Documenting the PhD Supervision Experience
Why is Documenting so Important?

The Obvious
- Reduces Misunderstandings
- Increases Trust
- Improves Structure & Meaningful interactions
- Increased Clarity about Discussions, Decisions, & Feedback
- Shareable
- Indicator of Progress

The Not so Obvious
- Protects all parties involved
- Data mining - extracting of future data on student success
- Usable for references and background information
First Meeting(s) Checklist

- During the initial meeting or meetings you are launching a career into academia - as a result it is important that you set the stage
- Key elements of the checklist include:
  - Setting the goals/agenda for the meeting(s)
  - Review any received documents - often includes a self-assessment by the student of their KSAs - highlight potential opportunities for interventions (i.e., workshops, program offerings)
  - Discuss & document student goals for the PhD (at least for the 1st year)
  - Conduct/Assemble and build consensus on a list of expectations
  - Identify potential issues, challenges, or constraints that may impact on the student-supervisor relationship
  - Establish a communication strategy including contact points, meetings, preferred means of contact, etc.
  - Encourage student to initiate their PhD portfolio
  - Establish an action plan for the 1st year
CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING FIRST MEETINGS
(Partial example- Oxford Learning Institute)

Use this checklist to plan what to discuss initial meetings with a new DPhil student
___ Explain the goals for meeting(s) & clarify how confidentiality should be handled
___ Discuss what each of you perceive as the boundaries of the supervisory relationship
___ Review the student’s current experience & qualifications
___ Discuss & record the student’s immediate & long-term goals
___ Explore useful professional development experiences in view of these goals
___ Record these (or ask the student to) as a professional development plan
___ Arrange a meeting schedule with your student. Clarify how meetings will be documented
A Note on Meeting Frequency

- This simply depends on: your availability, student type, program, policies, stage of the project, etc.

- Research has indicated that in the Social Sciences/Humanities at least twice per month is the norm; in the Biological Sciences about once per month for an MSc, slightly less for the PhD.
Meeting Documentation Forms

- Formal meetings (such as initial, annual, required, committee meetings) must be documented in accordance with the agency’s policies and formats. Often these are checkbox (fillable pdfs). There should be a policy on the frequency and content of such reports.

- Informal meetings/contacts (such as emails, written notes, phone contacts, etc) should be documented and placed in the PhD portfolio package.

- Ideally these 2 types will be signed and shared with the student for inclusion in the PhD portfolio package.

- Examples within your binder
Probes

- Who takes responsibility for the meeting notes being created?
- Which meeting notes should be signed off?
- Will these records be monitored? Frequency? Who is responsible?
Documenting of concerns, comments from others on student progress, confidential information must also be kept by the supervisor as part of the student progress evidence. However this must be maintained separate from the file which is regularly accessed and potentially seen by the student. Further, you should obtain a freedom of information (access to information) directive from your legal department if there are concerns on the student’s potential access to such information. If this is a potential, consider your personal journaling of such information which is less likely to be accessible.
Additional Information

- Initial and Annual Curriculum Vitae of the Student
- Initial and annual KSA evaluation
- Relevant admission documents
- Annual transcript or course completion record from the university
- A formal indication of the committee members and/or co-supervisor
- Any documentation related to program delays, extensions, etc.
Special considerations - Ethics, Risk Assessments, Academic Integrity

- Pre-Research
  - Consider a confidentiality agreement (blanket) for their involvement in your research team efforts
  - Does the University have a risk assessment disclaimer/acknowledgement form that speaks to risks such as students doing work ‘out of hours’ ‘off campus’ or ‘overseas’
    - These would ideally be managed during the orientation offered by the Department or Program but, in absence of this mechanism, please ensure this is considered
  - A signed acknowledgement of an understanding and review of the University’s Academic Integrity policies (such as plagiarism, professional behavior, etc.) * may be included in your ‘contract’ or ‘MOU’ with the student.
A Contracting for Success

- What do you feel would be the key components of a PhD supervision contract?

- What do you feel would work? A contract or a ‘memorandum of understanding’ or some other document form?