

Carole Chapin

Adoc Mètis

Co-author: Barthélémy Durette (Solstice)

Results of a crossed survey aimed at PhD supervisors and doctoral researchers in France

We present the results of a survey conducted in 2018, and published as an open research report in French in 2020. The survey consisted in two mirror questionnaires, one for PhD supervisors (318 respondents) and the other for doctoral researchers (1058 respondents). Each question in one questionnaire had an equivalent question in the other questionnaire (e.g. “How often do you have to give advice to a doctoral researcher regarding...” and “How often do you ask your supervisor for advice regarding...”).

For a variety of situations (covering career advice, quality of the relationship, methodological training), we asked how often the situation arose (never, sometimes, often). When the answer was not “Never”, we asked how satisfied the respondent was about the handling of the situation by the supervisor.

In order to compare the answers of PhD supervisors (Bøgelund 2015) with those of doctoral researchers (Heath 2002), data was weighted for statistic adjustment to account for the statistic distribution of doctoral researchers by field of research.

Our findings are as follows. First of all, we found some impact of the research field on the frequency of some situations, but very little impact on the satisfaction regarding their handling.

Second, we isolated a certain number of situations that arise frequently, according to supervisors, but for which they are not satisfied with their reaction. This might prove interesting for universities when they decide which topics should be broached in supervisors trainings.

Third, for some situations, we found important differences between the frequencies reported by supervisors and those reported by doctoral researchers (Anttila et al. 2024, Cardilini et al. 2022). Those situations include the existence of relationship tensions, scientific disagreements and other subjects in which a difference of perception can be the source of conflict. We suggest a list of topics that should be discussed between supervisors and supervisees in order to improve mutual understanding.

Last, our data indicates that trained supervisors (Guarimata-Salinas 2022, Haven 2023) are as satisfied with their reactions as supervisors who do not intend to attend a training, but that untrained supervisors willing to be trained are less satisfied than the others. We suggest an explanation, namely that satisfied supervisors see no reason to attend a training, whereas supervisors stumped on problematic situations seek tools and methods to tackle those.

Disclosure statement : Adoc Mètis is a training firm specialized in higher education in France, regularly providing training for doctoral supervisors and doctoral researchers.

References:

- Anttila, H., Pyhältö, K., & Tikkanen, L. (2024). Doctoral supervisors' and supervisees' perceptions on supervisory support and frequency of supervision – Do they match? *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61(2), 288–302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2238673>
- Bøgelund, P. (2015). How supervisors perceive PhD supervision – And how they practice it. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 10, 39-55. <https://doi.org/10.28945/2096>

- Cardilini, A. P. A., Risely, A., & Richardson, M. F. (2022). Supervising the PhD: identifying common mismatches in expectations between candidate and supervisor to improve research training outcomes. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 41(3), 613–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1874887>

- Guarimata-Salinas, G, Carvajal, J.J. , García-Álvarez, E. , Jiménez-López, M. , Reguero, M., Valverde, M. (2022) Results of a training intervention to improve PhD supervision practices, In 16th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, pp. 4660-4666. <https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2022.1231>

- Haven, T., Bouter, L., Mennen, L., & Tjldink, J. (2023). Superb supervision: A pilot study on training supervisors to convey responsible research practices onto their PhD candidates. *Accountability in Research*, 30(8), 574–591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2022.2071153>

- Heath, T. (2002). A Quantitative Analysis of PhD Students' Views of Supervision. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 21(1), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360220124648>