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**USING STIMULUS MATERIAL TO EXPLORE HOW
SUPERVISORS AND CANDIDATES CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS
DURING THE RESEARCH SUPERVISION PROCESS IN
ENGLAND**

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose

This study examined the perceptions of doctoral supervisors and candidates around how expectations for doctoral supervision are clarified, and the strategies used.

Background

Clarifying expectations is recommended in supervisor and candidate handbooks, supervisor training and recognition programme. Formal strategies have been adopted as a blanket approach by some departments, faculties, or universities but little research explores supervisor and candidate perceptions of this practice or available strategies.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews using stimulus material were held with nine supervisors and nine doctoral candidates from a university in England which adopts a team supervision model. Supervisor and candidate dyads were not used.

Contribution

This study can be used to consider the process of clarifying expectations. A smorgasbord or selection of strategies is presented, for practice.

Findings

Six supervisors were clarifying expectations at the beginning using an informal discussion, although some supervisors used multiple strategies. Candidates did not recall their expectations being clarified. Some supervisors and candidates believed that expectations did not need to be clarified and there were concerns about formal strategies. Team supervision had a positive and negative influence. Four candidates wanted expectations clarifying but the different starting points

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	and power issues suggested that supervisors need to create the space for regular discussions as part of a working alliance.
Recommendations for Practitioners	The stimulus material or smorgasbord of strategies can encourage dialogue between supervisors and candidates to enable them to discuss and select appropriate strategies, from the full range available.
Recommendations for Researchers	Researchers might want to undertake their own studies using stimulus material. The smorgasbord could be used in practice and research undertaken to see how it could be further developed.
Impact on Society	Supervisors and candidates using the smorgasbord and the idea of the working alliance can assist to have ongoing conversations about expectations.
Future Research	Researchers could conduct studies in other universities to see if similar findings are discovered. Future research could be undertaken where institutions have adopted a formal approach.
Keywords	research supervision, higher education, relationships, expectations, pedagogy, andragogy

INTRODUCTION

Policy developments which have diversified, and formalized doctoral education have resulted in the encouragement for supervisors and candidates to clarify expectations and a range of strategies are promoted for this purpose. In terms of diversification of doctoral education, Carter et al. (2021) informs how policy developments, have introduced different types of degrees, increased the number of candidates, led to the growth of part-time candidates and seen a shift in demographics relating to gender and age. Regarding the formalization of doctoral education Taylor et al. (2018) adds that the developments that aim to both formalize and regulate doctoral education are evident in the reduced time to complete, the attachment of funding to completions as opposed to enrolments, increased regulation through codes of practice and the shift towards a provider-consumer relationship.

The early literature from Australia indicates how the combination of these developments around diversity and formality have led to calls for the clarification of expectations (Moses, 1984). These expectations can include ground rules such as supervisors will expect candidates to turn up on time or more formal aspects such as what support the supervisor will offer with the literature search. There are also the candidate expectations of the supervisor such as regular supervision and feedback which are important, with the increased pressure to offer quality provision (Delamont et al., 2004). The worth of clarifying expectations is to help to determine barriers to progress, reduce tensions and prevent candidates dropping out (Holbrook et al., 2014). For supervisors it is important to be explicit about what they can offer within the supervisory relationship such as around the writing, editing and presentation of the thesis which has links to the formal requirements outlined in a university's code of practice for postgraduate supervision (Helper & Drew, 2019); thereby indicating a link to local and national policies.

The increase in numbers of doctoral candidates or rise in numbers of mature students, led to an interest in the aspects that were helpful or not helpful to doctoral studies, including postgraduate supervision. This interest is related to concerns around quality assurance in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in the supervisory relationship and as a result saw the introduction of strategies to clarify expectations including using contracts to agree the ground rules or completing checklists to determine responsibility for aspects such as selecting the topic (Moses, 1984; Ryan, 1994). This highlights a link between the interest in quality assurance through concerns around and the encouragement for the clarification of expectations because of the diversification and formalization of doctoral education; but these appear underpinned by interests around efficiency and effectiveness.

What is clear from the literature is that the clarification of expectations is becoming embedded in doctoral supervision practice. In Australia, Kiley (2011) reveals that the clarification of expectations is a common aspect of research supervisor training, although Taylor et al. (2018) points out that not all supervisors have access to training around supervision. In Australia and the UK, the ideas around ‘good’ or ‘effective’ supervision or supervisory practice includes the negotiation of boundaries and expectations (Engebretson et al., 2008; Taylor, 2019), although the idea of ‘good’ supervision is contentious and again links to quality assurance.

In the literature aimed at supervisors and candidates, there are strategies to clarify expectations which range from a general discussion to reviewing university codes of practice (Delamont et al., 2004; Finn, 2005). A system for clarifying expectations has been adopted by university departments, whole universities, or countries, which includes the use of formal checklists, agreements, and rating scales (see Taylor et al., 2018). Early literature such as the paper by Kiley (1998) proposes the use of a rating scale to be completed by the supervisor and candidate, but this is underpinned by expectations which view supervision as a service; although there are other expectations which can view supervision differently. Indeed Taylor et al. (2018) suggest that a supervisor should also consider their pedagogical style in addition to using a rating scale, suggesting that these strategies to clarifying expectations should not be used alone. This raises concerns about the purpose of the strategies to clarify expectations.

There is a need to explore supervisor and candidate experiences and perceptions of these strategies. This is important as much of the existing research focuses on the different types of expectations or how to establish them (such as Taylor et al., 2018) and the research does not question the purpose of this practice. Furthermore, Bui (2014) emphasize that much of the existing research focuses on supervisor perceptions. Rostami and Yousefi (2022) agree that rare studies have explored candidate perceptions or include both supervisors and candidates. The clarification of expectations between a supervisor and candidate are also outlined separately to the clarification of expectations between a supervisory team, such as in a UK supervisor recognition programme (Taylor, 2020). This highlights that there is a gap in the literature in terms of studies which explore supervisor and candidate perceptions of the use of these strategies to clarifying expectations, despite the adoption of this practice in some departments, faculties, or universities.

In summary, the practice of clarifying expectations for doctoral supervision has been adopted as a blanket approach by some departments, faculties or universities. It is a recommended practice in the supervisor and candidate handbooks, supervisor training and supervisor recognition programme. In many cases the strategies adopted for this practice are formal and linked to the provision of supervision as a service. However, there is a lack of research which explores how expectations are being clarified and supervisor and candidate perceptions of the available strategies.

This paper reports on a qualitative study that explored the clarification of expectations between doctoral candidates and their supervisors at one University from England in the UK. The methods were online semi-structured interviews with 18 participants which included nine supervisors and nine candidates from two faculties. During the interviews, the supervisors and candidates reflected on eight items of stimulus material (e.g. Policy developments, supervisory styles, expectations, and strategies) which were shown using PowerPoint slides, with the view to eliciting insights into sensitive topics (Kara, 2015). The research did not use supervisor and candidate dyads.

This paper commences with a discussion about what these expectations are, why it is important these are clarified, and the strategies advocated for clarifying them. Then, the methodology section will introduce the methods, sample, and ethical considerations. The thematic findings include a discussion that results in conclusions that summarize the new knowledge generated, which leads to the implications for practice and ideas for future research. At the end of this paper in the Appendix is a smorgasbord or a selection of the different strategies which could be used as a discussion point by supervisors and candidates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the literature is reviewed around the topic of clarifying expectations. It will firstly explore the rationale why expectations should be clarified; next it will outline the different types of expectations and finally it will discuss some of the different strategies which are promoted in the existing literature.

REASONS FOR CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

There are several research studies which explore the reasons why expectations should be clarified. Helfer and Drew (2019) in their Australian study argue that it is widely reported in the literature that expectations should be clarified to reduce frustrations and dissatisfactions which could lead to candidates dropping out or not achieving their doctorates. Furthermore, the literature makes the link between how roles are undertaken and the quality and satisfaction of supervision. Stracke and Kumar (2020) emphasize that expectations play an important role in the supervisory relationship but the differences in expectations between supervisors and candidates such as around feedback, need to be addressed. In response they developed a Feedback Expectation Tool (FET). Ali et al. (2016), in a survey with 131 candidates and 77 supervisors in an English university, used factor analysis to explore the differences in expectations, they found agreement on the most important and least important expectations which were similar between candidates and supervisors. They did not explore how expectations are clarified and suggest though that qualitative research would provide insight into the views of candidates and supervisors, as students are consumers of universities it is important for individuals and student-centred services. Sverdlik et al. (2018) in their review of 163 articles to explore the factors that influence doctoral completion, achievement, and wellbeing, indicates it is important to clarify expectations as they can remain tacit until they are confirmed by peers or through socialization into a faculty. Their review presents the factors which influence doctoral candidates' experiences including university factors such doctoral supervisor fit and the clarification of expectations, but there are also student factors such as background, demographics, and life structures. This indicates some complexity which could influence the need for expectations to be clarified.

Holbrook et al. (2014) suggests that little is known about candidate expectations when they commence their studies. Furthermore, there is some compelling evidence that focusing on expectations can reduce candidates dropping out, help determine barriers to progress, attend to student wellbeing and reduce tensions. However, they warn that there is a largely untested assumption about the link between unmet expectations and low levels of satisfaction. It is unclear whether unmet or mismatched expectations are a normal part of any doctoral pedagogy. They attempted to test expectations through a survey with 1,374 candidates from Australian universities and follow up interviews with 104 candidates. They report that there are three relevant factors including supervision which features as a university factor but only 13 of the 104 candidates they interviewed raised the issue of supervision, which was fewer than anticipated, given the emphasis in the literature. They conclude that further research into mismatches of expectations is important and that they planned to address problematic expectations through information in an induction package. Rostami and Yousefi (2022) explore Iranian PhD candidates' perceptions of supervisor responsibilities and expectations and found a variety of needs of expectations of candidates. This is in line with the earlier literature which influences these calls for the clarification of expectations. They did not explore the strategies to clarifying expectations, which is the subject of this paper, but they recommend a strategy which is for candidates to submit a weekly report with possible questions and problems. The range of strategies which are advocated in the literature to clarifying expectations will now be discussed, which this paper suggests including both formal and informal strategies.

GROUND RULES, LEARNING CONTRACTS AND UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

There are different types of expectations for supervisors and candidates which include ground rules and there are different ideas on how these can be agreed such as through an induction. Phillips and Pugh (2005) and Delamont et al. (2004) outline ground rules including how supervisors expect candidates to undertake the agreed work, be honest about progress and keep in touch around issues, share drafts of work, be independent and turn up on time. Candidates expect their supervisors to meet regularly, read work in advance and be constructively critical. Baydarova et al. (2021) in their study of expectations in Malaysia, emphasize that whilst researchers urge the need for supervisors and candidates to discuss expectations; in practice this is rarely taking place, with the main expectations being discussed being around timelines and written reports; which are more ground rules. The supervisors did not consider the expectations that students may have of them, and students were often afraid to raise the issue with supervisors, due to the experience of power exercised by supervisors. Only two candidates remembered having their expectations clarified, although all but one of the candidates could articulate their expectations. Their study concludes that it is important to open these opportunities for the discussion of expectations, which should be encouraged by universities and offered such as through induction programs.

The clarification of ground rules is encouraged through oral or written learning contracts which can be implemented at the start of the relationship. Phillips and Pugh (2005) propose that candidates should clarify these ground rules with supervisors using oral contracts. Wisker (2005) agrees that ground rules around expectations and behaviours are important, so that candidates do not lean on the supervisor too much. They encourage candidates to draw up a formal or informal written learning contract with their supervisor, which sets out expectations around work, communication, and responsibilities. They add that learning contracts are like legal contracts but less punitive and legally binding. Both Phillips and Pugh (2005), and Wisker (2005) emphasize that candidates' needs will change over time, so a contract review is important.

There is also a suggestion that learning contracts could be introduced as a reactive measure if there are issues within the relationship. Hockey (1996) proposes that learning contracts could be used where there are motivational issues, loss of trust or difficulties around independence. Furthermore, contracts can create a common ground, in an era where relationships are more formalized, but they do require the candidate's consent and implementation can differ across disciplines. However, they warn that if a contract, is used from the beginning, it can be viewed as a formal structure which can feed into other areas of quality assurance. A. Lee (2011) suggests that contracts can be useful as the supervisor and candidate can just check they are working to the contract as opposed to continually checking the expectations. They suggest that contracts can take the power differences into account, but the supervisory relationship with the candidate is not equal and requires more than an analysis of power over resources to a discussion about boundaries.

There is a suggestion that candidates and supervisors should use the information outlined in university regulations to clarify roles and responsibilities which also includes ground rules. In their candidate handbook, Churchill and Sanders (2007) suggest that a supervisor should discuss university regulations to cover ground rules such as the number of meetings, how conducted, the expectations for the work and communication. These should be revisited, or a meeting should be arranged, if any issues arise. They assert that university regulations will include the complaints procedures and will be available on an institution's intranet. The practice of discussing regulations has been adopted by universities such as the University of Otago (2021) who produced a supervisor checklist including the need to discuss regulations with candidates. Stracke and Kumar (2020) highlight that candidates in their first year of their studies, may not feel confident enough to negotiate the completion of the agreements or checklists, even though they have become prevalent in many universities, as discussed below. Baydarova et al. (2021) constructed a hierarchical model of supervisor and candidate expectations which includes the more formal expectations such as university regulations, but also frequency

of meetings, feedback and updates which appear more ground rules. The top of their pyramid is personal relationships which they argue can remain implicit and is the area which is the most unclarified and misaligned in their model; thereby highlighting the importance to clarifying expectations beyond university regulations. They conclude that although they have put forward this model, without the missing dialogue and negotiation of areas there is the opportunity for the expectations to stay misaligned, which suggests that informal clarification of expectations is important, beyond the formal.

RATING SCALES AND CODES OF PRACTICE

Beyond the clarification of ground rules, there are expectations which are related to the formal responsibilities outlined in a university code of practice, and the clarification of these expectations is undertaken by completing rating scales and checklists. These rating or role perception scales are attributed to Brown and Atkins (1988) in the UK, and then Moses (1985) in Australia (see Kiley, 2011). The scales feature 11 or 12 questions which are separately completed by the candidate and supervisor such as Who is responsible for selecting the topic? The supervisor will compare the answers and will then meet with the candidate to discuss and calibrate their understanding. Kiley (2011) developed the Moses questions into a one-page checklist with a joint column which influenced many Australian universities to produce their own survey tools and was also adapted by Kearns and Finn (2017). The scale by Kiley (2011) has also been used in research such as Helfer and Drew (2019) who used it to compare candidate perceptions of the roles against those outlined in a university's code of practice. The study which explored engineering student perceptions of supervision in an Australian university through a survey with 30 respondents, included the rating scale by Kiley (2011) to explore the perceptions of roles and reported differences in aspects deemed as a shared responsibility (e.g., writing the thesis). The study recommends that institutions should adopt the survey tools to clarify expectations; although as outlined in this literature review there are a range of strategies available.

Finn (2005, p. 41) shares an example code of practice for new PhD candidates and urges candidates to use the code for a discussion with their supervisor about roles and responsibilities. Taylor et al. (2018) encourages supervisors to read their institution's code of practice or handbook and to point out the formal expectations to candidates to hopefully avoid delays and non-completions. They suggest that many universities will provide checklists for this purpose, on the assumption that candidates may not appreciate the formal implications of a code of practice.

A UK supervisor recognition programme advocates the Brown and Atkins (1988) scale to evidence the clarification of expectations, but this is for use in conjunction with other considerations such as supervisor's style (Taylor, 2019). Stracke and Kumar (2020) in their Australian and New Zealand study produced a Feedback Expectation Tool (FET) which adapted the format of the Brown and Atkins (1988) scale to produce the FET to enable the supervisor and candidate to have deep conversations that advance beyond general expectations and skills. They advocate that supervisors can use the FET tool as a live document when talking with doctoral candidates to encourage dialogue around feedback and adding on any further relevant items. They planned to undertake further research to explore the usefulness of the FET tool, which is an aspect that appears to be lacking in current literature, in terms of the usefulness of the strategies to clarify expectations.

OPEN DISCUSSIONS AND BEING EXPLICIT ABOUT SUPPORT

In addition to the discussion of ground rules and formal strategies are informal strategies to clarify expectations including an open conversation around what the supervisor will offer, what the supervisor and candidate expect or need from each other and how they will work together. Delamont et al. (2004) propose that a supervisor should have a discussion with candidates during the first few supervision meetings to create early guidelines and confirm what the supervisor will offer. Beyond the ground rules, they argue that supervisors should also be explicit with the candidates about what they will offer around the methodology, theoretical concepts, literature search, references, writing the thesis, practical help, and pastoral support. The literature includes example questions that could be used

in this discussion. For instance, Phillips and Pugh (2005, p. 106) outline questions for candidates to ask such as 'How do you think we might work together more effectively? They emphasize this is important for both candidates and supervisors to undercover 'inside information' about each other which for candidates can help progress, develop necessary skills, and reduce communication barriers (p146). For supervisors the process can assist them to determine what candidates expect and improve the performance of their role. However, they add that some supervisors will prefer to keep the supervisory dialogue focused on the thesis (i.e., the product) as opposed to the relationship (i.e., the process) which is a key issue. The questions therefore can be helpful to encourage supervisors to focus on the relationship and not just the thesis, as some supervisors might be uncomfortable to have this type of open conversation about the relationship (process). Making space for this is important, particularly when one considers the research by Cribb and Gerwitz (2006) who warn how the introduction of the audit culture in higher education, underpinned by concerns around the quality of doctoral work is influencing doctoral supervision in unhelpful ways through blanket rules and systems of monitoring. This could be creating a different 'process' which must be navigated and could be squeezing out space for these open conversations about the relationship.

EXERCISES AND CASE STUDIES

A different way to structure the early supervision meetings to clarify expectations is through the answering of questions, undertaking an exercise or sharing case studies. Grant et al. (1994) produced a range of questions for supervisors to ask such as: How much input from supervisor? - regarding the research proposal. Candidates will read the questions before they meet with the supervisor to discuss. Finn (2005, p. 36) outlines example exercises for PhD candidates to consider on their own which includes questions such as 'What level of guidance and support do you expect from your PhD supervisor? N. J. Lee (2008) in their handbook for professional doctoral candidates presents two case studies, which outline the strengths and weaknesses of the supervision in the case studies. They suggest that candidates should use these case studies to explore their expectations and then discuss these with their supervision team to develop a clear outline of roles and responsibilities. However, they warn that many universities will use this information for a learning contract or agreement thereby aiming to use this for formal monitoring purposes and thus linking back to ideas around contracting supervision as a service and the audit culture.

In summary, the existing literature outlines the reasons why the clarification of expectations is important and there are different expectations which can be clarified such as ground rules. In response there are a range of strategies which are proposed to both supervisors and candidates to clarify their expectations, although some departments, faculties and universities have adopted a formal strategy as a blanket policy. Even though this published literature includes the assumptions that these strategies are necessary and useful; research is lacking which explores which strategies are being used and the perceptions of supervisors and candidates in relation to the strategies.

METHODOLOGY

AIMS OF THE STUDY

The practice of clarifying expectations for doctoral supervision has been adopted as a blanket approach by some departments, faculties, or universities. It is a recommended practice in the supervisor and candidate handbooks, supervisor training and supervisor recognition programme. In many cases the strategies adopted for this practice are formal and linked to the provision of supervision as a service. However, there is a lack of research which explores how expectations are being clarified and supervisor and candidate perceptions of the available strategies.

Having established that it is important to explore supervisor and candidate perceptions of these strategies and the need to identify which strategies are being used, this study intends to explore this

which is not covered in earlier research. The study reported on in this paper aimed to address these research questions:

- How are expectations determined between supervisors and candidates?
- What strategies or resources are used to develop relationships, agree milestones and expectations?
- What were the reflections on the stimulus material?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The adopted theoretical framework for this present study is the working alliance which emanates from psychotherapy by Bordin (1979) but they suggest that it can be generalized to other areas (Bordin, 1979; Frischer & Larsson, 2000). The working alliance is underpinned by a contract for work, which includes goals, the tasks to reach these goals, and the interpersonal bonding required to achieve the joint endeavour (Frischer & Larsson, 2000). The concept of the working alliance is also used in coaching and A. Lee (2011, p. 110) in their doctoral supervisor handbook draws on coaching literature including Clarkson (1995), and Hawkins (2006) to suggest that at the contracting stage of the supervisor-candidate expectations, together with hopes and fears are shared to establish a ‘productive alliance around a shared task’. Frischer and Larsson (2000) undertook research with 15 candidates who had dropped out from a Swedish university and reported that the supervisors were adopting a *laissez-faire* leadership style. They recommend that a working alliance should be adopted. However, research by Torka (2016) explores the idea of a working alliance in doctoral supervision as a professional practice but found that expectations were rarely communicated between supervisors and candidates. They conclude by asking ‘What can be done to support this working alliance?’ and argue that the working alliance cannot be substituted by structural forms. This suggests that informal strategies are important to a working alliance. The (Research) Supervisor’s Friend (2013) warns that consumer culture appears to be influencing the use of contracts in supervision for the negotiation of a service. As an alternative they propose a rating scale or survey tool such as Moses (1985), which are discussed below; although these relate to expectations of supervision which views it as a service (Kiley, 1998). This indicates that an informal approach is still lacking but this is clearly important to the working alliance. The study is therefore interested in how expectations are clarified and what strategies are used and whether these can support a working alliance.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND PROCESSES

This article arises from an internally funded research project undertaken at one University from England, which had full ethical approval. The university has adopted a team supervisory approach which includes a primary supervisor called the Director of Studies (DoS) and generally one second supervisor; but there can also be advisors. Doctoral supervisors and candidates were approached through a blanket email that was distributed through the Doctoral Research College (DRC) in the two faculties. The faculties will be called Faculty 1 (education and health) and Faculty 2 (art and media). The email specified that the supervisors and candidates needed to have been involved in a supervisory relationship for a least a year. This was to ensure that they had a certain amount of time to be able to talk about the relationship. Information sheets and consent forms were produced using the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) guidelines which outlined the research aims and objectives, to reassure participants such as the right to withdraw and gain their consent. Pseudonyms will be used for the supervisor and candidate names throughout this paper.

SAMPLE

Eighteen participants which included nine supervisors and nine candidates agreed to take part. The research did not use supervisor and candidate dyads and it is unknown if there were any pairings amongst the participants who took part. The years of experience of both supervisors and candidates ranged from 1-10 years. There were more responses from Faculty 1 (13 responses) than Faculty 2 (5

responses). The supervisor's academic roles include lecturers and research fellows up to professors; whilst the candidates were both external candidates and university staff. Six of the nine supervisors had more than six years' experience and four of the nine candidates had been in a supervisory relationship for more than five years.

METHODS

The supervisors and candidates were invited to take part in a 45–60-minute online video interview. The original plan was to undertake the research face-to-face, but the Covid-19 pandemic meant it had to take place online. A semi-structured interview guide was used which was divided into sections including 1) Prior experience, 2) National policy, 3) Local institutional context, 4) Relationship roles and supervisory styles and 5) Expectations and strategies to clarify them. In sections 2-5, the supervisors and candidates were asked questions and shown items of stimulus material from candidate and supervisor published handbooks. Section 1 'Prior experience' did not have an item of stimulus material, as not all of those located in the literature were neutral. Questions asked in this section included *'What would you say has influenced your supervisory approach?'*

To collate this stimulus material, a literature review was undertaken during which several themes arose about why it is important to clarify expectations and strategies to clarify them. In total 32 items were identified from the literature. The original plan was to use vignettes (e.g., a short story about a problem) as these are a way to elicit insights into sensitive topics (Kara, 2015). Although many vignettes were identified in the literature the majority of these were unsuitable, as they were not neutral. In addition, when using vignettes, a participant can respond to what they would do in the situation, in terms of social desirability as opposed to their perceptions of their practice (O'Dell et al., 2012). Stimulus material or texts can take many forms including photographs, sketches, news, and historical sources as clues or provokers (Törrönen, 2002). The stimulus material such as text boxes and models are more neutral and allow the participants to talk about their experiences of the topic and identify themselves and position themselves in what is described (Stacey & Vincent, 2011). In total eight items of stimulus material were created which included photographs of text boxes from supervisor and candidate handbooks. The supervisors and candidates were shown the same eight items of stimulus material, across the five topic guide areas which were numbered from Slide 1 to Slide 8. They were selected as suggested by Törrönen (2002) to be used as provokers, which call into question the established conventions, meanings, and practices of the phenomenon under investigation, namely the clarification of expectations. The stimulus material was thereby itself taking a role in the interviews whereby empowering the participants to share the experiences and cultural knowledge.

Piloting took place with a colleague who was an experienced supervisor with many completions. The colleague suggested the background to the stimulus material was helpful. During the interviews, the source, date, and the purpose of the original text were shared. The supervisors and candidates were asked their perceptions or reflections on what was shown, which in most cases included a photograph of the actual stimulus material such as a table from A. Lee (2010) which outlines different approaches to doctoral supervision. In two cases, the source was not concise enough, so we created PowerPoint slides as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2. For Figure 1 this includes the different types of expectations which are outlined in the literature such as by Delamont et al. (2004). The content was directly copied from the original text and put into the PowerPoint slide. Figure 2, which shows Slide 6 includes the range of expectations that were identified in the literature, and these were drawn together to allow the information to be presented in this slide. This was novel to this paper, as much of the literature generally focuses on one strategy, as opposed to presenting a range or a choice.

Slide 5: Supervisor and Student expectations

	Supervisors expect their students to:	Students expect their supervisors to:
Delamont, Atkinson and Parry (2004) Supervising the Doctorate: A guide to success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (holidays, sickness, change of address, etc.) and academically, • Do the research tasks that have been mutually agreed and scheduled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide regular supervision. A reasonable student can expect to see his or her supervisor twenty to thirty times a year (if full time), for a private, one-to-one discussion of the research. • Provide written feedback. A student can expect to have draft material read, and returned with written comments in a reasonable time.

Supervisor needs to be explicit about what they hope they will be able to provide around:

- methodology,
- literature search,
- theory,
- computing,
- fieldwork,
- practical support,
- references,
- tea and sympathy, and
- writing including correcting grammar, spelling and style.

Figure 1: Stimulus material of types of expectations

Slide 6: Strategies to clarify expectations

- First meeting – what do we expect
- Induction period
- Discuss university regulations
- Share informal/inside information
- Student-supervisor contracts
- Exercise – consider expectations and if not fulfilled
- Completing survey tools
- Guidelines – what to do and how to work together
- Discussing case studies
- Simple rules or points

Expectations of Research Supervision

Supervisors and research students often have differing expectations of supervision. The supervisor and student should complete this scale independently and then compare their responses. Circle a number depending on whether you think the responsibility lies more with the supervisor or the student.

	Supervisor	Rating	Student
1.	It is the supervisor's responsibility to select the research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The student is responsible for selecting her/his own topic.
2.	The supervisor should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology is most appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should decide which theoretical framework and/or methodology they wish to use.
3.	The supervisor should develop an appropriate program and timetable of research and study for the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The student should develop their own program and timetable of research.

Source: Kearns and Finn (2017)

Figure 2: Stimulus material of strategies to clarify expectations

ANALYSIS

The interviews were transcribed in full and the transcripts were printed to create hard copies for coding. Each transcript was initially coded in the order that the interviews were undertaken. The coding was undertaken using content analysis which aimed to verify the contents of written data in a rigorous manner through analysis and examination, including frequency of words or categories. Units for analysis were identified and allocated codes or categories in relation to the research questions (Cohen et al., 2017). This included moving back and forth between the data, research questions and literature, as the units of analysis emerged (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The initial codes and the development of the coding structure were kept in a word document. As the coding structure was developed it included parent and sub-codes. Where new codes emerged in subsequent transcripts, the earlier transcripts were then checked to see if these codes or sub-codes had been missed in the original coding. All of the transcripts were then coded in this manner. Codes were subsumed

to assist with creating open and flexible coding categories. The data enabled the presentation of analytical explanations on the basis of the qualitative data (Mason, 2002) which assisted the research questions to be answered which will be discussed in the rest of the paper.

FINDINGS

HOW EXPECTATIONS ARE DETERMINED BETWEEN SUPERVISORS AND CANDIDATES

Six of the nine supervisors from across the two faculties, which included Isabella, Yiona, Ian, Claire, June and Una revealed that they clarified expectations with all candidates at the beginning of the relationship. Isabella an experienced supervisor with 10 years' experience from Faculty 1 and Yiona a newer supervisor from Faculty 2 both emphasised how they would have a conversation to determine candidate expectations and needs. In addition, they would also explore the different roles of the supervision team between the Director of Studies (DoS) and the secondary supervisors or advisors and what the team members will offer in the initial meetings:

I always try and have all the supervisors however many there may be and any advisors, as it is useful altogether for the first meeting or two... You have to clarify expectations with the student in the bigger supervisory team... For me I have had to understand what my role is in each one, and it is slightly different in each one... That is absolutely crucial that the student understands that as well, because you know, they do get different things from each of us. (Isabella, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Ian, an experienced supervisor (9 years' experience), agreed that it was important to have this early discussion to clarify expectations with candidates and the supervision team roles during what Ian classed as an 'establishment phase'. However, Ian emphasized that these expectations will need to be revisited as the candidate undertakes the doctorate due to dos

shifts and changes:

It is important to sort out expectations very early on the first couple of meetings really, the kind of get to know you phase and establishment phase. And you do discuss what the roles of the supervisors are. The Director of Studies (DoS) in our university and 2nd supervisor, and indeed the candidate. So, what are the roles and expectations involved? I think that is important but bearing in mind that those will shift and change as the life of the doctorate shifts and changes. (Ian, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Claire and Serena who were two of the less experienced supervisors emphasized that the clarification of expectations depended on the supervision team. For Claire (two years' experience), this depended on who was the most experienced in the team whereas for Serena (four years' experience) it was the primary supervisor or DoS was the one to determine if expectations would be clarified:

I guess from the experience of being a second supervisor, knowing that it is ultimately not my project, I am here as more of a consultant, so it is for that DoS to have a handle on. (Serena, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

Una and June were both experienced supervisors and whilst they stated they clarified expectations through conversations, they both reflected that perhaps the clarification of expectations was not consistent across the board. June suggested this was a result of high numbers of candidates being supervised, but if the supervisor does not clarify expectations the candidate will not be aware:

We have been relatively explicit about what we are doing and what our expectations are beyond the sort of good time keeping and so on. But I suspect that this is not as consistent as it could be, or as you know, maybe sometimes I think I have done it, and perhaps I have not ... once you start supervising more than two or three students, I think it is easy to just... they kind

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blur into one in some ways, and so it is easy to forget. That they do not know, it is their first time. (June Supervisor, Faculty 2)

None of the candidates that were interviewed mentioned any conversations with supervisors to clarify their expectations. Ellie a candidate in the 6th year of studies stated that they did not recall any conversations about expectations, although some aspects were dealt with as they arose:

I do not remember ever having sat down and explicitly stated what was expected of me and for me to give them an indication of what I expected for them, so that you know we could marry the expectations up. Certainly, through the process of conversation, some of these things have been addressed. (Ellie, Y6 Candidate, Faculty 1)

This is interesting considering that six supervisors indicated that they clarified expectations, but clearly with the discretion of the DoS and the issues around workload this may not happen across the board. It is also important to note that the supervisors and candidates that were interviewed were not dyads. A further reason for this lack of recall of expectations being clarified, is that there were differences of opinion around whether expectations should be clarified from the three supervisors who did not state they clarified expectations (Lester, Olga, and Serena). Lester who had 6 years' experience, emphasized that conversations around expectations should be a reactive, informal process as opposed to a blanket policy having formal discussions:

I do not think that's a supervisor's job. That is you know, I think that if things go wrong then that is probably when you start bringing things like that and I think that at an early point you should be kind of trying to discuss those with you as informally as possible. (Lester, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Olga (seven years' experience) was concerned that clarifying expectations could stifle and limit a candidate's individual creativity as opposed to nurturing each candidate on their individual journey. Olga and Serena argued that clarifying expectations is trying to pre-empt and project manage the relationship, where there needs some openness and allow for the element of discovery:

Every project is going to be so different, and every student is going to be so different... so that trying to pre-empt, too much. It almost it can go. It can feel like it goes too far for me into that rote project management. (Serena, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

A doctorate has to have that element of discovery in it and have some openness around the expectations because I think you could easily stifle somebody's creativity and their potential to see things in a new way or find a new kind of theorist to apply... I would not want to close them down with the release of you know strict set of expectations, because I think expectations can be quite limiting for both... It is an incredible opportunity for transformation on a personal level, on an intellectual level, on a professional level, and I think it is about nurturing that student to find that for themselves... It concerns me when these things get over regulated and over kind of analysed in a way and dictated because you kind of lose some of the magic of it.
(Olga, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Despite these concerns from supervisors, four of the nine candidates including Polly, Ellie, Asha and Letitia from Faculty 1, revealed that their candidature would have been clearer if expectations had of been clarified. Polly and Ellie talked about the need for a space to be created in the supervision meetings in which the relationship could be discussed. For Polly, it became harder to ask for the expectations to be clarified, such as ground rules for returning writing for feedback, as the relationship developed, due to the inherent power dynamic:

It is important at the beginning to talk about expectations, and you know, I am not a big rule person, but it is important to set some expectations in terms when you are expected to send writing by... The rules that are important, negotiated rules I think would be important. So, what the supervisors are expecting. However, that gives you a chance to say what you would like to expect as well, and because I think sometimes, it can be quite a daunting experience. You

know, having supervision and if you have not had that chance from the beginning. (Polly, Year 5 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Ellie, a candidate who was initially a staff member, also recognized that the power dynamic prevented them from raising the topic of expectations and suggested that the supervisors should set the ‘tone’ from the beginning to create a space where the relationship can be discussed and not just the thesis through a regular discussion or ‘mandated conversation’:

There would be a mandated conversation about how is supervision working for you, because actually there is an inherent power dynamic regardless... If it was actually integral to the supervisory process where you know one month, three months, six months, whatever, it happens to be, you are required to sit down and have a conversation to see look how is supervision going for you either directly with your supervisor and even with a third party, just so that if it is not going well, you can address in a non-threatening way. (Ellie, Y6 Candidate, Faculty 1)

This suggests that for some candidates they would have liked their expectations to be clarified, but the power balance in the relationship can prevent candidates from raising this issue with supervisors. However, clearly not all supervisors believed that expectations needed to be clarified from the beginning. Isabella, recognized that if introduced as a blanket policy then supervisors could follow the same practice for every candidate, but they felt that they did not want to add to the existing monitoring paperwork:

I guess there could be an argument that you should do the same for everyone, but sometimes it seems like overkill... I am reluctant to bring in more paperwork as we are quite heavy on it already. (Isabella, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Claire a supervisor highlighted the difference in starting points between internal and external candidates and the importance of learning about the university culture, which can add an extra layer of complexity:

Some of my students who are HE practitioners, they know the system. They know the culture, etc. but at the same time, they are new to research. So you have got to talk to them about expectations of developing as a researcher. So how we are going to work together. But, people coming from outside: schools, FE colleges, etc. They are learning everything as well as developing the research and learning about their research topics and doing the research. They are also learning about University culture and I think for some of them that is really challenging. (Claire, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Letia a Year 6 candidate echoed the same aspect that although a member of staff it can mean that expectations are not clarified as it could be assumed that they already possess this inside information, but being a staff member is different from being a doctoral candidate:

Not aware of any guidelines of what to do and how to work together formally set out. Whether it is different because I know my supervisors, but I have two hats with them. One where they are supervising me as a student and the other half where we are working together to deliver courses and teach. I do not know whether that affects any of this. And whether the expectation is as a member of staff you know what supervisions are about and therefore do not need to go through that. (Letia, Year 6 Candidate, Faculty 1)

This highlights that there could be assumptions that candidates who are also staff members do not need to have their expectations clarified, as they are already privy to some inside information, but this might not be the case. The strategies and resources used to develop relationships, agree milestones and expectations will now be discussed.

WHAT STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES ARE USED TO DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS, AGREE MILESTONES AND EXPECTATIONS?

Informal discussion

As indicated in the previous section, six of the nine supervisors would have conversations with the candidates to clarify expectations indicating that an informal discussion was the most popular strategy. As mentioned above this could include the exploration of team roles, but also working to candidate expectations and needs. Isabella highlighted that they would try to ask the candidate what works for them in order to adapt to candidate needs, but not all candidates have a clear idea of what is helpful:

We had a lot of discussions around expectations. I suppose both in terms of student expectation, supervisory team expectations, what our roles were in terms of that kind of skills and knowledge, who we were and whose responsibility it was in terms of what the Director of Studies responsibility was, versus the other supervisors. (Yiona, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

I always have conversations with students early on about, you know what is most helpful, you know; Do they like lots of feedback? Do they whatever works for them, and some of them have very clear ideas of what works and what does not, and some do not. I try and adapt to the students' needs and also you adapt within supervisory teams. (Isabella, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

What is shown in Table 1 below is that whilst six supervisors indicate that they had an informal discussion, for some supervisors such as Una they did not mention that they used any other strategies to clarify expectations. In contrast some supervisors such as Isabella, were using an informal discussion but they were also using other strategies such as learning contracts and candidate handbooks, which will be discussed below.

Table 1: Strategies and Resources to Clarify Expectations by Supervisor

Participant Details	Informal Discussion with candidate	Discussion with candidate and team	Ground Rules	Learning Contracts	Candidate Handbook	Code of Practice	Rating Scale	University Regulations	Questions, Exercises or Case Studies
Yiona, 1 Year Faculty 2	√	√				√ aspects	√		
June, 6 years Faculty 2	√ Might not be consistent							√ Own reference	
Una, 9 Years Faculty 1	√ Might not be consistent								
Isabella, 10 years Faculty 1	√	√		√	√				
Olga, 7 years Faculty 1						√ aspects			
Serena, 4 years Faculty 2		√ Depends on DoS							
Lester, 6 years Faculty 1									
Ian, 9 years Faculty 1	√	√							
Claire, 2 years Faculty 1	√	√ Depends on DoS				√ aspects		√	

Ground rules

Olga and Una, two experienced supervisors with seven and nine years' experience, stated they used informal discussions which contained ground rules, which Olga stated '*almost goes without saying*'. In reflection to Slide 5 (Fig .1) with the ground rules and expectations from Delamont et al. (2004) Una added how beyond this, the clarification tended to be a reactive process, which might not always be discussed, which they reflected might not be helpful for candidates:

We have all those things at the top, but I am not sure that I make those things at the bottom explicit early on. When it comes up, we do it, but that is probably not very reassuring for the students. (Una, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Polly a Year 5 candidate revealed how they had been unaware of ground rules such as the number of days to submit work for feedback during their supervisory relationship, which had caused tension:

It would have been useful if some of this had been explained, but had come into the conversation, but there was never any formal discussion, so some of the things I have kind of worked out just through observation myself, like who does what in the supervisory team and sort of like timescales for things because there were a few occasions where I had some difficulties because I had not sent written work so many days in advance, but I did not ever know that that was an expectation. It caused tension, but it was not something that I was aware of. (Polly, Year 5 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Ant, a candidate in Year 4, highlighted how the expectations around timescales for feedback on written work from the supervisory team, were outlined by academic staff, during the cohort module stage of the doctorate, but this was the only expectation that was clarified:

No not really, the only thing that has really come up in terms of conduct between supervisors and students is when we were. And by we, I mean that the cohort of students when we were preparing to start the thesis stage of the day, we were just told several times, always give you supervisors five working days to respond to any like meaty feedback that you want. And that sort of drilled down into us by several tutors who run the module. (Ant, Year 4 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Learning contracts

Only two supervisors mentioned learning contracts which included Isabella who revealed they used learning contracts on an infrequent basis with specific candidates, where Isabella might anticipate problems in the supervisor to candidate relationship:

Student supervisor contracts. I think are quite a good idea... I am more prone to use them where I can imagine there may be a problem. I have not used them frequently, but occasionally I have met students and thought this is not going to be the easiest working relationship. (Isabella, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

There was more cautious practice around the use of learning contracts such as Ian, who had concerns around the legal definitions but also the need for negotiation with the candidate:

Contracts you know has quite a definite meaning in law, so I am not. I am not sure, what that is. But I think it is more about agreements and again it should be open to negotiation. (Ian, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

None of the other supervisors or any of the candidates indicated that a learning contract was used in the supervisory relationships.

Candidate handbooks

Only Isabella mentioned that the candidate handbook contained expectations and was a strategy to use to clarify expectations with candidates. However, Isabella revealed that they did not go through the handbook with the candidates:

Our handbook sets out, you know, our responsibilities and the students responsibilities. It is useful to go through that with them early on and establish expectations on both sides. I keep an up-to-date copy, certainly and sort of talk through. I do not necessarily talk through the handbook. (Isabella, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Five candidates mentioned the candidate handbook which included Letia a Year 6 candidate from Faculty 1 stated that they had never received a candidate handbook, but aware one has been created since they started. Asha, a candidate in Year 10, stated that the handbook they had received was not fit for purpose.

Four candidates mentioned the candidate handbook and the usefulness of this to their candidature, which was in varying degrees. Catherine, a candidate in Year 6, revealed that as a candidate they had received the candidate handbook and used when there was an issue. Charlie one of the newer candidates in Year 2 from Faculty 2, was an international candidate and received the candidate handbook before they started their candidature where it was useful, but had not referred to it since:

I do have a research degrees handbook. I only looked at it a few times, really. I think I looked through it most before I had actually been officially accepted, just to kind of make sure I knew what I was getting into. I have not really felt a need to turn to it aside from looking at how assessments are handled. (Charlie, Year 2 Candidate, Faculty 2)

Despite these discussions around whether the candidates received the handbook or the usefulness of the candidate handbook, it does not appear to be used as a strategy to clarify expectations despite being included in them as highlighted by Isabella.

Code of practice

The supervisors and candidates were shown an item of stimulus material from Taylor et al. (2018) and given time to read the document. The image was about the need for institutions to have codes of practice around research degrees and outlines aspects including: the research environment, selection, admission and induction, supervision, progress and review, development of research, evaluation, assessment, and complaints. In response to this stimulus material, Yiona stated that they went through all of these aspects with the candidate but did not discuss the code. June stated that they would specifically use the code of practice or university guidelines but to keep themselves on track rather than with the candidates:

I consult locally at a faculty level on various processes if I am unsure or I make sure that you know that I'm working within the kind of guidelines... There is an influence and I am definitely aware that I cannot go off on my own... but that I come back to look at whether I am adhering to various local policies. (June, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

Una made the point that they were a newer supervisor and working within the aspects outlined in the code of practice was normal for their practice, whilst Isabella stated it was useful to have this framework which included aspects such as supervisor development. Olga highlights they take support from the DRC in terms of their adherence to the milestones for candidates which are set around progress reviews and observance to any internal codes or practices. Lester an experienced supervisor suggested that the introduction of the code of practice did not have an influence on his approach. In contrast Claire was one of the newer supervisors emphasized how the aspects contained in the image did have an impact on their practice and this was important for supervisors and candidates:

It does play a really big part in my practice in terms of awareness of the university's policy and the requirements and what has been communicated to the supervisors and what's being communicated to students as well. I think that is really important because it is important that we are on the same page and students know the processes the procedures and all these things you mentioned here. (Claire, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Asha a candidate in Year 10, emphasized that they were unaware of the institution's code of practice and would have liked to have viewed the code:

I have never come across this [code]. So, I think it is something that we should be signposted to in terms of kind of background information and, I am not aware of our local kind of institution and again, I think sometimes if you are aware of these, it helps the supervisors and it helps the students in terms of managing expectations... I wish I had known about these and it would be very interesting to see what the [University] code is. (Asha, Year 10 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Despite this Asha summarized that the clarification of expectations was reached through a natural understanding between supervisors and themselves as an adult learner, as opposed to any formal strategy:

I think that's been the crux of my journey, and perhaps, systems and processes not being fully developed when I started my journey, but other than that, I think in terms of pastoral support in terms of, you know, like kind of hard work from the supervisors. I cannot fault that, it has been brilliant, but I think those expectations were not communicated formally, but it was just kind of a natural understanding that you have as kind of adults, as an adult learner. (Asha, Year 10 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Overall, there was an awareness amongst some supervisors of the introduction of these codes of practice, but there was only Yiona and Claire who specifically stated that they used these in their practice with the candidates. There was no awareness of the code of practice amongst the candidates.

Rating scales

Only Yiona, a newer supervisor revealed they had used a rating scale (Brown & Atkins, 1988) which was influenced by a supervisor development programme. Yiona and the candidate completed the scale, as opposed to sharing with the other supervisor. When Yiona and the candidate had a discussion, they discovered the differences in responses were due to their interpretation of the questions and there was no need to shift any responsibility to the candidate:

I used the role perception scale from Brown & Atkins... the student had been there for sort of four, five or six months... I gave it him to fill in separately, I filled it in separately, and then we compared in a meeting. So, in a lot of ways, by the time we came to do the role thing, we would sort of, I suppose, informally got into a bit of a pattern anyway. It was really aligned very closely. There was a few where we deviated slightly and that was quite useful to discuss that, but it was through the discussion we kind of realized that it was more sort of that we just interpreted the questions a bit differently. (Yiona, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

There was a lack of appetite to adopt a rating scale for future practice, despite the wide promotion to use survey tools in the literature. Instead, Yiona indicated the desire to have a discussion and use items from the stimulus material such as the framework by A. Lee (2010) that was shown to Yiona as part of the interview. The value of the stimulus material shown was deemed as useful to prompt an open discussion with candidates to determine needs:

I would use that one again although having seen some of the resources that you shared there; [to] have more of a sort of discussion with students about what they want from the supervisory process ... give them some of those words or phrases. (Yiona, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

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Polly a Year 5 candidate felt that a rating scale might be useful to enable expectations to be discussed and then have ongoing conversations. Una a supervisor felt the rating scale could be useful as a discussion point but queried the impact of these tools:

I think that is useful the rating [scale] or even if there was something like that, at different stages of the journey because it just makes you, it would refresh you about oh is there some area that I would like to experience more of in the supervision. (Polly, Y5 Candidate, Faculty 1)

I like this, you know it would be interesting to know kind of what sort of impact these could have. But certainly, as a discussion point, I think this is really good. (Una, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

University regulations

Claire and Yiona did discuss university regulations with candidates. Claire shared these regulations as they recognized that there is unequal power in the supervisory relationship and they did not want to be the custodian of this information, if there are concerns around supervision as a service:

Supervisors still have a quite powerful role in this relationship, and you do not want to supervise and become the kind of gatekeepers of these policy and processes. You want to make sure the students if they feel that they need to talk to somebody or need to raise an issue to somebody they do not have to always go through the supervisor. (Claire, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Two candidates felt that expectations did not need to be clarified such as Asha who emphasized that her expectations were met through a ‘natural understanding’. Ant, a Year 4 candidate emphasized how they would have been offended if the supervisors had wanted to discuss university regulations in the first supervision meeting, as it was common sense:

I would be quite offended if I am truthful, if my supervisor started a meeting the first time, I met them with some sort of contract or, you know, discussion of university regulations. I mean, it is common sense. (Ant, Year 4 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Sunita a 4th Year candidate could not see the clarification of expectations such as the discussing of university regulations as a blanket policy, due to increase in workload for supervisors, although it could work if candidates requested it:

Discussing university regulations, I do not ever imagine us doing that unless it was absolutely important to like an Annual Performance Review. I think however, if it came from me that this is what I want to do... we could have the conversation, but I think if this came from a university it might potentially, it looks like a lot of work. (Sunita, Year 4 Candidate, Faculty 1)

Instead, it appears that the clarification of expectations requires a practice which is adaptable to individual candidate’s needs as opposed to a blanket policy seen as more paperwork.

REFLECTIONS ON THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

Several supervisors such as Claire indicated that they had enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on the topic of clarifying expectations and there was an interest in finding out further information and resources, but Olga was cautious about how directive these resources should be:

Some good resources you can share with everybody, then that might be quite useful. (Claire, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Perhaps, I should do more clarifying expectations... I would be interested in perhaps more guidance on setting expectations, but I would not want them to be really directive... Every student is on a different journey. (Olga, Supervisor, Faculty 1)

Several candidates also felt that the resources for clarifying expectations were useful, but candidates such as Asha and Sunita highlighted that they needed to be live documents that form part of a working alliance to the doctoral process or relationship, which runs in parallel to the discussions about the thesis rather than within an induction:

So, I think these are really helpful and valuable... They need to be kind of live documents or things that you kind of periodically keep on referring back to that, rather than something that you perhaps just be given as part of an induction package. (Asha, Year 10 Candidate, Faculty 1)

I think the relationship development... needs to definitely have something about the therapeutic alliance or working alliance there and what their expectations of me are, in order to help them develop that with me. (Sunita, 4th Year Student, Faculty 1)

The collection of strategies that was presented was perceived as useful as a way to clarify expectations which Ellie described as a smorgasbord. June commented that this was useful as this practice should not be too prescriptive for each faculty:

It is almost, you know, like a smorgasbord of different things, that you can pick, but within that, you know is acknowledging that the relationship should be revisited, and the expectation should be refreshed periodically to make sure that that is still what you need...you are still making the appropriate progress. (Ellie, Y6 Candidate, Faculty 1)

I think it is good. It is good for it to not be overly prescriptive so that each faculty has a version that works for the kinds of students they have. (June, Supervisor, Faculty 2)

Whilst there are concerns, it appears that highlighting and sharing the information such as the research around clarifying expectations and the different strategies was useful as a way of raising awareness of this practice and brought interest from several of the supervisors and candidates.

DISCUSSION

The practice of clarifying expectations for doctoral supervision has been adopted as a blanket approach by some departments, faculties, or universities. It is a recommended practice in the supervisor and candidate handbooks, supervisor training and supervisor recognition programme. In many cases the strategies adopted for this practice are formal and linked to the provision of supervision as a service. However, there is a lack of research which explores how expectations are being clarified and supervisor and candidate perceptions of the available strategies.

HOW EXPECTATIONS ARE DETERMINED BETWEEN SUPERVISORS AND CANDIDATES

The findings highlight that six of the nine supervisors were clarifying expectations with candidates at the beginning of the relationship. This included newer and more experienced supervisors, from across the two faculties. The practice of clarifying expectations could include one or two meetings or several conversations which is in line with the suggestion by Delamont et al. (2004). One supervisor emphasized that this discussion of the relationship should happen during the establishment phase which fits in with the contracting stage as outlined by A. Lee (2011) but is unclear if these discussions would be revisited as part of a working alliance formed by sharing hopes and fears.

The conversations were being used to discuss candidate expectations were also being used to explore the different roles of the supervision team and what the team members will offer. This indicates that these initial meetings were combining the two aspects: the discussion of expectations with the candidate and the supervisor(s) and the discussion of the team roles. These two aspects are generally discussed separately in the literature such as the UK recognition programme (see Taylor, 2020). This consideration of supervision teams is important as there was a suggestion that supervision teams and

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levels of experience can impact whether expectations are clarified, which is not discussed in the current literature.

Within the existing literature such as Holbrook et al. (2014) is a discussion of the assumption that expectations should be clarified as a matter of course and this practice has been adopted by some universities (see University of Otago, 2021). Despite this the findings from this study reveal an issue with this assumption. Two supervisors reflected that the clarification of expectations was not consistent across the board, which could be influenced by the increased number of candidates. A supervisor and a candidate suggested that some expectations are clarified as they arise in a reactive manner or were covered as the issues arose. There was an indication by some supervisors and candidates that expectations did not need to be clarified at the start with every candidate in a regulated, formal manner, and it should be kept informal and reactive. This adds new knowledge to the literature around the practice of clarifying expectations.

None of the candidates mentioned any conversations with supervisors to clarify expectations, which is of interest considering that six supervisors stated they clarified expectations. This could be due to dyads not being used, but also that three supervisors would not clarify expectations. There were concerns about stifling creativity and limiting a candidates' individual journey and turning the supervision in to a project management role. So, whilst there is a history of the calls for the clarification of expectations which can be traced back to the 1980s (e.g., Moses, 1984) and that clarifying expectations is a common aspect of research supervision training where offered (Kiley, 2011) this is not necessarily a practice adopted by every supervisor, in this study. Despite this, four of the nine candidates from Faculty 1, revealed that their candidature would have been clearer if expectations had of been clarified. This does fit with earlier studies such as Helfer and Drew (2019) who argue that the clarification of expectations is important to reduce candidate frustrations and dissatisfactions. The candidates who were interviewed argued that it is important to create that space in the supervision meetings where a discussion can take place about the relationship (process) in addition to the thesis (product) (Phillips & Pugh, 2005). For some candidates it became hard to ask for the expectations such as ground rules to be clarified as the relationship developed. This was due to power dynamic in the supervisory relationship which prevented candidates raising the issue of expectations as suggested by Baydarova et al. (2021). The candidates highlighted that the power dynamic means that the supervisor needs to set the 'tone' for these conversations to take place. It was apparent that this should be more than one conversation indicating it was also important to have an ongoing discussion to clarify expectations with candidates beyond the induction period suggested by Holbrook et al. (2014).

There was a recognition that if the clarification of expectations were introduced as a blanket policy then supervisors could follow the same practice for every candidate, but there are concerns around adding to the existing monitoring paperwork. There is potential for these formal strategies to be perceived as an approach to systemization in higher education which appear to be aiming to formalize the supervisory relationship in unhelpful ways (Cribb & Gerwitz, 2006).

There could be assumptions that candidates who are also staff members do not need to have their expectations clarified, as they are already privy to what Phillips and Pugh (2005, p. 146) refer to as 'inside information', but this might not be the case. The discussion about clarifying expectations for university staff members undertaking doctorates adds to the research by Sverdlik et al. (2018) who presents the factors which influence candidate doctoral experiences including university factors such as the clarification of expectations, but also student factors such as background, demographics, and life structures. The consideration therefore of candidate starting points and what is relevant or needed is important including if doctoral candidates are staff members.

These findings indicate that whilst there is existing practice and interest from some candidates and supervisors on the need to clarify expectations, there are concerns about regulation and prescription, that could limit creativity. This appears to suggest that the clarifying of expectations needs to take the

individual candidate into account as a starting point, as opposed to implementing this as a top-down blanket policy.

WHAT STRATEGIES OR RESOURCES ARE USED TO DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS, AGREE MILESTONES AND EXPECTATIONS?

An informal discussion was the most popular strategy used to clarify expectations by six of the nine supervisors interviewed (Isabella, Yiona, Ian, Claire, June and Una). It was suggested that candidates are being asked what is helpful for them and the supervision team are trying to adapt to these needs. The prevalence of the informal discussion is interesting considering the push to use more formal strategies such as learning contracts, which are being influenced by consumer culture and linked to the negotiation of a service (The [Research] Supervisor's Friend, 2013). Despite the use of the informal discussion what is shown in Table 1 is that some of the supervisors were using multiple strategies, so whilst they might have an informal discussion to clarify expectations including ground rules, supervisors might also refer to university regulations. These individual strategies and resources will now be discussed.

The agreeing of ground rules such as sharing drafts of work and providing feedback are encouraged in the supervisor handbook by Delamont et al. (2004) and candidate handbook by Phillips and Pugh (2005). Two supervisors emphasized that ground rules would be automatically clarified, but then other aspects outlined by Delamont et al. (2004) such as around the methodologies or theories might not be discussed. These findings are in line with research by Baydarova et al. (2021) who reveal that in practice clarifying expectations is rarely taking place, with the main expectations being discussed being around timelines and written reports, which are more ground rules. However, in this study, only two of the nine supervisors talked about ground rules. Furthermore, in terms of candidate perspectives a Year 5 candidate suggested that ground rules such as the number of days for feedback was not clarified leading to tensions, but a Year 4 candidate indicated this did take place in the wider faculty, so beyond the supervision team. This suggests that some ground rules might not be clarified by supervisors or within the supervision teams, but through wider faculty provision.

One supervisor had used learning contracts, but this was on an infrequent basis with specific candidates in line with the suggestion by Hockey (1996). There was more cautious practice voiced by one supervisor in terms of the legal contracting of a service, but echoes of the need for negotiation with the candidate as proposed by Wisker (2005). The same supervisor was also aware the candidate handbooks for research degrees contained expectations, as highlighted by Taylor et al. (2018) but the supervisor did not go through the handbook with the candidates. There was a discussion of handbooks by four of the candidates but not for the clarification of expectations.

Two supervisors suggested they clarified aspects from the code of practice with the candidates they co-supervised, but they did not mention a policy. One supervisor did refer to the university guidelines which they consulted for their own practice whilst another consulted with the doctoral research college. This suggests that there are guidelines, procedures, milestones and processes in place and these aspects are being used – which some supervisors are consulting for their practice and some are then outlining to candidates. The supervisors do not appear to be going through a code of practice document with candidates to clarify expectations. So whilst Taylor et al. (2018) encourage supervisors to read the code of practice and point out formal expectations to candidates and Finn (2005) display an example code and urge candidates to raise this with supervisors, this practice is not being adopted. Whilst some supervisors were aware of the content of a code of practice and would go through this content with candidates it was not being used to have conversations about expectations. One candidate stated that they had not seen the code and would like to have seen it but added that in their doctoral journey the clarification of expectations was reached through a 'natural understanding' as opposed to any formal or informal clarification strategies. This adds findings to the untested assumption discussed by Holbrook et al. (2014) around how there can be unmet expectations and low levels of satisfaction.

How Supervisors and Candidates Clarify Expectations

One supervisor had used a rating scale by Brown and Atkins (1988) but had discovered the differences in responses were due to their interpretation of the questions and there was no need to shift any responsibility to the candidates as warned in earlier research with rating scales (see Helfer & Drew, 2019). There was a lack of appetite to adopt the rating scale for future practice, despite the wide promotion to use survey tools in the literature (Kiley, 1998) and instead the supervisor was interested to use the model by A. Lee (2010) of supervisor conceptions or approaches. A supervisor and a candidate thought that a rating scale might be a good idea to use, at least as a discussion point; but the supervisor wondered about the impact of these survey tools; which is not covered in the literature.

Two supervisors did discuss university regulations with candidates and one supervisor shared these regulations which is in line with the suggestions in the candidate handbook by Churchill and Sanders (2007) which suggests that supervisors should discuss these regulations with candidates. Beyond this the university regulations were not being used to clarify expectations and there was limited awareness of the regulations amongst the candidates. One candidate suggested that they would have been offended if the supervisors had presented a contract or university regulations in the first meeting as it was 'common sense'. This does not suggest that there was a mismatch of expectations which remained tacit until they were clarified as suggested in the literature reviewed by Sverdlik et al. (2018). The blanket policy to introduce strategies to clarify expectations appears to be based on assumptions that all candidates need to have them clarified (see Holbrook et al., 2014); which does not seem to be the case here.

The informal discussion was the most prominent strategy that was being used to clarify expectations. There was some awareness of formal strategies, but the usage was low; although some candidates would have liked the opportunity to see formal documents (e.g., code of practice) or discuss expectations early on to set the scene for an ongoing discussion about the relationship. By rejecting these formal strategies which seem to want to measure progress through positivistic approaches, what is important are inner experiences and the notions of choice, freedom, and individuality (Cohen et al., 2017). These findings encourage the clarification of expectations within doctoral supervision to be viewed within a sociological perspective as opposed to measurable terms. Hodza (2007) proposes that doctoral supervision is a social process, which does not occur in a social vacuum, as there are different interests at work including the supervisor, the candidate, and the institution. This paper extends this idea by discussing the different levels of influence on the practice of clarifying expectations. It is important for supervisors and academic developers to adopt a critical approach to explore the interests at work. This will help to explore the legitimacy of interests behind the proposed strategies, which is important in term of democracy and equality (Cohen et al., 2017). Cribb and Gerwitz (2006, p. 234) warns of a 'growing sense of collusion' with the audit culture which could stunt individual doctoral projects and propose that these accountability demands could be taken for granted. This paper warns of the adoption of the formal strategies as a blanket policy and instead highlights the importance of considering the interests at work.

REFLECTIONS ON THE STIMULUS MATERIAL

There were new and experienced supervisors who shared that they had enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on their supervisory practice and discuss the ideas of clarifying expectations. There was interest in finding out further, but some supervisors were cautious about how directive the resources would be and not being over prescriptive would be advantageous. Some candidates also felt the resources for clarifying expectations were useful, but suggested that these needed to be live documents which agrees with the research by Baydarova et al. (2021) which can then support the relationship as a working alliance, rather than part of an induction at the start as proposed by Holbrook et al. (2014). This also agrees with the suggestion by Torka (2016) that the working alliance cannot be substituted with structural forms and that informal strategies are needed. The findings highlight that it is important for the supervisor to make space for these open conversations, considering the inherent

power dynamic, not just at the contracting stage as highlighted by A. Lee (2011) but throughout the whole process. Torka (2016) questions what can be done to support this working alliance as expectations are rarely communicated between supervisors and candidates and this paper proposes a selection of strategies or a smorgasbord.

This paper has discussed a range of formal and informal strategies from the literature including tools (e.g., checklists, rating scales) but also frameworks such as the one by A. Lee (2010) which includes supervisory styles, but it is possible to use this as a discussion point to clarify expectations. Several supervisors and candidates commented that a collection or smorgasbord of strategies would be of use to supervisors and candidates to clarify expectations, as opposed to selecting one tool to use with all candidates in a university, faculty, or department. The existing literature generally recommends one strategy to clarifying expectations such as a rating scale (Kiley, 1998) or a learning contract (Wisker, 2005). The stimulus material included a list of the informal and formal strategies as outlined in the literature review of this paper.

This paper suggests that for current supervisory practice, rather than adding a further element to monitoring, there needs to be a way to support informal conversations between supervisor(s) and the candidate. This paper proposes that when forming the working alliance and opening the space to discuss expectations, the range of strategies could be discussed either by using the slide (Fig 2.) or the smorgasbord of strategies (Appendix). This paper argues that this will be useful to fan out the thinking around the available strategies and what is appropriate in each individual case.

This paper warns that it is important to consider the legitimacy of interests behind any proposed strategies. This paper includes a smorgasbord (Appendix) includes some notes for the supervisors and candidates to consider, when clarifying expectations. There is a plan to undertake further research to explore the use of the smorgasbord with supervisors and candidates to gain feedback on the usefulness as a resource to support dialogue and a working alliance

CONCLUSIONS

The existing literature focuses on how to establish expectations or supervisor perceptions on issues related to clarifying expectations. Our study explores how expectations are determined between supervisors and candidates and what strategies or resources are used to develop relationships, agree milestones and expectations. It also investigates the reflections of the supervisors and the candidates on the stimulus material. The themes which emerged allowed the researchers to explore the different perceptions around how expectations should be clarified and the best ways this can be achieved. The theoretical framework of the working alliance is used as it focuses on the agreement between the supervisor(s) and candidate towards a shared task and the agreeing of expectations forms part of this working alliance.

The supervisors were clarifying expectations at the beginning of the relationship through multiple conversations in an establishment phase, but it is unclear if this is the formation of a working alliance where hopes and fears are openly discussed (A. Lee, 2010). The candidates did not recall their expectations being specifically clarified, which suggests that if this took place, then the approach must have been subtle. Future research could consider what aspects are discussed within these initial conversations, using observations or listening rooms.

The team approach to supervisory practice meant that some supervisors were clarifying expectations but also discussing team roles, which are dealt with separately in the literature. However, the experience of the team and team member views can impact on whether expectations are clarified.

The informal discussion was the most popular strategy to clarify expectations, although some supervisors were using multiple strategies whilst others were not using any. There was an awareness of strategies such as candidate handbooks or codes of practice but these were not always being used in this manner. Some supervisors and candidates did not feel that expectations needed to be clarified as

a blanket policy and there was a push back on more formal strategies. These findings add to current knowledge on expectations as there was apprehension around a blanket policy to clarify expectations which is recommended in some of the literature (see University of Otago, 2021). For academic developers these findings highlight some caution around the introduction of this as a blanket policy in a one-size-fits all manner. The concern amongst some supervisors about adding further paperwork and monitoring links to existing concerns around the systemization of higher education and formalizing of the supervisory relationship (see Cribb & Gerwitz, 2006). Further research could be undertaken with institutions who have adopted a formal approach to explore how this has been received and if it is valuable to candidate outcomes.

It is important for supervisors to create a space as part of the working alliance from the beginning where the expectations around the doctoral supervision process can be discussed, alongside the completion of the thesis. Setting the ‘tone’ of the supervision meetings from the start is important so that these discussions are on the agenda as part of the working alliance that is revisited beyond the initial establishment conversations.

The methods used in this paper which included items of stimulus material such as those from handbooks and journal articles, were useful to discuss sensitive topics (Kara, 2015), in this instance doctoral supervision. The stimulus material allowed the supervisors and the candidates to talk about their experiences of the topic and identify themselves and position themselves with what is described (Stacey & Vincent, 2011). Several supervisors found the images interesting and allowed them time to reflect on their practice, so the shared slides from this study could be useful to those in academic development or supervisory development programs as they include the range of strategies available. The rest of these slides could be shared to aid this purpose. Further research to explore this topic at a different university would be useful to see if there are similar findings to this study.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study are that it only used a small sample from one university in England. This is an acknowledgement that there are differences across countries and disciplines in terms of the policies and practice around research supervision, for instance some countries do not use supervision teams (Taylor et al., 2018).

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APPENDIX: SMORGASBORD OF STRATEGIES TO CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

The following smorgasbord includes a range of strategies which can be used by supervisors and candidates to open dialogue about the supervisory relationship. The idea is to use this as part of a working alliance around how the supervisor(s) and candidate will work together. The literature includes a range of strategies from the more informal discussions, the setting of group rules and guidelines and then to the use of more formal documents or strategies. Select that which is most appropriate to the candidate starting point, needs and supervisor preferences. All the references in this table are from the literature included in this paper.

Notes for Supervisors and Candidates

- Not all candidates will need or want to have their expectations clarified. What is important is that the issue is raised, and an opportunity is given to discuss this as part of a working alliance.
- The clarification of expectations within doctoral supervision should be viewed within a sociological perspective as opposed to measurable terms. So, whilst there are strategies or tools within the above smorgasbord (e.g., formal contracts and checklists) these could be linked to formal measures, so caution should be considered.
- What is important is the inner experiences and the notions of choice, freedom, and individuality (Cohen et al., 2017) which are important in the clarification of expectations.
- Doctoral supervision is a social process, which does not occur in a social vacuum, as there are different interests at work including the supervisor, the candidate, and the institution (Hodza 2007).
- The above smorgasbord extends these ideas by discussing the different levels of influence on the practice of clarifying expectations.
- Supervisors and academic developers should adopt a critical approach to explore the interests at work behind any selected strategies (see Cohen et al., 2017).
- Research warns of a ‘growing sense of collusion’ with the audit culture and propose that these accountability demands could be taken for granted, which could stunt individual projects (Cribb & Gerwitz 2006: 234).

How Supervisors and Candidates Clarify Expectations

- This paper warns that the same could be said for some of the strategies to clarify expectations and the smorgasbord (Appendix) includes some notes for the supervisors and candidates to consider.

Informal discussions	Ground rules & guidelines	Formal documents
Discuss: ‘How do you think we might work together more effectively? (Phillips & Pugh, 2005: 106)	Locate and discuss: Locate and discuss Table 5 from Lee (2010) which is about identifying student needs from supervision.	Locate and explore: Explore the example learning contract to cover work, communication, and responsibilities. (Wisker, 2005).
Discuss: A supervisor should be explicit around what they hope to offer (e.g., methodology, theoretical concepts, literature search, references, writing the thesis, practical help, and pastoral support) (Delamont et al., 2004)	Create: Create early guidelines and confirm what the supervisor will offer (e.g., methodological help, literature search or theoretical ideas) during first few meetings (Delamont et al., 2004)	Explore and discuss: Locate your university regulations and discuss (to cover ground rules such as the number of meetings, how conducted, the expectations for the work and communication) (Churchill & Sanders, 2007)
Discuss: ‘What level of support and guidance do you expect from your PhD supervisor? (e.g., frequency of meetings, feedback) (Finn, 2005: 36)	Establish: Establish ground rules around expectations and behaviours. What do you want to ensure happens? What do you want to ensure does not happen? (Wisker, 2005)	Discuss and explore: What departmental handbooks or other documents are relevant for postgraduate students? (Grant et al., 1994)
Discuss: The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the candidate is introduced to the appropriate services and facilities of the department and the university (Kiley, 2011)	Explore: Locate and explore the two case studies, which outline the strengths and weaknesses of the supervision in Lee (2008: 100).	Locate and discuss: Locate your institution’s code of practice or handbook and point out the formal expectations with candidates (Taylor et al., 2018) or look at an example code (Finn, 2005: 41)
Discuss: What roles will be taken by each supervisor? (Grant et al., 1994)	Locate and discuss: Select three vignettes to discuss from Delamont et al. (2004)	Read, discuss, and complete: Look at a rating scale and discuss (Brown & Atkins, 1988; Kiley, 2011)

Informal discussions	Ground rules & guidelines	Formal documents
<p>Discuss: Discussing expectations with your supervisors to develop a clear outline of roles and responsibilities (Lee, 2008: 100).</p>	<p>Locate and discuss: Locate and discuss the hierarchical model of student-supervisor expectations (Baydarova et al., 2021)</p>	<p>Submit: Submit a weekly report to your supervisor with possible questions and problems (Rostami & Yousefi, 2022)</p>
<p>Locate and discuss: Locate the roles of a supervisor in Brown and Atkins (1988) and discuss your thoughts and expectations.</p>	<p>Locate and discuss: Discuss what supervisors expect of their candidates and candidates expect of their supervisors (Phillips & Pugh, 2005)</p>	<p>Locate and discuss: Look at an example Supervisor Checklist (University of Otago, 2021) and discuss.</p>

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