

**University of Cape Town
School of Education**

**AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF STUDENT-
SUPERVISOR RELATIONSHIPS AT POSTGRADUATE LEVEL**

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
the degree of Master of Philosophy in Education

by

Irene Olga Mbwanda

February 2006

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

CONTENTS

Declaration.....	5
Acknowledgements	6
Abstract	7
Chapter One: Introduction	8
Chapter Two: Supervisory Relationships at Postgraduate level.....	12
2.1. The Importance of the Postgraduate Research Supervision Process	13
2.2. The Student - Supervisor Relationship	17
2.2.1. Supervisory Relationship: Expectations.....	23
2.2.2. The Changing Nature of Supervisor-Student Relationship over Time	28
2.3. Models of Supervisory Relationships.....	31
2.3.1. Formal Models.....	33
2.3.1.1. <i>The Management Model</i>	33
2.3.1.2. <i>The Professional Model</i>	34
2.3.2. Informal Models	37
2.3.2.1 <i>The Comradeship Model</i>	37
2.3.3. Semi-formal Models	40
2.3.3.1. <i>The Mentorship (Student-Focused) Model</i>	40
2.3.3.2. <i>The "Combined" Model</i>	42
2.4. Summary and Conclusion	45
Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures.....	48
3.1. A case study approach.....	48
3.2. Research instruments	50
3.2.1. The rationale for using questionnaires	50
3.2.2. Questionnaire design	51
3.2.3. Piloting the questionnaire.....	52
3.3. Sample	53
3.4. Data capturing and analysis methods	53
3.5. Limitations.....	54
3.5.1. Limitations intrinsic to the research instruments.....	54
3.5.2. Limitations of the fieldwork	54
Chapter 4: The Supervisory Experience	56
4.1. Students' Previous Supervisory Experience at Masters Degree level.....	57
4.1.1. Mode of Study at Masters Degree level.....	58
4.1.2. Institution and Duration of Study at Masters Degree level.....	59
4.1.3. Institution of Study and Characterization of the Supervision Process.....	60
4.1.4. The Three Most Important Aspects of the Masters Supervision Experience	61
4.1.5. Masters degree Experience as a Preparation for PhD	63
4.1.5.1. <i>Masters degree experience as a preparation for PhD by place of study.</i>	64
4.1.6. The Three Most Important Factors that Enabled Students to Complete the Masters Theses	66
4.1.7. Summary	67
4.2. Students' Current Experience of Supervision	68
4.2.1. The Process of Supervision.....	69
4.2.1.1. <i>Meetings needed with the supervisors</i>	70

4.2.1.2. <i>Level of Satisfaction of the Respondents with the Supervisory Process in terms of Feedback</i>	72
4.2.1.3. <i>Respondents' level of satisfaction with the supervisors' academic expertise during the supervisory process</i>	75
4.2.1.4. <i>The Supervisors' involvement in the respondents' professional development during the supervisory process</i>	77
4.2.1.5. <i>Summary</i>	79
4.2.2. <i>The Nature of the Supervisory Relationships</i>	80
4.2.2.1. <i>Types of supervisory relationships</i>	80
4.2.2.2. <i>The student-supervisor contract</i>	84
4.2.2.3 <i>Respondents' discussion of expectations of the supervisory process with the supervisor</i>	86
4.2.2.4. <i>Mechanisms in place which enables the students and the supervisors to review the supervisory process</i>	88
4.2.2.5. <i>Summary</i>	89
4.2.3. <i>Completing the Degree</i>	90
4.2.3.1 <i>Students current confidence to do research</i>	91
4.2.3.2. <i>Respondents' opinions about factors for successful degree completion</i> ..	93
4.2.3.3. <i>Desirable characteristics of an effective supervisor</i>	97
4.2.3.4. <i>Summary</i>	100
4.2.4. <i>Students' Experience of Supervision</i>	102
4.2.4.1. <i>Respondents' description of their PhD supervisory experience so far..</i>	103
4.2.4.2. <i>The best and worst things about respondents' experiences</i>	105
4.2.4.3. <i>Suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship</i>	109
4.2.4.4. <i>Summary</i>	111
Chapter Five: <i>Conclusion</i>	115
5.1. <i>The Models of Supervision Experienced by Students</i>	116
5.2. <i>Factors Important for Successful Completion of Degrees</i>	118
5.3. <i>Suggestions on How to Improve the Student-supervisor Relationship</i>	119
References.....	121
Appendices.....	125

TABLES

Table 4.1: Mode by time of study	58
Table 4.2: Institution and duration of study at Masters degree level	59
Table 4.3: Institution of Study and Characterization of the Supervision Experience...	60
Table 4.4: Students' reasons for characterizing masters supervision	60
Table 4.5: Students' ranking of the most important aspects of supervision experience categorized under approaches of supervision.....	62
Table 4.6: Students' responses how Masters experience prepared them for PhD	63
Table 4.7: Institution of study by how Masters degree experience prepared students for PhD.....	64
Table 4.8: Students explanations for rating masters experience from inadequate to extremely well prepared.....	65
Table 4.9: The most important factors that enabled students to complete masters theses	66
Table 4.10: Meetings needed with the supervisors	71
Table 4.11: Stage of programme of study by frequency of meetings with the supervisors	71
Table 4.12: Respondents' level of satisfaction with feedback aspects of the supervisory process.....	74
Table 4.13: Respondents' level of satisfaction with the supervisor's academic expertise during the supervisory process.....	76
Table 4.14: The degree of involvement of supervisors with regards to respondents' professional development during the supervisory process	78
Table 4.15: The type of the supervisory process relationships being experienced by the respondents	81
Table 4.18: Desirability of a formal written contract between student and supervisor	85
Table 4.19: Respondents discussion of expectations about the supervisory process with their supervisors	87
Table 4.20: Respondents explanations to the responses on discussion of expectations	87
Table 4.21: Knowledge of mechanisms to change the supervisory relationship	88
Table 4.22: Current capabilities to do PhD research	91
Table 4.23: Respondents' reasons for rating current research capabilities	92
Table 4.24: Ranking the three most important factors for successful completion.....	94
Table 4.25: Ranking the most inhibiting factors for completion	96
Table 4.26: Desirable characteristics of a supervisor	98
Table 4.27: The PhD supervision experience so far	103
Table 4.28: Respondents' characterization of their PhD supervision experiences	104
Table 4.29: Best things about the supervisory experience	106
Table 4.31: Worst things about the supervisory experience.....	108
Table 4.32: Suggestions on improvement of the student supervisor relationship.....	110

Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irene Olga Mbwanda', with a stylized, cursive script.

Irene Olga Mbwanda

February 2006

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people who helped me to complete this thesis:

- My supervisor, David Gilmour, for his organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective/personal support; his mixing criticism and creativity, open, honesty and frank communication; and encouragement during the past two years. The student-supervisor relationship was a fulfilled postgraduate supervisory experience,
- Ceri , for her encouragement, emotional and social support,
- my children, Rumbidzai and Farai for their affective support and cognitive/academic challenge,
- my late husband, for his words of wisdom,
- my maid, Winnet for looking after my home during the past two years of full-time studies,
- my sister, Emma for her consistent financial and emotional support,
- my mother, friends: Florence Kazhanje, and colleagues for their continuous prayers, encouragement and support,
- the doctoral students who sacrificed their time to complete questionnaires and share insights,
- my government for granting me study leave.

Abstract

This thesis investigated the supervisory experiences of 20 PhD students in a single Department at the University of Cape Town. This was a case study to establish the prevailing models of supervision, students' expectations, and factors considered important for successful completion of their degree.

To provide a conceptual framework for the research, the thesis reviewed some of the existing models of postgraduate research supervision with particular emphasis on research conducted in the United Kingdom and Australia because South Africa and Australia have largely followed the UK model of one on one supervision.

A questionnaire was developed from this literature and administered to the students.

The key findings emerging from this study were:

- *The majority of the students saw their relationship with their supervisors as semi-formal, a mentorship style which was based equally on contract and trust, and which incorporated a balance of academic and personal support. The students expected this to be mediated with appropriate organizational arrangements.*
- *Surprisingly, the factors that students considered most important for completing their degrees were aspects of the affective or personal domain over academic or organizational aspects of the supervisory process. These factors included full time study, cultivating skills of confidence boosting, and matching compatible personalities.*
- *Factors such as lack of supervisor's support, financial cost and family commitments were highly considered most inhibiting for the completion of degrees followed by lack of supervisor's expertise in the subject area.*
- *Most students were highly or very satisfied with their supervision. Where they made suggestions for improvement these were largely in the area of improved organization of the experience.*

On the basis of these findings, the research indicates that students prefer semi-formal relationships, namely, a 'merged' model which means a balance of the organizational, academic and personal aspects of a supervisor's role.

Chapter One: Introduction

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is “committed to be a world-class, research-led institution” (Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele, in the Research Report, 2004:1). In pursuit of this purpose, derived from the UCT’s Mission Statement and strategic plan, the Graduate School in Humanities, for example, offers a wide range of postgraduate programmes in many disciplines. This thesis will focus on a Department (called Department A) which offers only postgraduate courses which are largely interdisciplinary in nature. The increasing focus on postgraduate tuition and training in UCT in general and in Department A in particular, raises new challenges. One of these is the need for researchers to engage with the student-supervisor relationship, since postgraduate research and writing occur within the context of such relationships.

Research over the years has identified the relationship between the supervisor and student, especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences, as one of the important aspects in higher degree study and this is remarked upon in a range of studies (Bargar and Mayo-Chamberlain, 1983; Burges, 1994; Cox, 1988; Lyons, Scroggins and Bonham Rule, 1990; Moses, 1984; Parry and Hayden, 1994, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999: 2; Salmon, 1992; Seeman, 1973; Welsh, 1979;). At UCT, Muller *et al.* (2000), state that problems in graduate student-supervisor relationship have recently become more and more evident. They claim that this is due to “an increasing diversity in the graduate student population; an increase in student numbers; and an increased awareness on the part of students of their rights” (Muller *et al.*, 2000:1). As a result, there is need to review current practices.

The student-supervisor relationship is complex. It includes “intellectual, operational and interpersonal relationships” (Lamm and Lewis, 1999:1; Holbrook in Buttery *et al.*, 2005:17; Malfroy and Webb, 2000:168; and Wisker, 2005:60). Brockbank and McGill (2001, in Kathy and Manathunga, 2004:240) specifically address these aspects of learning involved in the postgraduate supervision as “the cognitive (thinking), conative (doing), and the affective (feeling) domains.” The roles of the supervisor such as, “normative (administrative), formative (educative) and restorative (supportive)” issues of the supervisory process are embedded in these three aspects of supervision (Proctor,

Smith, 1996:4). Welsh and Moses (1978 and 1981, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999:1) argue that research affirms these three supervisory components such as, the organizational, academic and personal” impact on the quality of the student-supervisor relationship (see also Holbrook, 2001, in Buttery *et al.*, 2005:17) . However, “marked variations and different emphases define these roles” (Welsh, 1978; Connell, 1985; Mauch and Birch, 1989; Rugg and Norris, 1975; Brown and Atkins, 1988 and Leder, 1995, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999:2). It could be argued that postgraduate teaching and learning should explicitly take into account the three aspects of supervisory relationships within the supervisory process for a student to gain maximum benefit from higher degree studies. Kehrhahn *et al.*, (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:6) affirm that “improvements in the three areas of administrative, technical and emotional support lead to a dramatic improvement in time to complete.” Little is known about this supervisory relationship despite it being at the heart of doctoral work (Cox *et al.*, 1988, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999:3) and it has not been adequately and systematically studied. The supervisory relationship, though well documented as a significant part of supervision, appears to lack general and consistent consensus as to its necessary, obligatory or optimal form. These relationships contracted between postgraduate students and their supervisors deserve close scrutiny, since all work done by postgraduate students, and their success or failure at this work, occurs within contexts provided by those relationships.

This relationship, however, although being an important element of research supervision process, appears to be under researched. Subsequently, a difficulty in reviewing literature exists in that literature directly related to the topic was not easily found and there is a dearth of it (see also Rugg and Norris, 1975, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999).

There has been neither much research from the standpoint of it being mainly a postgraduate pedagogy nor a dynamic relationship between people (Malfroy and Webb, 2000). Yet the result of this peculiar learning experience is that the student’s acquisition of skills and attainment of academic independence are founded within and may evolve in part as a result of supervisory interactions. The reason usually “cited by students for discontinuing their studies is dissatisfaction with aspects of supervision” (Candy, 1988, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999:3). Hence, the relationship is potentially critical to the extent to

which students benefit from the process and consequently the success of its outcome (Lamm and Lewis, 1999).

In an effort to curb problems emanating from student-supervisor relationships, most institutions prominently display information pertaining to the process on their websites for prospective postgraduate students. Yet, “at UCT’s website, the information for prospective students centers on closing dates, forms, and financial support and lacks the link to the Doctoral Degrees Board and its requirements and statutes” (Muller *et al.*, 2000:2). However, the graduate student-supervisor Memorandum of Understanding has just been introduced in order to regulate the process. Therefore, the aim of this research is to investigate the experiences of students in the student-supervisor relationship within the context of Department A. The purpose of this investigation is to identify salient characteristics of those experiences and to establish common trends and patterns. A further aim is to critique aspects of those experiences in order to identify points of strength or weakness. Positive aspects can then be incorporated to recommend critical success factors, which could be beneficial to the progress of postgraduate students. Negative aspects can also be highlighted so as to be avoided. Therefore, it focuses on the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of students in supervisory relationship within Department A?
2. What aspects of the supervisory experiences are identified by participants as beneficial to the progress of postgraduate students? What other aspects are seen as negative?
3. What recommendations can be made to optimize the positive aspects of students’ experiences in the Department A?

Key hypotheses to be explored

1. There are positive aspects of student-supervisor relationship which maximize the progress of postgraduate students at Masters and PhD levels. At the same time, there are also negative aspects which can stultify postgraduate research and writing.

2. Participants namely, postgraduate students can identify such positive and negative aspects and articulate their views. Documents such as graduate supervisor-student memorandum of understanding also reflect an awareness of these positive and negative aspects.
3. The views expressed by participants as well as information extracted from documents can be analyzed so that key points are identified and isolated. These key points can serve as a starting point in a critique of current experiences of the supervisor-student relationships within Department A.

Chapter Outline

- Chapter Two reviews the literature, defines theories and explores concepts which can serve as a frame for the research.
- Chapter Three discusses and justifies the methodology applied in the study, its rationale and the procedure followed in the field study.
- Chapter Four presents the findings of the study, analyses the results and identifies trends and patterns.
- Chapter Five considers some of the implications of the findings.

The following chapter reviews the literature on some aspects the researcher considers to contribute towards a progressive student-supervisor relationship at postgraduate level.

Chapter Two: Supervisory Relationships at Postgraduate level

To unravel the debate around the student-supervisor relationship, the literature surveyed points at the importance of research supervision process looking particularly at why the supervision process in research is crucial to the success of postgraduate students. From there on, it focuses on the student- supervisor relationship, uncovering the debate around the topic. When entering the relationship, both supervisor and students develop expectations which change with time. These are discussed and the discussion culminates by looking at the changing nature of student- supervisor relationship with particular emphasis on research conducted in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. South Africa and Australia have largely followed UK models which is why this body of literature was reviewed.

The literature on models of supervisory relationships between the supervisor and the student is also reviewed so as to establish the appropriate supervision styles compatible with the postgraduate students within Department A. Soliman (1999:3) claims that “postgraduate candidates are less experienced at the doctoral level in research and inexperienced at the Masters level and thus depend on the supervisor for guidance and support.” Thus the challenge in supervision is how to give the appropriate degree of direction and support at the various stages of candidature and respond sensitively and appropriately to students’ needs in ways that enhance the research and writing process and develop a productive working relationship (ibid).

The rest of this chapter considers the importance of postgraduate research supervisory process in Section 2.1.

Section 2.2 explores the student-supervisor relationship. What appear to be the students and supervisors’ expectations are explored within this section as well as the changing nature of the relationship.

Section 2.3 discusses various models of supervisory relationships. These models are namely, the formal (management and professional), semi-formal (mentorship/student focused and combined), and the informal (comradeship).

Section 2.4 summarizes the literature on the supervisory relationships at postgraduate level.

2.1. The Importance of the Postgraduate Research Supervision Process

The postgraduate research supervision process is a fundamental part of higher education. Lamm and Lewis (1999:1) observe that postgraduate research supervision “helps determine the length of candidature, the quality of the thesis, and its ultimate completion as well as affecting the students’ accomplishment of additional higher degree outcomes.” It “contributes to the research profile of the University, consolidates international research links, provides a learning ground for future researchers, and extends the boundaries of knowledge” (Malfroy and Webb, 2000:165). Postgraduate students are an important national resource, representing the future of research in the country. To enable students to attain their individual potential, it is vital that their learning is as effective as resources allow particularly at a time of increasing constraints in terms of finance and the time available to them for completion. A key factor in the postgraduate student’s learning is the quality and effectiveness of the supervision received during the process. For Zhao (2001:2), “the supervisory process is crucial to the success of students and certainly complex, subtle, pivotal and responsible.” It “requires a wide range of personal and professional qualities to be effective” (Whittle, 1994:2)

The role of supervisor is “complex and demanding, especially for senior supervisors who also have separate research commitments and responsibilities” (Mertens and McCrimmon, 1998:1). Edward (2002:3) reports that “recent research also indicates that the role of supervisor is far more complex and subtle than some of the more traditional roles” such as the one-to-one supervisory model. It can be argued that the model needs to be supplemented by additional or alternative models. Yeatman (1995, in Latona and Browne, 2001:2) argues that the one-to-one model “master and apprentice model is inappropriate for contemporary mass education and international students.” For example, Down *et al.* (2000, in Edwards, 2002:3) note that “research found [that] supervisors might be required to engage up to 16 different roles.” These findings point to “substantial

differences in supervisory practices and relationships” (Edwards, 2002:3). As a result, Johnston (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:2) suggests that approaches which “offer a broader support and resource base for students” can be explored either as alternative models or additions to the existing ones. According to Latona and Browne (2001:2), these models include practices such as, “more openness between students and supervisors, the rights and obligations of both parties made explicit (for example through contracts) induction and/or research skills training, research-in-progress seminars, conferences, and supervision by academic panels. These can be complimented by formalized peer groups, informal gatherings, student inclusion in departmental activities and sympathetic arrangements for office space and technical support, assisting students to publish” (see also Whittle, 1994:2). Alternatively, “collaborative cohort models, involving regular cohort meetings (face-to-face or by teleconference)” as well as a “broadening of the traditional focus on subject-area expertise to include support for the student and capacity to balance creativity with criticism” could be used (Fraser and Mathews, 1999:1).

Research supervision is “a process of fostering and enhancing learning, research and communication at the highest level” (Laske and Zuber-Skerritt, 1996, in Zhao, 2001:2). Powles (1988, in Lawrence, 1996:1) observes that “sustained student motivation, effective supervision and supportive institutional services” are the key interactive factors in the successful completion of higher degrees with research and thesis requirements in Australia. The research supervision ought to be recognized by the supervisor as teaching which is intense teaching of complex learning experience at a higher level. Mullins and Hejka (1994, in Aspland *et al.*, 1999:129) argue that “if universities wish to increase the emphasis on postgraduate education, and to guarantee the quality of that education, there is a need to be institutional recognition of good teaching at that level. Hence, there is also a need for appropriate forms of evaluation of postgraduate supervision.” Connell (1985, in Soliman, 1999:2). suggests that:

Supervising a higher degree research is the most advanced level of teaching in our education system... a genuinely complex task. It requires a substantial commitment of time and energy... involves grappling with a considerable range of problems, from technicalities of research design to the morale, and

sometimes health, of the student. And it never stands still, as the character of the relationship changes markedly over the years of a candidature.

Although Connell raises questions about curriculum, method, teacher/student interactions, and educational environment, he maintains that there can be no fixed formula for PhD supervision, no fixed course of events. Nevertheless, useful strategies that have been found to be effective can be tried as part of a repertoire of supervision techniques (Soliman, 1999:2).

Research findings on supervision indicate that the elements of teaching such as, objectives, planning, appropriate methodologies, reinforcement and formative evaluation are part of the supervision process (Lawrence, 1996). Research supervision is for both the student and supervisor, which requires the provision of preparation and allocated time for each individual student and necessitates the development and maintenance of a professional relationship with the student. For Delamont *et al.* (1997:1), “successful and pleasurable higher degree supervision is based on making explicit to yourself (supervisor), and to the students, what the process and issues are.”

Conrad (1999, in Malfroy and Webb, 2000) argues that postgraduate supervision is about teaching and the facilitation of learning of research students. Notwithstanding this, “there has been neither much research from the standpoint of it being mainly a pedagogical engagement between the student and the supervisor nor, especially, of it being primarily about a dynamic relationship between people” (Malfroy and Webb, 2000:165). Research in Australia indicates that “for postgraduate students the key factor in the success or failure of their studies is the relationship with the supervisor” (Seagram *et al.*, 1998, in Edwards, 2002:3). They claim that the quality of the supervisory/mentoring experience is the key factor in the successful and timely completion of postgraduate degrees (Seagram, *et al.*, 1998, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5). Dinham and Scott (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) also claim that the “quality of supervision, which includes the personal qualities of the supervisor, is a key factor in completion and student satisfaction with doctoral programmes.”

Therefore, Willcoxson (1994, in Malfroy and Webb, 2000:165) asserts that the success of higher degree candidature is certainly dependent on a range of variables but mostly depends on the quality and appropriateness of supervision. In addition, Moses (1992, in Malfroy and Webb, 2000:165) argues that the variations in perceptions of the role of supervisors can be critical in explaining different outcomes of supervision. However, Malfroy and Webb contend that the quality of postgraduate supervision is mostly influenced by the extent to which the “two participants in the supervision relationship have congruent conceptions of supervision within their specific context.” In view of this, Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Malfroy and Webb, 2000:165) emphasize that “where the aims of the different groups involved with the PhD are not congruent, it is not too big a step to realize that certain conflicts are inherent in the system.” The concept of matching supervisor and student appears in the literature outlining procedures to improve supervisory practice but often without details on how this might occur and without detailing the qualities nor the characteristics which need to be matched (*ibid*). However, “teaching and learning styles of supervisor and student, and the extent of congruence or at least understanding, will affect both the supervisor-student relationship and a successful thesis outcome, thus, the matching of apparently incompatible personalities should be avoided” (Lawrence, 1996:6-7).

Cullen *et al.* (1994 quoted by Cranney 1998:2) reported that there are:

certain key generic processes in supervising students effectively that constitute a form of facilitation; that variations across disciplines and supervisor-student relationships need to be taken into account; that indicators of supervisory effectiveness include supervisory style (correct level of direction, regular meetings, making time for students, interest in project, encourage ideas/individuality); supervisor competence with respect to the student project; personal characteristics and attitude of the supervisor (approachable, supportive, positive, open-minded, prepared to acknowledge error, organized, enthusiastic); academic and intellectual standing of the supervisor; that students view their supervisors as mixtures of strengths and weaknesses; and that supervisor-student relationships are highly complex, dynamic and relational.

The fact that research supervision is ongoing allows for the relationship to grow and develop. The importance of the supervisory relationship has received much attention in supervision literature and according to Holbook, (2001, in Buttery *et al.*, 2005:17) the

“quality of the student-supervisor relationship is critical to successful completion, [and] factors impacting on the relationship include academic, institutional and interpersonal issues.” Brockbank and McGill (1998, in Kathy and Manathunga, 2004:17) and Kadushin, (1992, in Smith, 1996:2) refer to these issues as; “educative, administrative, and supportive respectively” (see also Malfroy and Webb, 2000). In addition, Holbrook argues that communication also impacts on the relationship. While not the sole determinate of the quality of supervision, the quality of the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee can add or detract from the experience. For Buttery *et al.* (2005:17), supervisors ought “to make an effort to understand the unique requirements of the student they are supervising based on gender, cultural background and personality. Otherwise the all-important primary relationship that is required to be mentor, patron, collaborator and more experienced researcher/teacher is not likely to build and develop.” It is important that the “relationship” aspect of supervision not be overlooked or neglected. The next section discusses different aspects of that relationship.

2.2. The Student - Supervisor Relationship

Cranney (1998) argues that the most important aspect of research supervision is the student-supervisor relationship. For him, three components must always be kept in mind: the student, the supervisor, and the project. According to Wisker (2005:59), the relationship between the supervisor and the student “is a long-term one designed to help students to become sound and successful researchers.” This relationship has been likened “to a rite of passage, a parent-child relationship, an apprenticeship, or a marriage (quite often an arranged marriage). In each of the relationships many factors contribute to its success” (Cranney, 1998:2). The main difference between these analogies and the supervisory relationship is that the end-product, the submitted doctoral dissertation must be externally examined. The content and processes of supervision are carried out through this supervisory relationship. Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Morrison-Saunders *et al.*, 2005:1) suggest that part of the student-supervisor relationship ought to incorporate a helpful psychological contract. Students may encounter some psychological and emotional aspects such as, enthusiasm, isolation, boredom, frustration, anxiety and

euphoria at some stage, mainly the middle stage of the process. These fall under the affective domain and might inhabit the student's progress. Therefore, a positive and productive relationship is critical to successful supervision.

Supervision is a complex and unique relationship and there are various ways of good supervision which ensure completion and student satisfaction (Malfroy and Webb, 2000). For Armstrong (2004:611), "the kind of this relationship which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure." According to Down *et al.* (2000), the relationship is defined by its visibility and not its invisibility. The outcome of this process as the successful and expedient completion of a higher degree is the "key performance indicator of the effectiveness and quality of the supervisor" (Down *et al.*, 2000: 2). The aim is to establish a clear relationship between supervisor and student, with defined parameters right from the beginning of the candidature. Care must be taken not to be too prescriptive about the supervision process. Instead the process of matching supervisor and student ought to be improved by checking points put in place with provisions for amendment within the first few months of candidature. Wisker (2005) suggests that it is essential to be open and frank about mutual expectations and needs. Moses (1985, in Wisker, 2005:59) notes that:

Becoming a supervisor is a two-way process. Openness in the initial discussions may prevent years of frustration for you and the student if your personality and learning-teaching styles are mismatched and no common style or ground is found. Openness about your own and the student's competence may prevent the student from withdrawing or failing.

This enables both supervisor and student to respond to each other's expectations, and develop shared meanings of supervision so as to forge a more fruitful relationship (Malfroy and Webb, 2000). Relationships ought to be worked at and discussed so that both parties are aware of expectations entailed within the supervisory relationship. This is because Sayed *et al.* (1998) observe that students bring to their work conceptions of the nature of the supervision that differs greatly from the supervisors although this changes over time. Thus, knowing your own thoughts and feelings about the process, coupled with an understanding of the supervisor's expectations, might serve to aid in the development of a positive and productive relationship. Therefore, this section discusses

the nature of a good supervisory relationship, and the expectations for the student and supervisor and concludes by underlining the changing nature of this supervisory relationship over time.

Grant (1999:1) claims that “good supervision ... is a pedagogy which is poorly understood.” “Traditionally conducted behind closed doors in spaces remote from undergraduate teaching, the intensity of the interpersonal relations of much postgraduate pedagogy is presumed but uninterrogated” (McWillan and Palmer, 1995, in Grant, 1999:1). There have been, however, numbers of attempts to categorize these. For example, Johnston (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5), notes that “relationships which are lengthy, complex and intense such as the supervisory one are associated with power issues.” Aguinis *et al.* (1996, in Latona and Browne, 200:5) claim that students fare better if the power is expert rather than coercive. Elton and Pope (1989, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) argue that “collegiality is another factor associated with student’s success.” Furthermore, Acker *et al.* (1994, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) confirm that “managed and negotiated approaches to supervision are also fundamental to student success” and note the prevalence of negotiated relationships in their study of thesis supervision in the social sciences.

Wisker (2005:51) contends that “identifying appropriate supportive structures and negotiating effective, regular, not too intrusive, open, enabling communication strategies helps students to have a good experience of being supervised.” Thus, there might be need for forms and examples of strategies which facilitate the supervisory relationship so that the process is not mysterious. There are three basic types of models which can be categorized as formal, semi or informal. These are discussed in detail in Section 2.3. Whatever forms and strategies adopted in postgraduate supervision, the question is whether or not they cater for the institutional, academic, communication and interpersonal issues which impact on the quality of the supervisory relationship.

For example, in support of more formal models Wisker (2005:51) suggests that “learning contracts can help the supervisor and the student to negotiate workable expectations and relationships together and act as an objective vehicle to discuss any break-downs.” The

candidate learns something of their supervisor's knowledge as well as gaining an insight into their supervisor's style of supervision. The contract operates as a tool to make apparent how an individual supervisor operates, and perhaps indicates to the student what strategies they may need to devise in order to have a productive working relationship (ibid). For Wisker (2005), contracts focus on terms of work, communication and responsibility. Contracts have stages such as:

- Identifying needs and stakeholders
- Identifying learning outcomes
- Resources, strategies needed, planning and agreeing rules, work, roles
- Assessment – how can the agreed work be seen to be accomplished?
- Review of success or not and evaluation

(Wisker, 2005: 52-53).

At UCT, Department A formalizes the student-supervisor relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU, Appendix 2), designed to ensure that the supervision experience is as mutually productive as possible. The MoU sets a framework which reflects a shared understanding of student's and supervisor's conceptions of the supervisory cycle. The supervisor identifies the student's strengths and weaknesses. Expectations for both parties are presumed to be explicit, realistic and negotiable. The expectations are re-negotiated annually during the supervisory process. The student's and the supervisor's compatibility is emphasized. The UCT stakeholders, as independent observers of the student-supervisor relationship, who enact the MoU, also review the agreed working parameters set by the student and the supervisor in this MoU to ensure that the supervisory process is demystified and a good working relationship is established. These contents of the MoU are in line with Moses (1985, in Wisker, 2005:59) who argues that "... openness about your own and the student's competence may prevent the student from withdrawing or failing."

A typical example of a contract is one at the University of Wollongong (UoW), Australia. At UoW, Pratt (2001:1) notes that there are formal rules and regulations outlined in the University's code of practice-supervision. The guidelines on Code of Practice at postgraduate level set the framework for the supervisory relationship between supervisor

and student which is the vital part of the research degree process (Uniteaching UoW, 2001:1). But developing a good supervisory relationship is like any other relationship. There is no absolute right or wrong way to go about it but needs work. Ground rules have to be negotiated where supervisors encourage their students to think about and identify their needs such as:

- What sort of feedback do I need?
- How regular do I like my meetings with supervisor to be?
- What form would I like to see the meetings take?

(Pratt, Uniteaching UOW, 2001:1).

According to Pratt (Uniteaching UOW, 2001), the supervisor should create an effective environment where the student feels that he/she is taking an active role in negotiating the terms on which the supervisory relationship operates as the needs change with time. Foremost, open and honest communication is fundamental as it promotes feedback and positive feedback is more important than negative feedback. As a supervisor, Gaffikin (Uniteaching UOW, 2001) maintains that it is very important in successful supervision of research students to develop a relationship of confidence and mutual respect between candidate and supervisor. This will involve a major time commitment by the supervisor.

The relationship between the supervisor and student “is like a dance, matching the steps of one to the other and working together to produce a research artwork of quality, creativity and substance where there are no fixed behaviours which need to be trained” (Wisker, 2005:5). The relationship is “highly individualistic in nature more so than any teaching in coursework programmes, and, the relationship continually changes throughout the research process” (Becher *et al.*, 1994, in Neumann, 2000:96). This relationship is critical to the success of postgraduate research. If the relationship is not developed and maintained, it will be difficult or impossible for supervisor and student to ensure that a satisfactory thesis is completed within the required time. In addition, Zhao (2001:3) argues that “establishing a right match and maintaining an effective working relationship holds the key to success of research projects and theses.” Each party has to respect one another in terms of scholarship, academic credibility and practices. Students

ought to bear in mind that the supervisor is the “link with the University, and an essential guide, teacher, colleague and mentor in the research process” (Wisker, 2005:41).

For a successful supervisory relationship, from the perspective of participants, Phillips and Pugh stress that:

It seems that rapport and good communication between students and their supervisors are the most important elements of supervision. Once the personal relationship has been well established, all else falls into place. If interpersonal compatibility is missing everything else to do with being a postgraduate is perceived negatively. Therefore, it cannot be stressed too strongly that discussion of this relationship should begin at the very earliest opportunity and a tentative agreement about working together should be reached

(Phillips and Pugh, 1994, in Woolard, 1998:2).

Acker *et al.* (1994) believe that the success of the supervisory relationship depends as much on the student as on the supervisor and identify coping strategies which students use. Parsloe (1993, in Latona and Browne, 2001) claims that students’ excitement, despair, boredom and confidence have predictable stages as the students move through the degree. Subsequently, it is a prerequisite for the supervisor to sort out a best working relationship with his/her supervisee (Delamont *et al.*, 1997) as students bring to their work conceptions of the nature of supervision that differs from that of the supervisors, although these will change over time (Sayed *et al.*, 1998).

Brew and Peseta (2004 quoted by Wisker, 2005:37) have collated parameters of good supervisory relationship, these are:

- Interest and enthusiasm for the supervision of postgraduate research students.
- Appreciation of a range of good practice approaches to supervision and an understanding of what constitutes a productive research learning environment.
- Establishment, for and with students, of clear goals and expectations in the light of up-to-date knowledge of the University requirements.

- Productive and regular meetings held with students, which provide them with sympathetic, responsive and effective academic, professional and personal support and guidance.
- Careful management of the supervisory process to achieve timely and successful completion of the thesis.
- Development of a partnership with students that takes account of the need to assist them to develop a range of generic attributes and to introduce them to the research community.
- Open communications established with students with timely feedback, which is both supportive and challenging, given on progress.
- Utilization of a repertoire of supervisory strategies to take account of the differing and diverse needs of individual students, including assisting students from equity groups and those off-campus to achieve success in their study.
- Evidence of systematic evaluation of competency in supervisory skills and of critical reflection and engagement with salient and emergent issues in their own field of research, to improve supervisory practice.
- Use, by the supervisor, of the literature on the scholarship of supervision pedagogy, and of relevant policy issues in research education to enhance the postgraduate research experience of their students.

Relationships ought to be worked at and discussed so that both parties are aware of expectations entailed within the supervisory relationship. What can both supervisor and students expect when entering that relationship? The next section provides the answer to that question.

2.2.1. Supervisory Relationship: Expectations

Kiley (1998) concurs with Cranney (1998) that the student-supervisor relationship is one of the crucial factors in postgraduate education. For Kiley, within this relationship, expectation provides the key to understanding why some student-supervisor relationships

are successful and others not. The expectations students bring to the relationship change over time (Delamont *et al.*, in Woolard, 1998). Clear and explicit expectations need to be formulated by both supervisors and students to overcome the gap in expectations experienced (Sayed *et al.*, 1998:285). According to Kiley (1998:190) “expectation is the act of expecting something expected ... a thing looked forward to, or a prospect of future good or profit.” The students’ expectations, as well as supervisors’ are brought about by a whole range of personal, professional and interpersonal experiences, including relationships with previous students as well as the current students. Edwards *et al.* (1999) believe that some basic issues underpin effective supervision and that discussion of the issues will lay the foundations for a good working relationship. Findings indicate that both supervisor and student expressed a preference for sharing understandings about supervision and reaching agreement over fundamental expectations and responsibilities with one another early in the candidature.

According to Edwards *et al.* (1995), the sharing of supervisor’s and student’s professional and educational background forms a positive starting point for opening up a discussion that identifies shared interests, and at the same time, acknowledges individual differences. Approaches to the supervisory process differ from individual to individual and conflicts within the supervisory process normally arise due to misunderstandings about the differing roles of the supervisor or student (*ibid*). Areas of responsibility of supervisor-student which need to be explicit to both parties are:

- Setting the research topic
- Writing the proposal
- Calling meetings and setting meetings agendas
- Setting timelines and tasks
- Monitoring progress
- Dealing with conflict
- Generating publications
- Authorship of publications

(Edwards *et al.*, 1995:5).

In addition to these expectations which need to be made explicit are “advice on the literature search, theoretical ideas, help with computing, visits during foreign fieldwork, debugging of equipment, and good references when they are applying for jobs or tea and sympathy” (Delamont *et al.*, 1997:21).

It is very important to have clear expectations about the student’s writing, and to communicate these expectations to the student. Delamont *et al.* (1997:24) also assert that the more the supervisor sorts out his/her expectations, the better the relationship is expected to be. The supervisor is obliged to set out his/her expectations for student conduct as part of the negotiations for student conduct. Various expectations which might form the foundation of an explicit departmental code of practice for the students are as follows:

- Turn up to appointments, prepared for them
- Write regularly, and share the draft material
- Tell the truth about work done and not done
- Keep in touch socially, practically especially holidays, sickness, change of address
- Most important, do the research tasks that have been mutually agreed and scheduled

(Delamont *et al.*, 1997:24).

Furthermore, in research conducted on supervisor expectations of students, Moses (1985, in Lawrence, 1996:5) concludes that “supervisors expected students to be diligent, dedicated and hard working; to be energetic, keen, tenacious, conscientious and have a sense of urgency.”

On the other hand, students, expected supervisors “foremost to have knowledge and ability to supervise that particular area of research, to be reasonable ... supporting ... understanding and approachable” (Moses, 1985, in Lawrence, 1996:5). The students can also have expectations about their supervisors namely, “regular supervision and written feedback. A reasonable student can expect to see his/her supervisor twenty to thirty times

a year if full-time, for a private one-to-one discussion of the research and have draft material read and returned with written comments in a reasonable time” (Delamont *et al.*, 1997:24). While supervisors only expressed the professional aspects of the relationship, students further made comments on the personal qualities of the relationship. According to Sayed *et al.* (1998:281), successful MEd students described the supervisor as a “guide and mentor who is seen as advisor, critical interlocutor and facilitator of the student’s movement towards becoming an independent and autonomous researcher.” In support, Lyons *et al.* (1990:2) note that “the literature clearly suggests that it is the primary function of the mentor to act as guide in the rite of passage from novice to professional in all its aspects.”

Supervisor and student ought to be open listeners who maintain contact through regular meetings (Lawrence, 1996). As a result, a constructive and supportive relationship facilitates the supervisory process. Perhaps, supervisors should strive to be equally explicit about what they cannot, or will not provide. In circumstances where supervisors cannot provide this, Delamont *et al.* (1997) argue that the supervisor directs the supervisee to get help elsewhere.

For Wisker (2005:19), “clarity of mutual expectations, ground rules about regularity, the type and focus of supervisions and agenda setting, as well as the involvement of the student in a supportive academic community are all essential in a good supervisor-student relationship.” Wisker claims that the aforesaid is “true of all disciplines, all levels, and all geographical areas.”

Woolard (1998:2) observes that the most succinct outline of the expectations graduate students bring to the supervisory relationship is the one delineated in the book called “How to Get a PhD” which suggests nine expectations, generally, among students according to the British experience regardless of discipline. Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Woolard, 1998:2) note that students expect:

- To be supervised.
- Supervisors to read their work well in advance of a discussion.

- Their supervisors to be available when needed.
- Their supervisors to be friendly, open and supportive.
- Their supervisors to be constructively critical.
- Their supervisors to have a good knowledge of the research area.
- Their supervisors to structure the tutorial so that it is relatively easy to exchange ideas.
- Their supervisors to have sufficient interest in their research to put more information in the students' path, including introducing their students to others in the field.
- Supervisors to be sufficiently involved in their success to help them get a good job at the end of it all.

The latter expectations are also highlighted by Wisker (2005:44-46). In addition, Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Woolard, 1998:2) contend that students "expect their supervisors to act as role models, modeling both their researcher and supervisor behaviours [and] to give them constructive and timely criticism, but at the same time, expected them to remember that doing a PhD is a very emotional experience which involves the whole person."

Spear (2000) supports this list of common expectations and adds that of absence of gender bias and sexual harassment ought to be included. In addition, he observes that students often expect supervisors to provide advice, sympathy and encouragement in non-academic boundaries of the thesis project. In such circumstances, Spear states that the supervisor should know where to refer the student when serious personal problems affect the student's work. Delamont *et al.* (1997) concur with this notion. They argue that the supervisor should direct the supervisee to get help elsewhere in cases where the supervisor cannot, or will not provide. The referral places can for example be the university's health service, counseling service, and student loan scheme.

Having considered the expectations from different authors, Spear (2000) suggests that the purpose of the supervision exercise should be considered foremost. For example, the process of PhD supervision should produce graduates who are capable of performing

independent research of publishable quality so as to maintain the reputation of the institution and the supervisor. However, within all these expectations, students expect their supervisors to be experts, supportive throughout the process, to guide, to mentor, to monitor their projects' progress, to be creative and to criticize their work constructively. It can be argued that students also have to play their role (Delamont *et al.*; 1997 and Moses, 1985, in Lawrence, 1996) for the relationship to be a memorable one. The underlying factor for a successful relationship throughout the process is what Spear called effective communication between the supervisor and the student. This was echoed by the student authors in Spear's survey at the Australian National University who stated that "the issue of good communication comes up over and over again. We think effective communication is the crux of good supervisor-student relationships" (Spear, 2000:17). According to Spear, this effective communication is all about the supervisor and the student exchanging views frankly without embarrassment or intimidation.

As time moves on, the circumstances under which the supervisor and the student are working may change. Because of those changes, the nature of their relationship changes as well. Wisker (2005:42) notes that "cultural, gender and age differences, the level of award sought, as well as differences in everyday practices and learning styles could affect expectations and relationships." Supervisor and student's relationships succeed if emerging differences in sharing of expectations are continuously discussed and addressed as the nature of supervision changes over time.

2.2.2. The Changing Nature of Supervisor-Student Relationship over Time

From interviews conducted among scientists and social scientists in the United Kingdom on the supervision of doctoral students, Delamont *et al.* (1997), argue that the nature of the supervisor-student relationship changes over time. One interviewee, a social scientist, a supervisor, noted that the relationship between supervisor and student can, and must change over the student's registration period by stating that:

I do think it's quite a difficult process for both parties, supervisor and student. And it changes over time. It is a very personal thing. To begin with the supervisor is in a quite strong position in defining and directing students, and

they are relatively subordinate in the beginning, willing to accept your advice and direction
(Delamont *et al.*, 1997:11).

The above is an early phase which the student needs to outgrow. The relationship changes as the student gets more and more into the subject and develops an expertise which the supervisor is no longer sharing. The student develops a view about his/her intellectual property which is different from his/her supervisor. This intellectual growing up process may lead to conflicts at a certain stage as the student develops that independence (Delamont, Atkinson and Parry, 1997).

According to the social scientist, the time when the equilibrium starts to shift can be juxtaposed to the stormy adolescence of the candidature as:

I have always found there's this period in the middle where there is that conflict, like my relationship with my daughter; where there is a change occurring, and it's quite difficult as a supervisor to begin let go almost. You feel they're not ready for it, they're not in control, and that leads to a degree of conflict which can be overt, or could not be overt. Sometimes people avoid seeing you it's like that
(Delamont *et al.*, 1997:11).

During the period of conflict between colleagues and students, the social scientist observes that:

I've seen that process sometimes with colleagues, where people don't seem to be able to complete, and I think it might need to be overtly addressed. And I think the most successful candidates are when you can be relatively open about that, get through it and then move to completion. But otherwise you can get stuck in that phase when the supervisor still tries to over-direct, over-control, and the student tries to pull away and develop their own interests. And if you're not careful you can get bogged down, the student doesn't know how to progress and you're not giving them the sort of advice they need to get through. I don't know if other supervisors have felt this, but I do think there's this shifting relationship which is actually quite difficult to cope with.
(Delamont *et al.*, 1997:11).

During the research, another supervisor stated that "the supervisor-student relationship is always stimulating if and only if the student writes regularly, is a good friend, and will not mythologize the PhD as a lifework" (Delamont *et al.*, 1997:12).

At different stages throughout the candidature, certain issues ought to be renegotiated and therefore, both supervisor and student should be encouraged to review the process at regular intervals or as the need arise. Research evidence suggests that the development of relationships between students and their supervisors needs to become the hub of ongoing discussions throughout the candidature as the nature of the relationship changes overtime.

Edwards *et al.* (1995:10) claim that “if a regular review of progress takes place both during and at the conclusion of the supervisory process the student is more highly motivated to finish.” The review could be self-assessment and a collaborative assessment with the supervisor. They suggest that in both formal and informal review processes pertaining to the supervisor-student relationship, it is worthwhile to consider some questions such as: “Is the relationship between the supervisor and the student satisfactory in relation to effective communication, degree of encouragement, level of expertise, and degree of interdependence” (ibid). In support, Spear (2000) also indicates that effective communication between supervisor and student is a necessary prerequisite. The elements of effective communication and negotiation are:

- Making an effort to articulate what you think
- Listening, indicating that you have understood, and responding to what has been said by confirming or disagreeing
- Discussing opposing points of view
- Compromising on less important matters and persisting in arguing for issues considered essential
- Reaching a compromise agreement that all parties accept

(Spear, 2000:17).

Students and supervisors providing each other with feedback about the process and the progress of research ensure the development and maintenance of quality supervisor-student relationships and, therefore, improve student completion rates (Aspland *et al.*, 1999). Furthermore, Zuber-Skerritt and Roche (2004:83) argue that “any methods that help supervisors to develop greater understanding and competence in their roles, including an ability to evaluate supervision effectiveness, could improve supervision

practice and potentially reduce the incidence of student non-completion or late completion.” However, “gathering feedback for quality improvement from the postgraduate students is hindered by the personal relationships existing between students and supervisors and students’ fears of jeopardizing these relationships by giving critical feedback” (Johnston, 1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:3). Regardless of these problems, results of a survey of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Western Australia investigating the desirable characteristics of a supervisor, observed that the students ranked supervisory support that balances creativity with criticism ahead of academic expertise (Fraser and Mathews 1999).

In their study, Sayed *et al.* (1998:282) report that “painful as the process may have been for the students, towards the end all the students acknowledge that the supervisor as guide and mentor approach meant that they learnt more about research than would otherwise have been the case.” As for supervisors, Kandlbinder and Peseta (2001, in Zuber-Skerritt and Roche, 2004:84), in their study, observe that “supervisors saw themselves as mentors and facilitators guiding students through the research process.” Down *et al.* (2000) also argue that postgraduate supervisors ought to view themselves as learning mentors. This approach values the student-supervisor relationship as one of cognitive and personal growth for both parties. It emphasizes the facilitation of learning and a guided growth towards learning autonomy. Ibrahim *et al.* (1980, in Aspland *et al.*, 1999) affirm that timely completion has positive consequences for both the student and for the society at large. When the relationship is well established, the frequency of the meetings influences the models of supervision. The following sections will discuss different supervisory models.

2.3. Models of Supervisory Relationships

Delamont *et al.* (1997:37) argue that “the relationship between the higher degree student and his/her supervisor can take many forms. However, it is necessary to establish clear, productive and mutually convenient arrangements for supervision.” The process of supervision occurs within the relationship established between the supervisor and supervisee. Hockey (1991, in Armstrong, 2004:611) observe that the supervision process

is, to state the obvious, a relationship. Hence, the kind of relationship which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure (Armstrong, 2004:611). It is important to keep in mind that both the supervisor and supervisee contribute to the relationship and have responsibilities within the process. The systematic manner in which supervision is applied is called a model. Different models have been identified to compliment one another as the degrees of the educative, administrative, and affective domains which impact on the quality of the student-supervisor relationship differ.

Hockey (1996 quoted by Kiley 1998:199) state that "...the significance of the relationship stems from its duality; the co-existence of intimacy, care and personal commitment on the one hand, and commitment to specific academic goals on the other hand." This is in line with Moses' observation when he notes that, "there is a continuum from strictly professional interaction to very personal interaction" (1985:3). Therefore, the literature search identifies different models of supervision. These are managerial, professional, mentorship/student focused, combined, and comradeship models.

All the models are characterized by varying degrees of formal relation, where contract is more important than trust (contractual relations), and informal relations where the notion of a contractual agreement and trust are of equal importance (contractual and personal interactions) or where trust is more important than contract (personal interactions). These differences of degree give rise to the various models described below. These can be ranged along a continuum which runs from the more formal (managerial and professional) models to the semi-formal (mentorship/student focused and combined) models to more informal (comradeship) models.

Welsh and Moses (1978 and 1981, in Lamm and Lewis, 1999:1) observe that research that identified supervisory roles and student satisfaction with supervision, confirm the three supervisory components such as, the organisational, academic and the personal." "Good academic guidance together with suitable organizational and administrative skills must also take into account the interpersonal relationship within the supervisory dyad, for a student to gain maximal benefit from higher degree studies" (Lamm and Lewis, 1999:2). Consequently, different models which have been identified to compliment one

another to address what might be a holistic approach to postgraduate supervision are discussed in detail. The section proceeds to discuss each of the models.

2.3.1. Formal Models

Two models fall under the formal models. These are the management model and the professional model. As noted above supervision involves all three categories namely, administration, education and support, and while both the management and the professional models do take these into account, the emphasis here is on the administrative or organizational aspects.

2.3.1.1. The Management Model

The management model is sometimes referred to as an administrative approach to supervision (Kathy and Manathunga, 2004). The model refers to contractual relations where the contract is more important than trust. In this model, Latona and Browne (2001, in Kathy and Manathunga, 2004:241) indicate that “supervisors’ and students’ individual roles and responsibilities are emphasized.” Kathy and Manathunga argue that although these aspects ensure students’ continuing progression, they are only part of the complex role of the supervisor. The management model regards the manager as someone who “co-ordinates and supervises from above which implies that the manager can organize and construct the environment totally” (Malfroy and Webb, 2000:167).

This approach has been criticized on a number of levels. Firstly, the model often does not do justice to the high level of intellectual commitment to the student and the topic that is evidenced in most supervisory relationships and does not account for the complementary role the student plays (Malfroy and Webb, 2000:167).

Secondly, the model does not assist supervisors in identifying the particular origin of students’ academic procrastination, which is more likely to lie within the cognitive or

affective domains. Thus, it can be argued that the emphasis on the administrative roles makes the management model deficient in supervision. Ashiabor *et al.* (2005:1) state that the present political and university climate requires that postgraduate research students acquire a quality research education located within a supportive intellectual environment, and these situations will encourage the timely completion of research degrees. This is not the case with management model. Similarly, Malfroy and Webb (2000:167) argue that the role of supervisor needs a level of personal engagement that is not needed by a manager who coordinates and supervises from above. After all, the “aim of the postgraduate research experience is to progressively develop new knowledge in previously uncharted waters and for the student to attain a level of expertise that is probably superior to the supervisor’s in the specific area” (Malfroy and Webb, 2000:167). It can be argued that the relationship is teacher-student where the student remains the neophyte and follower throughout the supervisory process and the supervisor as the director is set up as the infallible expert who knows best. This limits the level of the affective component of supervision and impacts on the quality of the student-supervisor relationship.

2.3.1.2. The Professional Model

This model is also referred to as “non-managerial supervision” and sometimes described as “consultant” or professional supervision in the literature (Brown, 1984, in Smith, 1996:6). Smith (1996:6) argues that the “most common distinction between the managerial and the non-managerial models is that in the managerial model, the first point of reference has to be the interest of the organization while the non-managerial supervisor looks to the development of the worker [in this, case the student]. Sometimes this is reduced to the difference between administrative and educational supervision. That is to say, one version argues that managers should not be concerned with educational supervision; and consultant supervisors should only focus on education and support.”

As the title implies, in this model the relationship between the supervisor and the student is kept on a professional level, “the contract becomes more important than trust” (Kiley,

1998:199). The contract can be a Code of Practice enacted by the university which also has an interest that the student-supervisor relationship works well. The professional model “can be used to support all students” if and only if the “professionalisation of the relationship is far from being an acceptance of masculinist culture of rules and regulations” (Wisker, 2005:216). Thus, it is “important that everyone has adequate access to facilities and a well-managed relationship between supervisor and supervisee based on mutual respect and commitment to mutual fulfillment of duty as well as to the experience of research” (Wisker, 2005:216).

In reviewing the application of a professional model in a science department in Australia, Moses (1985) noted that the approach functioned well when students worked in teams and had regular contact with each other. However, for students who work alone at a topic, Moses (1985) observes that the students often experience both physical isolation from others and intellectual isolation. This practice is mostly encountered in the social sciences and commonly in a one-to-one relationship. As a result, a student may look to the supervisor for guidance and friendship. Hartnett and Katz (1977, in Moses, 1985:39) observe that “supervisors ought to give more time to their postgraduate students to assist the students’ intellectual development. In addition, the supervisors ought to become more nurturing to postgraduates in both attitude and practices such as being aware and responding to the development and situational ambiguities in the lives of many graduate students.”

Moses (1985:40) suggests that for students and supervisors who rely solely on the professional relationship, the supervisor might ask himself/herself questions such as:

- Has my student opportunity to discuss the research with anyone else but me? If not, can I initiate research seminars? Can I refer the student to other experts in the field?
- Do I know enough about the student’s work approaches and home/work environment to realize when something is going wrong and he/she needs more direction or less, needs sympathy, practical help or a deferment?

Moses claims that friendliness and sympathy ought not to be ignored because of the professional approach. For the relationship which seems to be personal and friendship-oriented, the supervisor may ask himself/herself questions such as:

- Do I have enough distance from my students to criticize their work rigorously?
- Can I lean on them, pressure them if the work demands it?
- Am I treating my postgraduates equally? Do I look as if I were favoring female postgraduates? Do I include my male postgraduates in my circle of friends and exclude the female students? Or vice versa?

According to Moses (1985) both age, family situation for both student and supervisor as well as supervisor's personal compatibility are pivotal to the evolving relationship between the supervisor and his/her student. The concept of matching compatible personalities of student and supervisor is also emphasized in Malfroy and Webb (2000) and Lawrence (1996).

Moses (1985:3) contends that in the end, it is the successful completion of a thesis of merit which counts. She notes,

If your professional relationship ceases but your personal one survives, you have gained a friend. If the professional relationship continues in joint publications and research, you have gained a colleague. If the relationship ends with the acceptance of the thesis, you will have the satisfaction of having been part of this. Often, of course, you keep hearing from your postgraduate, notably to give references. Thus the responsibility towards your former apprentice or your student, who has come of age, may never end.

As the contractual relations lack the high degree of personal engagement required by students working alone at a topic, other models to compliment these more formal models were identified here. These are collectively called informal models.

2.3.2. Informal Models

There are three basic types of informal models. These are the comradeship model where trust is more important than contract; the mentorship (student-focused) model, and a combined model where the notion of contractual agreement and trust are of equal importance.

2.3.2.1 *The Comradeship Model*

In the comradeship model, the gap between the supervisor and the student is almost closed. The supervisor and the student act as they are at the same level, trust becomes more important than the contract. The model brings in trust between student and supervisor. The “role of experienced researcher and collaborator can only be performed satisfactorily if the student accepts that the supervisor is a more experienced colleague and collaborator, able to support the student in disciplinary thinking and /or broad research strategies” (Buttery *et al.*, 2005:17). During their research project in Britain on PhD students and their supervisors, Delamont *et al.* (1997:21) claim that one interviewee, describing her “intensely personal supervisory style” with doctoral students, stated that:

All my students come over for dinner, they know us as individuals and as a family. Eunice, who comes from Canada, has spent two Christmases with us. Bill who was a Zambian student, his grant ran out and he had nowhere to live so he lived with us for six months to finish.

This view is supported by Wisker (2005) and Moses (1985) for whom it is very important that both supervisor and student get along professionally and personally, without necessarily being the best of friends. Mutual respect and professional integrity are fundamental to a satisfactory relationship between a supervisor and a student. Both the supervisor and the student ought to respect each other in terms of scholarship, academic credibility and practices.

Grant (1999) claims that although the supervision relationship is risky, it is also potentially a highly pleasurable pedagogy for both supervisor and student. The student gains the pleasure of working one-to-one with an academic, and being recognized as an

academic, while the supervisor enjoys seeing the student's capabilities grow and flower in the writing of the thesis, co-producing a good piece of academic work and fostering the development of the discipline. These outcomes make the supervision relationship more than just a simple contract of mutual responsibilities between supervisor and student (Grant, 1999). In addition, Salmon (1992:118) states that "supervising entails relationship, and what essentially defines that relationship is trust on both sides." Hence, without trust the relationship cannot be established.

According to Hockey (1996, in Kiley, 1998:199), "supervisory relations in the UK are mostly in line with the comradeship model or verging on contractual agreement and trust and there are very few which could be categorized as professional, such as based on a contract system". Similarly, in Australia, "at least at the University of Adelaide, most supervisors and students enter the supervisory relationship with a sense of trust that each part will do what is expected although rarely is what is expected is defined or discussed in detail and that the whole experience will be a positive one" (Kiley, 1998:199).

Kiley observes that so long as trust is maintained on both sides in some cases as a result of good luck rather than good design, the relationship flourishes. The students look to the supervisor to give the right guidance because friends do not let you down. The supervisors and students effectively become collaborators, who interact with each other continuously. In such conditions, supervisor and students work together in an implicitly agreed environment. However, Kiley (1998:199) claims that "as long as postgraduate supervisory relationships are built on implicit trust there is always the strong potential for the relationship to deteriorate if the trust is broken on either side and/or if the implicit expectations of one partner are not reciprocated by the other." For Kiley, three options are either struggle along as is, draw up a contract with very clear roles and expectations or end the relationship by changing supervisors of which all the options are observable at the University of Adelaide.

Knowing that implicit expectations and implicit trust exist within supervisory experience and that they may be quite at odds with one another, Kiley (1998:200) asserts that "it is at least a start in establishing a truly open and collegial relationship, and working towards

an experience which is likely to be one of the most significant of a person's time as a student." "Using techniques such as the Supervisory Expectations Scale, or being involved in student-supervisor workshops where the implicit can be made explicit and then discussed provide means whereby students and their supervisors are more able to understand one another and work together more affectively" (Kiley, 1998:200). She argues that "the expectations can be even more varied and problematic for overseas students studying in a foreign country and often in another language" hence the need for the expectations to be made explicit. Whittle (1994, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) claims that "formalizing student-supervisor interactions has been found to confer benefits".

Although this model suggests a high level of personal engagement which is lacking in the managerial and the professional models, it can be argued that the organisational factors which also impact on the quality of student-supervisor relationship are limited. Wisker (2005:59) states that "the relationship between supervisor(s) and students is a long-term one, designed to help students become sound and successful researchers therefore it is essential to be open and frank about mutual expectations and needs". For Moses (1985:10)),

Becoming a supervisor is a two-way process. Openness in the initial discussions may prevent years of frustration for you and the student if your personality and learning-teaching styles are mismatched and no common style or ground is found. Openness about your own and the student's competence may prevent the student from withdrawing or failing.

In support, Kehrhahn *et al.* (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) claim that "clarifying and correcting student expectations about the milestones and time frames are part of improved time to complete."

In the light of these shortfalls, other models believed by the researcher to compliment them were explored. These can be called semi-formal models where the notion of a contractual agreement and trust are of equal importance.

2.3.3. Semi-formal Models

2.3.3.1. *The Mentorship (Student-Focused) Model*

According to Down *et al.* (2000:1) the mentorship (student-focused) model is “a mentoring approach to supervising postgraduate students.” This model is for supervisors seeking to prepare themselves for the challenges of supervising postgraduate students in a research environment that is demanding change yet seeking to maintain those elements of its past that are valuable and pertinent to its current focus. It “necessitates a move from a traditional approach, which is centered more on the development of research, to a problem solving approach” (Down *et al.*, 2000:10). Lyons *et al.* (1990, in McMichael, 1993:16) contend that “the relationship which grows out of successful supervision is described as mentoring.” For them, mentor’s (supervisor’s) close working relationships with students provide opportunities for students to learn the norms and methods of their discipline and lead to a fuller educational experience. The supervisor, as an experienced academic in the field sees himself/herself as a mentor whose role is facilitating, advising, guiding and supporting postgraduate students through the supervisory process. Among other definitions, Kram (1985, in Marshall *et al.*, 1998:2) argues that “effective mentoring relationships address both the professional, work related dimension and the psychosocial dimension.” In their research conducted in Australia, Marshall *et al.* (1998:6) found out that “effective mentors provide mentorees with personal support, addressing the psychosocial dimension of the mentorees’ needs for self confidence, encouragement and feedback as well as helping the individual to understand the culture and politics of the organization.” Important but not as the latter, mentors act as role models for their mentorees. The mentoring is “most effective when it occurs on a one-to-one basis” (Marshall *et al.*, 1998:5).

The model being transformative and enabling, implies that the student is given more attention, by comparison with the managerial and the professional models, to prepare

him/herself to become more independent. The postgraduate student's development as a researcher is as important as the development of the research project itself (Down *et al.*, 2000). According to them, for supervisors, this may mean:

- Acting in a variety of different yet overlapping roles such as counselor, negotiator, mediator, interpreter, critical friend, assessor, curriculum matcher, teacher/assessor, co-learner, enabler, listener, subversive friend, challenger, coach, resource broker including the selection of examiners
- Encouraging learners to grow and become independent with respect to their learning
- Assisting learners to monitor and review their own progress
- Demonstrating continuous improvement with respect to the role of learning mentor through personal reflective practice
- Demonstrating continuous improvement with respect to the role of learning mentor through the reflective practice of one's student
- Demonstrating that supervisory expectations and student expectations are actually reviewed, assessed, and evaluated throughout the duration of the research degree

(Down, Martin and Bicknell, 2000:10).

These requirements emphasize an approach which places the postgraduate student at the centre of the thesis and the supervisor's responsibility as that of "establishing an effective learning environment with physical, intellectual, social and emotional dimensions" (ibid). Down, Martin and Bicknell (2000:10) assert that this approach underpins the supervisor-student relationship as one of cognitive and personal growth for both the supervisor and the student. The approach underscores the facilitation of learning and a guided growth towards the development of postgraduate students as researchers as well as the development of research. In this approach, both the student and the research are greatly visible indicators of the quality of supervision received by individual students (Down, Martin and Bicknell, 2000:11). However, Ferman, (2002:4) contends that "care should be taken that the mentors possess sound sets of the various kinds of discipline and pedagogical knowledge necessary for effective supervision."

Are these major models of supervision mutually exclusive, or do they share common ground? All the models discussed above attend systematically to: a safe supervisory relationship; task-directed structure; methods addressing a variety of learning styles; multiple supervisory roles; and communication skills enhancing listening, analyzing, and elaboration. Furthermore, all the models involve two people with different personalities, different background and different experiences. Regardless of these differences, however, they all have a common goal: the focus on the student change from novice to experienced researcher. In addition, students depend on the supervisor for guidance and support. The guidance, support as well as balancing creativity with criticism and all phases of supervision process are elements of what can be called “a combined model.”

2.3.3.2. The "Combined" Model

This is a model developed by Fraser and Mathews (1999) from their appraisal of recent literature in the area of postgraduate supervision (see Cullen *et al.*, 1994; Hall *et al.*, 1997; McCormark, 1994; McMichael and Garry, 1994; and Parry and Hayden, 1994). The model broadens the traditional focus on expertise to include support for the student and the capacity of balancing creativity with criticism throughout the supervisory process. It can be argued that this model developed from research amongst agricultural students at the University of Western Australia has elements of other models but also it explicitly covers different stages of the supervision process and provides insight into the characteristics of an effective supervisor.

Fraser and Mathews (1999:1-2) observe that the “model represents the contribution of an academic to the student-supervisor relationship as having three main components namely, expertise in the research area, and the non-expertise areas such as the capacity of balancing creativity with criticism in supervision, and support for the student,” all of which are mediated by the stage at which the thesis is beginning, middle or end. They recognized that although expertise is an important contribution of an academic to the student-supervisor relationship, balancing creativity with criticism in supervision, and support for the student are two other important components of the supervisor’s

contribution too. These aspects are mediated by time. However, they note that academics usually have no particular training in these areas.

2.3.3.2.1. Expertise in the research area

In postgraduate supervision, for Fraser and Mathews (1999:1), expertise would mean a range of things such as, “being up-to-date in the research area; having an active research programme in the area; having a track record of research output in the area (including having done a PhD in the area); having a network of colleagues in the area; and having a track record as a research supervisor in the area.” In testing these aspects with students they refer to these characteristics as “knowledge; specialist; teacher; trainer; influential; and co-coordinator” (ibid), “guide; counselor; facilitator; sponsor; advisor and director/leader” (see also Marshall *et al.*, 1998; Down *et al.*, 2000; and Lyons, *et al.*, 1990).

2.3.3.2.2. Balancing creativity with criticism

Balancing creativity with criticism in supervision is one of the critical components of the supervisor’s contribution to the student-supervisor relationship. It covers a range of characteristics such as the supervisor being stimulating, active, critical, objective, challenging, a colleague, and a flexible thinker (see also Woolard, 1998; Buttery *et al.*, 2004; Down *et al.*, 2000). For Fraser and Mathews (1999:2), this process means “in the getting-going phase a supervisor contributes ideas to the project so that the student clearly sees his/her commitment (stimulating, active) and in the maintaining the impetus and finishing-off phases, the supervisor shifts more and more towards the critic. Thus, the student is typically developing his/her own ideas about where to go and what to do and it is the supervisor’s role to react constructively (critical, objective.” Hence, “both advice and criticism need to be managed in order to encourage the competent student to develop sufficient self-confidence to embark on and sustain several years of demanding independent work” (Delamont *et al.*, 1997, in Fraser and Mathews, 1999:4).

2.3.3.2.3. Support for the student

This covers a range of characteristics such as the supervisor being “enthusiastic, available, helpful, involved, attentive, and caring” (Fraser and Mathews, 1999:1) and being approachable, friendly, empathetic and nurturing (see Moses, 1985; Woolard, 1998; Cranney, 1998; Buttery *et al.*, 2005; Lyons *et al.*, 1990; and Wisker, 2005). Delamont *et al.* (1997, in Fraser and Mathews, 1999) claim that the supervisor can build and support the student’s self-confidence as well as reassure and motivate the student particularly in the early stage of the research.

2.3.3.2.4. Time as an influence

Fraser and Mathews (1999); Morrison-Saunders (2005); and Wisker (2005) argue that there are three main different stages of the supervisory process namely, the beginning stage (early phase), middle stage (maintaining the impetus) and the final stage (end phase). They observe that the significance of the various types of support changes between these phases. Fraser and Mathews (1999:2) contend that in the “settling-in and getting going phase, it is essential to make the student feel confident that they have the intellectual capacity to complete the project (enthusiastic, involved). Later on, in the maintaining the impetus phase, students often suffer a relapse of self-doubt. The supervisees need to be reminded of all they have achieved already, and helped to develop a clear vision both of what remains to be done and of how to achieve it (helpful, attentive).

Finally, in the finishing-off phase students are often distressed at the prospect of having their writing criticized and having to rework chapters at a point when they feel intellectually exhausted. It is important to rearrange and rebuild their work rather than knock it down, so that they can see their efforts have not been wasted and feel that they have the stamina to finish after all (available, caring)” (Fraser and Mathews, 1999: 2).

Interestingly, Fraser and Mathews (1999:3) point out that research findings, in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Western Australia, indicate that “students

evidently rank non-expertise supervisor-related characteristics which provide support and which balance creativity with criticism as more important than expertise-related characteristics. It can be argued that by adopting this combined model as a system-based holistic approach to all stages of the supervisory relationship, a genuine and effective learning partnership between the student and the supervisor is established.

Problems with the student, project or student-supervisor relationship may not be identified, particularly by less experienced supervisors, until they are critical (Mertens and McCrimmon, 1998). Consequently, training for the supervisor is one of the most effective means of supporting both the supervisor and the student during their period of study and it also helps the supervisor to maximize his/her own effectiveness. An effective training programme for supervisors would also demonstrate good practice to universities and emphasize the institutions' commitment to continuing education in research. "Gaining skills to supervise effectively has benefits for both the students and the supervisors" (Graham and Grant, 1997, in Fraser and Mathews, 1999:3). Yet the required teaching, supervisory and management skills are developed over an extended period of time, largely by trial and error (Mertens and McCrimmon, 1998).

2.4. Summary and Conclusion

From the literature surveyed, it could be argued that the supervision of research students is a complex teaching task which requires a wide range of personal and professional qualities to be effective. Whittle (1994:2) claims that "it is widely accepted that the ability to provide effective supervision is a key factor in assisting students to complete their degrees on time." As the relationship changes over time during the thesis life circle due to the shared and negotiated expectations, supervisors ought to be flexible in meeting the needs of individual students and in guiding them towards independent research. Acker *et al.* (1994, in Latona and Browne, 2001) concur with Pratt (2001) that good supervisory relationships have to be negotiated.

Models of student-supervisor relationship identified which can be adopted by the supervisor to ensure successful completion which results in a student being an

independent researcher and a life-long friend runs from the supervisor possessing management qualities, professional qualities, and comradeship qualities to some mentorship characteristics all of which characteristics are found in the combined model. Lyons *et al.* (1990:3) claim that “having a mentor is absolutely essential for success in graduate school.” “Graduate school mentors and their protégés share a comradeship of such extraordinary intensity that it transcends the normal teacher/student relationship” (ibid). Phillips and Pugh (1994:12) argue that the personal relationship is an important part of the thesis process and can be developed in the course of the supervisory process.

However, Zhao (2001) indicates that there are times when trust is broken when the expectations were never initially made explicit. This can be avoided by supervisor and student discussing and agreeing on ways of working and all this is emphasized by Delamont *et al.*, 1997; Edwards *et al.*, 1995; Moses, 1985; Sayed *et al.*, 1998; and Down *et al.*, 2000. Fraser and Mathews (1999) recognize the change over time of the relationship during the thesis life circle which consists of the initial, middle and finishing off phases and the supervisor’s characteristics for the successful completion of the thesis. The mentorship (student-focused) model which puts the student at the centre of the research process compliments the combined model. Throughout the process, the student receives support through guidance, mentorship and productive criticism to become an independent researcher.

Good supervision practices include acting as a mentor for students, encouraging open communication, making expectations, roles and responsibilities explicit, scheduling regular and frequent formal meetings, encouraging students to publish, providing opportunities for joint publication, and assisting students in attending conferences (Whittle, 1994:2; see also Brew and Peseta, 2004, in Wisker, 2005). Providing feedback about the process and progress of research between students and supervisors ensures the development and maintenance of quality student-supervisor relationship and subsequently improves the student completion rates (Elphinstone, 1994; Phillips, 1994; Phillips and Pugh, 1994, in Apsaland *et al.*, 1999:129). The feedback should be timely, constructive, both supportive and challenging. Such feedback between the student and the supervisor can be received in form of evaluative strategies. The “availability and

implementation of the evaluative strategies for the ongoing review of supervision would help to dispel the notion that postgraduate supervision is not real teaching and improve the quality of teaching supervision” (Powles, 1988; Zuber-Skerrit, 1992, in Aspaland *et al.*, 1999:129).

The literature highlighted the complexity of the student-supervisor relationship which includes organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective/personal issues which impact on the quality of the student-supervisor relationship. Thus, management of supervision includes all the three categories. This is emphasized by Lamm and Lewis (1999:2) when they note that “good academic guidance together with suitable organizational and administrative skills must also take into account the personal relationship within the supervisory dyad, for a student to gain maximal benefit from higher degree studies.”

This thesis then examines current PhD students’ experiences of supervision to establish the quality of the supervisory process, the models of supervision they experience and the factors they consider important for the successful completion of their degrees.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

This research is concerned with the experience and expectations of a relatively small number of PhD students (20). The approach used therefore was that of a case study.

Section 3.1 explains the rationale for a case study.

Section 3.2 indicates the rationale for the research instrument, the implementation of this research instrument and its design features.

Section 3.3 discusses the cohort of the doctoral students and the responses returned.

Section 3.4 provides details regarding the data capturing and analysis methods.

The last section, Section 3.5, discusses the limitations of this project.

3.1. A case study approach

The case study design was chosen because as Mouton (2001:149) states "case studies are usually qualitative in nature and aim to provide an in depth description of a small number (less than 50) of cases." By focusing only on Department A at UCT, it can be argued that this study meets that condition. A case study refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, normally including the accounts of subjects themselves. The case study method involves an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single instance or event: a case. A case is defined as "one that is representative of a group as a whole" (Education Yahoo, 2000. Online 8 June 2005). As Leedy (1993:2) elaborates, a case study is a "type of descriptive research in which data are gathered directly from individuals (individual cases) or social or community groups in their natural environment for the purpose of studying interactions, attitudes, or characteristics of individuals or groups."

Yin (1994:1) provides another useful definition. For him, a case study can be defined as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life

context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident." He argues that "because phenomenon and context are not always distinguishable in real life situations", many other technical characteristics such as data collection and data analysis strategies become part of the study. He notes: "the case study enquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points." Accordingly this has two results. One being that it "relies on multiple source of evidence with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion." However, it is noted that the researcher did not carry out the triangulation methodology which could have included follow-up interviews with students and supervisors due to time constraints and also because the project is a minor dissertation. The second is that it "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis." In this project the literature review provided the key questions and analytical frame.

According to Wisker (2005:32), "case studies show reflection and development." For Hutchings (1991 in Wisker, 2005:33), the case studies "depict incidents of teaching and learning and raise pedagogical issues and prompt discussion of them. This includes four dimensions namely, authenticity, concrete detail, a narrative form and open-endedness." Brew and Peseta (2004 in Wisker, 2005:33) suggest that there should be "reflective practice in a case study. The issue under scrutiny must be anchored in real-life experience and sufficiently rich in context so that readers can make decisions about how to proceed. This enables the readers to identify with the issues and characters, and has some emotional investment in how the action unfolds." They further suggest that the case study should be "open to various interpretations and not suggestive of a particular or correct course of action." For Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993 in Wisker, 2005:33), case studies "move colleagues beyond their experience and what they observe around them into new worlds of practice." It could be argued that this research will help supervisors to identify issues and concerns that are of importance to their supervisees and those who will follow in future.

3.2. Research instruments

In order to collect the data, a questionnaire (Appendix 1) was distributed to the majority of the PhD students at a time when they were all in one place, attending a Doctoral Seminar. Students who were not present received the same questionnaire by e-mail. Initially, a pilot questionnaire was sent out to three selected PhD students to test the user-friendliness capacity of the final questionnaire for distribution. The exercise was further used to optimize the questionnaire by removing errors and re-wording potentially confusing questions that would lead to user-bias.

3.2.1. The rationale for using questionnaires

A questionnaire consists of a list of pre-set questions (Haralambos and Martin, 1995:835). According to Brown and Dowling (1998), the design and the use of a questionnaire enhance the quality of study. A questionnaire is mostly good for exploring what and how. Improved response can be attained if the topic interests the respondents; the appearance of the questionnaire is fundamental, as well as if each respondent is assured of confidentiality and anonymity. In support, Kumar (1996:114) argues that a questionnaire provides “a greater anonymity as there are no face- to-face interactions between respondents and interviewer.” The research topic was anticipated to arouse interest as it addressed a topic which was central to their success in carrying out and completing their research projects and development as researchers. The respondents were also assured of confidentiality and anonymity especially taking into consideration that the topic was potentially very sensitive.

Cohen and Manion (1994:283) state that an advantage of a questionnaire is that “it is more economical than the interview in terms of time and money”. This fact played an important determinant in the selection of a data collection method. The PhD students were very difficult to get hold of, so when the opportunity arose that they were all in one place for a limited amount of time, it was the easier form of data collection to give them the questionnaires to fill in, and then drop them off within 14 working days. Having to

personally bring them all to one place would have been costly for a research project without funding.

Once the data has been collected, Haralambos and Martin (1995:837) contend that “the results of the questionnaire research can be comparatively easily quantified, and with the assistance of the computers the data can be analysed quickly and efficiently.” By employing this method of using computers, “the relationship between many different variables can be examined.” This was considered to be an advantage.

3.2.2. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire consisted of a total of 27 main questions, not taking into account sub-questions. Question response formats included open-ended questions and closed questions consisting of Likert ratings and ticking of an appropriate response box. The majority of questions consisted of closed questions in a bid to minimize response time and to make data analysis more meaningful. Open-ended questions were however made available in order to uncover more insightful and explanatory responses that would have otherwise not been captured in the closed questions. This is also in line with Kumar (1996:118) when he claims that open-ended questions “virtually eliminate the possibility of investigator bias introduced through the response pattern presented to respondents.” Nevertheless, Kumar (1996) argues that information can be lost as some respondents might fail to express themselves. Spaces were provided for the open-ended responses as windows of opportunity for the respondents to shed light on issues or to provide explanation.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections of questions, namely, (a): Personal Information, (b): Previous Experience of Supervision and (c): Current Experience of Supervision (Appendix 1). The personal information section was made available to enable readers to get a feel of the nature and constituency of PhD population. The Previous Experience of Supervision section explores the Masters Degree level student-supervisor relationship which all respondents would have had prior to their PhD studies. This was considered important for two main reasons. Firstly, none of the respondents

would have experienced the full time span of PhD supervision compared with their Masters experience. The expectation here is that the supervisory relationship may change during the various phases of research. Secondly, it may be expected that previous experience would temper current attitudes. The Current Experience section obviously is there to gauge present experiences of respondents at the various stages of research they are at and their opinions about certain aspects of the supervisory process.

Finally, Cohen *et al.* (2000:262) affirm that “include a covering explanation, giving thanks for anticipated co-operation, indicating the purposes of the research, how anonymity and confidentiality will be addressed, who you are and what position you hold, who will be party of the final report.” To do this, the front cover of the doctoral questionnaire stated the purpose of the questionnaire, promised anonymity and confidentiality as well as thanked the respondents at the end of the questionnaire.

Beyond these “technical” design issues, it should be noted that the questions asked were derived from the ideas and concepts developed in Chapter Two.

3.2.3. Piloting the questionnaire

Cohen *et al.* (2000: 260) state that piloting (pre-testing) a questionnaire “is crucial to its success.” Piloting a questionnaire, “principally increases the reliability, validity and practicality of the questionnaire” (Oppenheim, 1992; Morrison, 1993; Wilson and Mclean, 1994; in Cohen *et al.*, 2000:260; Struwig and Stead, 2001). A piloting study was done with this in mind. The draft questionnaire was piloted amongst three PhD students, following which the order of some questions was changed, some questions were deleted, and in some the wording changed for clarity. The average completion time was around 30 minutes, and this was regarded as satisfactory.

3.3. Sample

Within UCT there are different cases (Departments and Schools) which can be studied. As will be shown later on in the limitation section, time and budget compelled me to choose an individual case which is Department A. This choice was also motivated by my knowledge of that School and familiarity with members of the community it serves. The researcher is also a postgraduate research student and being supervised, and therefore has a deep understanding of the process of supervision and is part of the cohort circle of understanding this process at least at a Masters Degree level.

The population was limited to PhD students in Department A, and the entire population consists of 30 students of which 14 are males and 16 are females. The researcher assumed that the PhD students were at different stages of the theses process for example, that some were in the beginning stage namely, writing the proposal, some were in the middle stage such as, collecting data, and the rest were nearing completion. This was important to see whether or not responses would vary by stage/time. The questionnaires were either handed out or e-mailed to all these students of which 20 (6 males and 14 females) were returned. This was considered reasonable since as Kumar (1996:114) states the researcher should consider himself/ herself “lucky to obtain a 50 percent response rate and sometimes it might be as low as 20 percent.”

3.4. Data capturing and analysis methods

Careful consideration during questionnaire construction, as well as pre-coding, speeded up and simplified data capturing. Quantitative data was captured in Microsoft Excel and Statistica databases. Qualitative, open-ended data was post-coded where necessary. Data analysis was done using both Microsoft Excel and Statistical analysis tools. The first step was to populate and code the databases. Thereafter, questions were selected for different analytical methods, including frequency counts and cross-tabulations.

The last section in this chapter highlights the limitations of this study.

3.5. Limitations

There are several types of limitations discussed here. Firstly, the limitations intrinsic to the research instruments and secondly the fieldwork limitations.

3.5.1. Limitations intrinsic to the research instruments

3.5.1.1. Questionnaire completion was voluntary and this could have influenced questionnaire returns and responses.

3.5.1.2. Misinterpretation of terms which could have occurred in answering the questionnaire was offset by the researcher by piloting the questionnaire to be applicable to the context.

3.5.2. Limitations of the fieldwork

3.5.2.1. Brown and Dowling (1998:68) claim that “the questionnaire can be given to a group of people namely, a class of children or a group of teachers attending a training course who are asked to complete the questionnaire at a specific time.” While it might have been ideal to hand out the questionnaires to all 30 PhD students at the same time when attending the seminar, it was not possible because some students were absent. As a result, some questionnaires were handed out to the students who attended the seminar and the rest were e-mailed to those students who did not attend the seminar. The questionnaire distribution was 100% and the questionnaire return was 66.7%.

3.5.2.2. Due to time constraints as well as limitations in the length of this project, this study was restricted to the Department A of the University of Cape Town in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The results may therefore only be applicable to the Department A and not across disciplines.

3.5.2.3. The limitations of the case study strategy have also to be acknowledged. Because of a small number of cases, there is a lack of generalizability of results. Yin (1994:10) argues however, that although case studies are not generalizable to populations, they are generalizable to theoretical propositions. It is in this context that hopefully, the conclusions drawn from this limited study will inform practices beyond just the School of Education. The researcher expects that students and supervisors working in other departments and faculties will be able to apply some of the findings of this study to their own contexts.

3.5.2.4. No interviews or follow up was carried out. This was due to the assurance given to the respondents on the anonymity and confidentiality of the research project and because of the difficulty of contacting the widely (geographically) spread student population.

After questionnaire collection the data was analysed. Chapter Four provides results of the study.

Chapter 4: The Supervisory Experience

As indicated, Hockey (1991, Armstrong, 2004:611) observes that the supervision process is, to state the obvious, a relationship. Consequently, the kind of relationship which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure (Armstrong, 2004:611). Lamm and Lewis (1999:1) believe that "the nature of postgraduate supervision is a critical factor in influencing student satisfaction or dissatisfaction during the course of the studies". According to (Lamm and Lewis, 1999:1), the nature of this postgraduate supervision "helps determine the length of candidature, the quality of the thesis, and its ultimate completion, as well as affecting the students' accomplishment of additional higher degree outcomes." In support, Holbrook (2001, Buttery *et al.*, 2005:17) states that the quality of the student-supervisor relationship is critical to the successful completion; factors impacting on the relationship include academic issues, interpersonal issues, communication and institutional issues.

Brockbank and McGill (1998, in Kathy and Manathunga, 2004) identify these issues as cognitive, affective and administrative domains of learning involved in postgraduate supervision. Lamm and Lewis (1999) describe these domains as academic, personal and organisational aspects of postgraduate supervision. For consistency, terms such as organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic, and affective/personal will be used throughout and interchangeably. The affective domain can be divided further into emotional and social factors. Several models of the supervisory relationship were identified in the literature. These were managerial, professional, mentorship, combined, and comradeship models. These can be ranged along a continuum which runs from the more formal (managerial and professional) to mid-formal (mentorship and combined) and to more informal (comradeship). What the postgraduate students experience within these supervisory relationships is at the heart of the thesis.

The supervision process is a relationship which changes over time and the kind of the relationship which evolves, heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure. The supervision process consists of three key phases namely, the beginning, middle and the nearing completion. Cognitive/academic issues, affective/personal issues,

communication and organizational issues impact on the relationship. It might be expected then that factors such as gender, age and life-cycle and mode of study and institution of study will also affect outcomes. The literature, it should be noted, provides little guide on the aspects which is why these factors were included.

This chapter explores the previous and current experiences of the 20 doctoral students (6 (30%) males and 14 (70%) females) who responded to the questionnaire. It should be noted that the full PhD group consists of 14 male (46.7%) and 16 female (53.3%) students. The responses are therefore not representative but only provide indicators of the general experience. This is a varied group. 55% are in the age range of 36-41+ and the 45% are in the age range of 26-35 years. 70% of the students are studying fulltime and 30% are studying part-time. The students are at different stages of programme of study and registered for the PhD from 2000 to 2004. 10 (50%) are nearing completion, 9 (45%) are in the middle stage and 1 (5%) at the beginning stage. This range of experience coupled with insights from their supervision experience at Masters level should provide a clear view of the overall supervision process notwithstanding the sample.

These PhD students' responses on supervision experiences consist of two main sections:

- 4.1 Students' previous supervisory experience at Masters Degree level
- 4.2 Students' current supervisory experience at PhD level

4.1. Students' Previous Supervisory Experience at Masters Degree level

This section (Section 2 of the questionnaire, Appendix 1), explores the students' previous experiences in the student-supervisor relationship. This experience is examined in terms of mode of study, the place of study and duration. Furthermore, it considers the quality of supervision in terms of characterizing the supervision and the most important aspects of the experience of supervision. Finally, this section considers factors which enabled successful completion of the Masters theses.

Section 4.1.1 presents results about the mode of study at Masters in which the students experienced the supervision. This mode of study and the period the students took to be in this relationship are juxtaposed in this section.

Section 4.1.2 shows the duration and place of study in months.

Section 4.1.3 gives a picture of how the students characterized their experience of supervision at their previous institutions and the reasons for their responses.

Section 4.1.4 presents the three most important aspects of the students' experiences.

Section 4.1.5 shows students' responses on whether Masters Experience of supervision prepared them for PhD, preparation for PhD by place of study and the reasons given.

Finally, section 4.1.6 presents the three most important factors that enabled students to complete the Masters theses.

4.1.1. Mode of Study at Masters Degree level

60% of the respondents studied fulltime and 30% part-time. 10% of the sample indicated that they were at times full time. The mode of study might be significant in determining the time the students took to complete and in developing the relationship between the student and the supervisor.

Table 4.1: Mode by time of study

	Duration of Thesis (months)									
Mode of study	1-12		13-24		25-36		49-60		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fulltime	7	35	3	15	1	5	1	5	12	60
Part-time	5	25	1	5	0	0	0	0	6	30
Both	1	5	0	0	1	5	0	0	2	10
Total	13	65	4	20	2	10	1	5	20	100

Table 4.1 shows that 7 out of 12 students who studied fulltime took less than 13 months to complete compared to 5 out of 6 students who studied part-time. This suggests that the mode of study did not make a major difference in completing the theses, but may only be significant in developing the relationship between the student and the supervisor. Since the students did their Masters at different institutions and it might be significant to investigate whether place and duration of study made a difference in taking time to complete.

4.1.2. Institution and Duration of Study at Masters Degree level

The 20 PhD students did their Masters theses at different institutions, namely, UCT and other institutions. Ten students studied at UCT and the other ten studied at other institutions. It might be expected that the institution of study will affect the duration of the thesis and the supervisory relationship. The results are shown below.

Table 4.2: Institution and duration of study at Masters degree level

		Duration of Thesis (months)					
Institution		1-12	13-24	25-36	37-48	49-60	Total
UCT	n	7	2	1	0	0	10
	%	70	20	10	0	0	100
Other	n	6	2	1	0	1	10
	%	60	20	10	0	10	100

The results in Table 4.2 show that there was no significant difference between place of study and duration of thesis. 70% of the UCT students took less than 13 months to complete their theses compared to 60% from the other institutions. The only issue was that the students experienced the supervisory relationship at different places and mode of study. Following this, the students were asked to characterize this previous supervision experience.

4.1.3. Institution of Study and Characterization of the Supervision Process

In this section students were asked to rate their previous experience and to explain their answers. The results are shown below.

Table 4.3: Institution of Study and Characterization of the Supervision Experience

		Characterize Supervision					
Institution		Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Total
UCT	n	0	0	3	4	3	10
	%	0	0	30	40	30	100
Other	n	0	3	4	2	1	10
	%	0	30	40	20	10	100
Total		0	15	35	30	20	100

It can be seen that 70% of UCT students felt their supervision was good and very good compared with 30% at other institutions. The reasons are explained below.

Table 4.4: Students' reasons for characterizing masters supervision

Reasons	n	%
Good to Very good	10	50%
Supervisor was supportive namely, being available, close supervision, providing guidance, friendship, empathy, helpful feedback, had insight into student's ideas and granted student the independence to pursue own research interests		
Poor to Average	10	50%
Supervisor was not supportive such as rarely available, no useful feedback, put less effort to read and critique student's work, limited knowledge in subject area and not giving student enough induction into the academic world		
Total	20	100

On the one hand, Table 4.4 shows that good supervision was described as the supervisor supervising students closely and giving students helpful feedback. In addition, the supervisor was described as having insight into student's work and provided guidance. The other elements of good supervision were associated with friendship, empathy and

supervisor being available and granting student the independence to pursue own research interests. The emphasis was on the supervisor being supportive throughout. In the research on students' experience of postgraduate supervision done in South Africa, among Masters of Education students Sayed *et al.* (1998) claim that students' successful progress was linked to the supervisor empathy and emotional support. Similarly, Moses (1985:39) observes that "students who are working alone at a topic often experience both physical isolation from others and intellectual isolation and they might look up to their supervisors for guidance and friendship." PhD students according to the British experience expect their supervisors to be friendly, open and supportive regardless of discipline (Woolard, 1998). Dinham and Scott, 1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) claim that the "quality of supervision which includes personal qualities of the supervisor, is a key factor in completion and student satisfaction with doctoral programmes."

On the other hand, poor supervision was described as the supervisor not being very supportive, putting less effort into reading and critiquing student's work and not giving useful feedback. Limited knowledge in the subject area, not giving student enough induction into the academic world and supervisor not being available when needed were also associated with this poor supervision. Yet, Woolard, (1998), argues that PhD students expect their supervisors to be available, constructively critical and have a good knowledge of the research area.

Given this, the students were further asked to rank what they considered to be the three most important aspects of this Masters supervision experience in order to find the most important factors.

4.1.4. The Three Most Important Aspects of the Masters Supervision Experience

This section, further probes these constructs of the relationship according to literature which talks about what students expect from their supervisors regardless of discipline.

The list of explanations from which they could choose was developed from literature (see Cullen *et al.* (1994, in Cranney, 1998); Delamont *et al.* (1997); Edward *et al.* (1999);

Lamm and Lewis, 1999); Latona and Browne (2001); Sayed *et al.* (1998); Spear (2000); Wisker (2005); and Woolard (1998). The aspects of the Masters supervision experience were further categorized under the three key areas of supervision relationship namely, administrative/organisational, cognitive/academic and personal/affective. These different aspects that impact on the student-supervisor relationship were explained in the literature review (see Buttery *et al.*, 2005; Kathy and Manathunga, 2004; Lamm and Lewis, 1999; Malfrey and Webb, 2000; and Wisker, 2005).

The above aspects will be used in the thesis from now on. Respondents were asked to Rank with 1, 2 and 3, the three most important aspects of their supervision. The results are shown below in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Students' ranking of the most important aspects of supervision experience categorized under approaches of supervision

Approaches to Supervision	Aspects of Supervision	Rank 1		Rank 2		Rank 3	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Organizational/ administrative Rank 1 - 25% Rank 2 - 45% Rank 3 - 30%	Well organized process	1	5	2	10	4	20
	Constructive and timely feedback	4	20	7	35	2	10
Cognitive/ academic Rank 1 - 30% Rank 2 - 40% Rank 3 - 40%	Expertise in your subject area	2	10	5	25	2	10
	Intellectual challenge	3	15	2	10	0	0
	Preparation for further research	1	5	0	0	3	15
	Induction into academia	0	0	1	5	3	15
Affective/ personal Rank 1 - 45% Rank 2 - 15% Rank 3 - 30%	Friendship	1	5	0	0	3	15
	Support/Encourage Ment	6	30	3	15	3	15
	Empathy	2	10	0	0	0	0
Total		20	100	20	100	20	100

The table shows that in Rank 1 the most important aspect of supervision was the affective/personal aspect (45%). The most important aspect of students' experience of

supervision within this set of function was support/encouragement. In Rank 2 the most important aspect was related to organization of the relationship (45%) of which constructive and timely feedback was the most important factor. In Rank 3 the most important set of functions was the cognitive/academic domain (40%) of which preparation for further research and induction into academia were considered important.

It could be argued that the personal issues, organizational issues and the cognitive issues are interdependent and should be considered equally important in the supervisory process. The same pattern was observed when the students described the factors which enabled them to complete their Masters theses (see section 4.1.6). Of importance here is the fact that contrary to perhaps intuitive sense, the personal aspects of supervision are critical to success.

Given this experience, it was important to investigate the extent the Masters experience prepared the students for doing PhD.

4.1.5. Masters degree Experience as a Preparation for PhD

The students were asked to indicate their responses by very inadequately to extremely well how the Masters experience prepared them for PhD.

Table 4.6: Students' responses how Masters experience prepared them for PhD

Responses	n	%
Very inadequately	0	0
Inadequately	3	15
Adequately	8	40
Well	5	25
Extremely well	4	20
Total	20	100

Table 4.6 shows that only 9 (45%) students felt that their Masters experience prepared them for doing PhD well to extremely well. 8 (40%) thought it was adequate and 3 (15%) that they were inadequately prepared. The students' responses on how the Masters

Degree experience prepared them for PhD was further explored in terms of place of study anticipating that the place of study might have an impact on the responses.

4.1.5.1. Masters degree experience as a preparation for PhD by place of study

It might be expected that the institution of study influences the students' responses on how the Masters Degree experience prepared them for the PhD. The results are shown below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Institution of study by how Masters degree experience prepared students for PhD

	UCT		Other	
Responses	n	%	n	%
Very inadequately	0	0	0	0
Inadequately	0	0	3	30
Adequately	4	40	4	40
Well	3	30	2	20
Extremely well	3	30	1	10
Total	10	100	10	100

The place of study had an effect on the students' responses on how the Masters Degree prepared them for PhD. Six out of 10 (60%) students from UCT indicated that the Masters Degree experience prepared them well for the PhD compared to 3 out of 10 (30%) students from other institutions. Three (30%) students from the other institutions felt that the Masters Degree experience inadequately prepared them for PhD. The explanations given by students for this are provided below in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Students explanations for rating masters experience from inadequate to extremely well prepared

Inadequately	n=3
Masters' programme did not prepare me adequately in methodological aspects and theoretical framework in research	
Gap between two levels too huge	
It was a small thesis	
Adequately	n=8
Different disciplines from Masters to PhD but had basic processes like reading, writing, analytical and critical thinking skills	
Institutional context provided the student with the inception towards topic of student's choice and student had passion for the topic	
PhD quite different from Masters degree. The doctoral experience is far, far more challenging	
Do literature review, analyse theories, make scholarly arguments and quantitative analysis although I was not prepared for the quantitative analysis	
Although good insights but found that there is huge difference between Masters and PhD conceptually	
Introduced to research	
Experience gained in thesis writing prepared me for PhD	
Although my PhD topic not related to my Masters topic but fairly apply similar theoretical tools to it	
Well	n=5
Introduced me to research	
Exploring literature, getting to grips with field work in schools and how to be an academic	
Plan carefully according to previous experience	
Encouraged self-management an important aspect of PhD work and PhD work can be lonely	
Now understand thesis writing	
Extremely well	n=4
Exposure to leading academics in the field as presenters in seminars and had passion for the topic	
Gave me the confidence to think that I can do a PhD	
PhD experiences the same as Masters degree	
Exposure to leading academics in the field as presenters in seminars, encouraged and enabled an engagement with cutting edge theory	

In common, students' explanations for adequately to extremely well prepared was that they could do basic research, compared with inadequately prepared students who were not adequately prepared in methodological aspects and theoretical frameworks in research and who consequently found that the PhD research project to be more

challenging than the Masters mini-thesis. The difference between well prepared and adequately prepared students was on the one hand, the gap between Masters and PhD levels, and on the other hand, the confidence and self-management of the students. Regardless, of the varied extent to which the Masters experience prepared the students for PhD, nonetheless, these students successfully completed their dissertations and it was imperative to investigate what enabled the students to complete their Masters.

4.1.6. The Three Most Important Factors that Enabled Students to Complete the Masters Theses

Having investigated the type of experience the students gained during their Masters experience of supervision, it was worth investigating what actually enabled them to complete the Masters theses. The responses were organized around the three areas referred to before: organizational/administrative which included factors such as constructive and timely feedback, close supervision and well organized processes; cognitive/academic such as, guidance, insight into student's ideas, intellectual challenge and expertise in the subject area; and personal/affective (emotional and social) factors namely, friendship, availability, empathy, support/encouragement, and helpfulness. It was anticipated that there may have been gender differences and these are explored below in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: The most important factors that enabled students to complete masters theses

Categorized factors	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Organizational/administrative	3	18.8	2	5.1	5	9.1
Cognitive/academic	2	12.4	2	5.1	4	7.3
Affective/personal	11	68.8	33	84.6	44	80.0
Other	0	0	2	5.1	2	3.6
Total	16	100	39	100	55	100

Affective/personal factors, with 80% out of 55 selections, most enabled the respondents to complete their Masters theses followed by organizational and then cognitive/academic factors. These results tally with the findings in section 4.1.4, where the students indicated the affective/personal aspects as critical coupled with the organizational and the cognitive/academic issues. Nonetheless, the affective factors were critical for both males (68.8%) and females (84.6%). The affective/personal factors outside the institutional process included financial support, support and encouragement from friends and immediate family.

Latona and Browne (2001:4) claim that the “American National Centre for Education Statistics found that self-supporting students took the longest time to complete, whereas students on scholarships took the shortest time.” Sayed *et al.* (1998:283) observe that “support and encouragement received from students’ families is crucial to the students’ success.” The other factors besides the affective ones which the males indicated to be important were the organisational (18.8%) and the cognitive factors (12.4%), and for females, these were (5.1%) each, respectively. The personal factors were important for both males (68.8%) and females (84.6%). These findings are not in line with Lussier (1995, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) who states that “factors which most affect women’s experience of the supervision are interpersonal while those impacting on men’s experience are academic.” The results in Table 4.9 show that personal factors were critical for both males and females at the Masters Degree level, hence, the results dispute the latter claim. Supervisors need to take this into account.

4.1.7. Summary

The introduction to this chapter indicated that the kind of the supervisory relationship which evolves during the supervisory process heavily influences the outcome of the student’s success or failure. The students’ supervision experience at Masters Degree level was examined in terms of the mode of study; the place of study and duration of the theses; the most important aspects of the experience of supervision; and the factors which enabled the students to complete their Masters theses. It was also anticipated that there might have been gender differences.

The mode of study did not make a major difference in completing the theses. Seven out of 12 students who studied fulltime took less than 13 months to complete compared to five out of six students who studied part-time so that the nature of the mode of study may only be significant in developing the relationship between the student and the supervisor. It was also observed that there was no significant difference between place of study and duration of the theses. 70% of the UCT students took less than 13 months to complete their theses compared to 60% from the other institutions.

The students indicated the quality of the supervisory relationship which evolved during their Masters Degree supervision by stating that the affective/personal issues (80%) were critical to their success coupled with organisational and academic issues. Although these factors were critical for both males (68.8%) and females (84.6%), females felt that the personal factors were more important compared to males. Thus, supervisors need to take this gender issue into account. The other aspects which enabled the males to complete their theses were the organisational (18.8%) and the academic (12.4%). This was further investigated under the students' current supervisory experiences which are discussed below.

4.2. Students' Current Experience of Supervision

Having investigated the previous experiences of the doctoral cohort at Masters Degree level up to the successful completion of their theses, this section explores respondents' current experiences at the PhD level. This experience was examined in terms of the process of supervision, the nature of the supervisory relationship, completing the degree and the students' experiences so far. The impact of factors such as organizational issues, cognitive/academic issues, communication and personal/affective issues, age, life-cycle, and institution of study as well as gender on the current experience of supervision is explored as the PhD students are expected to be better accustomed to their personal student-supervisor relationship requirements in order to successfully complete their research projects.

As Armstrong (2004) indicates that the supervisory process which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure, Section 4.2.1 presents the results on how often the respondents needed to interact with their supervisors. The frequency of interaction and the stages of programme of study are juxtaposed in this section. It might be that the frequency of the meetings depends on the stages of the programme. Also, the results of the quality of that interaction such as feedback, levels of academic expertise and professional development being experienced by these respondents are presented.

Section 4.2.2 shows the nature and style of the supervision being experienced by the respondents. This style of the supervision, stage of programme, gender, age and institution of study are also juxtaposed. It might be that the style of supervision depends on stage of programme, gender, age and institution of study. The role of contracts in their relationship; respondents' expectations of their supervisors and the place of mediation or review of the relationship are presented too.

Section 4.2.3 shows what the respondents considered to be the most important factors and the most inhibiting factors for completion as well as what they felt to be the characteristics of an effective supervisor.

Section 4.2.4 presents the results on respondents' responses about their supervisory experience so far. In this section, the respondents expressed what they felt to be the BEST and the WORST things about their supervisory experiences. The respondents' suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship are also shown.

4.2.1. The Process of Supervision

As, said the supervisory process which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's success or failure. After determining the frequency of interaction, it was imperative to investigate the quality of this interaction in terms of feedback, levels of academic expertise and professional development. The frequency of the meetings and the stages of programme of study are juxtaposed in this section.

Section 4.2.1.1 presents the frequency of interaction of the respondents and their supervisors. These results and the stages of the programme of study are juxtaposed and the results are presented.

Section 4.2.1.2 shows the respondents' level of satisfaction they get from their supervisors in terms of the shown feedback aspects during the supervisory process.

Section 4.2.1.3 presents the respondents' level of satisfaction with their supervisors' academic expertise in areas such as the research topic, the research methodology, the process of supervision and assisting students to consult other people for help.

Section 4.2.1.4 shows the respondents' level of support they get from their supervisors in terms of the supervisors' involvement in their professional development during the supervisory process.

4.2.1.1. Meetings needed with the supervisors

Woodward *et al.* (1993 and 1998, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) observe that more frequent meetings with the supervisors are strongly associated with successful completion, (see also Brew and Peseta, 2004, in Wisker, 2005; Cullen *et al.*, 1994, in Buttery *et al.*, 2005 and Cranney, 1998; and Moses, 1985, in Lawrence 1996). Respondents were asked how often they need to meet with their supervisors. Patterns were identified and grouped accordingly. The results are shown below.

Table 4.10: Meetings needed with the supervisors

Category	n	%
Fortnightly	8	40
Once a month	2	10
Once in 3 months	5	25
As per need	5	25
Total	20	100

The results in Table 4.10 show that 8 (40%) indicated the need for frequent meetings of every two weeks, 7 (35%) once in one to three months and the remaining 5 (25%) of the respondents indicated that they need to interact with their supervisors when necessary.

It might be that the frequency of meetings also depends on the stage of the programme: whether the student is at the beginning/early, middle or nearing completion stage (see Morrison-Saunders *et al.*, 2005; Wisker, 2005 and Fraser and Mathews, 1999). The results are shown below in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Stage of programme of study by frequency of meetings with the supervisors

Stage of programme	Fortnightly		Once a month		Once in 3 months		As per need		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Beginning	1	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
Middle	6	30	0	0	1	5	2	10	9	45
Nearing completion	1	5	2	10	4	20	3	15	10	50
Total	8	40	2	10	5	25	5	25	20	100

Table 4.11 shows that 6 out of 9 respondents in the middle stage felt that it was critical to meet with their supervisors as often as fortnightly. These results appear to be in line with

Fraser and Mathews (1999:6) who argue that in the middle phase “students often suffer a relapse of self-doubt of which they need to be reminded of all they have achieved already, and helped to develop a clear vision of what remains to be done and how to achieve it.” Emotions such as “frustration, boredom, guilt and loneliness/isolation” are more prominent in the middle phase of the PhD than in the beginning phase (Morrison-Saunders *et al.*, 2005:4). Hence, it might be that these students needed to meet with their supervisors as often as possible for support, encouragement, empathy, guidance and feedback. Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Woolard, 1998:2) contend that students “expect their supervisors to give them constructive and timely criticism, but at the same time, expected them to remember that doing a PhD is a very emotional experience which involves the whole person”. For those nearing completion the need to meet frequently decreased, with 4 out of 10 saying once every 3 months was adequate and 3 saying meetings were only necessary as circumstances dictated.

No matter what stage of the programme of study, the findings appear to show that PhD students need to meet with their supervisors and one of the respondents stated that he/ she “would like to meet once a month just to get/ stay on track.” Another one indicated that meetings “differed according to the stage where I was at more during conceptualization and less as I took better control of my work.” Overall, the results seem to show that the frequency of the meetings depends on the thesis-cycle, more frequent in the middle stage than in the nearing completion.

Whatever the frequency, the quality of the interaction is important and this is discussed next in terms of feedback (Section 4.2.1.2), academic expertise (Section 4.2.1.3) and professional development (Section 4.2.1.4).

4.2.1.2. Level of Satisfaction of the Respondents with the Supervisory Process in terms of Feedback

Besides the productive and regular meetings held with the students, which provide them with sympathetic, responsive and effective academic, professional and personal support and guidance during the supervisory process, Brew and Peseta (2004, in Wisker, 2005)

observe that open communication established with students with timely and constructive feedback, which is both supportive and challenging, given on progress is fundamental for good supervisory relationships (see also Latona and Browne, 2001 and Edwards *et al.*, 1995). In addition, Aspaland *et al.* (1999:129) observe that “the provision of feedback between students and supervisors ensures the development and maintenance of quality student-supervisor relationship and therefore, improves student completion rates.” “Delays in feedback affect time to complete” (Seagram *et al.*, 1998, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5). The feedback aspect was ranked by the respondents in section 4.1.4, Table 4.5, as one of the most important aspects of the Masters Degree supervision experience. Knowles (1999, in Latona and Browne, 2001:5) identifies that feedback is the “main gauge by which both parties measure whether the supervision is successful.” Thus, the respondents were asked to what extent they were satisfied that the supervisors carried out these feedback aspects. The results are shown below.

Table 4.12: Respondents' level of satisfaction with feedback aspects of the supervisory process

Feedback aspects	Very Dissatisfied		Somewhat dissatisfied		Average		Somewhat satisfied		Very Satisfied		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Available for consultations	0	0	0	0	2	10	6	30	12	60	20	100
Sets time to discuss research progress	0	0	2	10	2	10	5	25	11	55	20	100
Reads work on time and in advance of meetings	1	5	3	15	3	15	4	20	9	45	20	100
Regularly provides you with prompt feedback on submitted work	0	0	3	15	5	25	5	25	7	35	20	100
Engages in constructive discussions about your progress	1	5	0	0	2	10	7	35	10	50	20	100
Is a source of new ideas for your research	1	5	2	10	2	10	10	50	5	25	20	100
Assists with writing skills	2	10	1	5	3	15	5	25	9	45	20	100

The majority of the respondents were averagely satisfied to very satisfied in all of their supervisors feedback attributes. Among these seven feedback attributes all the respondents were averagely satisfied to very satisfied that their supervisors were available for consultations and none were dissatisfied. 12 (60%) of these were very satisfied. 11 (55%) were very satisfied with their supervisors setting time to discuss research progress and only 2 (10%) were dissatisfied. 10 (50%) were very satisfied with their supervisors engaging in constructive discussions about progress and only 1 (5%)

was dissatisfied. 9 (45%) were very satisfied with their supervisors reading work on time and in advance of meetings while 4 (20%) were dissatisfied. 9 (45%) were very satisfied with their supervisors assisting them with writing skills and 3 (15%) were dissatisfied. 7 (35%) were very satisfied with their supervisors regularly providing them with prompt feedback on submitted work while 3 (15%) were dissatisfied. Finally, 5 (25%) were very satisfied with their supervisors as sources of new ideas for their research and 3 (15%) were dissatisfied.

Overall, the level of satisfaction of the feedback aspects of the supervisory process ranged from 80% to 100% of the respondents being satisfied and low level of dissatisfaction ranging from zero to 20% of respondents dissatisfied. These results might be an indication of quality interaction among the respondents and their supervisors in terms of these feedback aspects. In section 4.1.3, the respondents described good supervision as the supervisor supervising students closely and giving students guidance and helpful feedback. Similarly, in section 4.1.4, the respondents ranked constructive and timely feedback as one of the most important aspects of supervision experience at Masters Degree level. Therefore, this may be evidence of the importance of positive feedback as the hub of the organizational issues within the supervisory process.

The quality of interaction was further investigated in terms of academic expertise brought to the process. This is discussed below.

4.2.1.3. Respondents' level of satisfaction with the supervisors' academic expertise during the supervisory process

The supervisor's expertise in the research area is one of the important contributions of an academic to a student-supervisor relationship (see Buttery *et al.*, 2004; Fraser and Mathews, 1999; Lamm and Lewis, 1999; Kathy and Manathunga, 2004; Malfroy and Webb, 2000; and Wisker, 2005). The level of satisfaction with their supervisors' academic expertise is shown below in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Respondents' level of satisfaction with the supervisor's academic expertise during the supervisory process

Aspects of supervisor expertise	Very low		Somewhat dissatisfied		Average		Somewhat Highly satisfied		Very highly satisfied		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Research topic	0	0	0	0	6	30	10	50	4	20	20	100
Research methodology	1	5	1	5	4	20	9	45	5	25	20	100
The process of supervision	0	0	1	5	4	20	8	40	7	35	20	100
Assisting you to consult other people for help	1	5	2	10	6	30	5	25	6	30	20	100

None of the respondents were dissatisfied with the supervisor's expertise in the research topic. 14 (70%) of the respondents were somewhat highly to very highly satisfied with their supervisors' expertise in the research topic and 6 (30%) indicated that it was average. 14 (70%) of the respondents rated expertise in the research methodology somewhat highly to very highly satisfied, 4 (20%) rated it average and 2 (10%) dissatisfied. The process of supervision was rated somewhat highly to very highly satisfied by 15 (75%) respondents, 4 (20%) rated it average and only one respondent was dissatisfied. The area of supervisor's expertise which had the highest number of respondents being dissatisfied was assisting students to consult other people for help. 3 (15%) of the respondents were dissatisfied, 6 (30%) indicated average and 11 (55%) of the respondents were somewhat highly to very highly satisfied.

The results seem to show high levels of the respondents' satisfaction with their supervisors' "expertise" in their research areas, process of supervision and assistance in

consulting other people. Woolard (1998) argues that students expect their supervisors to have good knowledge of the research area and to structure the tutorial so that it is relatively easy to exchange ideas. In this recent study, it might be strong evidence of competency of their supervisors' contribution to the student-supervisor relationship.

4.2.1.4. The Supervisors' involvement in the respondents' professional development during the supervisory process

Professional development is an important aspect of supervision which encompasses the induction of students into academic field and independent research. According to Wisker (2005:58) supervisors should "encourage students to make good use of peer and academic support groups and networks locally and internationally so as to try out and discuss their own and others' work as well as disseminate at conferences through publications as soon as the students and their data are ready". In addition, Woolard (1998) states that students expect their supervisors to have sufficient interest in their research to put more information in the students' path, including introducing their students to others in the field. This enables the students to enter the research culture and develop as independent researchers within the research community. The respondents were asked to indicate the levels of assistance of their supervisors with regards to their professional development on a rating scale from not at all to very much. The results are shown below.

Table 4.14: The degree of involvement of supervisors with regards to respondents' professional development during the supervisory process

Professional development aspects	Not at all		A little		Averagely		A lot		Very Much		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Network with other researchers in the area	2	10	4	20	8	40	3	15	3	15	20	100
Assist to publish	9	45	2	10	8	40	0	0	1	5	20	100
Encourage you to present work at appropriate seminars and conferences	4	20	3	15	6	30	2	10	5	25	20	100
Help with extra research problems including employment and technical training.	10	50	4	20	2	10	3	15	1	5	20	100

The results appear to show that there was very little professional support involvement in helping respondents with extra research problems such as employment and technical training (70%), assisting to publish (55%) as well as encouraging students to present work at appropriate seminars and conferences (35%). This might be evidence for a call for improvement in this area because in section 4.1.4, the respondents ranked preparation for further research and induction into academia as some of the most important aspects of supervision experience during their Masters Degree level. Woolard (1998:2) claims that PhD students expect "their supervisors to be sufficiently involved in their success to help them get a good job at the end of it all." In this study, it might be that the respondents' expectations in this area were not being satisfactorily met.

4.2.1.5. Summary

Firstly, all the students in the sample indicated the need to meet with their supervisors. The only difference was in the variation of the meetings. 75% of the sample indicated that they need to interact with their supervisors regularly, of which 40% indicated the need for meetings of every two weeks. The findings are in line with the literature surveyed which confirms that regular meetings with supervisors are strongly associated with successful completion. The results also showed that the meetings depend on the thesis cycle, more frequent in the middle stage than in the nearing completion stage.

Secondly, whatever the frequency, the quality of the interaction is important. In terms of feedback aspects, the level of satisfaction of these feedback aspects ranged from 80% to 100%.

Thirdly, the results showed that the respondents were satisfied with their supervisors' competence with respect to academic expertise such as research topic, research methodology, the process of supervision, assisting students to consult other people for help. Fraser and Mathews (1999) refer to this as the supervisor's expertise in the research area which is an important contribution of an academic to the student-supervisor relationship.

Finally, the results showed that there was very little professional support involvement in helping students with extra research problems such as employment and technical training (70%), assisting to publish (55%) as well as encouraging students to present work at appropriate seminars (35%). Thus, this might be an indication that the respondents expect their supervisors to be more involved in their professional development.

Having examined the processes of supervision being experienced by these respondents, this study investigates the nature of the supervisory relationships being experienced by the respondents.

4.2.2. The Nature of the Supervisory Relationships

The supervisory relationship according to the literature surveyed, encompasses organizational issues; academic issues, communicative issues and non-expertise related characteristics of supervision which provide support and which balance creativity with criticism. This supervisory relationship is highly individualistic; a long-term one designed to help students to become sound and successful researchers; and continually changes throughout the research process. "Establishing a right match and maintaining an effective working relationship holds the key to success of research projects and theses" (Zhao, 2001:3). Each party has to respect one another in terms of scholarship, academic credibility and practices. "Students ought to bear in mind that the supervisor is the link with the University, and an essential guide, teacher, colleague and mentor in the research process" (Wisker, 2005:41). Thus, given this construct, it was important to understand the nature and style of the supervision being experienced.

Section 4.2.2.1 presents the types of supervisory relationships. These supervisory relationships, gender, age, stage of the programme and institution of study are juxtaposed in this section.

Section 4.2.2.2 shows the respondents' desirability of a formal written contract.

Section 4.2.2.3 gives a picture of the respondents' discussion of expectations of the supervisory process with their supervisors as well as the explanations.

Finally, section 4.2.2.4 presents the students' responses on mechanisms which would enable them and their supervisors to review the relationship during the programme of study.

4.2.2.1. Types of supervisory relationships

Participants were asked to describe the supervisory relationships they were experiencing with their supervisors. As discussed in the literature review the choices for describing their relationships consisted of managerial (supervisor leading the student as student);

professional (peer relationship); comradeship (collegial relationship); mentorship (student as mentoree); and combined (all of these). The managerial and the professional are contractual or formal relationships while the mentorship and the combined relationships are semi-formal based on trust and contract. The comradeship model is informal where trust is more important than contract. The results are shown below.

Table 4.15: The type of the supervisory process relationships being experienced by the respondents

Nature of the relationship	Relationship with the Supervisor	n	%
Formal/Contractual	Student (Managerial)	0	0
	Peer (Professional)	0	0
Semi-formal	Mentoree (Mentorship)	11	55
	All of these (Combined)	5	25
Informal	Colleague (Comradeship)	3	15
	None of these	1	5
Total		20	100

Table 4.15 shows that the majority of respondents (80%) saw their relationship as being semi-formal. The predominant model was one of mentorship (55%) along with the combined approach (25%). The remaining 20% saw the relationship as informal. For none of them was the relationship exclusively formal.

Of significance is that semi-formal and informal relationships include the affective elements important to the success of these respondents. The results of Table 4.15 were juxtaposed against gender, age, stage of the programme and institution of study as it was hypothesized that these might also affect the nature of the relationship. The results are shown below in Tables 4.16 which shows the raw data and 4.17 which shows the percentages.

Table 4.16: The relationship between the respondents' responses on models of supervision by gender, age, stage of the programme and institution of study (n)

Relationship with the Supervisor	Gender		Age		Stage of programme			Institution of study	
	M	F	26 to 35	36+	B	Md	E	UCT	O
	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Managerial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mentorship	2	9	5	6	1	4	6	5	6
Combined	2	3	4	1	0	3	2	3	2
Collegial	2	1	0	3	0	1	2	2	1
None of these	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Total	6	14	9	11	1	9	10	10	10

Key: M = male; F = female; B = beginning; Md = middle; E = end; UCT = University of Cape Town; O = other institutions

Table 4.17: The relationship between the respondents' responses on models of supervision by gender, age, stage of the programme and institution of study (%)

Relationship with the Supervisor	Gender		Age		Stage of programme			Institution of study	
	M	F	26 to 35	36+	B	M	E	U	O
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Managerial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mentorship	33.3	64.3	55.6	54.5	100	44.4	60.0	50.0	60.0
Combined	33.3	21.4	44.4	9.1	0	33.3	20.0	30.0	20.0
Collegial	33.3	7.1	0	27.3	0	11.1	20.0	20.0	10.0
None of these	0	7.1	0	9.1	0	11.1	0	0	10.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Although the numbers are too small to draw firm conclusions, it appears that females are more likely to experience mentoring relationships (64.3%) than males (33%). This may be a function of the gender (not established) of the supervisors. Age plays a role, and all of the collegial relationships were experienced by students over 36 years of age. Place of previous study has little impact and interestingly neither does stage of programme. It would be expected that as students neared completion, the relationships might change to one of collegiality, but as the data shows, the mentorship model predominates. This is confirmed by the limited professional assistance indicated in Section 4.2.1.4.

These results seem to confirm that the supervisory relationships being experienced by the respondents within Department A range from the semi-formal to informal based equally on contractual agreement and trust of which the contract for Department A is in the form of the UCT Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix 2).

The existence of this contract in Department A and the results which show the existence of the prevailing mentorship model appear to be in line with Down *et al.* (2000). They argue that “the student focused approach (mentorship) to postgraduate supervision necessitates a move from a traditional approach, centred more on the development of research, to a problem solving approach” (Down *et al.*, 2000:10). In this model, the student is central and the development of the student is as important as the research itself. Both the student and the research are highly visible indicators of the quality of supervision. The mentorship model is trans formative not reproductive; enabling not obstructing; provides support and guidance to all postgraduate students regardless of ethnic, racial, sexual, gender, age, social class, theological, disability differences; and supports within any field of study, a diverse range of research topics, problems, and projects” (Down *et al.*, 2000:4).

Having investigated the supervisory styles being experienced by the respondents of which the results seem to show semi-formal and informal relationships, it was important to find out what regulates these relationships.

4.2.2.2. The student-supervisor contract

At UCT students and supervisors sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU, 2004) between graduate student and supervisor which acts as a form of contract to offset and regulate the supervisory relationship. In this document, the supervisee’s and the supervisor’s expectations are to be made explicit and reviewed annually (MOU, 2004:1). Wisker (2005:51) suggests that “learning contracts can help the supervisor and the student to negotiate workable expectations and relationships together and act as an objective vehicle to discuss any break-downs.” For Downes (2002) contracts need to be monitored and evaluated over time so as to maximize their value and usefulness. Acker et al. (1994, in Latona and Browne, 2001:7) confirm that “managed and negotiated approaches to supervision are fundamental to student success and note the prevalence of negotiated relationships in their study.” In describing what makes a successful supervisory relationship, Phillips and Pugh (1994, in Woolard, 1998:2) argue that

“discussion of this relationship should begin at the very early opportunity, and a tentative agreement about working together should be reached.” Respondents were thus asked if they feel that a formal written contract between supervisor and student is necessary. The results are shown in Table 4.17. The respondents were further asked to explain their responses.

Table 4.18: Desirability of a formal written contract between student and supervisor

Responses	n	%
Yes	14	70
No	2	10
Not sure	4	20
Total	20	100

Table 4.18 shows that the majority (14, 70%) of the respondents felt that a contract was necessary and this might be further evidence of the semi-formal (mentorship) relationship where the notion of trust and contract are of equal importance and the respondents might expect the contract to regulate the prevailing student-supervisor relationship in this Department. Two (10%) felt that it was not necessary, whilst 4 (20%) were not sure.

Of the 14 respondents who felt that a contract was necessary, 12 felt that it was mutually beneficial to the student and supervisor, and sets clear guidelines to enable completion and protection of both parties if disagreements arise; one felt that a contract was necessary for the sake of professionalism, and one felt that a contract was necessary due to the fact that he/she had had bad experiences in his/her past experience where there had been no contract to set the guidelines. Of the 2 respondents who indicated that a contract was not necessary, 1 respondent indicated that the relationship must be based rather on trust, and a relationship should be built on that, whilst the other respondent felt that a contract would injure the student-supervisor relationship as the process becomes more formalized. All 4 respondents who indicated that they were not sure if there should be a contract, indicated that supervision expertise may differ from supervisor to supervisor, and that if the supervisor went against the contract, the student might be too scared to report this, and further to this a contract might encourage a supervisor to offer minimal

assistance as long as the supervisor sticks to the minimal requirement stipulated in the contract.

Relationships ought to be worked at and discussed so that both parties are aware of expectations entailed within the supervisory relationship. This is because Sayed *et al.* (1998) observe that students bring to their work conceptions of the nature of the supervision that differs greatly from the supervisors although this changes over time. In view of this, the respondents were asked if they explicitly discussed expectations with their supervisors.

4.2.2.3 Respondents' discussion of expectations of the supervisory process with the supervisor

Edwards *et al.* (1995:3) claim that research evidence suggest that the development of relationships between students and their supervisors needs to become the focus of ongoing discussions throughout the candidature. According to them, without ongoing discussions, unnecessary problems might arise which might impact adversely upon students' progress. Hence it is necessary to instigate fruitful discussions and development of positive relationships within the complex of supervision. Negotiated and managed approaches to supervisory relationships have been found to be associated with students' success (Acker *et al.*, 1994 in Latona and Browne, 2001).

Respondents were asked if they had fully and clearly discussed expectations about the supervisory process with their supervisors and asked to explain. The results are shown in Table 4.19 and the explanations are shown in Table 4.20.

Table 4.19: Respondents discussion of expectations about the supervisory process with their supervisors

Responses	n	%
Yes	8	40
Somewhat/ partially	7	35
No	5	25
Total	20	100

Table 4.19 shows that 8 (40%) of the doctoral cohort had clearly and fully discussed expectations about the supervisory process with their supervisors, 7 (35%) had partially discussed these and 5 (25%) had not. The implication might be that the 25% who have not are working with their supervisors in an implicit environment based on trust of which the relationship might flourish because of luck or break as a result of different expectations. The respondents were asked to explain their answers and the explanations are shown in Table 4.20 below.

Table 4 20: Respondents explanations to the responses on discussion of expectations

Explanations	n	%
Discussed when the contract was initiated	6	30
Discussed when problems occurred	3	15
Discussed towards the end of the study of the programme	1	5
Expectations were implicit and not explicit	5	25
Supervisor down plays student expectations	3	15
Supervisor lacks insight in facilitation of discussion	2	10
Total	20	100

What is clear from this table is that only 6 of the 20 respondents (30%) discussed their expectations at the beginning of the process (that is literally at the beginning and when the contract was signed). Thus, the findings appear to be that what the respondents expected were not being fully and clearly discussed such as the supervisors facilitating the discussion of the expectations explicitly at the beginning before problems occurred,

and supervisors not to down play students' expectations. Following this, the respondents were asked if there were mechanisms in place which enables them and their supervisors to then review the supervisory process.

4.2.2.4. Mechanisms in place which enables the students and the supervisors to review the supervisory process

Aspaland *et al.* (1999:133) claim that a suite of strategies promoting flexibility is an essential feature of any supervisory process. According to them (1999:133), "strategies support the development of students' lifelong learning skills through the provision of regular feedback between the students and the supervisors and the systematic review of the progress of students' work, the facilitation of agreement over fundamental expectations and responsibilities, and the provision of a mechanism for handling conflict or difficulties, before they arise." Additionally, strategies encourage the development of students' negotiation, conflict resolution, and goal setting skills and promote student learning autonomy (*ibid*). As a result, the respondents were asked if there were any mechanisms in place, such as a review process which would enable them and their supervisors to respond better to each others expectations. The results are shown in Table 4.21.

Table 4.21: Knowledge of mechanisms to change the supervisory relationship

Choices	n	%
Yes	5	25
No	4	20
Not sure	6	30
Don't know	5	25
Total	20	100

The results seem to show that it is only explicit to 5 out of 20 respondents that there are mechanisms in place to regulate the supervisory relationship. This might indicate a need for an investigation into evaluation strategies which are beneficial for the student-supervisor relationship.

4.2.2.5. Summary

The results show that the type of relationships experienced by the respondents ranged from the semi-formal to informal. The semi-formal relationship experienced by the majority of the respondents is the mentorship model (55%) followed by the combined approach (25%). The rest saw the relationship as informal and for none of them was the relationship formal.

Upon juxtaposing these relationships against gender, age, place of previous study and stage of the programme, the results show that females are more likely to experience mentoring relationships (64.3%) than males (33.3%). Age plays a role, and all of the collegial relationships were experienced by students over 36 years of age. Place of previous study and stages of programme have little impact, instead, the mentorship model predominates.

The semi-formal and informal relationships appear to confirm the relationships based equally on contractual agreement and trust. The contract for Department A is in form of the UCT, MoU (see Appendix 2). On the one hand, a majority of the respondents felt that a contract was necessary for the sake of professionalism as it is beneficial to students and supervisors, sets guidelines to enable completion and protection of both parties if disagreements arise. On the other hand, the few respondents who felt that a contract was unnecessary claimed that a contract would injure the student-supervisor relationship if formalized by restricting what is in the contract. Instead, they felt that the relationship should be based on trust.

The results appear to show that 8 (40%) respondents clearly and fully discussed expectations about the supervisory process with their supervisors compared to 7 (35%) who partially discussed. A few (5, 25%) seem to be working with their supervisors in an implicit environment which might also imply the presence of informal relationships in this Department. The explanations given by the respondents clearly show that only 6 of the 20 respondents (30%) discussed their expectations with their supervisors at the

beginning of the process (that is literally at the beginning and when the contract was signed). Thus, the findings appear to be that what the respondents expected were not being fully and clearly discussed. Nonetheless, the results seem to confirm the existence of the semi-formal and informal relationships based equally on contract and trust.

Only 5 (25%) indicated that they knew of mechanisms in place which enable them and their supervisors to respond better to each others' expectations during the PhD candidature. Six (30%) were not sure, 5 (25%) did not know and 4 (20%) were definite that there were no mechanisms in place.

Having investigated the models of supervision experienced by the respondents and the quality of the relationship, the nature of the supervisory process which would enable the respondents to complete their dissertations successfully was investigated further in terms of factors relating to completing the degree.

4.2.3. Completing the Degree

Having completed Masters degrees, it might be expected that PhD students would have insight into their personal student-supervisor relationship requirements. This section probes further what the respondents felt was fundamental to complete their dissertations successfully.

Section 4.2.3.1 presents the results of the respondents' current confidence to do research at PhD level.

Section 4.2.3.2 shows the respondents' opinions about three most important factors for successful completion and three most inhibiting factors.

Section 4.2.3.3 presents the results on what the respondents felt were desirable and undesirable characteristics of an effective supervisor.

4.2.3.1 Students current confidence to do research

Respondents were asked how they rate their confidence to do research, rating from not capable to extremely capable, and were asked to give reasons for their responses. The reasons are shown in Table 4.22 and the explanations are shown in Table 4.23. Given the earlier gender differences referred to in section 4.1.6 these results were analysed by gender.

Table 4.22: Current capabilities to do PhD research

	Male		Female		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not confident	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat confident	0	0	0	0	0	0
Confident	3	15	8	40	11	55
Very confident	2	10	4	20	6	30
Extremely confident	1	5	2	10	3	15
Total	6	30	14	70	20	100

All the respondents were confident about their capabilities to do research at PhD level. Nine out of 20 (45%) indicated that they were very or extremely confident. There was little difference between males 3 out of 6 (50%) and females 6 out of 14 (42%) in these latter categories. Of the 9 students, 5 students (55.6%) were from UCT and the other 4 students (44.4%) were from other institutions. This shows very little difference as the students seem to have integrated well in the same academic culture and might confirm the effectiveness of the mentorship style of supervision within Department A. The reasons given by students for the current confidence to do research are shown below in Table 4.23 according to the categories extremely confident, very confident and confident.

Table 4.23: Respondents' reasons for rating current research capabilities

Extremely confident
Integrated well into the research community, can do external research work successfully
Supervisors facilitated the process then mostly on my own
Published and edited journals; involved and supervise research projects
Very confident
Comfortable with other aspects of research except the depth of literature review
Teaching and supervising students at the university, meetings and publishing
PhD sharpened abilities
Conversant with research methodology
Gathered broad research experience
Published a few refereed journal articles in the area
Confident
Confident and excited that I can do PhD
Confident to conduct research in my chosen field
Face lots of issues, questions, problems but eventually solve/cope with them as achievement and progression
Got good feedback after presenting conference papers
Picked well using qualitative research methodology for first time
Still learning a lot
Relatively confident
I know what is needed and I do not underestimate the demands
Now I understand what I want to write about
There is so much to learn and know
PhD process has given me a lot of experience

The responses such as experience gained from doing a PhD so far, continual exposure to research through supervision of other research students, assistance from the supervisor and being active in the academic field such as preparing conference papers and published journals are closely interrelated and, if clustered together, mostly indicate that the students got confidence to do current research from actually doing the PhD. It might be that these responses confirm the importance of supervisors involving themselves with the students' professional development during the supervisory process.

None of the respondents indicated that they were not confident. Some positive explanations namely: 'PhD sharpened abilities'; 'PhD process has given me a lot of experience'; 'conversant with research methodology'; 'gathered broad research

experience'; 'confident and excited that I can do PhD'; 'picked well using qualitative research methodology for first time'; [and] 'now I understand what I want to write about' appear to show an improvement on the capabilities of the respondents compared with their confidence at Masters Degree level (in section 4.1.5).

Given this experience and an apparent growth in confidence students were then asked about what factors were important for degree completion.

4.2.3.2. Respondents' opinions about factors for successful degree completion

Respondents were asked to rank the three factors they felt were most important for completing their degrees (Table 4.24) and the factors which might inhibit this (Table 4.25).

The list of factors for successful completion (nine in all) was developed from an appraisal of recent literature in the area of postgraduate supervision (Ashibar *et al.*, 2005; Buttery *et al.*, 2005; Kathy and Manthunga, 2004; Latona and Browne, 2001; Malfroy and Webb, 2000; Soliman, 1999; and Wisker, 2005; Zhao, 2001).

The results have been grouped into the 3 categories of organizational, cognitive/academic and affective/personal factors.

Table 4.24: Ranking the three most important factors for successful completion

Approaches to Supervision	Completion Factors	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total
		n	n	n	N
Organizational Rank 1 - 30% Rank 2 -35% Rank 3 -30%	Carefully managed and negotiated supervisory relationships	1	1	2	4
	Productive and regular meetings held with supervisor	2	4	2	8
	Open, frank and honest communication about mutual expectations	3	2	2	7
Cognitive/ Academic Rank 1 -25% Rank 2 -20% Rank 3 -55%	An intellectual environment	1	0	11	12
	Supervisor's expertise in the subject area	4	4	0	8
Affective/ Personal Rank 1 - 45% Rank 2 -45% Rank 3 -15%	Collegiality	1	0	1	2
	Cultivating skills of confidence boosting	0	4	0	4
	Full time study	5	3	2	10
	Matching compatible personalities	3	1	0	4
	Other	0	1	0	1
Total		20	20	20	60

The table shows that in Rank 1 the most important set of functions felt by students to complete their degrees was the affective or personal aspect (45%) of which full time study and matching compatible personalities were considered most important. The “affective area can be divided into emotional and social factors” (Kathy and Manathunga, 2005:242), thus, full time study is categorized under affective as the researcher views it as a social factor. A key aspect which emerged was the supervisor’s expertise. This confirms the findings from previous research about the balance in supervisor’s roles that is required. In Rank 2 the most important factors were again related to affective or

personal issues (45%). These were cultivating skills of confidence boosting and full time study. In Rank 3 the most important aspect of successful completion was the cognitive/academic area (55%). The factor felt most important by students within this aspect was an intellectual environment. The above findings seem to support Kathy and Manathunga (2004) who note that while the organizational aspect is important in supervision the underlying causes of lack of progress at postgraduate level are the cognitive and affective (socio-emotional) aspects.

Following this, the respondents were asked to rank the most inhibiting factors which were also developed from recent postgraduate supervisory literature (Ashibar *et al.*, 2005; Buttery *et al.*, 2005; Kathy and Manthunga, 2004; Latona and Browne, 2001; and Sayed *et al.*, 1998). Table 4.25 illustrates the results.

Table 4.25: Ranking the most inhibiting factors for completion

Approaches to Supervision	Inhibiting factors for completion	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total
		n	n	n	N
Organizational Rank 1 -15% Rank 2 -20% Rank 3 -20%	Lack of institutional support	1	3	2	6
	Work commitments	2	1	2	5
Cognitive/ Academic Rank 1 -15% Rank 2 -40% Rank 3 -10%	I have little experience in this topic area	1	2	0	3
	Supervisor's lack of expertise in the subject area	2	6	2	10
Affective/ Personal Rank 1 -70% Rank 2 -40% Rank 3 -70%	Family commitments	0	2	5	7
	Financial cost	2	3	7	12
	Lack of supervisor support	10	3	2	15
	Loneliness	2	0	0	2
	Other	0	0	0	0
Total		20	20	20	60

The table shows that in Rank 1 the most inhibiting aspects for successful completion were seen to be in the affective/personal domain (70%). The most inhibiting factor in this set was a lack of supervisor support. In Rank 2 cognitive/academic factor (40%) along with affective/personal factors (40%) were felt inhibiting. The most inhibiting factor as an element of the cognitive aspect was supervisor's lack of expertise in the subject area. Lack of supervisors' support and financial cost were the most inhibiting affective factors. In Rank 3 the most inhibiting aspect was again related to affective issues (70%) of which family commitments and financial cost were the most inhibiting.

Given these results, the respondents were then asked what they considered to be the characteristics of an effective supervisor.

4.2.3.3. Desirable characteristics of an effective supervisor

As was discussed in Section 4.1.4, there are three key areas which impact on the student-supervisor relationship, the organizational/administrative factors, cognitive/academic and affective/personal factors.

These aspects are related to a scale used by Fraser and Mathews (1999) to study students conceptions of desirable characteristics which scale was also used in this study to gauge these characteristics. Fraser and Mathews use the terms expertise (for cognitive/academic), support (for affective/personal) and add the dimension of creativity/criticism. For consistency, the terms used throughout will be used in the table rather than Fraser and Mathews' terminology. However, it should be noted that they underemphasize the organizational aspects (These organizational aspects, however, feature later in students' estimations of features of their experience). Nonetheless, it was useful to replicate their study by presenting students with a list of characteristics which they had to rate. This list of characteristics was augmented by features noted by inter alia Ashibar *et al.* (2005); Buttery *et al.* (2005); Cranney (1998); Down *et al.* (2000); Moses (1985); Sayed *et al.* (1998); Woolard (1998); and Wisker (2005).

Respondents were asked to rate these characteristics of an effective supervisor on a scale of 1 to 5 from "Undesirable to "Very highly desirable." Characteristics viewed as "Very highly desirable" achieved a score of 4 and above, "averagely desirable" achieved 3 to < 4, whilst characteristics receiving between 1 to < 3 were "undesirable or somewhat desirable" (Table 4.26). The raw data of the responses from the 20 doctoral respondents is attached (Appendix 3). Appendix (4) shows the mean scores of the 28 characteristics in descending order.

Table 4.26 shows the results of the desirable characteristics arranged in a matrix form with three columns representing each of the main components, cognitive/academic, affective/personal and balancing creativity with criticism (creative/criticism), and three rows ranking the characteristics according to whether they achieved a mean score of 1 to < 3 (undesirable to somewhat desirable), 3 to < 4 (averagely desirable), or 4 and above (highly desirable to very highly desirable).

Table 4.26: Desirable characteristics of a supervisor

Mean Score	Cognitive/academic	Affective/personal	Creative/Critical
4 and above Highly desirable to Very highly desirable	Knowledgeable (4.65)		
		Helpful (4.40)	
		Available (4.40)	
		Approachable (4.35)	Flexible thinker (4.35)
		Attentive (4.25)	Stimulating (4.25)
	Guide (4.15)		
		Enthusiastic (4.10)	
			Active (4.00)
			Objective (4.00)
3 to < 4 Averagely desirable		Involved (3.95)	
		Caring (3.95)	
	Adviser (3.90)		Challenger (3.90)
	Teacher (3.80)		Critical (3.80)
	Specialist (3.70)		
		Nurturer (3.65)	
	Trainer (3.60)		
	Influential (3.30)		
	Counselor (3.15)		
		Friend (3.10)	
1 to < 3 Undesirable to Somewhat desirable	Director/leader (2.75)		
		Detached (1.6)	Passive (1.6)

Based on the matrix, the cognitive/academic aspect is highly prized with the characteristic 'knowledgeable' rating highest at 4.65. This confirms the high rating for supervisor's expertise in the subject area seen in Table 4.24. Importantly, however, it seems this factor needs to be mediated by support in the affective and cognitive domains and a style that balances creativity with criticism. In this sense, 5 out of 11 support characteristics were rated as 'highly desirable' as were 4 out of 8 creativity features.

These respondents' conceptions of desirability of an effective supervisor support the balanced academic and the affective roles of a supervisor emphasized in the literature (Chapter 2) along with balancing creativity with criticism. These results are in line with

what the respondents said about their supervisory experience at Masters level (Section 4.1.3, 4.1.4 and 4.1.6) as well as their PhD supervisory experience (Section 4.2.1). They attributed their confidence to do research at PhD level, among others, to assistance from their supervisors. In Section 4.2.3.2, they emphasized the supervisor's expertise in the subject area as an important factor for successful completion and inhibiting if not provided.

The respondents noted that a lack of supervisor support throughout their supervisory experience is inhibiting and this is affirmed in this Table 4.26 when the students rated detached and passive as an undesirable characteristics of an effective supervisor. Thus, these results seem to confirm that supervisor's support is most important to these respondents. These findings also confirm Fraser and Mathews' (1999) research findings.

The results also appear to confirm the desirability of the mentorship model prevailing in Department A (Section 4.2.2). The features of the mentorship model such as wise, guide, adviser, teacher, counselor, listener, and support, challenger, enabler, and critical friend are confirmed as desirable in the ratings given to features such as knowledgeable, guide adviser, teacher, trainer, mediator, counselor, helpful, approachable, available, attentive, caring, challenger, critical and stimulating.

Three characteristics scored 1 to <3, these being director/teacher (2.75); detached (1.6) and passive (1.6). Director was viewed as somewhat desirable whilst detached and passive were viewed as undesirable. This may indicate a reluctance for more formal models such as the managerial or professional approaches.

If the organizational factors highlighted in Section 4.2.4.3 are taken into account, then these findings support the views of Kram (1985, in Marshall *et al.*, 1998:2) who notes that "effective mentoring relationships address both the professional, work related dimension and the psychosocial dimension." Put differently, the most desirable model requires a balance of organizational, cognitive/academic and affective/personal features along with the added element from the combined model, a balance of mixing criticism with creativity. The evidence, thus, points to what could be called a 'merged' model

which captures the best features of all the models but which is built around the mentorship model.

4.2.3.4. Summary

This section dealt with 3 main areas namely, students' current capabilities to do research, opinions about factors for successful completion of their degrees and conceptions of an effective supervisor.

All the respondents were confident to do research. There was little gender difference. They articulated what they felt was fundamental to successfully complete their dissertations. The confidence was mostly gained through the PhD experience such as continual exposure to research through supervision of other research students, assistance from supervisor and being active in the academic field such as preparing conference papers and published journals. These results seem to confirm the importance of supervisors involving themselves with the students' professional development during the supervisory process in Department A.

In Rank 1 the most important set of functions felt by students to complete their degrees was the affective or personal aspect (45%) of which full time study and matching compatible personalities were considered most important. In Rank 2 the most important factors were again related to affective or personal issues (45%) namely, cultivating skills of confidence boosting and full time study. In Rank 3 the most important aspect of successful completion was the cognitive/academic area (55%). The factor felt most important by students within this aspect was an intellectual environment.

The students also noted what they felt were the most inhibiting factors. In Rank 1 the most inhibiting aspect of supervision was the affective/personal aspect (70%), especially lack of supervisor support. In Rank 2 cognitive/academic factors (40%) along with affective factors (40%) were felt inhibiting. The most inhibiting factor as an element of the cognitive aspect was the supervisor's lack of expertise in the subject area. Lack of

supervisors' support and financial cost were the most inhibiting affective factors. In Rank 3 the most inhibiting aspect was again related to affective issues (70%) of which family commitments and financial cost caused the most problems.

In characterizing an effective supervisor the respondents highly prized expertise (confirming the results in Table 4.24). Desirable characteristics of an effective supervisor such as, knowledgeable, guide, available friend, helpful, empathy, active, caring, nurturing, challenging, critical, and flexible were described as characteristics of good supervision at Masters Degree and PhD levels which seems to be congruent with what they experienced. The results also appear to confirm the desirability of the mentorship model prevailing in Department A (Section 4.2.2). The features of the mentorship model such as wise, guide, adviser, teacher, counselor, mediator, listener, and support, challenger, enabler, and critical friend are confirmed as desirable in the ratings given to features such as knowledgeable, guide adviser, teacher, trainer, counselor, helpful, approachable, available, attentive, caring, challenger, critical and stimulating.

Three characteristics described as undesirable, director, detached and passive, may indicate a reluctance for more formal models such as the managerial or professional.

If students' suggestions on the improvement of the organization of the experience (Section 4.2.4.3) are taken into account, it might be that the most desirable model requires a balance of organizational, cognitive/academic and affective/personal features along with the added element from the combined model, a balance of mixing criticism with creativity. The evidence, thus, points to what could be called a 'merged' model which captures the best features of all the models but which is built around the mentorship model.

Having stated the most important factors to complete their dissertations successfully and most inhibiting as well as stating the characteristics of an effective supervisor, the next Section 4.2.4 explores the respondents' supervisory experience so far

4.2.4. Students' Experience of Supervision

The previous three sections have dealt with the quality of the supervisory process being experienced by the respondents, the nature of the supervisory relationships prevailing, and what the respondents felt as critical in order to complete their degrees and inhibiting.

The final Section 4.2.4 moves to explore the experience so far. In this section, it could be argued that the manner in which the students responded, the Masters (previous experience) might have a bearing on how the students describe their supervisory experience so far. This is because of the way the questionnaire is structured; it awakens the students' minds on the Masters experience and takes them to the PhD experience. In addition, the results in the previous sections seem to show that the mentorship (student focused approach) is mostly being experienced by these respondents and if this is true, then the elements of this approach should be highlighted in the description and in what the respondents say about the BEST things of their supervisory experience so far

Section 4.2.4.1 presents the results on how the respondents described their supervisory experience so far and the reasons given for their choices.

Section 4.2.4.2 shows what the respondents felt were the BEST and the WORST things about their supervisory experiences respectively.

Lastly, students' suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship are presented in Section 4.2.4.3. These suggestions were grouped according to similarities and themes identified in Chapter 2.

The responses to Sections 4.2.4.2 and 4.2.4.3 were categorized as organizational, cognitive/academic and affective/personal and an added element of mixing criticism with creativity where applicable.

4.2.4.1. Respondents' description of their PhD supervisory experience so far

The respondents gave an account of their previous supervision at Masters Degree level in Section 4.1. This was designed to get them thinking about their current experience.

Here, the respondents were asked to rate their supervisory experience so far and to explain their answers. The results are shown in Table 4.27 and Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.27: The PhD supervision experience so far

Characterize supervision	n	%
Very poor	0	0
Poor	1	5
Average	1	5
Good	12	60
Very good	6	30
Total	20	100

Table 4.27 shows that 90% of students describe their supervisory experience as good (60%) or very good (30%). One (5%) saw it as average and 1 (5%) as poor. These results seem to show a significant improvement in terms of the respondents' ratings at Masters Degree level where 50% of the respondents rated this previous experience of supervision from good to very good (Table 4.4). The reasons for these ratings are shown in Table 4.28 below.

Table 4.28: Respondents' characterization of their PhD supervision experiences

Reasons
Very good
Nurturing and empowering
Excellent insight, guidance, inspiration
Encouraging, helpful, active, development on contacts
Supervisor supported me cognitively by truly shifting my understanding regarding the nature of research
Supervisor is supportive and caring, not letting me lazy around
Supervisor respects me and my work
Good
Supervisor very busy and at times does not understand any preoccupation but tries hard.
I eventually get what I need from the supervisor
Supervisor able to assist me anytime with my work
Supervisor is encouraging, open and flexible
Sufficient guidance
Support from supervisor
Supervisor was caring, rigorous, challenging me to do better although was not always available
Supervisor's support but my voice suffocates as I end up doing what the supervisor wants. Lacks more independence
Support from supervisor
Supervisor's desire to see me successfully complete the research
Supervisor has managed to fulfill my expectations to a reasonable level
Supervisor supportive, critical, prompt with returning feedback on drafts
Average
Supervisor takes ages to give feedback and at times the feedback is not comprehensive and helpful
Poor
Not sufficient engagement from supervisor as a result supervisor never understood research problem adequately

The results show that 90% of the respondents who described their supervisory experience as good to very good attribute this to the support from their supervisors as being active, caring, guiding, empowering, encouraging, helpful, inspiring, nurturing, open, flexible, challenging, critical, rigorous, along with prompt feedback and understanding the nature of the student's research as well as the supervisor respecting the student and his/her work. This confirms the results of Section 4.2.3.3 where it was shown that desirable characteristics strongly included expertise, supportive, creative and constructive critical

aspects. It also confirms research described earlier (see Cullen *et al.*, 1994, in Buttery *et al.*, 2005; Wisker, 2005; and Phillips and Pugh, 1994, in Woolard, 1998).

After the respondents characterized their supervisory experience as mostly good to very good, they were asked about the BEST and WORST things of their supervisory experiences.

4.2.4.2. The best and worst things about respondents' experiences

Tables 4.29 and 4.30 show the detailed BEST and the WORST things the students said about their supervisory experiences grouped in themes of organizational, cognitive/academic and affective/personal because as discussed previously, these are the 3 main elements of the supervisory task.

Table 4.29: Best things about the supervisory experience

Approaches to Supervision	BEST Things	N	%
Organizational/		2	10
	Going to conference together		
	Occasions when I get stimulating feedback from supervisor		
Cognitive/academic		7	35
	Access; intellectual stimulation; unrivalled analytical help		
	A sense of developing translated into a huge learning curve		
	Engaging with the problem		
	Guidance towards research material/books		
	Huge growth in capabilities in visible areas		
	Thinking in different ways such as embracing qualitative research methods in doing research		
	Working across contexts/exposed to conceptual frameworks/experiencing supervisor insight		
Affective/personal		11	55
	Encouragement and belief		
	Help		
	Help from supervisor		
	Own excitement doing research		
	Perseverance to bring out my full potential		
	Respect, vote of confidence that my supervisor wants me through PhD		
	Supervisor is friendly and shows concern		
	Supervisor's support in my academic weaknesses		
	Supervisor is open and friendly		
	Support and encouragement		
	Supervisor agreeing to supervise me		
Total		20	100

The results seem to show that the BEST things are a combination of organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective/personal aspects of the process. However, affective/personal factors such as help, friendship, encouragement,

openness, building confidence, mutual respect, approachability, availability, empathy, interest and student's own excitement to do research were significantly stated as the best things about the supervisory experience by 55% of the respondents. Cognitive/academic aspects such as the supervisor's expertise in the subject area, intellectual stimulation, guidance and students' huge development as researchers were noted by 35% of respondents. The organizational aspects were least stated as the best things (10%). These positive comments about the best things of the supervisory experience, based mainly on the affective/personal and cognitive/academic aspects, might be an indication of the effectiveness of the mentorship supervisory style experienced by the respondents (see Table 4.15). As stated before, "mentorship values the student-supervisor relationship as one of cognitive and personal growth for both parties; it emphasizes the facilitation of learning and a guided growth towards learning autonomy" (Down *et al.*, 2000:10).

Following this, the respondents were asked about the WORST things of their supervisory experience. These are shown in Table 4.30 below.

Table 4.31: Worst things about the supervisory experience

Approaches to Supervision	WORST Things	N	%
Organizational		6	33.3
	Feedback is usually slow		
	My failure to meet deadlines		
	Occasions when feedback is delayed		
	Short of time		
	Time		
	Waiting too long to see supervisor		
Cognitive/academic		2	11.1
	Struggling to conceptualize an acceptable and viable proposal		
	Supervisor's confusion at times		
Affective/personal		10	55.6
	Financial difficulties		
	Going through supervisor more interested in his/her work		
	Mostly supervisor detached		
	Not adequately networking with other PhD students		
	Not having enough study time because of family commitments and full time job		
	Not having mutual understanding because of cultural difference		
	Insufficient encouragement to write, publish/present papers, sarcastic comments		
	Isolating and stressful		
	Supervisor making insensitive comments regarding my work		
	Unfounded accusations of underperformance		
Total		18	100

The results to show that the WORST things about the respondents' supervisory experience were affective/personal issues (55.6%) followed by organizational issues (33.3%) cognitive/academic issues (11.1%). The worst things to do with the affective/personal issues include supervisors not being supportive, student not being adequately integrated into the research culture, personality clash as a result of culture

differences, financial difficulties, family and work commitments. Factors related to the supervisor as not being supportive are detached, inadequate encouragement and depressing comments. The worst things about the organizational issues were delayed feedback and meetings, inadequate study time, and the student's failure to meet deadlines. The supervisors' and the students' lack of expertise in the subject area were cognitive/academic weaknesses.

These results partly mirror the comments about the BEST experiences. In both cases, the power of affective or personal aspects is confirmed. Interestingly when things go well, the organizational aspects are hardly noticed, but that when things go badly these become more prominent. These results confirm Kathy and Manathunga's finding (2004:242).

Having noted that they were all confident to do research at PhD level; articulated what they felt were the most important factors for successful completion and inhibiting factors to complete their degrees; and stated the BEST and WORST things about their supervisory experience, the respondents were asked to give suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship.

4.2.4.3. Suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship

The students were asked to give suggestions on how they felt the student-supervisor relationship can be improved. The respondents' comments were grouped where there were similarities of suggestions (for example the comment "Hold regular and combined students-supervisors meetings at faculty level", occurred in various forms 4 times), and were further collated as in the previous tables. The results are shown below.

Table 4.32: Suggestions on improvement of the student supervisor relationship

Approaches to Supervision	Suggestions	N
Organizational n= 33 63.5%	Clear, explicit, signed contracts and adhered to by both parties	6
	Commonality in academic knowledge, interdisciplinary field	1
	Department puts mechanism of assessing supervisor's performance without confrontation	1
	Hold regular and combined students-supervisors meetings at faculty level	4
	Limit number of students	1
	Open, honesty and frank communication from both parties	4
	Open forum at departmental level to discuss issues of supervision	1
	Regular supervision and reports to faculty committee on PhD supervision	1
	Supervisor should give students sensitive and prompt feedback	3
	Supervision team rather than single supervisor	2
	Supervisor should read student's work before the meetings	1
	Supply students with information on supervision and choosing supervisors	3
	Training and re-training of supervisors in research supervision	2
	Transparency of supervisor qualifications and track record in supervising	3
Cognitive/academic n = 7 13.5%	Open up access to new areas of theory and research fields not what supervisors are comfortable with	2
	Supervisor well networked and introduces student to use opportunities	1
	Supervisor has insight/knowledge/experience in student's research area and respect it	1
	Student must be in an institution that creates a supportive intellectual environment	1
	The supervisor must be constructive, a guide, and be regularly available	2
Affective/personal n = 10 19.2%	Both supervisor and student to be collegial and respectful	2
	Encourage students to network and talk to other people about their work	2
	Personality compatibility of supervisor and student	4
	Provide PhD common room for socializing both students and supervisors	2
Creativity/critical n= 2 3.8%	Supervisor to be more critical to read student's work and also offer suggestions on how to remedy problems	2
Total		52

The results here are interesting and show a consistency with previous tables. Organizational aspects with 33 suggestions (63.5%) occurred most often, followed by affective/personal (10, 19.2%) and cognitive/academic (7, 13.5%). There were 2 suggestions which were related to the balancing creativity with criticism aspect discussed earlier (Section 4.2.3.3).

In that the organizational aspects were highlighted amongst the worst aspects they unsurprisingly feature highly amongst suggestions for improvement. The same can be said for affective or personal suggestions. The low percentage of comments about cognitive/academic aspects confirms students' general satisfaction with this aspect of their supervisory experience discussed earlier (Section 4.2.1.3).

4.2.4.4. Summary

This section dealt with 3 main sections namely, the respondents' supervision experience at PhD level, the best and worst things about this experience and suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship.

90% of the respondents characterized their PhD supervisory experience as good to very good compared to 50% at Masters Degree level. They attributed this good supervisory experience to the support from their supervisors as being active, caring, guiding, empowering, encouraging, helpful, inspiring, nurturing, open, flexible, challenging, critical, rigorous, along with prompt feedback and understanding the nature of the student's research as well as the supervisor respecting the student and his/her work. These characteristics were also described by the respondents in Section 4.2.3.3 as the desirable characteristics of an effective supervisor and these are features of the mentorship, the combined and the comradeship model experienced by these respondents (Section 4.2.2.1).

These results point to the desirability of the semi-formal relationship referred to above as the 'merged' model. This means a balance of organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective or personal roles as well as an allowance for creativity and criticism.

Consistent with these results, the respondents described the BEST things about their supervision experience as being a combination of organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective or personal aspects of the supervision process. However, affective/personal factors (55%) such as help, friendship, encouragement, openness, building confidence, mutual respect, approachability, availability, empathy, interest and the student's own excitement to do research were significantly stated as the best things. Cognitive and academic factors (35%) such as the supervisor's expertise in the subject area, intellectual stimulation, guidance and students' huge development as researchers were noted as important. The organizational factors were not significant here. These positive comments about the best things of the supervisory experience mainly based on the affective/personal and cognitive/academic aspects might be an indication of the effectiveness of the mentorship supervisory style experienced by the respondents (see Table 4.15).

The WORST things about the respondents' supervisory experience were also to do with organization, cognitive/academic, and affective or personal aspects. The affective or personal issues (55.6%) which included supervisors not being supportive, the student not being adequately integrated into the research culture, personality clashes as a result of culture differences, financial difficulties, family and work commitments were highlighted as the worst things. Organizational/academic issues (33.3%) were delayed feedback and meetings, inadequate study time, and the student's failure to meet deadlines. The supervisors and the students' lack of expertise in the subject area were noted as cognitive/academic weaknesses. It might be that the worst things can be avoided as they might be viewed as impeding the students' progress.

Lastly, the suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship given by the respondents to improve the existing student-supervisor relationship might need to be attended to in Department A. Organizational aspects (63.5%) of supervision were highlighted here. These included the presence of clear, explicit, signed and adhered to contracts which promote open, honesty and frank communication for students and supervisors, commonality in academic knowledge namely, interdisciplinary field, regular

and combined meetings for students and supervisors at faculty level, sensitive and prompt feedback, transparency of the supervision process from start to end, team supervision, implementation of supervisory evaluative tools used regularly and forwarded to the PhD supervision faculty committee and constant training of supervisors in postgraduate supervision.

Interestingly, the presence of clear, explicit, signed and adhered to contracts which promote open, honesty and frank communication for students and supervisors features frequently (see Table 4.32). In Section 4.2.2.2 a majority of the students (70%) felt that a contract was necessary and yet most of the students were not clear about a discussion of expectations and the existence of the contract (Sections 4.2.2.3 and 4.2.2.4).

Suggestions related to the affective or personal issues (19.2%) were that supervisors and students should be personally compatible, respectful of one another and have a collegial relationship, supervisors should encourage students to talk to other people about their work, and the Department should provide a PhD common room for students and supervisors as space for socializing. The cognitive/academic aspects (13.5%) highlighted were that supervisors should have expertise in the students' subject areas, give correct level of guidance, be well networked, students should be in a supportive intellectual environment and supervisors should be flexible enough to let students explore and use new theories. Finally, the respondents suggested that the supervisors ought to be more critical in reading students' work but at the same time to offer suggestions on how to remedy the problems as an element of balancing creativity with criticism. This was noted by students in Section 4.2.3.3 as a component of an effective supervisor.

It can be argued that the best things, worst things and suggestions are embedded in this characterizing of the PhD supervision experience. Best things can be upheld, suggestions can be considered and worst things should be avoided as this might hamper students' progress and cause students' dissatisfaction with the postgraduate supervision.

This chapter set out to examine students' supervision experience in Department A in order to establish the quality of the supervision process, the supervision relationships

prevailing and factors important to students' successful completion of degrees. These findings are summarised in Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In an effort to curb problems emanating from student-supervisor relationships, most institutions prominently display information pertaining to the process on their websites for prospective postgraduate students. Yet, “at UCT’s website, the information for prospective students centers on closing dates, forms, and financial support and lacks the link to the Doctoral Degrees Board and its requirements and statutes” (Muller *et al.*, 2000:2).

Against this background, this thesis investigated the supervisory experiences of 20 PhD students (6 males and 14 females) in Department A. The purpose of this investigation was to identify the salient characteristics of those experiences and to establish common trends and patterns. A further aim was to critique aspects of those experiences in order to identify points of strength or weakness. Positive aspects were identified and these can be incorporated in practice to improve success factors, Negative aspects were also highlighted so as to be avoided. Therefore, this thesis focused on the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of students in supervisory relationships within Department A?
2. What aspects of the supervisory experiences are identified by participants as beneficial to the progress of postgraduate students? What other aspects are seen as negative?

This thesis then examined current PhD students’ experiences of supervision to establish the models of supervision experienced, and the factors considered by students for the successful completion of their degrees.

A key result was that 90% of students thought their supervisory experience was good or very good. The reasons for this can be summarized in 2 main areas. Firstly, the type of supervision they received. This leads to a consideration of optimal models of supervision. Secondly, a review of what students expect and what they have experienced shows a strong congruence, and provides pointers to factors for successful degree completion. Finally, suggestions were made on how to improve the student supervisor relationship.

Section 5.1 presents the models of supervision experienced by the students.

Section 5.2 presents the factors considered by these students as important for the successful completion of degrees.

Section 5.3 presents suggestions made on how to improve the student- supervisor relationship.

The above conclusions are briefly discussed below.

5.1. The Models of Supervision Experienced by Students.

The supervision process is a relationship which changes over time and the kind of the relationship which evolves heavily influences the outcome of the student's satisfaction, success or failure. For this reason, supervisory relationships which enhance students' progress are necessary. What these postgraduate respondents experienced within the supervisory relationships discussed below was at the heart of this thesis.

As discussed, there are 3 main types of supervision model namely, more formal types which include so called managerial and professional models; semi-formal models such as the mentorship and the combined models; and informal models such as the collegial or comradeship model.

Within each of these, there are 3 key aspects of the supervisory task which need to occur in any successful supervisory experience. These are the organization and administration of the relationship, the availability of cognitive and academic expertise and recognition of the affective and personal elements. The 3 models above emphasize each of these domains differently. For example, the managerial and professional models emphasize the organization or administration of the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students. Semi-formal models, especially the mentorship model, emphasize a balance of cognitive/academic input along with taking appropriate account of the personal relationship.

The majority of the students (80%) saw their relationship as being semi-formal. The mentorship model (55%) was the most predominant one followed by the combined model (25%) then the collegial model (15%).

It did not seem that the stage of the programme of study, gender, age nor previous institution of study affected this. The mentorship model was the one most experienced by students. Within this, the students significantly stated that the affective or personal aspects (55%) were the best things about their supervisory experience followed by the cognitive or academic aspects (35%). The worst things likewise were the affective or personal aspects (55.6%) and organization of the supervisory relationship (33.3%). This suggests that the affective aspects are critical and indeed students cited these as most important in finishing their Masters' theses (80%).

In characterizing an effective supervisor the respondents highly prized expertise mediated by the affective or personal aspect and supported by a balance of creativity and criticism. However, as could be expected by now, the affective elements overall were considered more desirable than the cognitive ones. Desirable characteristics of an effective supervisor such as, knowledgeable, guide, available friend, helpful, empathy, active, caring, nurturing, challenging, critical, and flexible were described as characteristics of good supervision at Masters Degree and PhD levels which seems to be congruent with what they experienced. The results appear to confirm the desirability of the mentorship model prevailing in Department A, the features of which match the characteristics described here.

Where there were weaknesses these were largely in the organizational/administrative domain. 64% of students suggested these aspects were the weakest part of their supervisory experience. This suggests that although the affective element at the core of the mentorship model is highly prized, it needs to be balanced with recognition of the importance of organizational factors. Put together, this might suggest an approach which

points to what could be called a 'merged' model which captures the best features of all the models but which is built around the mentorship model.

The strong congruence of what the students expect and what they have experienced provides pointers to factors for successful degree completion and these are discussed below.

5.2. Factors Important for Successful Completion of Degrees

A combination of cognitive or academic factors and affective or personal factors were identified by the students as the most important factors for successful completion of degrees. The most inhibiting factors for completing degrees were identified to be in these same domains too.

In the first rank of factors, the students stated that the affective or personal factors (45%) were most central to the successful completion of degrees. These factors were matching compatible personalities, full time study and cultivating skills of confidence boosting. These were followed by organizational factors (30%) which related to the clear management of the process and finally, the most important factor in the cognitive or academic area (25%) was an intellectual environment. This combination of the affective, organizational and academic aspects shows congruence with what the students expected from an effective supervisor. It appears that these results are confirming the significance of the 'merged' model discussed above.

It is also important to consider the factors considered by students as most inhibiting. The factors were embedded in the same domains as above, but particularly in the affective or personal domains 70% of all responses in the 1st rank of problems related to factors such as lack of supervisor's support, financial cost and family commitments. This points to the fact that there are also other factors outside the supervisor's characteristics, which impact on the student-supervisor relationship which need to be taken account of for students to be satisfied with the supervisory experience and to facilitate their progress. Finally, a lack of supervisor's expertise in the subject area was considered to be the most inhibiting

factor in the academic domain although only 2/20 responses in the 1st rank of problems cited this.

This review of factors considered detrimental by students leads to the final section which details some suggestions made for improvement. These are again organized by organizational/administrative, cognitive/academic and affective/personal domains.

5.3. Suggestions on How to Improve the Student-supervisor Relationship

Weaknesses were largely in the organizational/administrative domain. (64%) of students suggested these aspects were the weakest part of their experience. Within this aspect, the areas to be improved were to do with the contractual relationship, revision of the contract, meetings and feedback during the supervisory process. The students expected clear, explicit, signed and adhered to learning contracts to be in place and their supervisors to facilitate discussion of expectations mutually and explicitly at the beginning of the supervision process and not after problems have occurred. The students expected these expectations to be reviewed thereafter. The students suggested that all this should be communicated openly, honestly and frankly by both parties.

Secondly, the students suggested that regular meetings with their supervisors at faculty level would improve the student-supervisor relationship. Thirdly, suggestions on the implementation of supervision evaluative tools, used regularly and forwarded to the PhD supervision faculty committee were raised. This might point to the revision of the existing learning contract (MoU) so as to match the students' needs which might lead among others to transparency of the supervision process from start to end required by these students. Constant training of their supervisors was an area of concern. Lastly, the students suggested that their supervisors should read their work on time and in advance of meetings, and give them constructive, stimulating and prompt feedback.

Weaknesses in the affective/personal domain (19%) were relatively low. The issues raised here which needed improvement were emotional factors such as personality

compatibility of student and supervisor and a respectful relationship as well as social factors such as students and their supervisors socializing in a common room provided by the authorities and to assist in integrating students into the research culture.

The least weaknesses were in the cognitive/academic domain (14%). Generally, the students were satisfied with their supervisors' academic roles. Nonetheless, the areas which needed improvement were to do with the academic environment namely, supervisors letting students explore and use new theories; the supervisors' expertise in students' research subject area and knowledge about the supervision process.

Finally, the students suggested that balancing creativity with criticism (4%) needed improvement such as the supervisors being more critical in reading students' work and also offering suggestions on how to remedy them.

References

- Armstrong, J. S. (2004) The Impact of Supervisors' Cognitive Styles on the Quality of Research Supervision in Management Education. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Volume 74, pp 599-616.
- Ashiabor, H., Taplin, R., Bryce, M. and Kefallinos, E. (2005) Redefining our experiences of Research through the Integration of Multiple Perspectives for the Development of Postgraduate Research. (Online 4 April 2005)
www.aare.edu.au/conf03nc/as03021z.pdf
- Aspland, T., Edwards, H., O'Leary, J. and Ryan, Y. (1999) Tracking New Direction in the Evaluation of Postgraduate Supervision. *Innovative Higher Education*, Volume 34, Number 2, pp 127-147.
- Brown, A. and Dowling, P. (1998) *Doing Research, Reading Research: A Mode of Interrogation for Education*. London: Falmer Press.
- Burns, R.B. (2000) *Introduction to Research Methods* (4th Edition). London: Thousand Oaks.
- Buttery, E. A., Richter, E. M. and Filho, W. L. (2005) An Overview of the Elements that Influence Efficiency in Postgraduate Supervisory Practice Arrangements. *Postgraduate Supervisory Practice. International Journal of Education Management* Volume 19, Number 1, pp 7-25.
www.emeraldinsight.com/0951-354X.htm
- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1994) *Research Methods in Education* (4th edition). London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2000) *Research Methods in Education* (5th Edition). London Falmer.
- Connell, R. (1985) "How to Supervise a PhD", *Vestes*, Volume. 28 Number 2, pp 38-41. (Online 16 April 2005)
www.ecu.edu.au/acserv/ecu/supervis.rtf
- Cranney, J. (1998) *Supervisor (and Co-supervisor) Role and Responsibilities*. Draft Report University of New Castle South Wales (Online 4 June 2005)
<http://www.chem.unsw.edu.au/postgrad/models/B/B08/B08.html>
- Cullen, D. J., Pearson, M., Saha, L. J. and Spear, R. H. (1994) *Establishing Effective PhD Supervision*. Department of Education and Training. Australian Government Publishing Service. (Online 14 December 2005)
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2002/07/31/nlaw31.xml>
- Delamont, S., Atkinson, P. and Parry, O. (1997) *Supervising the PhD: A Guide to Success*. Buckingham [England]: Society for Research in Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Down, C. M., Martin, E., Bicknell, L. (2000) Student Focused Postgraduate Supervision: *A Mentoring Approach to Supervising Postgraduate Students* (Version 1) RMIT University. (Online 9 April 2005)
www.rmit.edu.au/departments/rd/postgrad/mentor.pdf
- Downes, A. S. (2002) SA64D: Research Design and Management. *Lecture Notes*. Module 1: Introduction to Research Design and Management. (Online 9 April 2005) www.uwichill.edu.bb/iser/SA64D%20Design%20and%20Management.doc

- Edwards, B. (2002) Postgraduate Supervision: *Is Having a PhD enough?* A paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference Problematic Futures: Educational Research in an Era of Uncertainty. Brisbane, Australia. 1-5 December. <http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/edw02382.htm>
- Edwards, H., Aspland, T., O'Leary, J., Ryan, Y., Southey, G. and Timms, P. (1995) *Tracking Postgraduate Supervision*. (Online 4 April 2005) www.qut.edu.au/talss/eval/resources/pg-sup/pg-sup-index.htm
- Ferman, T. (2002) The Knowledge needs of Doctoral Supervisors. The Teaching and Educational Development Institute. The University of Queensland. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Association for Research in Education. <http://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/fer02251.htm>
- Fraser, R. and Mathews, A. (1999) An Evaluation of the Desirable Characteristics of a Supervisor. In Martin, K, Stanley, N. and Davison N. (Edition). *Teaching in the Disciplines/ Learning in Context*. Proceedings of the 8th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, the University of Western Australia. pp 129-137 (Online 4 April 2005) <http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf1999/fraser.html>
- Grant, B. (1999) Walking on a Rakey Bridge: Mapping Supervision. *HERDSA Annual International Conference*, Melbourne, 12-15 July (Online 4 April 2005) www.herdsa.org.au/branches/vic/cornerstones/pdf/grant.pdf
- Guide for Research Students and Supervisors (2003), University of Manchester Faculty of Arts. (Online 4 April 2005) www.art.man.ac.uk/Grad-sch/documents/phdhand.pdf
- Kathy, A. and Manathunga, C. (2004) Clutch-Starting Stalled Research Students. *Innovative Higher Education*. Volume 28, Number 4, pp 237-254.
- Kiley, M. "Expectation" in a Cross-Cultural Postgraduate Experience: In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (Edition). (1998) *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Managing the New Agenda*. The University of Adelaide, Adelaide. (Online 5 May 2005) <http://www.canberra.edu.au/QPR/1998.pdf>
- Kumar, R. (1996) *Research Methodology. A Step-by-step Guide for Beginners*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Lamm, R. and Lewis, R. (1999) *The Interpersonal Relationship in Doctorial Supervision*: Paper Presented at AARE-NZARE Conference 29 November – 2 December, Melbourne (Online 28 April 2005) <http://www.aare.edu.au/99pap/lam99406.htm>
- Latona, K. and Browne, M. (2001) *Factors associated with Completion of Research Higher Degrees* Report Number 37. University of Technology, Sydney, University Graduate School. (Online) 9 April 2005 www.gradschool.uts.edu.au/about/aboutprocess/Completiondegree.html
- Lawrence, B. (1996) *Guidelines for the Supervision of Honours, Master and Doctoral Students*: Division of Academic Services (Online 16 April 2005) www.ecu.edu.au/acserv/ecu/supervis.rtf
- Leedy, P. D. (1993) *Practical research: Planning and design* (5th Edition). California: Macmillan Publishing Company.

- Lyons, W., Scroggins, D. and Rule, P. B. (1990) The Mentor in Graduate Education. *Studies in Higher Education*, Volume 15, Number 3, pp 277-286. (Online 30 January 2006)
http://web18.epnet.com/citation.asp?tb_1&_ug=sid+032EF201%2DC717%2D4BB8...
- Malfroy, J. and Webb, C. (2000) *Congruent and Incongruent Views of Postgraduate Supervision*: in Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (Edition). *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making Ends Meet*. Advisory Centre for University Education, The University of Adelaide. pp165-177. (Online 4 April 2005)
www.canberra.edu.au/OPR/2000/Malfroy2000.pdf
- Marshall, S., Adams, M. and Cameron, A. (1998) *Mentoring Academic Staff*: Lessons from the field. Proceedings of HERDSA Annual International Conference: Higher Education Knows no Limits Auckland, NZ, 7-10 July. (Online 13 April 2005).
http://www.cpd.mq.edu.au/about/sm_rschr.htm
- McMichael, P. (1993) Starting Up as Supervisors: the Perceptions of New Comers in Postgraduate Supervision in Australian and Sri Lanka. *Studies in Higher Education*. (Online 30 January 2006). Volume 18, Number 1, pp 15-26.
<http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/fc22ht5jfkdrwmee6q3m/contribution>
- McWilliam, E. and Palmer, P. (1995) Teaching tech(no)bodies: Open Learning and Postgraduate Pedagogy. *The Australian Universities' Review*. Volume 35, Number 2, pp 32-34.
- Mertens, P. C. and McCrimmon, T. (1998) Training and Accreditation Programme for Postgraduate Supervisors (TAPPS): *The Initial Concept*. (Online 9 April 2005)
www.iah.bbsrc.ac.uk/TAPPS/TAPPS,%20the%20Initial%20
- Moses, I. (1985) Supervising Postgraduates. *Green Guide* Number 3. HERDSA
- Morrison-Saunders, A, Moore, S, Newsome, D. and Newsome, J. (2005) Reflecting on the Role of Emotions in the PhD Process. *In the Reflective Practitioner*. Proceeding of the 14th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 3-4 February 2005. Perth: Murdoch University.(On Line 5 May 2005)
<http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2005/refereed/morrison-saunders.html>
- Mouton, J. (2001) *How to succeed in your master's and doctoral studies*. Goodwood: Van Schaik.
- Murdoch University. Division of Arts-Postgraduate Research. (Online 9 April 2005)
www.arts.murdoch.edu.au/postgrads/supervision/candidature
- Muller, J., Kaunda, L., de Wet, J. and Mendelsohn, R. (2000) The Supervisor-Student Relationship: Report to GRAPRO by the Graduate Supervision. Sub- Committee. Faculty of Humanities, University of Cape Town. Mimeo.
- Ndebele, N. S. (2004) Vice Chancellor's Foreword (Online 13 December 2005)
<http://www.research2004.uct.ac.za/foreword/index.php>
- Neumann, R. (2000) Quality Enhancement in Doctoral Education: A Case Study of MGSM. In Kiley, M. and Mullins, G. (Edition). (2000). *Quality in Postgraduate Research: Making the ends meet*. Advisory Centre for University Education, the University of Adelaide. (Online 5 May 2005)
<http://www.canberra.edu.au/OPR/2000/Neumann2000.pdf>
- Pratt, A. (2001) *Uniteaching* University of Wollongong (Online 20 April 2005)
<http://cedir.uow.edu.au/cedir/uniteach/uniteachv2n2/v2n2a4.html>

- Salmon, P. (1992) *Achieving a PhD- Ten Students Experiences*. London: Trentham Books.
- Sayed, Y, Kruss, G. and Badat, S. (1998) Students' Experience of Postgraduate Supervision at the University of the Western Cape. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, Volume 22, Number 3, pp 275-285.
- Smith, M. K. (1996) The Functions of Supervision, *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*. (Online 28 May 2005)
http://www.infed.org/biblio/functions_of_supervision.htm
- Soliman, I. (1999) *Introduction to University Teaching Series*. Postgraduate Supervision. Teaching and Learning Centre. University of New England. (Online 28 May 2005) www.une.edu.au/tlc/pub/pgrad.pdf
- Spear, R. H. (2000) *Supervision of Research students: Responding to students Expectations*. Technical Report Occasional Paper No. GS001. Graduate School. Australian National University (Online 18 March 2005)
http://64.233.187.104/Search?q=cache:SNuTFDMgr_IJ:eprints.anu.edu.au/archive
- Struwig, F. W. and Stead, G. B. (2001) *Planning, Designing and Reporting Research*. Cape Town: Pearson Education South Africa.
- Whittle, J. (1994) Collaborative Supervision and Research Skills Training in Research Degree Programs. *Quality in Postgraduate Research. Making it Happen*. The University of South Australia. (Online 5 May 2005)
www.canberra.edu.au/QPR/1994/Whittle_1_1994.pdf
- Wisker, G. (2005) The Good Supervisor. *Supervising Postgraduate and Undergraduate Research for Doctoral Theses and Dissertations*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Woolard, L. (1998) Graduate Student Supervision. (Online 25 April 2005)
<http://www.ualberta.ca/~ckreber/papers/Lorraine.htm>
- Yin, R. (1994) *Case study research: Design and Methods* (2nd Edition). London: SAGE.
- Zhao, F. (2001) Postgraduate Research Supervision: A Process of Management. Centre for Management Quality Research, Bundoora West, RMIT University. (Online 25 April 2005) <http://ultibase.rmit.edu.au/Articles/may01/zhao1.htm>
- Zuber-Skerrit, O. and Roche, V. (2004) A Constructive Model for Evaluating Postgraduate Supervision: A Case Study. *Quality Assurance in Education*. Volume 12, Number 2, pp 82-93.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 PhD Questionnaire
- Appendix 2 Memorandum of Understanding
- Appendix 3 Postgraduate supervision characteristics: Responses of students
- Appendix 4 Mean score postgraduate supervision characteristics in descending
order: Responses of students

CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Irene O. Mbwanda. I am a Master's degree student doing my research on doctoral students' experiences in the student-supervisor relationship. What the postgraduate student experiences within this student-supervisor relationship is at the heart of the thesis.

The responses to this research will help supervisors to identify issues and concerns that are of importance to you and to all those who will follow in the future. The information you provide in this questionnaire is strictly confidential. The answers to this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only and will not be used in any manner that may identify individual respondents.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any further questions or comments, please contact me at shmire001@mail.uct.ac.za or phone 0722890622.

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability without leaving any questions unanswered.

A. Personal Information

Do not write

INSTRUCTIONS: Please tick the boxes which correspond to your answer where these are provided. Where the question needs explanation, complete your answer in the space provided.

1. Gender: Male ☐ 1 Female ☐ 2

☐

2. Age: 20-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41+

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐

3. Mode of Study Fulltime ☐ 1 Part-time ☐ 2

☐

4. When did you first register for your current field of study? Year

☐

5. How far are you with your programme of study?

Beginning (proposal) ☐ 1 Middle (data collection) ☐ 2 Nearing completion (writing) ☐ 3

☐

B. Previous Experience of Supervision

6. At which institution did you do your **Masters degree**?

UCT ☐ 1 Other ☐ 2

☐

7. What was the mode of study?

Fulltime ☐ 1 Part-time ☐ 2 Both ☐ 3

☐

8. When did you complete your Masters degree?

Year

☐

9. How long did you take to complete the thesis?

Months

☐

10. When you look back at your experience of supervision how would you characterize it?

(Please tick the box)

Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
☐ 1	☐ 2	☐ 3	☐ 4	☐ 5

☐

10a. Please explain.....

☐
☐
☐

11. What were the **THREE** most important aspects of this experience? (Please **RANK** with 1, 2 and 3 in the boxes provided along side the aspects)

11.1	Friendship	
11.2	Expertise in your subject area	
11.3	Support/encouragement	
11.4	Well organized process	
11.5	Intellectual challenge	
11.6	Constructive and timely feedback	
11.7	Empathy	
11.8	Preparation for further research	
11.9	Induction into academia	
11.10	Other (Please specify):	

☐
☐
☐

12. How well did your **Masters Degree experience** prepare you for doing **PhD**?

(Please indicate your response by ticking in the appropriate box).

Very Inadequately Inadequately Adequately Well Extremely well

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐

12a. Please explain:

.....

.....

☐
☐
☐

13. What were the **THREE** most important factors that **enabled you to complete** your Masters thesis? (These may include factors outside of the formal university process)

13.1

13.2

13.3

☐
☐
☐

C. Current Experience

14. How do you rate your current capabilities to do research?

Not confident Somewhat confident Confident Very confident Extremely confident

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

☐

15a. Why do you choose the above rating?

☐

15. How often do you need to meet with your supervisor ?

☐

For question 16 please use the key provided below to answer the questions. (Tick the number in the box which corresponds to your answer).

KEY: 1 = Very dissatisfied
 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied
 3 = Average
 4 = Somewhat satisfied
 5 = Very satisfied

16. To what extent are you satisfied that your supervisor:

16.1	Is available for discussions/consultations when needed	1	2	3	4	5
16.2	Sets aside uninterrupted time to discuss your research progress	1	2	3	4	5
16.3	Reads your work in a timely manner and in advance of meetings with you	1	2	3	4	5
16.4	Engages in constructive discussions with you about your progress	1	2	3	4	5
16.5	Regularly provides you with prompt, comprehensive and constructive feedback on submitted written work	1	2	3	4	5
16.6	Is a source of new ideas for your research	1	2	3	4	5
16.7	Assists with writing skills namely, expression of ideas, grammar, structure of thesis.	1	2	3	4	5

For question 17 please use the key provided below to answer the questions. (Tick the number in the box which corresponds to your answer).

KEY:

- 1 = Very low**
- 2 = Somewhat dissatisfied**
- 3 = Average**
- 4 = Somewhat highly**
- 5 = Very highly**

17. How would you rate your supervisor's expertise with regard to:

17.1	Your research topic	1	2	3	4	5
17.2	Your research methodology	1	2	3	4	5
17.3	The process of supervision	1	2	3	4	5
17.4	Assisting you to consult other people for help	1	2	3	4	5

18. (Please tick the box which corresponds to your answers)

Does your supervisor:

Not at all A little Averagely A lot Very Much

18.1	Help you network with other researchers in your area?	1	2	3	4	5
18.2	Assist you to publish	1	2	3	4	5
18.3	Encourage you to present your work at appropriate seminars and conferences?	1	2	3	4	5
18.4	Help with extra-research problems including employment and technical training?	1	2	3	4	5

19. How would you describe your relationship with your supervisor?

Student Peer Colleague Mentoree All of these None of these

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

(Mentoree = supervisor is an advisor, coach and promoter)

19a. Please explain

.....

.....

☐
☐
☐
☐

20. Do you think a formal written contract between student and supervisor is necessary?

yes ☐ 1 no ☐ 2 not sure ☐ 3

☐

20a. Please explain:

.....

.....

☐
☐
☐

21. Have you clearly and fully discussed expectations about the supervisory process with your supervisor?

yes ☐ 1 no ☐ 2 Somewhat/partially ☐ 3

☐

21a. Please explain

.....

.....

☐
☐
☐

22. Are there any mechanisms in place such as a review process which would enable you and your supervisor to respond better to each other's expectations?

yes no not sure don't know

23. In your opinion, which are the **THREE** most important factors for **successful completion**?
(Please indicate with 1, 2 and 3 in the boxes along side the factors)

23.1	An intellectual environment	
23.2	Open, frank and honest communication about mutual expectations	
23.3	Cultivating skills of confidence boosting	
23.4	Carefully managed and negotiated supervisory relationships	
23.5	Productive and regular meetings held with supervisor	
23.6	Matching compatible personalities	
23.7	Supervisor's expertise in the subject area	
23.8	Collegiality	
23.9	Full time study	
23.10	Other.....	

24. In your opinion, which are the **THREE** most **inhibiting factors for completion**?
(Please indicate with 1, 2 and 3 in the boxes provided alongside the factor)

24.1	Loneliness	
24.2	Family commitments	
24.3	Financial cost	
24.4	Lack of institutional support	
24.5	Lack of supervisor support	
24.6	I have little experience in this topic area	
24.7	Work commitments	
24.8	Supervisor's lack of expertise in the subject area	
24.9	Other.....	

25. The characteristics of a supervisor listed below have been identified as important in the student-supervisor relationship.

Please rate each one of the following **characteristics of an effective supervisor** from *1 = undesirable to 5 = very highly desirable* by ticking the appropriate box.

The supervisor should be:	Undesirable 1	Somewhat Desirable 2	Averagely desirable 3	Highly Desirable 4	Very Highly Desirable 5
Active in the research area					
Advisor					
Approachable					
Attentive					
Available					
Caring					
Challenger					
Colleague					
Counselor					
Critical					
Detached					
Director/leader					
Enthusiastic					
Flexible thinker					
Friend					
Guide					
Helpful					
Influential					
Involved					
Knowledgeable					
Nurturer					
Objective					
Partner					
Passive					
Specialist					
Stimulating					
Teacher					
Trainer					

26. How would you describe your supervisory experience so far?

Very Poor	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good
1	2	3	4	5

☐

26a. Please explain

☐
☐
☐

.....

.....

.....

26b What has been the **BEST** thing about your experience?

☐

.....

.....

26c What has been the **WORST** thing about your experience?

☐

.....

.....

27. Please make suggestions on how to improve the student-supervisor relationship

1.

☐
☐
☐

2.

3.

THANK YOU!

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Memorandum of understanding

between

graduate student and supervisor

This memorandum of understanding between

.....(name of graduate student)

.....(signature)

.....(date)

and

.....(name of supervisor)

.....(signature)

.....(date)

is designed to ensure that the supervision experience is as mutually productive as possible.

(This must be completed within six months of initial registration; an annual supplement must be completed each subsequent year before the student renews his/her registration)

Candidature details:

- A1** Full name of candidate:.....
- A2** Academic and professional qualifications:
.....
.....
- A3** Candidate's experience: (in his/her own words) giving particular attention to research experience and mastery of techniques/second languages/equipment as may be relevant (Attach details if necessary)
.....
- A4** Project description and thesis/dissertation title: (attach full details)
- A5** Personal particulars
- (a) student number:.....
- (b) current Cape Town address:.....
- (c) e-mail:.....
- (d) telephone number(s):.....

The supervision arrangements:

General obligations of supervisors are outlined in appendix I. By signing this document, both parties acknowledge their understanding of the general expectations it contains.

- A6** Supervisor:
- (a) Initials & surname:
- (b) Staff no:.....
- (c) Department:.....
- A7** Responsibilities for supervision in this case (in addition to the standard set as listed in appendix I)
.....
- A8** Co-supervisor(s) if any:
- (a) Initials & surname:.....
Department:.....
Institution:.....
Responsibilities:.....
.....

- (b) Initials & surname:.....
 Department:.....
 Institution:.....
 Responsibilities:.....

Expectations

B1 Supervisor's expectations:

The supervisor must set out in as much detail as he/she can what he/she expects of the candidate, including (where relevant) an assessment of the time to be spent on each phase of the project:

.....

B2 Supervisor's plans and commitments:

2.1 The supervisor must set out his/her plans for providing –

- (a) supervision (nature, frequency, progress reports and supervision diary);
- (b) financial support (see B3 for detail);
- (c) project finance, space, equipment and operating costs; and
- (d) travel and/or publication support

2.2 Supervision arrangements

- (a) Leave (per annum) for the student:

.....

- (b) Expected absence of supervisor(s) on leave/sabbaticals (giving arrangements for supervision if away for more than 2 months in any one year): during the next 3 years

.....

- (c) Field work: Outline arrangements for field work:

.....

(d) Laboratory work:

Outline lab arrangements (if any) and supervision arrangements for lab work

.....

.....

(e) Courses and classes

List any class, workshop or course that the student must attend as a pre-requisite and costs associated with this.

.....

.....

Funding plans

B3 Specify all approved financial assistance to be provided by the supervisor(s) to support this study, and if necessary, how these funds are to be used. Please note that additional details may be specified in the annual supplement(s).

Years	Category	Use	Source	Amount
	Bursaries salaries			
	Computers & stationery			
	Laboratory costs			
	Fieldwork			
	Equipment			
	Conferences & courses			
	Other running costs			
	TOTAL			

Note: If, on withdrawing or being refused re-registration the student becomes contractually obliged to repay any of the above. This should be noted. Funding from external agencies may stipulate such a provision. (The NRF sometimes does this.) If a lack of progress is due to factors beyond the student's control (e.g. health problems or unavoidable contingencies) the student may not be obliged to repay these funds, and the supervisor(s) should negotiate with the funding agencies for this stipulation to be waived.

The candidate's expectations

- B4.1** The candidate must set out in as much detail as he/she can what he/she expects of the supervisor and the department, especially giving attention to access to research facilities.

B4.2 Comment by supervisor on this:.....

B5 The candidate's plans and commitments

- 5.1** The candidate must set out his/her plan for the project, and a detailed time commitment of what he/she plans to give to the project.

5.2 Comment by supervisor:.....

Intellectual property issues

B6 UCT policy on IP is set out at www.uct.ac.za.....

(a) Authorship:

It is our guideline that all who contribute significantly to the conception, execution and writing-up of a paper should be listed as authors. Any additional points on authorship must be noted here by the supervisor:

.....

(b) Copyright:

Copyright in a thesis or dissertation vests in the author, subject to the rights UCT has in terms of the general rules.

(c) Patents

Should any patents emanate from this study, in whose name(s) will this be registered

.....

.....

(d) Ownership of data

Graduate students often use data that belongs to the University, or a hospital, or a research group. Any issues relating to data ownership should be noted here.

.....

.....

C1 Observations by the HoD

I have reviewed this completed MoU am satisfied that it reflects the shared understanding of supervisor and candidate and that the department is able to meet the obligations to candidates set out in this MoU:

Signed:.....

Name:.....

Date:.....

C2 Observations by the Dean/Dean's nominee

I have seen this completed MoU and I have the following comments:

.....

.....

Signed:.....

Dean/Dean's nominee

Name:.....

Date:.....

Once seen by all parties, copies must be returned to and retained by the candidate, supervisor, HoD and Faculty Office.

Appendix: 3: Postgraduate supervision characteristics: Responses of Students

The supervisor should be:	Undesirable 1	Somewhat Desirable 2	Averagely desirable 3	Highly Desirable 4	Very Highly Desirable 5
Active in the research area (Cr)	1	1	4	5	9
Advisor (E)	0	1	4	11	4
Approachable (S)	0	0	3	7	10
Attentive (S)	0	0	4	7	9
Available (S)	0	1	2	5	12
Caring (S)	0	1	6	6	7
Challenger (Cr)	1	1	5	5	8
Colleague (Cr)	4	1	9	3	3
Counselor (E)	1	5	7	4	3
Critical (Cr)	3	0	2	8	7
Detached (S)	13	2	5	0	0
Director/leader (E)	3	4	8	5	0
Enthusiastic (S)	0	1	4	7	8
Flexible thinker (Cr)	0	1	1	8	10
Friend (S)	2	4	7	4	3
Guide (E)	0	0	3	11	6
Helpful (S)	0	0	2	8	10
Influential (E)	0	5	7	5	3
Involved (S)	0	2	4	7	7
Knowledgeable (E)	0	0	0	7	13
Nurturer (S)	0	2	9	3	6
Objective (Cr)	0	2	4	6	8
Partner (S)	2	4	9	2	3
Passive (Cr)	13	2	5	0	0
Specialist (E)	0	3	7	3	7
Stimulating (Cr)	0	1	3	6	10
Teacher (E)	0	2	7	4	7
Trainer (E)	2	1	6	5	6

Notes: Cr = Balancing Creativity and Criticism

S = Support for the Student

E =Expertise in the Research Area

Appendix 4: Mean Score Postgraduate Supervision Characteristics in Descending Order (Very Highly desirable to Undesirable): Responses of Students

Characteristics	Mean Score
Knowledgeable (E)	4.65
Available (S)	4.4
Helpful (S)	4.4
Approachable (S)	4.35
flexible thinker (Cr)	4.35
Attentive (S)	4.25
Stimulating (Cr)	4.25
Guide (E)	4.15
Enthusiastic (S)	4.1
Active (Cr)	4
Objective (Cr)	4
Caring (S)	3.95
Involved (S)	3.95
Advisor (E)	3.9
Challenger (Cr)	3.9
Critical (Cr)	3.8
Teacher (E)	3.8
Specialist (E)	3.7
Nurturer (S)	3.65
Trainer (E)	3.6
Influential (E)	3.3
Counselor (E)	3.15
Friend (S)	3.1
Colleague (Cr)	3
Partner (S)	3
director/leader (E)	2.75
Detached (S)	1.6
Passive (Cr)	1.6