

PGR Tips on supervisory meetings

You will get the most out of your relationship with your supervisor by being proactive. This means managing the supervision process rather than waiting for it to happen to you. Your supervisor is likely to be grateful to you for taking the initiative and respect you for it. Here is a list of tips that can make meetings with your supervisor(s) more effective.

Set up regular meetings

By agreeing the frequency and a schedule for meetings from the beginning, meetings are more likely to take place.

Preparation

Aim to produce a written report, piece of written work or coherent set of results for each meeting. Send this to your supervisor ahead of time. This can form the basis for discussion and allow your supervisor to get a good feel for the progress you are making. Producing a piece of work to a deadline is also a potent motivator should one be needed. If you intend to discuss results ensure you think about them in advance and present ideas and hypotheses along with the data.

Agenda

Send an agenda to your supervisor before the meeting. Drawing up an agenda will focus your mind on what you want to get out of the meeting. It can help to put things on the agenda that you might otherwise find hard to bring up in the course of a conversation or are outside the normal run of things. Things you may want to discuss include how your progress compares to expectations, career options, training needs and opportunities, conference or meeting attendance, possible collaborations. Your supervisor may also have items to add.

During the meeting

Take notes during the meeting. Don't be afraid to ask questions or slow down your supervisor if need be. Equally, be prepared to explain things yourself as your supervisor can't be an expert on everything. Be honest about any difficulties you may experience. Work through the agenda you set and use it to avoid going off track.

After the meeting

Write a summary of the meeting, especially any decisions made, include any action points either of you have committed to and an agreed date for the next meeting. Send this to your supervisor to check that you have both understood the same. This will highlight any problems immediately and prevent misunderstandings in the future. Bring this document along to the next meeting to help you review progress.