



# e-Lingua

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Siti Farhana Zakaria shared about the process & procedure of supervision.



Prof. Dr. Norzannah Mat Nor talked about the skills in supervision.

# Postgraduate Supervision Course 3/2023: Roles and Responsibilities of a Supervisor

Postgraduate programmes are offered in all Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) campuses around Malaysia. Meanwhile, Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPSiS) has been established for the purpose of administration and management of postgraduate programmes in UiTM. According to university and Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) regulations, UiTM PhD lecturers who intend to supervise postgraduate students must enrol in the Postgraduate Supervision Course starting from 2019. Recently, I participated in a two-day academic research supervision course entitled 'Effective Postgraduate Supervision' organised by IPSiS. The course offered a deep dive into the process and procedure in supervising postgraduate students as well as to deliver important information regarding the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor.

Considering what I have learned from the course, I believe that developing a distinct personality or set of qualities that makes a good supervisor is crucial for all prospective postgraduate supervisors. Terminologically, 'academic research supervision' means the academic guide for a student throughout his/her higher degree by research program, which usually includes offering advice or guidance, showing direction, monitoring research progress, and providing necessary

feedback or support in a field of research. Throughout the process of advising, coaching, and mentoring, a good supervision should not overlook the human side of the relationship between a supervisor and a student. Abusive (continuous hostile behaviour), ghost (rarely responding to student), or controlling (micro manager who awaits updates on small issues) supervision must be avoided to keep positive human relationships.



Therefore, it is essential to consider the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor to ensure effective supervision. In summary, the course highlights supervisor's roles as a:

1. Teacher: Share knowledge and educate students.
2. Facilitator: Make it easier for students to conduct research by providing them with resources like broad connections with other experts who may assist them with their research.
3. Judge: Good in analysing different students' characteristics or personalities and providing appropriate guidance to different students.
4. Assessor: Assess students' proposals / works / papers / thesis.
5. Monitor: Track students' progress and development and provide support when required.
6. Editor: Share with students the tips and strategies to produce quality thesis/journal papers.
7. Reviewer: Play significant role as a research and content expert.
8. Guide: Support students' decision-making and provide direction.
9. Advisor: Provide both academic and non-academic advice; demonstrate compassion and emphasise humanity.

In the aspect of responsibility, supervisors must fulfil the responsibility of being 'active thinkers'. The most common way to practise thinking skills with the students is through Socratic questioning. Supervisors are suggested to implement Edward de Bono's (1985) Six Thinking Hats principles with their students. It can be used to try out different thinking approaches and to look at a problem in six different ways, then, think constructively about ways to move forward. More information

regarding each of the Six Thinking Hats can be found in Fig 1 on the next page.

Nonetheless, to consolidate the roles and responsibilities in supervising students, a good supervisor should possess a diverse set of human relation skills to foster a healthy and productive supervision environment. Communication skills are paramount, enabling supervisors to articulate expectations clearly and listen attentively. Empathy allows understanding and addressing the needs of students, while stress management ensures a composed and resilient supervision approach. Proficiency in conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining harmonious relationships with students. The ability to motivate and inspire is essential for encouraging optimal performance. Last but not least, self-awareness enables supervisors to navigate challenges with a reflective and an adaptive mindset, contributing to effective supervision.

#### References

De Bono, E. (1985). Six thinking hats. Brown and Company.



Prof. Dr. Faizah Abdul Majid imparted on the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor.




The Six Hats	Aims	Examples of Questions
	Gather the facts, data, or information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information do we have?</li> <li>• What information is missing?</li> <li>• What information would we like to have?</li> <li>• How are we going to get the information?</li> </ul>
	Call for optimism and the logical positive aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the benefits of this decision?</li> <li>• Why is the proposal preferable?</li> <li>• What are the positive assets of this design?</li> <li>• How can we make this work?</li> </ul>
	Consider the proposal critically and logically (judge & evaluate).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would this proposal be too costly?</li> <li>• Would the regulations allow...?</li> <li>• Is the proposal practical?</li> <li>• Would the materials mean high maintenance?</li> <li>• What about handrails?</li> </ul>
	Creating new ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any other ideas here?</li> <li>• Are there any additional alternatives?</li> <li>• Could we do this in a different way?</li> <li>• Could there be another explanation?</li> </ul>
	Controlling the sequence of thinking (metacognition).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why not I suggest we try...?</li> <li>• Could we have a summary of your views?</li> </ul>
	Consider feelings, emotions, and intuition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we feeling that this will not work?</li> <li>• Do we like the way this being done?</li> <li>• What does my intuition tell me?</li> </ul>

Fig 1: The Six Thinking Hats

