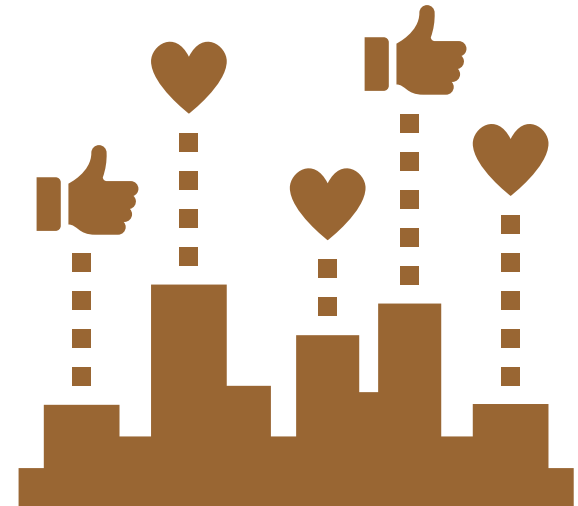
Ask questions about how you can improve

Be grateful for feedback: it sucks but it's important

Filter out useless criticism

Create an action plan

Brian Tracy,
Personal and business success coach
@BrianTracyOfficial



Self-compassion

Two questions to help with self-compassion in the face of feedback:

1. What am I proud of?
2. What would I say to a friend in my situation?



Empowered meetings checklist

Set the agenda beforehand

....ask if they have other topics they'd like to agree



Agree the date of next meeting at the meeting

....Put it in both diaries



Send a written recap

....Issues discussed, actions agreed, timelines for delivery



Always invite them to comment



Sample Agenda and Meeting Notes

Date of Supervision meeting:	1 June 2023
Agenda	Notes
Actions/ progress since last meeting	
Work submitted for this meeting	
Agreed tasks/ objectives for next meeting	
Administrative matters (taking leave, deadlines, reviews/ reports)	
Other comments	
Date/ time of next meeting	

Communicate Professionally



- ❖ Remember, this is YOUR degree: be assertive (but not rude!)
- ❖ You can question/ disagree with your supervisor
- ❖ Some academics avoid giving ‘harsh’ criticism, so be sure to ask “is there anything else you think I need to know/ do at this stage?”
- ❖ Remember, some academics take good research/ writing for granted
- ❖ Try not to be disheartened

Communicate Professionally

Things it's ok... and important... to ask:

- **Clarify:** "I want to make sure I understand you completely, can you repeat that last bit about X again?"
- **Expand:** "Can you tell me a little more about what you mean when you say...X"
- **Disagree:** "I'm not sure I agree with that, let me tell you why..."
- **Ask Additional Questions:** "Is there anything else you think I need to know about the progress in general? Is there anything that I should have asked that I didn't?"
- **Next Meeting:** "Thanks again for your time, can we schedule our next meeting now, while I'm here?"

Seek support early —you are not alone

- **Postgraduate Advisory Service – the frontline service**
www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate
- **Student's Union**
 - Welfare and Education Officers
 - Web: www.tcdsu.org
- **Student Counselling Service**
 - Web: tcd.ie/Student_Counselling
- **Student Learning Development**
 - Academic Writing Centre + 1:1 sessions
 - Web: tcd.ie/student-learning.tcd.ie

So, for homework

1. Read the Research Student Handbook
2. Research your supervisor: publications, experience, etc
3. SWOT analysis:
 - What am I good at?
 - What do I need to work on?
 - What can help me?
 - What do I need to look for?
4. Further reading:
 - Rowena Murray, *How to Write a Thesis*, 2006

Postgraduate Advisory Service



postgrad.support@tcd.ie



Visit the [PAS website](https://tcd.ie/pas) on tcd.ie



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Give us feedback on this session, please!

**Scan the QR code to
fill in our 2-minute
feedback survey**

**Responses are
anonymous; no
identifying
information is
requested.**

**Postgraduate Advisory Service
Workshop Feedback 2024-25**





Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Thank You!

