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# How to Manage Your Supervisor?

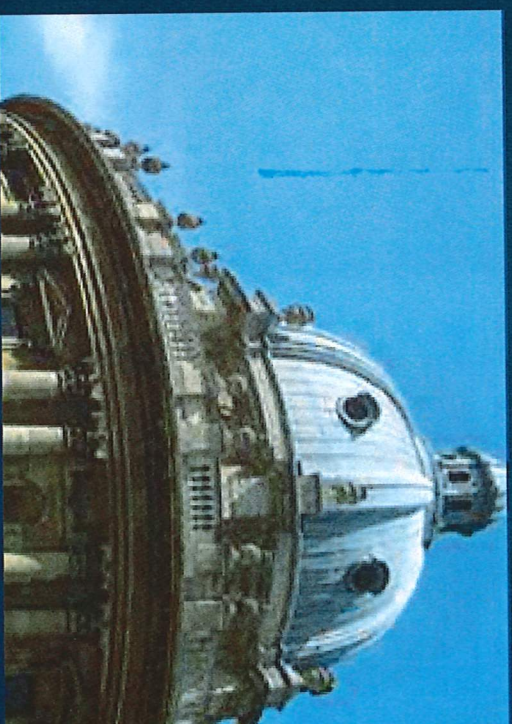
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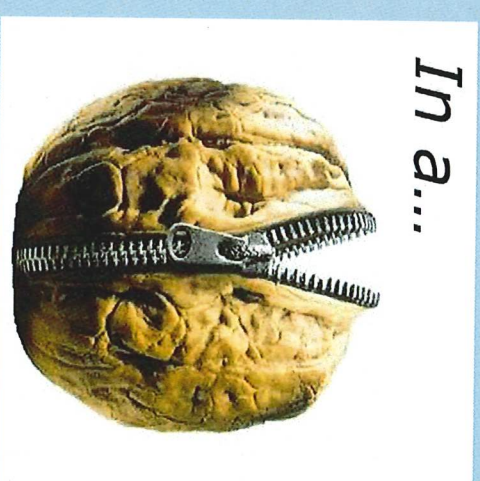
Medical Sciences Division





# Today in a Nutshell!

- Supervisor vs. supervisee
- Understanding your supervisor
- What should you *expect* from your supervisor?
- Common problems (and how best to deal with them)





**It is not that bad!!**

**T.H.E.S.I.S**

True Happiness Ended Since It Started

**We have all been there .... You are not alone!**





## Pre-Preparation is THE key

### Know your Research Area- within the first term



- Background literature review...*Introduction Chapter*
- Do you know the objectives/aims of your study?
- How will you be approaching to address this? What methodology?
- Do you need to consult a statistician before the start?
- Be prepared for “*unsuccessful experiments*” and troubleshooting
- Take it in steps and keep up-to-date with your literature review.
- Create a routine that works for you..



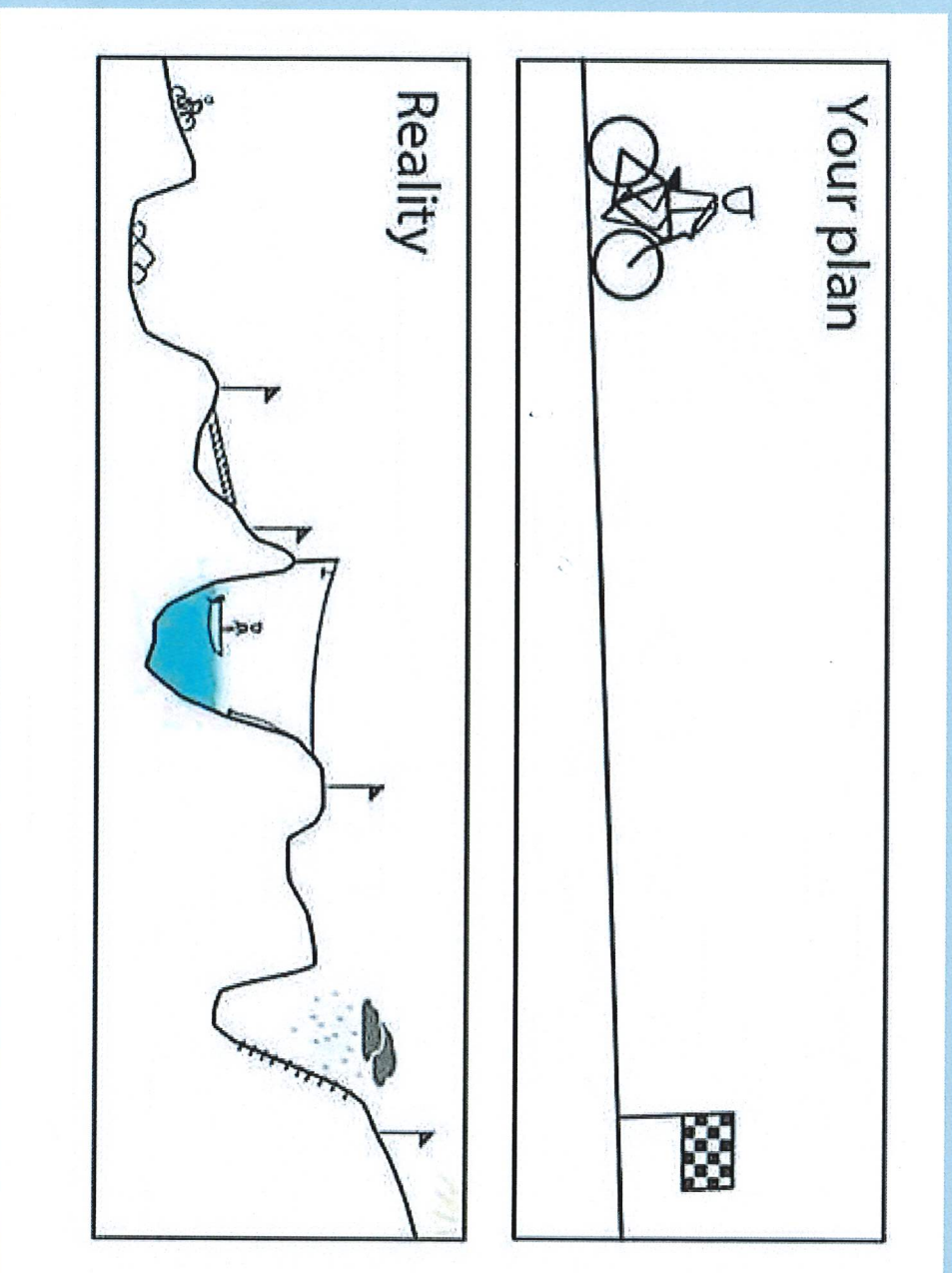
## What makes a graduate student successful?

- Perseverance (prepare for failures)
- Tenacity (persistent determination)
- Clarity (Ability to clearly articulate ideas)
- Ability to work in a team & independently
- Represent your research group





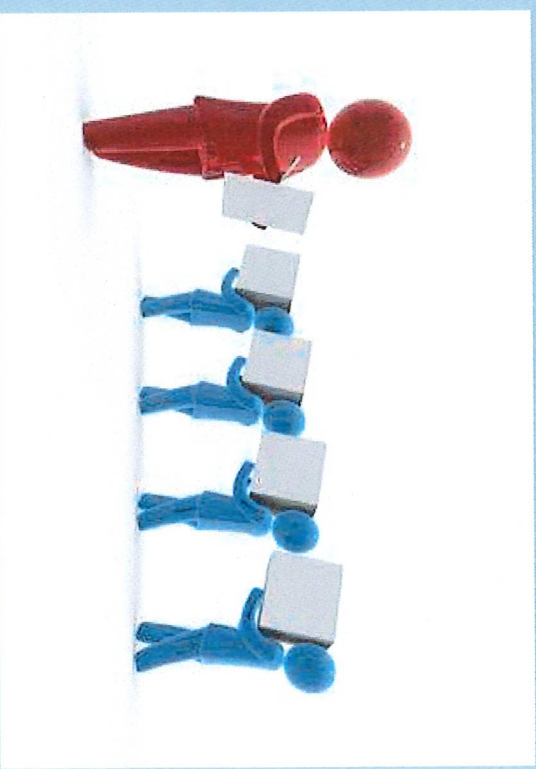
# Your Research Journey - long & hazardous ?





## What are your expectations from a Supervisor?

- ✓ Motivate
- ✓ Guide
- ✓ Direct the work/research
- ✓ Coordinate various research
- ✓ Nurture
- ✓ Monitor students' progress
- ✓ Good at time management

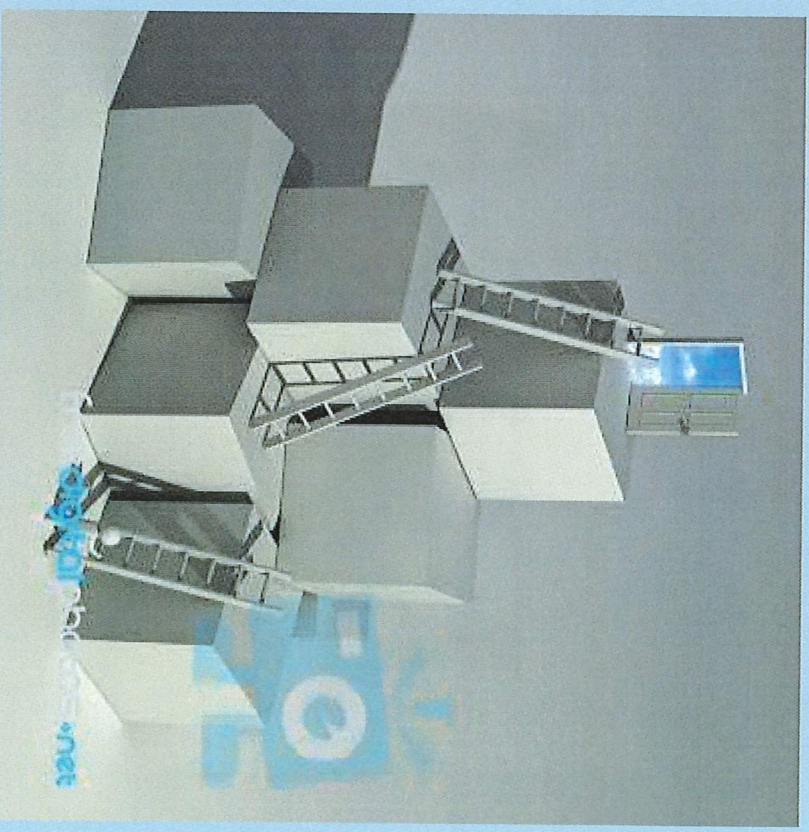




## Role of a Supervisor

- Guidance
- Mentorship
- Demonstrate the path(s)
- Be Patient
- Be Tough
- To Scaffold learning experiences

**But.....Not to write another thesis**





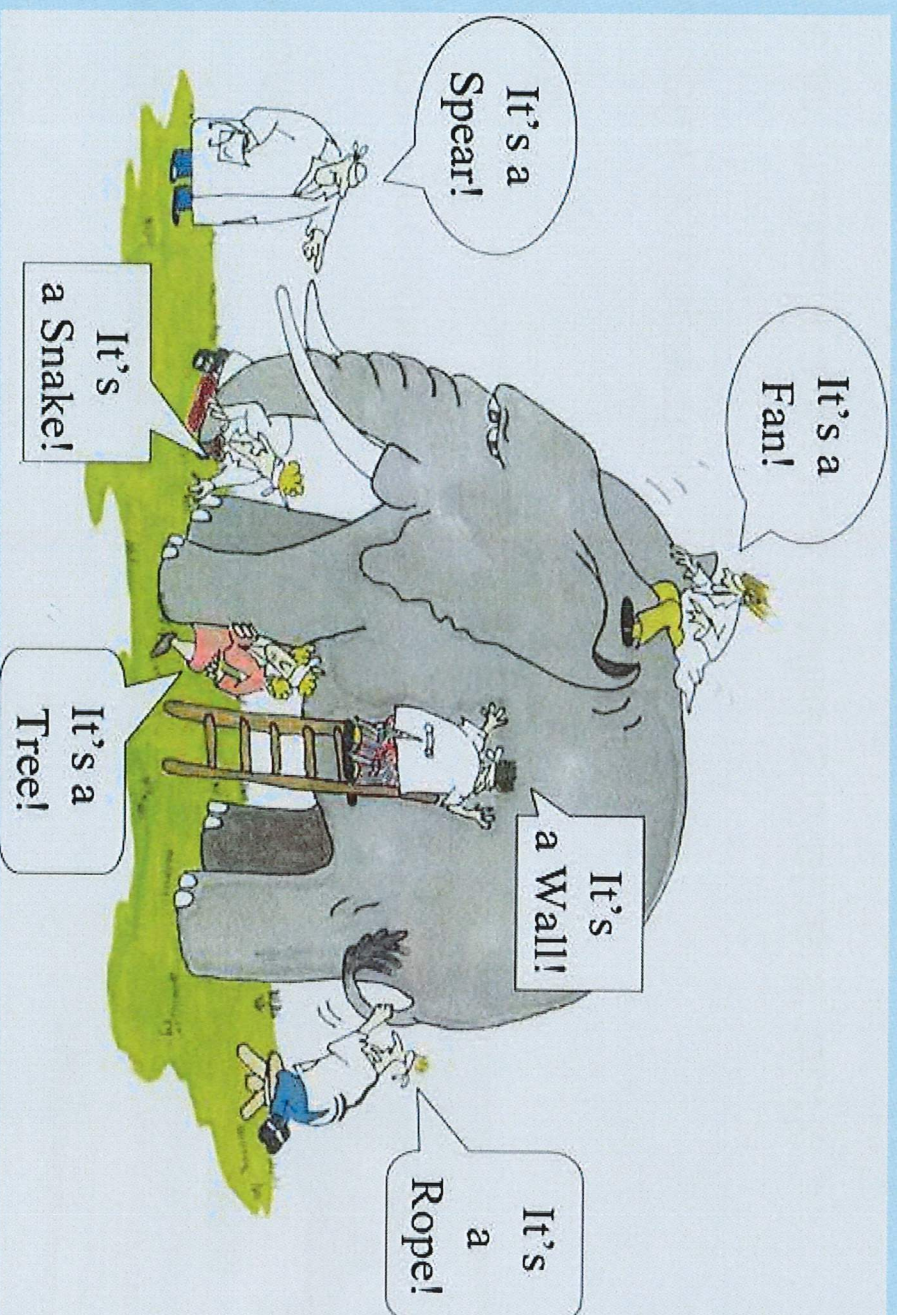
# What does your supervisor expect from you?

- ✓ Enthusiastic
- ✓ Independent thinker & worker
- ✓ Hard worker
- ✓ Able to meet deadlines
- ✓ Confident
- ✓ Resourceful & respectful
- ✓ Be able to critically appraise his/hers & others' work
- ✓ Present their research at meetings





**Remember we all have a different perception!**



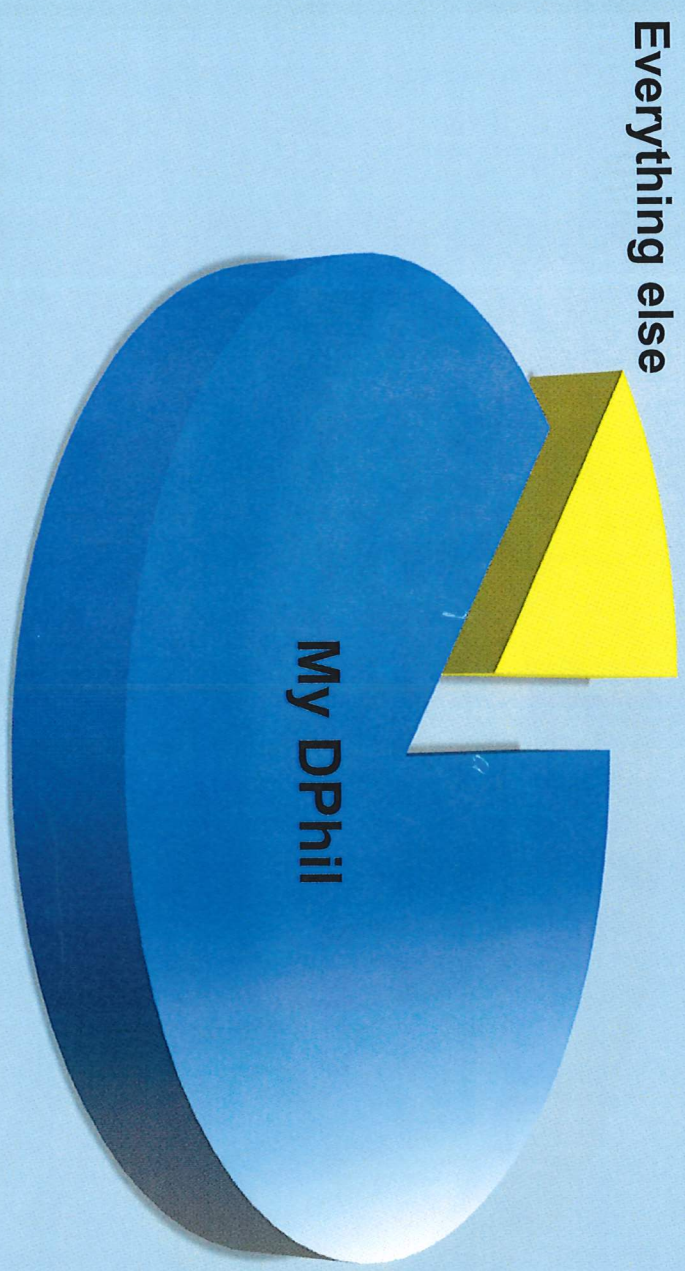
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# Student's perception





# Your supervisor's perception

Your DPhil



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# Your supervisor's other responsibilities..

*To name a few....*



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## **First six months are critical for both parties**

- Constant interaction/communication
- Setting expectations
- Day-to-day responsibilities..?
- Group & 1-2-1 meetings
- Interact with others in the group
- ‘*Search-read-write-think*’ ... to be confident on the research approach
- Attend relevant courses
- ***Remember every student’s need is different***





## Supervisor/student relationship



- It is like a marriage
- But one has to work hard at it
- Learn the strengths & weaknesses of your ‘*spouse*’ supervisor
- Both parties have to work on the “3Cs” .....

**Communicate; Compromise; Cooperate.....  
...in a contractual way**



## How does one achieve this?...Pt 1

- Discuss each other's expectations
- Regular meeting (request for weekly or at least bimonthly ones)
- Two days before meeting, e/mail written list of what needs discussing
- Take notes at the meeting and set targets and a date for the next meeting
- Send a record what was agreed & discussed
- Plan ahead & be realistic re: feedback





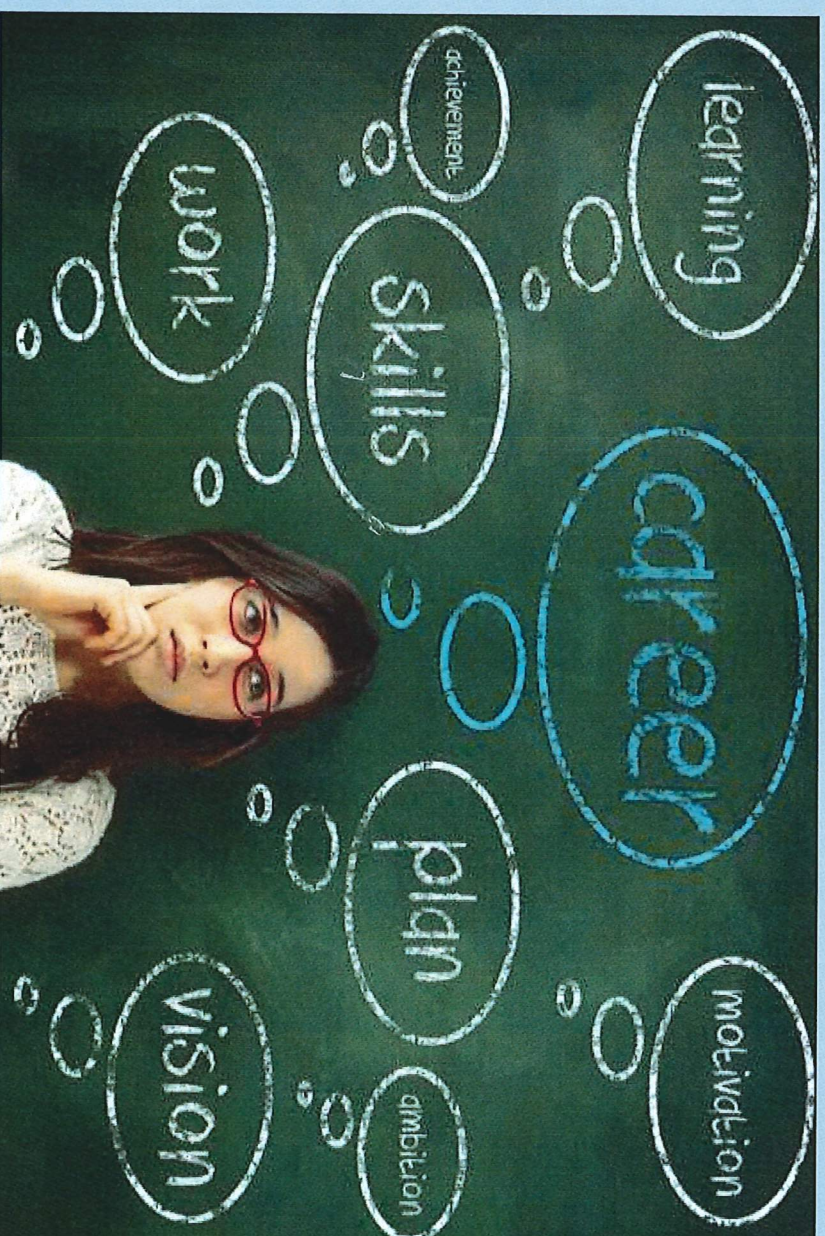
## How does one achieve this?.....Pt 2

- Get to know your supervisor
  - speak to post-docs and/or previous students...be cautious as everyone's opinion may vary!
- Know their timetable
  - PA or directly with the supervisor
- Be proactive & engaging
  - contribute to discussions & represent the team
- Don't get distracted too easily
  - social networking
- Take control
  - plan your 'thesis' and submission date!





# FOCUS & Plan ahead



Please seek help if you are very concerned!

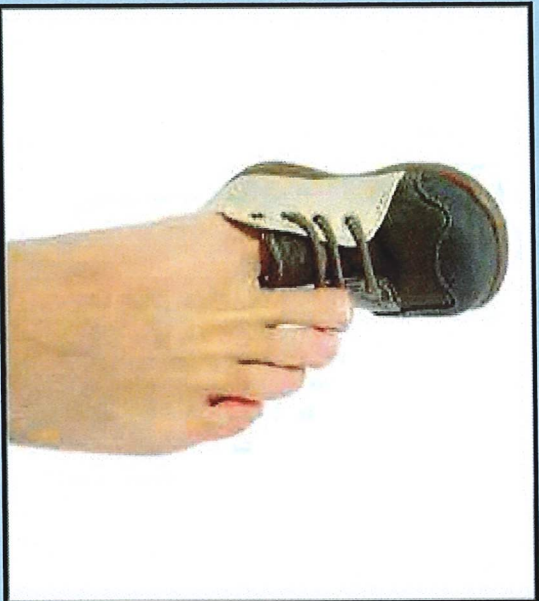
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**NB: One size does not fit all**



Students' experiences & abilities are different



## What *not* to do!

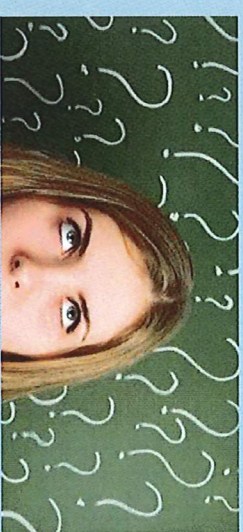
- Pester on daily basis!
- Repetition & interruption
- Not engaging at meetings
- Being late for meetings or cancelling at the last minute
- Ignoring/undermining them
- Not allowing enough time for supervisor to respond (*they need time*)
- Expecting them to organise everything
- Intellectual properties issues

**PLEASE DON'T PANICK!**





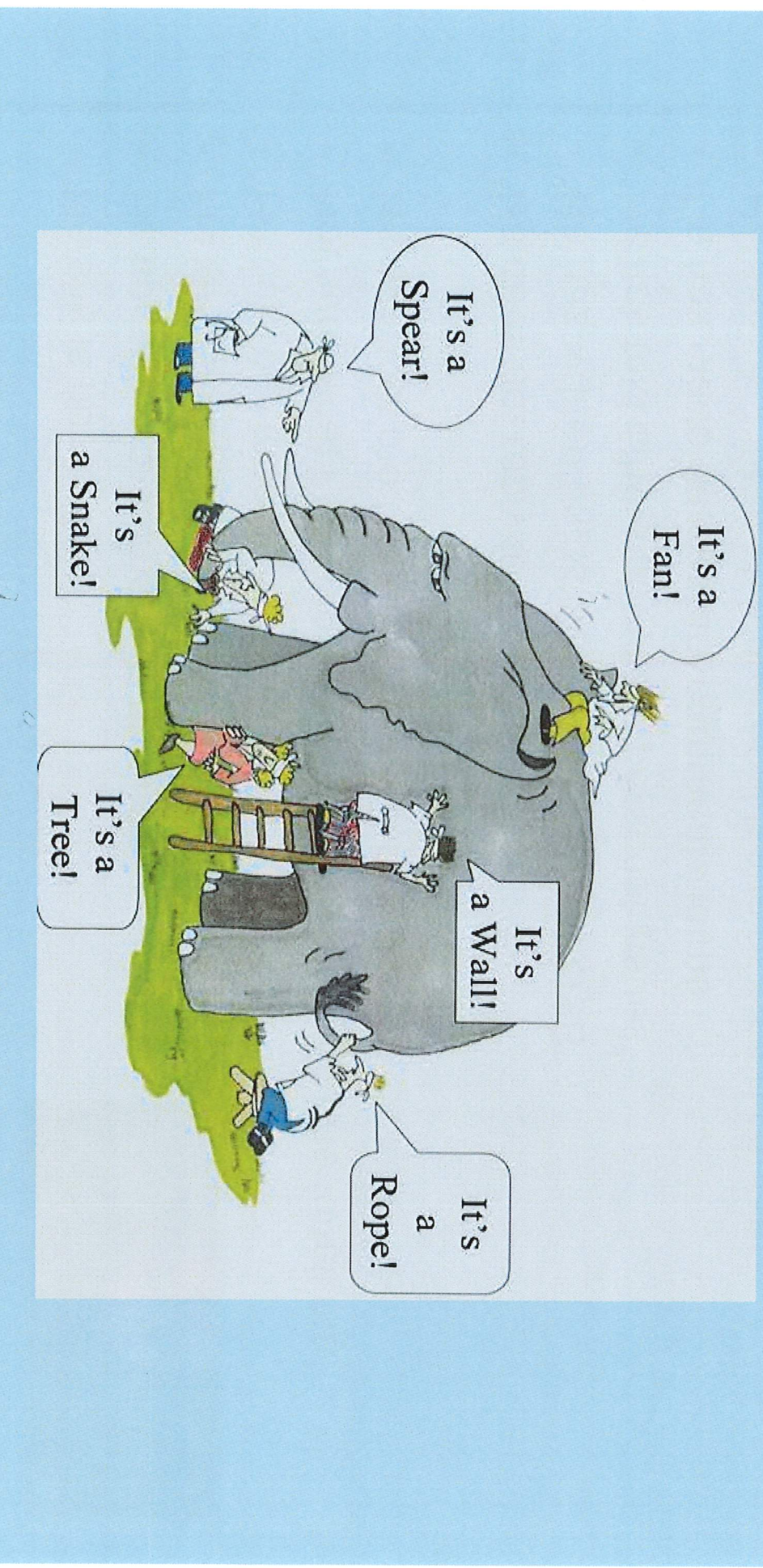
## Examples of issues raised...by students



- “He/she is never here”
- “He spends more time with student A”
- “He ignores me at the meetings”
- “He cuts our meetings short”
- “Not sure what I have to do next and there is no one to tell me”
- “He won’t let me think for myself & belittles me”
- “He does not reply to my e/mails”
- “He has written unjustified comments on GSS”
- “He has told others about my personal issues”
- “He has made derogatory comments to me”
- “He does not let me have annual leave or attend courses”



**Remember.. we all have a different perception!**



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## Examples of issues raised...by supervisors

- “He/she is never here, either “/ll” or on AL”
- “He spends more time on Facebook”
- “He doesn’t interact at the meetings”
- “He is often late for our meetings”
- “He does not reply to my e/mails”
- “He has written unjustified comments on GSS”
- “He has told others about issues which are unfounded”
- “He has made derogatory comments to me”
- “He seems to be here all the time but is unclear what he is doing”
- “I heard he has sent *my cells* to other labs without my permission or knowledge”





**Now time to discuss (play)  
some specific scenarios!**

.....





## Let's have some examples of specific issues

Please write a list of your specific concerns and we will try to address each one individually...

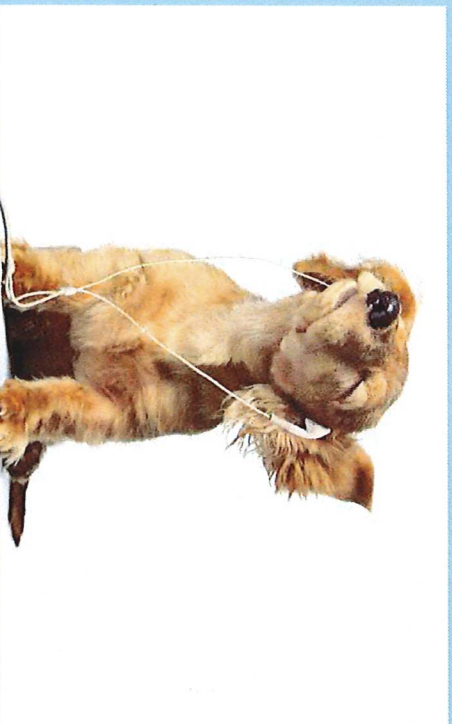
We will keep it anonymous by asking you to write as many scenarios on the card as you wish and place them in the box

If you wish to discuss your concerns (confidentially), Kevin & I will be happy to do so at the end of session, or by e/mail.





# Thinking time!



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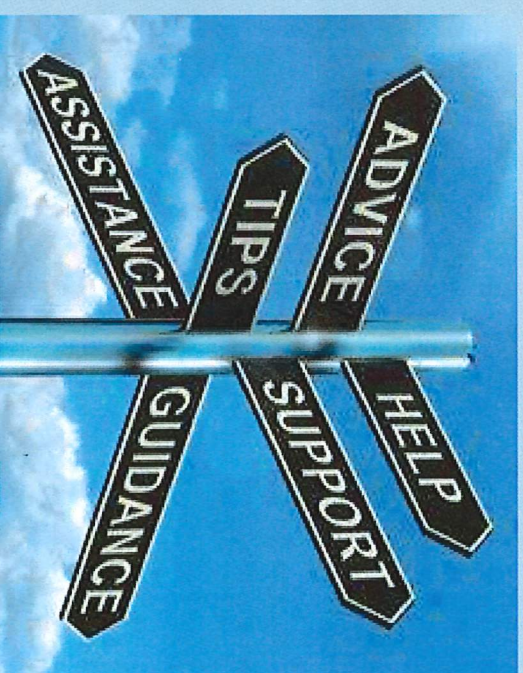


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## Where to go for advice & help?

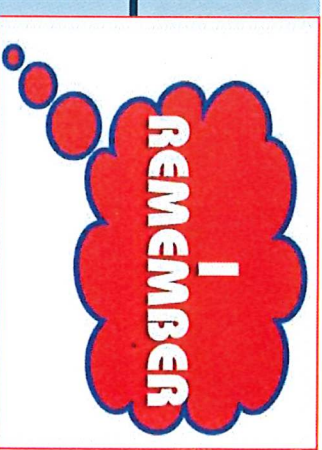
- Reflect
- Start again and re-build bridges
- Discuss the option of an additional supervisor
- DGS
- Change supervisor and/or project
- College Advisor/Senior tutor
- HoD





## Remember.....

- It is up to *both parties* to make it work
- It takes time & effort to get to know each other & build a strong relationship
- Relationship needs work, negotiation, openness, communication, trust, honesty & information...
- Although the relationship can be complex, it can be rewarding, fruitful & mutually beneficial
- Be respectful, responsive, engaging & team player
- To plan your milestones





## What is take-home message?

'Handling your supervisor ' requires:

- Patience & skills
- Commitment to 'us'...*the team*
- Mutual understanding
- Working towards the same goal
- Communicating...*without getting too personal* ..unless necessary
- Compromise by lowering your expectations (within reason).....  
...*cultural differences..can be an issue!*
- Remember your supervisor needs your help too!!!

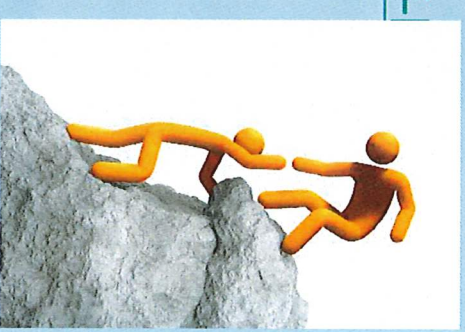




## Further Support

It is ok to ask  
for help

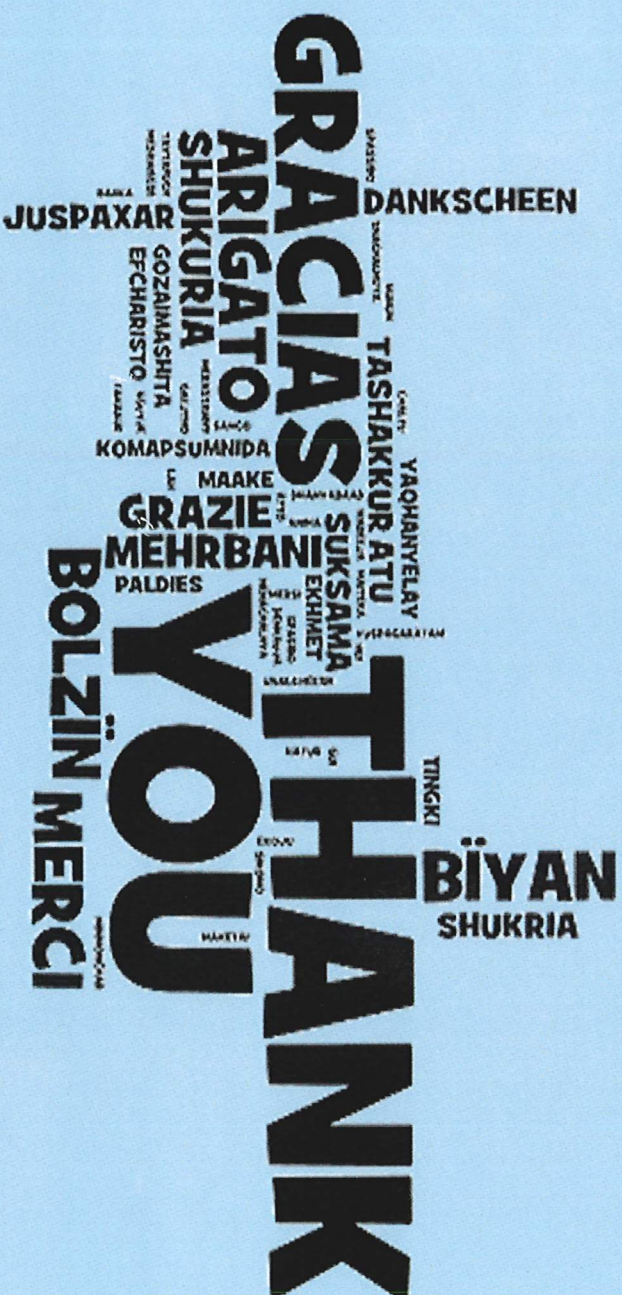
- ❖ [www.learning.ox.ac.uk/supervision](http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/supervision)
- ❖ Student-led support: Student rep, Peer Support, OUSU services & other types  
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/peer>
- ❖ Other resources  
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling/self->
- ❖ University Regulations  
<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/regulations>





**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING...**

**ANY QUESTIONS ???**



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