**ENHANCING MEETINGS WITH RESEARCH CANDIDATES: THE FIRST MEETING**

**by Simon Moss**

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| **Introduction** |

The first meeting after your research candidates enrol is especially vital, particularly if you are the principal supervisor. If possible, during the first meeting,

* clarify the key tasks the candidate will need to complete during their candidature and begin a rough timeline or plan
* determine the extent to which the candidate can access the necessary resources
* help introduce the candidate to helpful contacts
* foster confidence and enthusiasm

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| **Clarify the tasks the candidate needs to complete** |

When candidates can envisage how their journey is likely to unfold, they tend to feel more confident and motivated. To help these candidates envisage their journey as vividly as possible, you could develop a rough schedule of activities—a schedule that you will refine over time. You could, for example, modify the following table. In particular, together with the candidate, you could

* decrease or increase the number of rows—or relabel these rows
* modify the format and, for example, construct a Gantt chart
* outline each of these activities

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| Activity | Start date | End date | Insert a X if completed |
| Review the relevant fields of literature |  |  |  |
| Conduct a systematic literature review |  |  |  |
| Contact stakeholders  Attend the relevant CDU workshops |  |  |  |
| Construct a research proposal |  |  |  |
| Prepare and present the research proposal |  |  |  |
| Submit an ethics application |  |  |  |
| Engage the community or conduct a pilot |  |  |  |
| Study 1: Prepare materials |  |  |  |
| Study 1: Collect data |  |  |  |
| Study 1: Analyse data |  |  |  |
| Study 1: Write and submit report |  |  |  |
| Study 2: Prepare materials |  |  |  |
| Study 2: Collect data |  |  |  |
| Study 2: Analyse data |  |  |  |
| Study 2: Write and submit report  Present at a conference |  |  |  |
| Study 3: Prepare materials |  |  |  |
| Study 3: Collect data |  |  |  |
| Study 3: Analyse data |  |  |  |
| Study 3: Write and submit report |  |  |  |
| Write introduction and literature review  Write a methodology chapter |  |  |  |
| Write the linking paragraphs |  |  |  |
| Write the general discussion |  |  |  |
| Identify possible examiners |  |  |  |
| Prepare for submission |  |  |  |

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| **Organize access to the necessary resources** |

In general, the college or school should organize the necessary resources, such as office space and a computer. Nevertheless, especially if you are the principal supervisor, you should confirm the candidate has received this assistance. The first column in the following table presents the resources that candidates should be able to access. The second column indicates who supervisors should contact to arrange these resources

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| Resources | How to assist candidates who  cannot access these resources |
| An office with a chair, computer, shelf, and filing cabinet | * Contact the HDR administrator of the college or school * External candidates should also be granted access to a computer but not an office |
| Access to the building at night for internal candidates | * Contact the HDR administrator of the college or school |
| An email account, Learnline, and internet | * Contact the HDR administrator of the college or school |
| A printer and photocopier | * Contact the HDR administrator of the college or school |
| Necessary software | * If necessary, show candidates how to utilize software central |
| The policy or “governance document library” | Inform candidates of which policies might be relevant, such as   * All policies that begin with “HDR” * Code of Conduct * Common course rules for this degree * Candidates – Academic Grievance Procedures * Candidates - Grievances with Staff or Other Candidates Procedures * Travel Policy * Work Health and Safety Policy |

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| **Introduce research candidates to helpful contacts** |

If possible, during the first meeting, or at least during the first week, you could also introduce your research candidates to key contacts. These contacts should include

* the HDR administrator in the college or school; inform candidates they should contact this person to arrange financial transactions, such as the purchase of materials, licenses, and airfares.
* the HDR convener or assistant dean of research in the college or school
* other PhD or Masters of Research candidates
* other academics in the discipline, and

For external candidates, perhaps organize a videoconference with at least one or other research candidates as well as with the HDR administrator of the college or school.

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| **Guidance to international candidates** |

International candidates might need additional guidance from supervisors initially. Although CDU global offer many services, supervisors should

* help international candidates meet other international candidates—peers who can offer support that is specific to international candidates
* inform international candidates they might feel somewhat uneasy and vigilant in the few months while living in another nation, but these feelings tend to dissipate within six months—but might occasionally recur
* inform international candidates of the various opportunities to network

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| **Clarify the next set of activities that candidates could complete** |

In addition, perhaps towards the end of this first meeting, research supervisors could offer candidates advice on the tasks they could begin or complete during the next few weeks. The following table outlines some of these activities.

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| Possible tasks | Details |
| Encourage candidates to read, or at least skim, a past thesis | * For suitable theses, open the folder called “How to begin your thesis…” and read the first document in “explore 1” |
| Suggest several articles on relevant theories and methods the candidate could read |  |
| Encourage candidates to attend a confirmation of candidature as soon as they can |  |

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| **Foster confidence and enthusiasm** |

During this meeting, and subsequent meetings, one of your main roles is to foster confidence and enthusiasm in research candidates. The following table offers some insights on how to achieve this goal.

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| Principle | Justification or example |
| Acknowledge some of your own limitations, including the challenges you experienced while completing a research degree | * Candidates feel more willing to concede their own concerns if you acknowledge your limitations * Candidates feel they may be able to overcome their limitations—a key determinant of persistence |
| Indicate your role is partly to help candidates address any of their own concerns or limitations | * For example, you could indicate that, if they are not confident in writing, many opportunities to develop this skill are available. To illustrate, the CDU webite for HDR candidates and ALLSP offer extensive resources around writing |