Development and evaluation of resources to enhance skills in higher degree research supervision in a cross-cultural context

Final Report 2010

Partner institutions and team members:

Macquarie University
Associate Professor Judi Homewood
Ms Christa Jacenyik-Trawoger
Associate Professor Anna Reid
Dr Theresa Winchester-Seeto

The University of Queensland
Dr Catherine Manathunga

The University of Newcastle
Professor Sid Bourke
Professor Allyson Holbrook

Report authors:

Associate Professor Judi Homewood
Dr Theresa Winchester-Seeto
Ms Jacqueline Mackaway
Ms Christa Jacenyik-Trawoger

http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/group/cross-cultural-supervision-project

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Photos from video scenario resources courtesy of Mark Parry

Report Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

The involvement of international candidates in postgraduate research degrees has been a goal of many universities across the developed world. Surprisingly little research has focused on the needs of this group of students, and for the most part it has problematised them by its focus on factors associated with students themselves, for example cultural adaptation and language problems, rather than addressing any need for the institution and its agents to vary their practice to meet any different needs of an increasingly diverse population. This project addressed postgraduate research supervision in a cross-cultural context from the point of view of both supervisor and candidate, and from the perspective of what institutions can do to support candidates and supervisors.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with candidates and supervisors were used as the source of research data to construct the project outcomes. The broad findings of the project were that certain factors magnify or intensify the complexity of the supervisory arrangement when this occurs in a cross-cultural context. These include:

- Separation from the usual support network, including family, friends and colleagues and former teachers.

- Separation from the familiar, and the consequent 'fish out of water' feeling or lack of familiarity with and understanding of both the academic as well as general way of life in Australia.

- Increased time pressure for international candidates due to visa limitations and increased costs and/or loss of income.

- Language issues that contribute to communication difficulties including, but not limited to, written and oral.

The interviews also provided narratives and case studies that informed the development of resources designed to assist supervisors, doctoral candidates and those charged with the education and training of these two groups. The resources include:

- Materials designed to augment professional development for candidates and supervisors, which would also assist private self-reflection (videos and written scenarios).

- Materials to suggest strategies to candidates and supervisors.

- A checklist for departments and faculties to help them assess their readiness to host international candidates, and assist candidates with different cultural backgrounds.

- A bibliography that would provide access to the main published material in this area, and to allow further investigation if needed.

To ensure ready access, the resources are available from the ALTC Exchange website. They are free for people to use and can be downloaded and used as often as necessary, under a Creative Commons licence.

The project did not attempt to produce resources that would supersede those already used by institutions for supervisor training; rather the resources are designed to be an adjunct to existing practice. The project also did not produce resources which mandate

a solution to commonly occurring issues, although feedback from candidates and supervisors suggested that this impossible task would have been welcomed. Instead, discussion questions were included with the video and written scenarios to trigger scholarly reflection on interpersonal aspects of the supervisory and research process. Similarly, candidates' and supervisors' suggestions were used to develop documents that suggest possible strategies.

The outcomes of the project and the research data were presented at five international conferences, two conferences and five seminars/workshops. Early release of the deliverables has been requested from eight universities in Australia and New Zealand.

Resources are available at:
http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/group/cross-cultural-supervision-project

2.0 Introduction

This project was conceived in an attempt to address some of the issues related to the supervision of higher degree research candidates within the Australian higher education sector. The main driver was the changing demographic profile of postgraduate research candidates, with an increasing number of international postgraduate research candidates in Australian universities (King, 2008). Specific cross-cultural issues, not simply communication related, impact both supervisor and candidate. There is also increasing pressure on universities to ensure and optimise timely completion among postgraduate research candidates, irrespective of whether they are domestic or international candidates. Drop out and failure to complete postgraduate research in a timely manner brings high cost to universities through the inefficient allocation of staff and physical resources, to the community due to opportunity cost of lost employment time and to candidates and their families because of the high cost of international student fees. These issues make timely completion of postgraduate research studies an imperative. In addition these issues highlight the need to develop resources to augment current professional development for postgraduate research supervisors and candidates, specifically in relation to the cross-cultural context.

An investigation of existing available resources that focus on cross-cultural issues revealed that the majority are designed to serve the corporate and the overseas volunteering sectors. In terms of the higher education sector, most universities have developed professional development programs for their postgraduate research supervisors and candidates and several national projects have also been conducted to provide guidelines and resources to facilitate this process. Many of these resources are relevant to international students. Examples include:

- fIRST website - collects developmental activities that can be shared among the academic community (http://www.first.edu.au/)
- USYD ITL site - provides case studies of best practice derived from their professional development program (http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/)
- The University of Melbourne site - includes a case study on cross-cultural communication (http://www.gsa.unimelb.edu.au/advice/index.shtml)
- Macquarie University site - collects best practice web resources (http://www.mq.edu.au/ltc/resources/index.htm).

Current initiatives pay only cursory attention to cross-cultural issues that may affect postgraduate research supervision and impact on both supervisors and candidates. This project builds on existing knowledge from previous and ongoing initiatives within the sector, but focuses specifically on developing resources that address cross-cultural issues within the postgraduate research context. It aims to extend current knowledge regarding effective postgraduate research supervision and to highlight this specific area of supervisor and candidate professional development.

Much of the literature in this area is dated, limited to specific contexts, is ethno-specific or examines only a small cohort. One of the strengths of this project is that it is grounded in recent research undertaken as part of the project, with candidates and supervisors from three Australian universities. This also ensures relevance across the Australian higher education sector. The project deliberately sought to design the resources so they were not institution or ethnic cohort specific. It was the intention that these resources would avoid perpetuating any stereotypic views and would have broad application across the higher education sector.

In designing this project we took into account that institutions do things differently and

that resources are more likely to be used if they can be employed flexibly and embedded within existing institutionally-based postgraduate research supervisor and candidate training, as well as for individual 'just-in-time' activities. The resources developed in this project were designed to be used by tertiary institutions as an adjunct to their existing postgraduate research supervisor and candidate training, within their own institutional systems. We also recognise that staff charged with organising and presenting such training have differing levels of experience and expertise in postgraduate research supervision and in cross-cultural interactions. The resources are therefore supported by suggested discussion questions to assist novice and experienced presenters gain the maximum benefit.

We also recognise that it is not possible to deal with all issues in training sessions and that individuals may seek information or guidance outside these frameworks. Thus resources were also designed to be used for private, guided self-reflection by individuals. Additionally bibliographies were included to allow further exploration of the literature in this area to assist a scholarly approach to understanding and practice.

Note: across the sector different nomenclature is used to describe the student group that was the focus of this research. For example: research higher degree candidates, higher degree research candidates, PhD students, graduate research students or postgraduate research students. In this report we use the term postgraduate research candidate to describe those candidates undertaking research degrees after an undergraduate degree where the primary outcome is a thesis describing original research or findings.

3.0 Project Outcomes

This project has produced several significant outcomes:

- A better understanding of current cross-cultural issues that affect candidates and supervisors, and the faculties and departments that host them.

- Readily accessible multi-media resources that address current cross-cultural issues in engaging and interesting ways.

- Resources to assist in group training of supervisors and candidates and for guided self-reflection for individuals.

- Access to relevant literature in this area via an annotated bibliography that guides users to the most relevant scholarly publications.

- Resources to assist university faculties and departments assess their strengths and weaknesses in hosting candidates from different cultures, and as a way to assist them plan improvements in this area.

Resources are hosted on the ALTC Exchange website as we believed this afforded the best access for all institutions and individuals. Please see section 5.0 entitled Resources Developed for a detailed discussion of the project resources.

The research phase of this project highlighted a huge range of issues that influence effective supervision. The original intention was to focus on cross-cultural communication. However, while this aspect remains a significant factor, it became clear that it was by no means the only, nor necessarily the most important one. Thus, while cross-cultural communication is included, the resources developed also focused on other factors such as time, financial and accommodation stresses, isolation, conflicts and so on. These are presented in the context of common supervisory activities such as meetings, supervisor feedback, editing, networking, developing publications etc., to ensure relevance to working supervisors and their candidates.

4.0 Project Approach and Methodology

The study employed a design-based methodology (Wang and Hannafin, 2005) that involved a flexible, iterative process of analysis, design, development and evaluation. The approach recognises the need for collaboration between researchers and practitioners in a real world context, integrating a range of research methods from qualitative research paradigms to best inform the research. The method is also inter-disciplinary, acknowledging the need to bring together experts in education, multimedia design, technical production, higher degree research supervision, professional development, and systemic change in higher education institutions.

The methodology consisted of four main phases.

1. A planning phase involving ethics applications across three institutions, research design, establishment of communication channels and formation of the reference group.
2. A research phase involving literature review, data collection from supervisors and candidates, and data analysis.
3. A development phase involving content development, design and technical development.
4. An evaluation phase.

Each phase was supported by area experts from the participating institutions, thereby facilitating the development of quality research and resources.

Planning phase

During the first few months of the project, the team established a cross-institutional management steering group with the two original university partners, Macquarie University and The University of Newcastle, and the project manager. Team members determined meeting and funding procedures, as well as an overall project plan, including development of a reference group. Towards the end of the first year of operation a third partner, The University of Queensland, joined the team.

During the planning stage, research design was determined and ethics approval was obtained from each university in order to collect data from students and academics through interviews and focus groups. Ongoing meetings were held by the project team to monitor progress.

Research phase

A range of research methodologies were involved in this phase of the project, as outlined in the following steps:

- literature review
- data collection
- data analysis.

a. Literature review

The initial review of the literature sought to determine the current state of knowledge of issues involved in cross-cultural supervision, particularly within the Australian higher

education context. The literature on postgraduate research supervision is quite large overall, but is fragmented, and little is directly related to Australia. There are a small number of studies that directly address cross-cultural issues, but they generally:

- are small scale studies (e.g. four candidates in Kutieleh & Egege, 2004; seven international PhD candidates in Whiteley, 2004);

- concentrate on specific ethnic cohorts (e.g. Indian candidates in Handa & Power, 2005; Iranian candidates in UK universities, Hasrati, 2005; Israeli candidates in UK universities, Wisker, 2000)

- feature a single institution (e.g. Kiley, 1998).

This does not mean that there is nothing to be learnt from them, but the application to a wider context is untested. Thus there was a need to undertake a larger scale, cross-institutional study that did not target particular ethnic groups.

Several issues emerge from the literature that impact postgraduate research supervision in cross-cultural contexts. These include:

- Where the candidate has English as a second language (ESL) language issues emerge. These may be based around written language problems such as plagiarism (e.g. Handa & Power, 2005), negotiating academic English (e.g. Bullen & Kenway, 2003), editing and actual authorship of the thesis (e.g. Hall, 1996) or verbal issues such as slower processing of thoughts and responses in a second language (e.g. Wisker, 2000).

- Communication and relationship issues arise between supervisor and candidate, for example where misunderstandings due to communication difficulties alter the supervisor's perception of the degree of initiative and intelligence of candidates (Adams & Cargill, 2003). Other instances include candidates from some cultures who feel the need to maintain harmony in the supervisory relationship, often by not disagreeing with their supervisor, which may be misinterpreted by the supervisor (Kiley, 1998; Brew & Cairns, 2004; Novera, 2004). Candidates also may have different perceptions of what constitutes politeness, which can be perceived as excessive deference (Cargill, 1998). Conversely there may be issues of 'saving face' that affect communication and may not be correctly perceived by either party (Cargill, 1998).

- Differences in perception of hierarchy in a supervisory relationship are commonly referred to in the literature. Candidates from some cultures do not feel that it is their place to disagree or argue with their supervisor, which may lead to unintended inferences drawn by the supervisor who may perceive a lack of commitment whereas the candidate may just not wish to contradict the supervisor (Cargill, 1998; Chen et al., 2003). Candidates may also be somewhat confused by the change to a more informal relationship with their supervisors (Bullen & Kenway, 2003). Some authors also discuss the asymmetrical power issues in this relationship (e.g. Kiley, 1998; Wisker, 2000; Whiteley, 2004; Li & Seale, 2007).

- Differences in approaches to learning and research based on culture are also commonly referred to. The literature suggests that supervisors perceive or believe that there are differences especially from eastern or south-eastern Asia, for instance these candidates may be viewed as rote learners who take a non-critical approach (e.g. Kutieleh & Egege, 2004).

- There are issues around mismatched expectations of candidates and supervisors (Kiley, 1998; Adams & Cargill, 2003).

- The literature notes the effects of everyday problems such as accommodation and finances (Wisker, 2000).

There were several problems with basing our materials only on the literature to date. Firstly, based on their study on undergraduate students, Morrison, Merrick, Higgins and Metais (2005) pointed out that much of the literature problematises international students or focuses on factors associated with them, for example, cultural adaptation and language problems, rather than addressing any need for the institution and its agents to vary their practice to meet any different needs. Thus it does not really help us in our quest to develop resources that might assist supervisors, candidates and institutions.

Secondly, the complexity of the issues surrounding cross-cultural supervision does not seem to have been adequately addressed, except in relation to language, communication, hierarchy and power. Finally, much of the literature is concerned with ethno-specific instances and may be limited in general applicability.

For these reasons it was decided that a medium-sized study across three universities was necessary to more fully explore the common issues facing candidates, supervisors and their institutions. Moreover, we were also interested in the solutions that supervisors and candidates had found to these problems, so that they could be captured and communicated to others.

b. Data collection

The focus of data collection was to inform resource development. We thus concentrated on collecting in-depth, rich, qualitative data that would allow us to explore and follow issues that were problematic for candidates and supervisors. In particular we were looking for narratives that would enable us to develop engaging resources. In contrast with many studies we were particularly interested in the ways candidates and supervisors overcame difficulties, as this would also be a feature of the resources.

The research instrument used was a semi-structured interview, of approximately one hour, with a trained interviewer. Parallel sets of questions were developed for interviews with candidates and supervisors (Figure 1). The questions covered aspects of the supervisory relationship that either party thought were beneficial, the main sources of misunderstanding between candidates and supervisors, what candidates most need from their supervisors, and sources of misunderstanding. Candidates and supervisors were also asked what changes and developments in supervision or other aspects of their candidature could help meet the needs of international candidates, and what candidates themselves could do to improve their supervisory experience. Interviews were transcribed and pseudonyms were used for interviewees.

In all 34 interviews were conducted with candidates from Macquarie University and The University of Queensland. In addition, a focus group with 12 candidates was held with candidates from Macquarie University and The University of Newcastle, using the same questions, giving a total of 46 candidates. There were also 38 interviews with supervisors from all three universities, i.e. Macquarie University, The University of Newcastle and The University of Queensland. Doctoral candidates from all disciplines were invited to participate, and these included international candidates as well as any who identified with cultural backgrounds that differed from their supervisors. The candidates ranged from those in the first year of their candidature to those in the final stages. Supervisors who had previously worked with international candidates were invited to participate. These included both novice and experienced supervisors, and some who were not born in Australia and who had been educated overseas.

Figure 1: Interview questions for postgraduate research candidates and supervisors

Questions for interviews:

What aspects of your involvement with supervisors are beneficial and useful?

What do you most need from your supervisors?

What are the main sources of misunderstandings and problems that arise between students and supervisors?

What are the most serious types of misunderstanding that may arise between students and supervisors?

Based on your own experience what changes and developments in supervision would you most like to see take place?

What other developments would you recommend?

In what ways can international students take action to improve their supervisory experience?

c. Data analysis

Members of the project team undertook an independent thematic analysis of the transcripts to determine the main issues and themes. As themes emerged from the data, they were sorted into categories, using a constant comparative approach (Thorne, 2000). This is an iterative process that groups similar ideas, and looks for similarities as well as any new issues or themes. This approach is used in grounded theory as an inductive method. The researcher begins to examine data critically and draw new meaning from the data (rather than a deductive approach which defines at the outset what will be found).

The four sets of themes were then merged into a master list. This was a challenging process due to the complexity of the issues and the richness of the data, and took considerable time and debate, until a consensus was established. Please see section 6.0 entitled Enhancement of Existing Knowledge and Current Practice for more detail on the findings.

Development phase

The development phase involved translating the ideas and results from primary and secondary sources into multimedia materials that would engage and inform users. It also involved the challenge of harnessing and channeling the creative input of script-writers, a video producer, actors, etc, to produce resources that were true to the research, but professional, informative and attractive.

Managing this complex and multi-faceted process necessitated close contact between the production and the project teams so as not to lose focus. Decisions were made in regular face-to-face meetings and online.

The reference group was convened and met on two occasions to assist in determining the actual form of the deliverables. The original proposal included role play scenarios,

however, on the advice of experts in role play who made up part of the reference group, it was decided that this was inappropriate. The reference group was also keen to avoid stereotypes in the materials developed, and this concept was incorporated into the design process. As the materials were developed, the reference group reviewed samples and provided feedback. On their advice the term 'tip sheet' was replaced by 'strategies' and a number of prepared materials were disregarded as they were seen to be too generalised to be of much use to the intended audience.

The final set of deliverables included:

- resources designed to augment professional development for candidates and supervisors, which would also assist private self-reflection (videos and written scenarios)
- materials to provide strategies to candidates and supervisors
- a checklist for departments and faculties to help them assess their readiness to host international candidates, and assist candidates with different cultural backgrounds
- a bibliography to provide access to the main published material in this area, and to allow further investigation if needed.

Ready access to these resources was a paramount concern. It was decided that a web-based approach best afforded this access, and that the ALTC Exchange site provided the most stable, long-term repository. Thus a web designer joined the team so as to maximise ease of navigation through the site and to deliver a visually pleasing web presence.

The video and scenario resources proved to be the most complex to manage. The project team prioritised the themes to be tackled in these resources and scripts were developed from the narratives described in the interviews. Considerable care was taken to ensure that no stereotyping occurred in the story lines, and most scripts were amalgams of themes from different candidates and supervisors. Scripts were given to the project team for feedback and a sample was given to the reference group. The external evaluator also commented on the scenario scripts.

On the advice of the video producer, it was decided to use a simple format, where actors would not interact with each other, but would be filmed separately, and talk about the same incidents or issues. This allowed for dramatic tension, but would be less difficult for our mix of professional and amateur actors. It also allowed for easier fine-tuning in the scripting. Locating suitable actors was a challenge, as we particularly aimed to have a mix of ethnicities. We drew not only on professional actors, but also on local dramatic societies, so as not to double up on actors which might confuse users, and to provide a broader range of ages, gender and ethnic background.

The other materials were all text based and underwent a cycle of content development, design and feedback by the project team and external evaluator, samples were also commented on by the reference group. Additional feedback was provided from seminars and workshops where material was used.

The final stage was website and graphic design work. Designs and layout were approved by the project team for the test website. Text was also developed for web pages.

Evaluation phase

The project and resources were evaluated iteratively throughout the project by way of a range of planned activities:

- regular scheduled meetings for all members of the project team, including some via Skype or teleconferencing
- project team members from the lead institution met at least every two weeks during the development phase
- two planning days with project team members from partner institutions and other relevant parties when required
- two meetings by the reference group.

The ALTC Progress Reports and the active involvement of the external evaluator during the development phase were valuable aspects of the formative evaluation process during the project.

Formal, summative evaluation of the resources and website included questionnaires filled in during access to the test website by:

- 11 candidates who attended three sessions
- eight supervisors
- two web design experts.

More informal evaluation was undertaken by use of early versions of the videos and scenarios with conference presentations. These were also road-tested in professional development workshops with both supervisors and candidates at three different universities. In some instances, members of the team observed their use in group situations and reported any issues that were quickly addressed.

On the basis of the questionnaires and comments by the external evaluator, and informal evaluation at conferences and workshops, the website and resources were modified and fine tuned. Most comments about the resources were positive, but the website underwent extensive redesign in line with issues raised in the evaluation process.

Please see section 11.0 entitled Project Evaluation for details of the summative evaluation process.

5.0 Resources Developed

Photos from video scenario resources, courtesy of Mark Parry

The intent of this project was to address a lacuna in the current understanding of cross-cultural issues in postgraduate research supervision, and in the provision of resources to assist stakeholders in this arena. There are several stakeholders, including international postgraduate research candidates, candidates with cultural backgrounds differing from those of the supervisors, local postgraduate research candidates, postgraduate research supervisors, those undertaking professional development of candidates or supervisors, as well as university, faculty and departmental personnel. The latter are increasingly becoming involved as the numbers of postgraduate research candidates increase, especially international candidates, and there is clearly a need to adequately cater for them both in physical terms such as space, computers, etc., but also in additional language and other support.

While the needs of local and international candidates overlap to a considerable degree, our research has identified factors that 'intensify' the issues for international candidates. Thus, as measures and practices that address the requirements of international candidates will also assist local candidates, it is also necessary to direct particular support to understanding and ameliorating some of the difficulties facing international candidates and others with differing cultural backgrounds to the mainstream.

The resources developed in this project differ in several key aspects from those already available:

- they are based on first-hand research across three universities
- they target many stakeholders, including institutional ones
- they highlight the complexity of the issues
- they are highly accessible to all stakeholders via the ALTC Exchange
- they are free to use under a Creative Commons licence.

To meet the needs of all target audiences, five different types of resources were developed. These include:

- ten short video clips, with supporting transcripts, key ideas and suggested discussion questions (see Figure 2 for list of titles and key ideas covered)
- seventeen written scenarios, with key ideas and suggested discussion questions (see Figure 3 for list of titles and key ideas covered)
- three documents outlining strategies
- a checklist to determine departmental and faculty readiness, supported by a document with first-hand quotes to provide a context and authenticity
- an annotated bibliography with over 100 entries.

Figure 4 outlines the intended target audience and Figure 5 highlights the purpose of the resource.

Figure 2: Summary of video scenarios

Videos	Key ideas	
Becoming a student again	• Handling criticism from supervisor and other students • Practicing oral presentations • Managing mature age candidates or candidates who are mid-career professionals	• Providing critical feedback to candidates • Becoming a student again • Making sure candidates know what to expect about interactions with supervisor and other colleagues
The first meeting	• Importance of the first meeting • Mismatched expectations	• Role of supervisor • Similarities and differences between candidates
Having two supervisors	• Choosing supervisors • Managing disagreements between supervisors • Putting the student in the centre of a conflict between supervisors	• Where does the candidate go when there is a problem? • Communication between supervisors • Politely disagreeing with supervisors
Approaching the supervisor	• Arranging meetings • Helping students understand how to approach supervisor for help	• Setting the expectations to avoid misunderstandings • Being polite, but getting the help you need
Giving and receiving feedback	• Writing in academic English and editing • Mature age candidates	• Providing useful feedback • Finding help for the candidate
Communicating expectations	• What is the main purpose of regular meetings?	• Coping with misunderstanding • Communication problems
Being international versus domestic	• Speaking up when you have a problem • Communication problems	• Additional needs of international students • Mismatched expectations
Whose doctorate is it?	• Disagreement about when the thesis is ready for submission • The need to publish results	• Different expectations about the purpose of a doctorate and doctoral supervision

Differing culture	• Understanding that sometimes there may be relaxed or casual approaches to work • Allowing time for settling in	• Working towards a positive relationship between the supervisor and candidate • Punctuality, or different understandings of what "being on time" means
Using communication technology	• Feelings of isolation • Recording interviews • Options for supervision when you are travelling	• Learning from other candidates • Creating a support group or research team for candidates

Figure 3: Summary of scenario resources

Scenarios	Key ideas	
Coping with changes to family life	• Managing family issues and completing a PhD • Time pressure for the candidate • Managing tension in the supervisory relationship	• Cultural differences with respect to bringing up children or family issues • Appropriate ways of making a complaint • Managing tensions in the supervisory relationship
Different world view	• Adapting to Australian academic culture • Candidacy as a life-changing experience	• Coping with criticism • Differences in academic cultures
Tension between supervisors	• Managing tension between supervisors • Academic career path • Changing supervisor	• Options for conflict resolution • Student autonomy (whose research is it?) • Changing direction of research focus once started
Publishing during candidature	• Academic pathways • Differences and expectations in academic culture • Who should be a co-author?	• Thesis by publication vs. traditional thesis • Decisions about when and what to publish
Making a complaint	• Supervision from a distance • Managing a supervisor's absence • Following complaints procedure	• Mismatched expectations about the degree of supervision • Roles of primary and associate supervisor • Effectiveness of communication processes

Data ownership	• Who "owns" data • Co-authorship	• Research ethics • *The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*
Gift giving	• Developing supervisory relationship • Appropriate gifts	• Relationship beyond the thesis
Whose doctorate is it?	• Disagreement about when the thesis is ready for submission • The need to publish results	• Different expectations about the purpose of a doctorate and doctoral supervision
Improving spoken English	• Everyday casual communication vs. learning English as a foreign language • Peer support	• Supervisor's role in helping candidate to settle in • Supervisor's relationship with candidate
Language development and editing	• Academic writing in English • Ethical issues related to editing • Editing vs. proofing	• Who is responsible for editing a candidate's thesis? • Who is responsible for developing candidate's English?
Attending conferences	• Financial pressures • Introduction into international research community and networking	• Support needs of international vs. domestic candidates • Confidence in spoken English – is it good enough for a conference?
Expectations of a supervisory relationship	• Differing expectations regarding supervisory relationship • Scope and boundaries of supervisory relationship	• Differing expectations about student autonomy and independence • Effect of supervisor having the same cultural background as the candidate

Impact of family life on study	• Visa conditions, such as work restrictions, permitted duration of stay, etc. • Financial pressures	• Scope and boundaries of supervisory relationship • Managing progress and quality of thesis • Effective communication

Supervisor leaving during candidacy	• Implications of changing primary supervisor to:
	    - candidate
	    - associate supervisor
	    - department
		• Supervision across distance
		• Negotiating supervisory relationship
		• Effective communication
		• Accommodating and adapting to changing circumstances

Supervisor teams – roles of primary and associate supervisors	• Mismatched expectations about supervisory relationship • Gender issues • Conflict resolution	• Negotiating supervisory relationship with primary and associate supervisor • Having an "expert" as a supervisor • The absent supervisor
Learning how to research	• Adjusting to Australian research culture • Developing supervisory relationship over time	• Misunderstandings • Valuing the new perspectives from international doctoral candidates
Finishing the doctorate	• Negotiating realistic timeframes • Readiness to publish • Providing timely feedback	• Preparing for academic life after the doctorate • Supervisor workload
Expectations and gender	• Expectations about candidacy not matched by reality • Gender perceptions	• Culture vs. personality • Expectations of hierarchy

Figure 4: Target audience

Target audience	Videos	Written scenarios	Strategies and guidelines	Are you ready checklist; participants voices	Bibliography
Postgraduate research candidates	X	X	X		
Postgraduate research supervisors	X	X	X		X
Professional development staff	X	X	X	X	X
Department and faculty – academic and support staff				X	X

Figure 5: Resource purpose and support material

Resource	Main purpose	Support material
Video clips (10)	Stimulate : • group discussion • active self-reflection	• List of key ideas • Suggested discussion questions • Transcripts
Written scenarios (17)	Stimulate : • group discussion • active self-reflection	• List of key ideas • Suggested discussion questions
Strategies documents (3)	• Capture good practice • Make it available to candidates and supervisors	
Determining readiness for candidates checklist (1)	Provide material to faculty and departmental staff to : • assist them to assess their readiness to provide for international candidates and others from different cultural backgrounds • assist them to plan for the future	Participants' voices document – to provide context in the participants' own words
Bibliography	Make current research more accessible	Much of the bibliography is annotated

The video clips and written scenarios were designed to show differing views of the same incident, or point of conflict, from the point of view of the supervisor or supervisors, and the candidate. Videos are intentionally very short and most contain a variety of issues. Scenarios are also intended to be only a maximum of two pages, so as not to overload the user, but to also tease out particular issues. Key ideas are listed to assist users to quickly find the most appropriate resource, and they demonstrate the range of issues covered. Each video and written scenario is accompanied by a set of discussion questions to assist users to consider the range of issues covered. These resources could be used by individuals to assist active self-reflection or for group situations such as professional development workshops for candidates or supervisors, or both together. We anticipate that these resources will trigger scholarly collaborative reflection regarding the interpersonal aspects of the supervisory and research process.

The design of video clips and written scenarios deliberately avoided offering solutions to problems, as these are often context and institution specific. Some of the clips, however, allude to strategies and good practice solutions that were discussed in our interviews. However, we are aware that many individual users may be seeking information, so it was decided to address some of the more common issues in three short documents entitled 'Strategies'.

As an aid to determining faculty and departmental readiness to adequately accommodate and provide for international candidates, the Checklist guides users through the main areas that need to be addressed. It is not intended that all aspects in the Checklist will be in place before any international candidate is accepted, but it provides guidance as to what needs to be considered and developed over time for most effective supervision.

Lastly, the Bibliography makes the latest and most important research in this area accessible to all users.

We anticipate that the primary use of these resources will be by tertiary institutions as an adjunct to their existing postgraduate research supervisor training, within their own institutional systems, by both candidates and supervisors. At the same time, the project has attempted to ensure the resources are designed in such a way as to allow for flexible integration or adaptation into existing professional development programs or for one-off stand alone use on an as needs basis by individuals or departments. The resources are free for people to use and can be downloaded and used as often as necessary. This will be made easier as the resources are licenced under Creative Commons and can be amended, with acknowledgement to the original source, and therefore used in a way to best suit user requirements.

The website provides full access to all the resources developed (http://www.altcexchange.edu.au/). Included in the appendices are a few examples to illustrate the range and style developed. They come under the headings of:

- Gift giving scenario (Appendix 2) and suggested discussion questions
- Becoming a student again (Appendix 3)
- Supervisory teams (Appendix 4).

6.0 Enhancement of Existing Knowledge and Current Practice

Enhancement of existing knowledge

The primary aim of the data analysis was to inform the development of the project's resources and guidelines. A thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups with postgraduate research candidates and supervisors distilled the main themes and issues. These were then compared across all three campuses to determine the general applicability.

In the early stages of the data analysis it became apparent that there were some assumptions that could be drawn about the nature of postgraduate research supervision, candidates and supervisors. The cross-cultural postgraduate research supervisory relationship is often complex simply because it involves two individuals engaged in a single endeavour over a period of time. Generalisations cannot be made about postgraduate research candidates or supervisors, even when candidates come from the same country or culture. Each candidate has a different background and prior experiences, as well as a different personality, confidence level and resilience. The same applies to supervisors. This means issues can vary from one supervisory experience to the next and may in fact be contradictory at times.

Efforts to make sense of the data included attempts to separate the themes and issues into international ones versus local or common issues. It became evident however most issues apply to a greater or lesser extent to local and international candidates. Nevertheless, a distinguishing feature from the data was that certain factors 'intensify' or 'magnify' the issues for international candidates.

These 'intensifiers' include:

- separation from the usual support network, including family, friends and colleagues and former teachers
- separation from the familiar, and the consequent 'fish out of water' feeling or lack of familiarity with, and understanding of, the academic as well as general way of life in Australia
- increased time pressure for international candidates due to visa limitations and increased costs and/or loss of income
- language issues that contribute to communication difficulties including, but not limited to, written and oral.

The main themes and issues included:

- issues outside the thesis itself such as settling in, accommodation, loneliness, finances, etc that add to the overall stress and pressure international candidates experience
- mismatches of expectations and misunderstanding of the roles and responsibilities of candidates and supervisors
- maintenance of positive relationships between candidates and supervisors, complicated by some of the above mentioned factors

- the challenge of managing problems with the candidacy in the context of the cross-cultural supervisory experience, again because of the influence of some of the above mentioned factors.

Other issues or questions evident from the data include:

- complications that can occur when the supervisor is from the same overseas country or cultural background as the candidate

- questions that arise as to how different the international candidates actually are and whether they need the same things as local candidates

- the value of international candidates to universities and the danger in viewing these candidates as 'cash cows'.

Enhancement of current practice

The project has delivered resources to directly support postgraduate research supervisors and candidates in cross-cultural supervisory relationships and in doing so has made a tangible contribution to the on-going professional development of postgraduate research supervisors. These resources are grounded in the literature and data collected during the project, and importantly deal with the under representation of training materials specifically addressing cross-cultural issues within the higher education sector, particularly in the context of postgraduate research supervision.

As online resources they are easy to access, free for both postgraduate research supervisors and candidates to use and can be downloaded and used as often as necessary. A further advantage of these resources is that they are not institution, discipline or ethnic cohort specific. In being designed this way they afford an increased chance of greater application across the broader higher education sector in Australia.

7.0 Selected Factors Influencing Project Outcomes

Success factors

The formative and summative evaluative processes employed by this project highlighted the following key factors that contributed to the success of this project.

- One of the challenges of this project was to turn the highly detailed interview transcripts containing complex ideas and interpersonal themes into material that was both accessible and engaging.

- The multidisciplinary nature of the project team made a major contribution because it allowed the research data to be exploited to the greatest extent.

- The consultative and collaborative approach adopted by the project management group, seen in both the interactions between group members themselves and their interaction with the reference group and the external reviewer, was a strength of this project. For example, it was initially proposed to develop and record plays of interactions between candidates and supervisors showing aspects of practice. Input from the reference group led to the approach taken, which was to develop scripts and use actors talking direct to camera to portray candidates and supervisors and to use discussion questions as prompts to aid reflection and discussion about specific points.

- The support and engagement of the reference group made a significant contribution to the project, in conjunction with the flexibility by project team members to adapt to changes / challenges throughout the project, particularly during the difficulties encountered. The consultative approach was particularly important in considering and evaluating the comments by the external evaluator, whose initial appraisal resulted in material that had been developed being omitted from the deliverables.

- The willingness of postgraduate research candidates and supervisors to share sometimes highly personal experiences was a strength of the project. These interviews formed the research data of the projects and their richness allowed the construction of the highly layered written and video scenarios as well as the guidelines and strategies documents.

- The strong ties that the project team had with colleagues in their own university and their reputation as experienced researchers and supervisors played an important role in both recruitment of participants for the project and engaging them with its aims.

- The appointment of an external evaluator who was an expert in the topic area, as well as an experienced project evaluator, was a major strength which contributed to the success.

- Use of an experienced project manager, with both a background in project management and expertise in cross-cultural education, to coordinate and manage the overall project was crucial.

- The use of an experienced media production team and professional actors contributed to the successful delivery of high quality video resources.

- Assigning someone to manage the production of the final report helped to coordinate and consolidate the contributions of multiple authors.

- Presenting the research findings, project methodology and deliverables at

international and national conferences and seminars has ensured that the resources will be used outside the partner universities.

Inhibiting factors:

The formative and summative evaluative processes employed by this project highlighted the following key factors that impeded the success of this project.

- Multi-site research studies are less than straightforward for several obvious reasons, and some of these were encountered in this project. Ethics approval from three different universities was essential and the different requirements and submission dates for each institution for the initial application and subsequent modifications caused its own unique series of challenges and delays.

- Communication across universities and coordinating activities from a distance was challenging at times. In response, sufficient lead times had to be factored in. Project management meetings were held via Skype, rather than in person.

- Some other challenges not specific to the multi-site nature of the project were also dealt with. At the beginning of this project, the initial project leader (Professor Sue Spence) was appointed to a new position and was not able to take part. After six months the initial project manager (Dr Theresa Winchester-Seeto) was also appointed to a new position but fortunately she was able to continue as a member of the project team. Recruitment of a project manager (Ms Christa Jacenyik-Trawoger) with sufficient management and research experience was time-consuming. One of the initial members of the project team Associate Professor Anna Reid, accepted a new appointment within the last six months of the project and has not been able to contribute to the final report and additional deliverables. These changes in staff, along with other staff changes throughout the project, caused delays.

- Data collection by a partner institution fell behind schedule and this impacted the range and volume of data collected.

- The original production group (for production of the video scenarios) was disbanded and this resulted in some time delays as a new partner was sourced and tested.

8.0 Dissemination

In keeping with the ALTC's agenda of disseminating and encouraging sustained institutional change, we sought to share both the deliverable multimedia resources and findings of the project with colleagues both in Australia and overseas.

Conference presentations

Homewood, J., Winchester-Seeto, T. & Jacenyik-Trawoger, C. (2010). Development and evaluation of resources to enhance skills in higher degree research supervision in a cross-cultural context, 9th Quality in Postgraduate Research Education Conference, Adelaide, 13-15 April 2010.

Reid, E., Homewood, J., Winchester-Seeto, T. & Reid, A. (2009). Faculty readiness for international research students: Voices from the edge. AARE 2009 International Education Research Conference Canberra, 29 November – 3 December 2009.

Jacenyik-Trawoger, C. (2009). Taking a project management approach to convert research outcomes into educational development. AARE 2009 International Education Research Conference Canberra, 29 November – 3 December 2009.

Homewood, J. (2009). PhD supervision when the candidate and supervisor identify with different cultural backgrounds. Higher Education Academy Conference, July 2009 Manchester, UK.

Homewood, J., Reid, A., Holbrook, A., Bourke, S., Winchester-Seeto, T. & Spence, S. (2008). Higher degree supervision in a cross-cultural context. AARE 2008 International Education Conference Brisbane, 30th November - 4th December, 2008.

Presentations

Homewood, J. (2010). *PhD supervision when the candidate and supervisor identify with different cultural backgrounds.* University of New England, March, 2010.

Winchester-Seeto, T. (2009). *Higher degree supervision in a cross-cultural context – research base for the project.* The University of Queensland, November, 2009.

Homewood, J. & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2009). *Higher degree supervision in a cross-cultural context - discussion forum on intercultural learning: Practice and Research.* Macquarie University, Learning and Teaching Week, Sept 2009.

Winchester-Seeto, T. (2009). *Oral Presentations*, Postgraduate Research Students Seminar, Faculty of Human Sciences, Macquarie University, September 2009.

Reid, A. (2009). Macquarie University Colloquium: research supervisors. October and November, 2009.

Brew, A. (2010). Macquarie University Colloquium: research supervisors. September, 2010.

Manathunga, M. (2009). Research higher degree supervisor workshops. The University of Queensland, November, 2009.

Other

A special presentation of the resources was given to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Provost, Professor Judyth Sachs, December 2010, by the Macquarie University project team.

Ms Christa Jacenyik-Trawoger spoke about the project at the academic developer group meeting (part of the Learning and Teaching Centre at Macquarie University) in May 2010. The focus of the talk was how the project resources could best be embedded within the university at a faculty and departmental level.

An informal viewing of two video scenarios was shown by Associate Professor Judi Homewood and Dr Theresa Winchestor-Seeto at the Quality in Postgraduate Research conference in April 2010 and a discussion followed with comments/feedback recorded.

Project resources are included in Macquarie University's Learning and Teaching Centre resources portfolio. A link to the ALTC Exchange site is provided.

The resources have been disseminated via Macquarie University's Learning and Teaching Centre blog.

Requests for pre-release access to the resources have come from Pro Vice-Chancellor Macquarie University, Professor Gail Whiteford; Dr. Matthew Piscioneri, Learning Support Unit, Faculty of Arts, Monash University; and Supervisor Training groups at Flinders University, Griffith University, The University of Adelaide, The University of Auckland, University of Canberra, University of New England and The University of Waikato.

A request came from Dr Sally Knowles and Dr Helen Kosniowska (Murdoch University) for information about the project focus and website to inform a forthcoming ALTC grant application that looks at the take-up and embedding of the resources produced in this project in the doctoral curriculums. The Knowles and Kosniowska grant will focus on diversity and the issue of power relations in supervisory negotiation.

Another request came from Anna Magyar (University of East Anglia) for information about the website and resources to inform the production of a manual to accompany a DVD which is about international postgraduate research and supervision.

In planning

Two papers in preparation are 'Factors affecting postgraduate research supervision in a cross-cultural context' and 'The influence of student agency on postgraduate research supervision'.

Project leaders from the ALTC funded projects listed below will be contacted as it is believed this project will complement and extend these projects:

- 'Addressing cultural diversity in health ethics education'. Dr Giuliana Fuscaldo, The University of Melbourne.

- 'Addressing the on-going English language growth of international students'. Dr Judith Rochecouste, Monash University.

- 'Building research supervision and training across Australian universities'. Associate Professor Jennifer Hammond, University of Technology, Sydney.

- 'Research skill development: questions of curriculum and pedagogy'. Professor Mandy Thomas, The Australian National University.

9.0 Extent to which the Approach/Outcomes are Amenable to Implementation

We acknowledge institutions do things differently and resources are more likely to be used if they can be employed flexibly and embedded within existing institutionally-based postgraduate research supervisor training and individual 'just-in-time' activity. Consequently the resources developed in this project are designed in such a way that they can be used by tertiary institutions as an adjunct to their existing postgraduate research supervisor training, within their own institutional systems. We also recognise training needs of staff in this area will be influenced by differing levels of experience in postgraduate research supervision and in cross-cultural interactions. The resources are not institution or discipline specific and are not designed to meet the needs of a certain level or experience of academic supervisor. Consequently they are readily accessible for use by any tertiary institution to meet their specific needs.

10.0 Links Between this Project and Other ALTC Projects and Fellowships

The outcomes of this project contribute to the ALTC program priorities, particularly in the areas of:

- Strategic approaches to learning and teaching that address the increasing diversity of the student body.

- Innovations in learning and teaching, including in relation to the role of new technologies.

This project will complement and extend the following ALTC funded projects and fellowships:

- 'Addressing cultural diversity in health ethics education'. Dr Giuliana Fuscaldo, The University of Melbourne.

- 'Addressing the on-going English language growth of international students'. Dr Judith Rochecouste, Monash University.

- 'Building research supervision and training across Australian universities'. Associate Professor Jennifer Hammond, University of Technology, Sydney.

- 'LIFE – Learning interactively for engagement: Meeting the pedagogical needs of refugee students in two Western Australian universities'. Dr Jenny Silburn, Murdoch University.

- 'Research skill development: questions of curriculum and pedagogy'. Professor Mandy Thomas, The Australian National University.

- 'Towards a pedagogy of supervision in the technology discipline'. Professor Christine Bruce, Queensland University of Technology.

- 'Zen and the art of transdisciplinary postgraduate studies'. Professor Cynthia Mitchell, University of Technology, Sydney.

11.0 Project Evaluation

Project evaluation incorporated both formative feedback, which occurred at regular intervals during the development and production of the resources, and summative evaluation that occurred after resources and website were developed.

Formative evaluation included:

- Receiving feedback from the reference group, who made comments on early drafts of resources (as detailed previously).

- Road-testing of materials in professional development seminars with candidates and supervisors at two universities. Observers from the project team watched the videos and written scenarios being used. Candidate and supervisor reactions were used to modify the written scenarios and influenced the decision to include all 10 video scenarios in the final release of the resources. Team members who led the professional development seminars also commented on ease of use and content, as well as positive comments on ability to stimulate discussion.

- Presentations at workshops and conferences also garnered comments that were overwhelmingly positive about the need for the resources, the quality of the draft finished products and the need for them to be disseminated widely.

- From an early stage in resource development the external evaluator Dr Peg Nightingale made practical and editorial suggestions about content and format.

Within the time frame of the present project it was only feasible to conduct a short-term summative evaluation of the resources and website as a vehicle for dissemination. This involved surveys with supervisors, candidates and professional development staff to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback regarding quality and utility of the resource materials and website.

Summative evaluation included a formal evaluation questionnaire for 11 candidates and eight supervisors, as well as two e-learning experts. The questionnaires covered both website design and resources. Each participant was asked to fill in the questionnaire for the website and two resources (see Appendices 5 and 6 for the questionnaires). Dr Peg Nightingale, the external evaluator, made extensive comment, along with a series of suggested changes, and minor and major editorial suggestions.

Feedback from all sources was amalgamated and decisions were made by the project team on the best way to respond and incorporate as many as possible of the suggestions made, where they coincided with the project vision.

As a result of the feedback from all these sources, the following changes were made:

- tip sheets were drastically reduced in number, and a small selection were redeveloped into 'Strategies' documents

- role-plays were not included in the final resources, as the static web format was seen to be unsuitable

- all written scenarios and videos are now accompanied by a set of

discussion questions to prompt and assist self and collaborative reflection

- the website was extensively redesigned to simplify navigation and highlight popular resources
- navigation was redesigned as the appearance varied greatly on different browsers
- all pages were redesigned to improve them visually and make them more inviting and engaging, e.g. using photos and colour
- key ideas developed for the scenarios and videos were moved on the website so that users could more efficiently find material they needed
- webpages were rewritten to more simply explain how the resources could be used.

A small number of candidates expressed the view that although the resources raised questions and explored problems, there were few answers provided. The project team considered this aspect, but were faced with the problem that institutions function differently, and the answers for each institution are therefore likely to be quite different; that different institutions have different names for core departments where candidates or supervisors might seek advice or help; and legislation covering visa and other matters relevant to international students are subject to change. Hence, any resources that seek to provide answers will have to be so generalised that they are virtually useless. Tip sheets that were drafted early in the project were negatively received by the reference group and external evaluator for exactly this reason and were therefore discontinued. Discussion questions were written to direct users to current sources of information, rather than providing specific answers.

12.0 Concluding Remarks

This project makes an important contribution to an increased understanding of the complexities of postgraduate research supervision in a cross-cultural context. It draws attention to particular issues which international candidates must deal with and provides resources for candidates, supervisors and institutions.

13.0 References

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14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Actors in video resources

Appendix 2: Gift giving (example of a written scenario)

Appendix 3: Becoming a student again (video transcript)

Appendix 4: Supervisor teams (example of a strategy)

Appendix 5: Resource evaluation

Appendix 6: Website evaluation

Appendix 1

Actors in video resources

Hatef Ahankoob

Fay Akrivou

Paul Armstrong

Eva Belline

Karina Bracken

Tibby Chiu

Penny Day

Sukh Raj Deepak

Peter Gizriotis

Angela Hastedt

Michelle Hickson

Darrell Hilton

Billy Holden

Jan Johnson

Mansi Khurana

Gemma Laffan

Quinn Le

Andy Minh Trieu

Helen Perris

Craig Purdon

David Seeto

Nick Simson

Lachelle Uzcateguigaymon

Appendix 2: Gift giving

Background information

Kim is 32 and has nearly completed her PhD in Anthropology. She has worked very hard and has a remarkable experience, discovering new research ideas and meeting people from all over the world. She feels that doing her PhD changed her life and the direction of her life's work. She ready to hand in her dissertation and decided to find an appropriate gift to thank her supervisor, Dyani, for all the work she put into her project.

Kim's supervisor is Dyani who is 36. Kim was Dyani's first higher degree research student and in many ways they have become friends as well as being supervisor and student. Dyani has developed a strong sense of respect for Kim and believes Kim has an extremely promising career ahead of her. Dyani would like to work with Kim to develop a multi-country research program when Kim returns home.

The supervisor's perspective: Dyani

"Supervising Kim has been one of the best decisions I ever made in my career. Kim has worked hard and produced not only a great thesis, but 4 international publications as well. I have learnt so much from her. Over time, we have developed a strong relationship based on trust and mutual respect. When we first met we had a few small misunderstandings about how the supervisory relationship works in Australia. At first Kim thought I was almost a 'demi-god' that she couldn't approach. Kim even insisted on calling me 'Dr Russo' for the first two weeks! She didn't think she could have a one-on-one personal talk with me. Gradually, Kim managed to change that mindset and we always talked about our expectations openly. Whenever we did this we managed to work out how to prevent any issues from happening again. Initially our relationship was quite formal, but we started to develop a more personal relationship last year when we travelled together to two conferences. Those trips kind of broke down the hierarchies in our relationship.

We organised one last meeting before Kim handed in her dissertation. She was going to fly home for a holiday the next week while it was being examined. I was looking forward to seeing her and suggesting my idea of developing some kind of international collaborative research project with her. When Kim arrived she said she wanted to give me a thank you present to mark the end of her time with me. I find it acceptable to receive small gifts at the end of a project, and I like to give small gifts (such as a bookmark) when I return from conferences and other events. Kim and I had exchanged several small things like this after our various travels over the last 3 years.

The problem was, this gift was more personal and seemed very valuable (it was a pair of earrings). It was extremely difficult for me to know whether or not to accept the gift. I know it was meant as a kind gesture, but it really is not appropriate for candidates and supervisors to be exchanging valuable gifts as they could be interpreted as bribes. I was at a loss about what to do. In the end I just said that I would have loved to accept the gift, but that our university won't allow us to accept any gifts at all. Kim seemed to understand, but it did make our final conversation more awkward. I didn't end up mentioning my idea of working together in the future and I'm not sure whether I should email Kim now to suggest it while she is on holidays.

I am so disappointed because I don't want our successful working relationship to end on a sour note."

The candidate's perspective: Kim

"Some people thought I was crazy to want to do a PhD overseas. They made jokes about the burden of having to write a thesis that no-one would read and about the pressure of publishing all the way through as well. To be honest, I was worried about how I would be able to work with an academic who was such an expert. I hoped I could cope with the expectations of my supervisor and cope with the workload that she set. In the end, my experience was so different to all of that. Dyani, my supervisor challenged all my expectations about how a good working relationship functions. From the very start she insisted that she didn't answer to 'Dr Russo' and wanted me to call her 'Dyani'. I found this difficult for the first few weeks, but now it seems completely natural.

My PhD was never a burden. It was an opportunity to indulge myself in research for 3 years, which is fantastic. It is a golden opportunity to do what you love and just focus on it for 3 whole years. My analogy is that it is like having a big world globe and spinning it and deciding where you want to go on the globe. For me it was freedom, freedom to construct my own ideas, freedom to research what I wanted to research and freedom to create my identity around my research.

It was because of this life changing experience that I decided to buy a gift for Dyani to thank her for all the time she spent working with me. I have also been hoping that we can stay in touch as colleagues in the future. I had expected our final meeting to be the same as all our others, supportive, warm and professional. When I took out the present from my bag, Dyani looked so uncomfortable. That made me feel really awkward, too. I spent a lot of time choosing the earrings and they were very expensive so I was quite shocked when she wouldn't accept them. I didn't know it was university policy to not accept gifts. We have given gifts to each other in the past. Now I am wondering if she was just saying no because she thinks now that I have finished my dissertation I am not her responsibility anymore. I just don't understand because I thought we had become friends. I have come home now and don't know if we will have any further contact now, or if it is normal to just cut all ties with your supervisor once your thesis is finished."

Discussion questions:

☐ What factors made this supervisory relationship satisfying and productive for both candidate and supervisor?
☐ What issues were raised for both candidate and supervisor in..
  o the giving of the gift?
  o the refusal of the gift?
☐ When is gift giving and acceptance appropriate? What ethical issues and protocols are involved?

Appendix 3: Becoming a student again

FADE IN

OPENING SHOT

Hand adjusting a tie.

SUPERVISOR
Yeah, this relates to an incident last week with a candidate. He was invited to talk at a conference. This is a big deal, so I organised a practice session, where myself and some of the students were in the audience to offer some feedback.

CANDIDATE
I recently had this terrible, terrible experience. I was honoured that my supervisor asked me to present my work to his research group. I was nervous but I was happy to practice for the conference because to use academic English and structure your arguments requires practice.

SUPERVISOR
It just didn't go well. Usually for a practice like this, you have a two-way interaction. I mean, this was different. There was no two-way interaction. None. Maybe it was a personality thing, but when we made suggestions, the student just nodded and kept going. I didn't think he was taking on any feedback at all.

CANDIDATE
I spent hours preparing my talk but when I started talking, the other students started interrupting. I tried to be polite, but everyone was so casual and criticised me so freely. They even joked about my tie. I was shocked. So shocked.

SUPERVISOR
It was so frustrating I said 'I think you should write these things down'. We almost forced him to because we were unsure whether he would remember our feedback.

CANDIDATE
When I presented my work at home I was never interrupted. I would NEVER interrupt someone while they were talking. The most humiliating thing was that they asked me to take notes while I talked. I lost all confidence… I mumbled through. I couldn't wait to get out of there.

FELLOW CANDIDATE
Well, I was at the presentation too. I could see the presenter was really nervous, but it is our job to make suggestions, so the other students can improve. Um, I could see he was really stressed because he started to stumble over the English. And, as the talk went on his accent got really hard to understand. I felt sorry for him. We tried to lighten the mood by chatting and joking. You know, to just to show our support. I wish he came to my talk last week. Then he would have known what to expect. Maybe his supervisor didn't tell him what these training sessions are about and how they work.

FADE OUT

Appendix 4: Supervisor teams

This resource is designed to provide supervisors with ideas on some of the issues to be considered when working in a supervisor teams. International doctoral candidates can be under additional pressures, i.e. time constraints, financial pressures, language and culture shock, which make effective co-supervision especially important The quotes included are from candidates and supervisors to illustrate common issues and how they have been addressed.

Like all effective research teams, most supervisor teams are made up of members with complimentary sets of skills, expertise and experience. They communicate regularly, divide the work load and share a common goal. Co-supervising provides occasions to mentor new supervisors by those who are more experienced. It also allows cross research opportunities to be explored and offers supervisors the possibility to undertake new projects.

Suggestions for effective team supervision
- Clarifying team composition, team members' roles and areas of expertise prior to meeting with the candidate ensures that all supervisors involved are clear about their mutual expectations. In addition, this avoids exposing the candidate to team friction, faculty/departmental politics or infighting, which detracts from effectively supporting the candidate.
- Once the candidate has arrived other issues can be negotiated with the candidate. Examples of these issues are:
  o agreeing on a budget;
  o expectations of how grants/funding will be spent;
  o how editing the work of the candidate will be managed;
  o co-authorship, intellectual property and confidentiality.
- Regular communication ensures that all team members are up to date with the candidate's progress and any issues arising. This may also help prevent the candidate receiving conflicting advice, a common complaint from higher degree research candidates.
- It can be difficult to coordinate regular meetings, particularly if team members come from different faculties, universities or even countries. The use of online communication tools, such as online video conferencing programs, can be useful in overcoming geographical distance.
- At various stages of the project, candidates' need for supervisor expertise and support will vary. This could mean that individual supervisors will be input more at some points in time, less at other times. It could also mean that, as the project progresses the candidate becomes more confident and independent relying less on their supervisors.
- The advantage of supervisor teams is that no supervisor is expected to provide all required knowledge. If there are gaps, a candidate can be referred to a colleague with the relevant expertise.

One thing that has been a real benefit to me is that my two supervisors have completely, almost opposite skill sets in a way, so they are both very good at different things. My primary supervisor is very detail focused and very generous with her feedback. My associate supervisor has a helicopter view, like he'll be likely to say "you could follow up on this" and he'll give me a reference, and I'll do and read about it and try and integrate it.

Candidate: Isolde

Where to get further help
- See your university website for information related to supervising higher degree research candidates and co-supervising teams, specifically Codes of Practice.

Appendix 5: Resource evaluation

I looked at_____

1) The resource was easy to find on the website (please tick)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

The resource would be easier to find if:

2) The title is descriptive and tells me what the resource is about (please tick)

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

I would like to see the title changed to:

3) Presentation (layout, choice of medium, font, etc.) of the resource is effective

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Presentation would be more effective if:

4) Content is user-friendly

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Content would be more user-friendly if:

5) Content is useful

☐ Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Content would be more useful if:

6) I would like to see the following content added:

7) I would like to see changed:

8) I would find this resource useful:

☐ to promote discussion in a workshop

☐ for self-reflection

☐ other:

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Appendix 6: Website evaluation

1. Presentation (layout, font, etc.) of the resource is effective

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Presentation would be more effective if:

| |
| |

2. Information is easy to find

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Information would be easier to find if:

| |
| |

3. The links are easy to find and use

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

Links would be easier to find and use if:

| |
| |

4. The title of the links were descriptive and tells me what information it would lead me to

☐ Strongly agree ☐ agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree

The title of links would be more descriptive if:

| |
| |

5. I liked:

| |
| |

6. I would like to see changes to: