Expectations and roles in a PhD

This part contains some topics, framed as question prompts, to support discussion by area. You could address these at the start of a PhD, but also revisit them at milestones. Answers might vary over time, or depending on who you're working with.

Mentoring

- What outcome is wanted from the PhD, what will success look like? (E.g., what career path, academic or other, what key outputs in the journey, skills learned, etc.).
- How can support be provided for these outcomes, and whose responsibility is planning for and delivering on this support?
- How can emerging needs be communicated (whether personal circumstances, or regarding research) by both supervisor and researcher?

Work/Life Balance

- What are the formal rights and responsibilities regarding working hours, access to leave (vacation, sick leave, etc.), and other services?
- What are expectations regarding hours of contact, effective communication, and ability to disconnect (for everyone)?
- What are expectations regarding managing outside work (e.g., as a research assistant, teaching, etc.), and planning for positive impact on PhD?

Communication/Scheduling

- What are expectations regarding meeting regularity, duration, and rescheduling? How should meetings be arranged and managed?
- What platform(s) will be used for communication and collaboration?
- What are expectations regarding 'open door' vs scheduled meeting use?

Feedback

- How will feedback be provided and on what? (What lead times, what artefacts/documents, and kinds of feedback)?
- Will there be some set points for feedback and reflection, and how will they be targeted at identified researcher development areas (e.g., presentations, writing, etc.)?
- How can feedback be requested outside established milestone points?

Funding and resources

- Are there any restrictions or stipulations regarding what funding may be accessed and for what purposes?
- In case I need funding, what are each of our expectations to secure it?
- What resources are available to support research / researcher development? What resources might be needed?

Research, Output, and Collaboration

Research timeline and milestones

Key activities	Stage 1 and revised proposal →				Stage 2 and preliminary data →				Stage 3 analysis and writeup →				Submit / celebrate →	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q2	Q3
Familiarise with uni systems and people, draft development plan, revisit proposal	▓													
Read & identify key theory, & gaps; consider methodological depth to proposal	▓	▓												
Develop plan for gaining data (& ethical implications/application) target reading		▓	▓											
Develop pilot approach (& possibly pilot data) alongside fleshed out proposal for the work's onward trajectory			▓	▓										
Write stage 1 report & submit for assessment (& celebration)				▓										
Take on board feedback and implications for empirical work (and ethics)					▓									
Conduct pilot studies / contributing study				▓	▓									
Revise and write up (conference?)						▓	▓							
Plan further study(s), analysis methods (are these a contribution), and ethics							▓	▓						
Stage 2 presentation (+ celebration)								▓						
Conduct empirical study									▓	▓				
Data analysis										▓	▓			
Write up and refocus on big picture											▓	▓		
Compilation of thesis draft												▓		
Stage 3 assessment, submit "intent to submit" paperwork, nominate examiners													▓	
Finalise thesis for submission (last changes)														▓
Submit thesis for examination + celebrate														▓

(delete and add elements as you like. It is useful to change the Q1 to actual dates. Consider contingencies between activities, e.g., empirical work cannot be conducted prior to ethics approval.)

What is the general timeline for research milestones (e.g formal assessments, key tasks such as ethics applications, data collection, etc.)? Build in times for breaks; as you create more detailed plans, consider how you can use periods where supervisors are reviewing your drafts to take a break (or, if you already have breaks scheduled, to be getting on with work that isn't contingent on the feedback). Add into the table. In the table highlight any key activities that could/should contribute to lead to publication via paper ideas and conference deadlines. Consider conferences, journal outputs, and engagement pieces, and what role they will play at different stages of the PhD journey (e.g., conferences are important for networking, engagement pieces may help communicate your research which may be important in job hunting).

Research collaboration

- Who will be involved in the PhD work, and researcher development? Will either involve groups (a research team working with supervisor(s), faculty level cohorts, etc.)?
- In the research, and particularly in publications, what are expectations of collaboration and co-authorship?
- What are the preferred tools to work on research (e.g., reference managers such as Zotero, writing tools such as Word, analysis tools such as R, etc.), and how will materials be collaborated on / received (email, hard copy, shared drives)
- How should time be managed (e.g., split of reading/ research activities/ researcher development) and directed (e.g., how will project plans be developed/ by whom, who should be directing how time is spent and what lead-times should be used, etc.)?

Student-Supervisor Expectation Scales

This Student-Supervisor Expectation Scales worksheet lists 16 pairs of statements describing end points on a continuum. The intent of the worksheet is to support discussion between supervisors (or advisors) and doctoral candidates / researchers (or students). Variation in answers may reflect default expectations based on disciplinary norms, expectations of educational philosophy, and individual personality. Because these are often implicit, or assumed to be fixed, this can lead to challenges. Discussing these issues through using the scales to make expectations explicit can minimise misaligned expectations, and provide a tool to reflect on and adjust practices.

Because of power imbalances, supervisors should initiate use of the scales and their discussion. This may be with individuals, or groups (e.g., a lab). The resource may be used in different ways, e.g.:

Supervisors
- For each item, why does the supervisor think that this is the best way to proceed?
- Which items are non-negotiable? Which can be discussed and determined together?
- In which ways does the supervisor tailor her/his *modus operandi* to the individual student? Why does the faculty member change his/her MO? Does the supervisor take into account the student's personality, background experiences, stage in graduate studies, or other factors?
- What other expectations does the supervisor have of students? When and how should students ask for clarification of expectations?

Students
Students can complete the worksheet to explore:

- The student's own needs and desires. What does the student think is the best way to proceed for the student's own development?
- What does the student believe and understand to be the supervisor's preferences and *modus operandi*?
- Complete the worksheet identifying both what the student desires and the perception of the faculty supervisor's position. If the difference is 2 points or more, this is an item that should probably be discussed directly.
- Do all of the supervisor's supervisees share similar understandings of the supervisor's preferences and *modus operandi*?
- Develop a personal advising philosophy. How would the student plan to advise graduate students in the future? How does the student mentor and advise undergraduates or newer graduate students?

Directors of Graduate Studies
The worksheet can be used with a group of faculty members to initiate discussion about:

- What positions do individual supervisors hold? Why do they think that this is the best way to proceed?
- Does the department have some expectations that are shared?
- Do supervisors share the same reasons or rationale for shared positions on scales?
- When and how do supervisors discuss expectations with student advisees?

Student-Supervisor Expectation Scales

Read each of pair of statements describing end points on a continuum. Estimate your position and mark it on the scale. For example, if you believe very strongly that it is the supervisor's responsibility to select a research topic for the candidate / researcher, on scale #1 you should circle '1'. If you think that both the supervisor and candidate / researcher should be equally involved, circle '3'.

Researcher and Research Development: Use to establish how research development will happen		
The supervisor should suggest and approve researcher development programs / courses the researcher takes.	1 2 3 4 5	Researchers should solely determine which researcher development programs / courses they take.
It is the supervisor's responsibility to select a research topic.	1 2 3 4 5	The researcher is solely responsible for selecting the research topic.
It is the supervisor who decides which theoretical framework or methodology is most appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	It is the supervisor who decides which theoretical framework or methodology is most appropriate.
The supervisor should develop an appropriate programme and timetable of research and study for the researcher.	1 2 3 4 5	The supervisor should leave the development of the programme of study to the researcher.
The supervisor should ensure the researcher completes within their funded candidature, with suitable publications.	1 2 3 4 5	The researcher should take responsibility for timely completion and outputs.
Contact & Involvement: Use to agree meeting frequency and style, and when appropriate to be in touch outside them		
The supervisor should determine how often and when to meet with the student.	1 2 3 4 5	The researcher should decide how often and when to meet with the supervisor.
Supervisory relationships are professional, and personal matters are not appropriate.	1 2 3 4 5	Close personal relationships are essential for successful advising.
A warm supportive relationship between supervisor and researcher is important for a successful doctorate.	1 2 3 4 5	A personal supportive relationship is inadvisable because it may obstruct objectivity for both researcher and supervisor during the doctorate.
The supervisor should check regularly that the researcher is working consistently and on task.	1 2 3 4 5	Researchers should work independently without having to account for how they spend their time.
The supervisor should be the first place to turn when the researcher has problems with the research project.	1 2 3 4 5	Researchers should try to resolve problems on their own, including seeking input from others, before bringing a research problem to the supervisor.
The supervisor is responsible for providing emotional support and encouragement to the researcher.	1 2 3 4 5	Emotional support and counselling are not the responsibility of the supervisor – researchers should look elsewhere.
The Thesis / Dissertation: Use to discuss frequency of drafts and feedback mechanisms		
The supervisor should insist on seeing all drafts of work to ensure that the researcher is on the right track.	1 2 3 4 5	Researchers should submit drafts of work only when they want input and feedback from the supervisor.
The supervisor should assist in the writing of the thesis if necessary.	1 2 3 4 5	The writing of the thesis should only ever be the researcher's own work.
The supervisor should determine when and where to present or publish the research.	1 2 3 4 5	The researcher should decide when and where to present or publish the research.
The supervisor has direct responsibility for the quality of the thesis.	1 2 3 4 5	The researcher bears sole responsibility for the quality of the thesis.
Support: Use to discuss networking and career goals		
The supervisor is responsible for introducing the researcher to others in the field, especially at conferences.	1 2 3 4 5	Researchers are responsible for building their networks in the field.
The supervisor is responsible for providing career advice and preparation to the researcher.	1 2 3 4 5	Career advice and preparation are not the responsibility of the supervisor – researchers should look elsewhere.

Other resources

Initial Tasks

Will vary by institution/candidate, but similar things should be common:

Topic	Notes	Actions required	Action status?
DSP	Develop a Doctoral Study Plan, which shows how you'll develop research skills to complete research that contributes to knowledge.		
Focus area	It would be good to re-visit your interests and focus. What area are you interested in exploring (and how)? What questions do you have?		
Timeline	We can help you to map out key milestones		
Web presence	Consider where you'd like to build your profile and network, e.g. linkedin, social media, a personal website, etc. Register for ORCID and google scholar accounts.	…	
Tech	Do you need access to specific technology resources? Is your laptop set up for tools we'll use (including reference management)?		
RQs	Getting started - What, Why, How? Thinking about questions: 1. What are you doing? (The BBQ answer/ pitch) 2. Why are you doing it? (The 'so what?' or 'contribution' question) 3. How are you going to do it? (Mapping your aim->questions->data->analysis)		
Policies	There are some university policies you *must* read, and some you *should* read.		

Some resources on doing a PhD/research project

1. https://sjgknight.notion.site/Session-1-Research-and-Knowing-47134b16d41f457cad5f7b1c1be98825, Research and Knowing, a resource developed by Simon to give an overview of research (particularly transdisciplinary research) and how it helps us navigate knowledge to tackle problems – contains useful links and resources.
2. https://sjgknight.notion.site/Session-2-Using-Questions-to-Drive-Research-791d6d3c0d984e79b510fde97f0c2a4f, Using Questions to Drive Research, a resource developed by Simon to help think about the role of research questions in research
3. https://www.notion.so/sjgknight/Session-3-Ethics-f933d3c9268649a193f06d5e0eb2867e, Ethics, a resource developed by Simon to help think about ethics and ethical responsibilities of researchers

For other key topics
1. https://patthomson.net/2015/10/19/starting-the-phd-dont-panic/, Starting the PhD - *Don't Panic!* *(Pat Thomson)*,
2. https://supervisorsfriend.wordpress.com/2011/05/17/how-can-you-tell-when-there-has-been-a-contribution-to-knowledge-in-a-doctoral-research-study/, How to demonstrate significant contribution/original study in your thesis, resource by Geof Hill (the (research) supervisor's friend)
3. http://mcinerneylab.com/research/h-index-m-index-and-google-citations/, H-INDEX, M-INDEX AND GOOGLE CITATIONS, an explanation of various academic citation indexes

General links around the web
- https://thesiswhisperer.com/useful-resources-for-students-and-supervisors/, Thesis whisperer
- https://www.vitae.ac.uk/vitae-publications/reports/innovate-open-university-social-media-handbook-vitae-2012.pdf, Vitae Innovate Handbook of social media for researchers and supervisors, Open University 2012
- https://www.bardram.net/the-art-of-doing-a-phd/, The Art of Doing a PhD
- http://jcs.biologists.org/content/121/11/1771, How to be stupid in research
- http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php, PhD Comics
- http://phdtalk.blogspot.com.au/, PhD Talk
- https://patthomson.net/, Pat Thomson
- https://chroniclevitae.com/, The Chronicle's researcher development site

Tools
 Use the tools that work for you, Simon uses:

- Notion https://www.notion.so/ for note taking, a Kanban (project management, like Trello), and to-do lists (like Google Keep). Education users get a free boost. This describes how one of these functions can help https://doctoralwriting.wordpress.com/2015/10/14/live-a-phd-life-less-disorganised-with-trello/ Trello for organising the PhD life
- Zotero – you can use it for reference management (importing citation detail), 'cite-while-you-write' (insert citations into word processor, auto-create formatted reference list), and document annotation and structured notes.
- Setup google scholar alerts for citations to key papers/authors

General thesis resources
- British Library EThOS/ – Search and order theses online
- Theses now searchable via Trove

General Reference material that might prove useful include:
- https://thesiswhisperer.com/2010/11/18/5-books-to-help-you-with-your-phd/ 5 books to help you with your PhD
- The Sage Methods series https://methods.sagepub.com

Some (not particularly sophisticated) other ways to map out work

Objective-Activity-Output mapping

It may be helpful to map objectives, tasks, and milestones. You could use the key activities above to do this, some examples below.

	Q1-Q2	Q3-Q4	Q5-Q6	Q7-Q8	Q9-Q10	Q11-12	Q13-14
Objectives (What do you need to achieve? / What's the purpose addressed in this phase of work)	Familiarity with uni systems and people. A development plan to ensure skills for completion of PhD. A plan for the PhD research trajectory.						Finishing, ideally with a job to go to.
Tasks (What activities will be done to achieve those aims?)	Complete training, identify and attend key uni networking. Read and identify key theory and gaps, drawing out key methodological inspiration.						Writing and finalising thesis; consider 'post-PhD'
Milestones (What concrete things will be created?)	Calendar of regular events. Development plan. Literature review on topic X (and plans for topics Y and Z going forward).						Final thesis

Project Dependency mapping

At various points you may find it helpful to break projects down. I would suggest seeking advice at your institution/from your support to do this.

There are various tools available for project mapping, and you may find it helpful to use more sophisticated approaches (e.g., you may want a Gantt chart, you might want to map 'who' will be doing what, etc.; tools like Notion help with this, but you can also do it easily in a spreadsheeting tool).

In this table, number each task, indicate what its status is, and map what the dependencies are for the task (i.e, what needs to be completed in order for this task to be done). This is helpful for priority setting, and for identifying possible points of failure (if everything is dependent on task 3, but you aren't sure if that task can be delivered, that's a problem).

n	Task	Status	Dependencies
1	Finalise literature review on issue	Done	-
2	Develop interview materials and get feedback	W/supervisors for feedback	-
3	Ethics application due 10/01/2020	Draft	1, 2
4	Recruit 5 participants		4
5	Schedule and run interviews		5