

## **5B Exploring the potential to overcome some of the challenges of supervision through “matching” of students and supervisors**

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A key part of higher education is research by students. Through the course of their dissertation students acquire research and other valuable transferable skills that will be integral to their future successes. Literature suggests that the supervisor plays a central role in the success of these projects (e.g. Devos, 2007). Current literature concentrates on the qualities of an effective supervisor and much focus is given to setting out guidance on what academics should do in order to become good supervisors (e.g. Lovitts, 2001). Independently, other research suggests that students' characteristics and approaches to learning can have an impact on success (e.g. Busato et al, 2000). Conventionally, the qualities of a “good” supervisor and the qualities of a student are studied separately. No research bridges the gap between these aspects. It is proposed that the qualities of the supervisory relationship, and hence the students learning experience and the outcomes of the dissertation, depends on a complex interaction between the characteristics, personalities and expectations of both the student and the supervisor. Recognising the complex and challenging nature of this interaction, this paper investigates the significance of “match” or “mismatch” of psychological factors in supervisor-student partnerships, and considers the extent to which this can impact on the learning experience at undergraduate and masters level. Utilising a mixed methods approach (interviews and questionnaires) this research uniquely investigates pairs of students and supervisors.

Data collection occurred in two phases:

1. Student data pre-project;
2. Student and supervisor data post project.

This paper will discuss the key findings which have emerged and will focus on the development of students through the process, and if there are consequences of “match” or “mismatch” between student and supervisor. This concept of a ‘match’/‘mismatch’ is novel but could have significant practical implications for overcoming some of the challenges of supervision.

### **References**

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