

Getting into Supervision: A Checklist for Supervisors

When a student approaches you requesting that you become her/his supervisor, a good strategy is to insert a pause between being asked and agreeing (or not) to supervise. The decision to supervise is your responsibility although you may be required to justify a refusal.

If you have a statement of your approach/philosophy of supervision, give it to the student and ask them to consider it as part of their thinking. Lastly, tell them when you'll get back to them with your decision and how (by email/phone, etc).

In the meantime, consider these questions. Then, if you think you might be interested in supervising the student and you don't know her/him, meet up for an exploratory (preliminary no-obligation) conversation.

Checklist

- Why am I interested in this exercise? Is it the student, the project or the requirements of the position?
- How many students do I have already?
- Do I have enough time to supervise this student? (The normal allocation for a masters or doctoral student is 50 hours per annum.)
- Do I have the necessary knowledge to supervise this student's research topic?
- Do I know enough to support the research approach / methodology required for this proposal?
- Are adequate resources available?
- Will I be able to work with this person? How would I overcome any barriers that might arise from gender, age, cultural, language, etc differences?
- Will this student fit in with my existing group of students?
- What experience does the student have of academic research and/or writing?

The exploratory conversation might include these sorts of matters

- The amount of direction the student thinks s/he'll need (student's mode of working)
- Supervisor's mode of working with graduate research students
- Limits of supervisor's contribution
- The skills and strengths the student thinks s/he has that will be relevant to the project
- Need for, and availability of, other input (second supervisor, advisors, learning skills tutors etc)