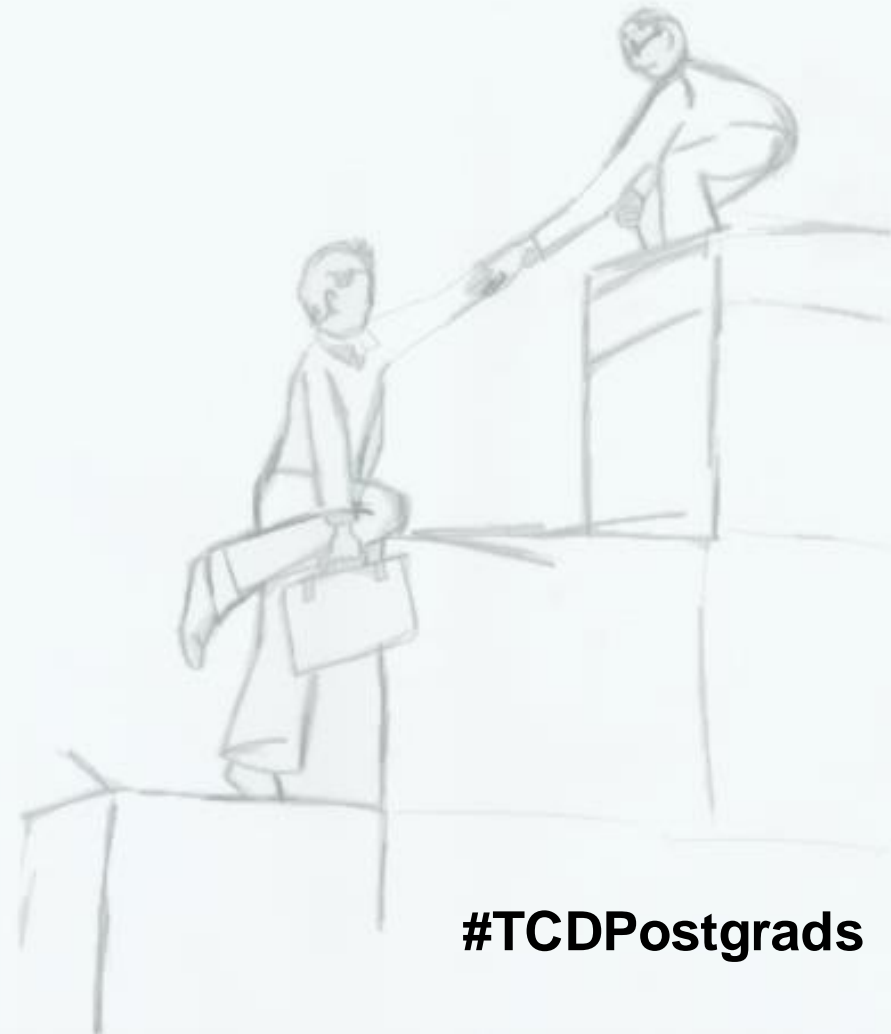


# The Supervisor-Student Relationship

Postgraduate Advisory Service  
Martin McAndrew (he/him)



[postgrad.support@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.support@tcd.ie)

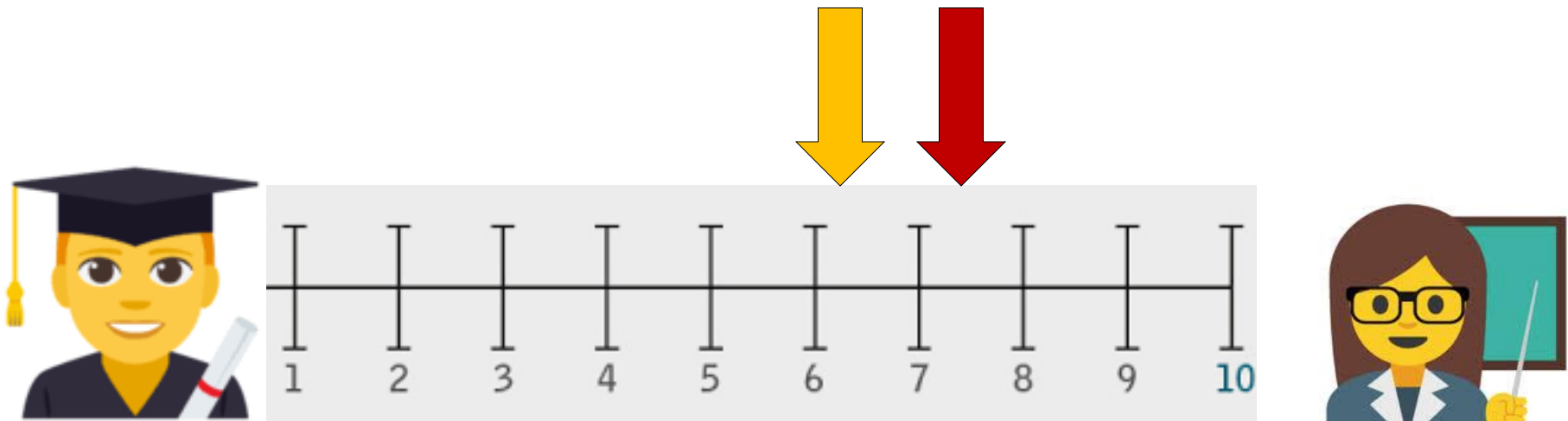


[@TCDPGAdvisory](https://www.instagram.com/TCDPGAdvisory)

[#TCDPostgrads](https://twitter.com/TCDPostgrads)

# What's different about supervision?

- What are the common concerns around supervision?
- Is there a power imbalance in the supervision relationship?



# What's different about supervision?

**Guide not a travel  
companion**

**Not an expert in  
your topic:  
You Are!**

**Academic & Professional  
Relationship  
NOT  
Pastoral & Personal**

# Let's build the ideal supervisor

Provides constructive feedback

Patient

Good communicator

Available

Friendly

Knowledgeable



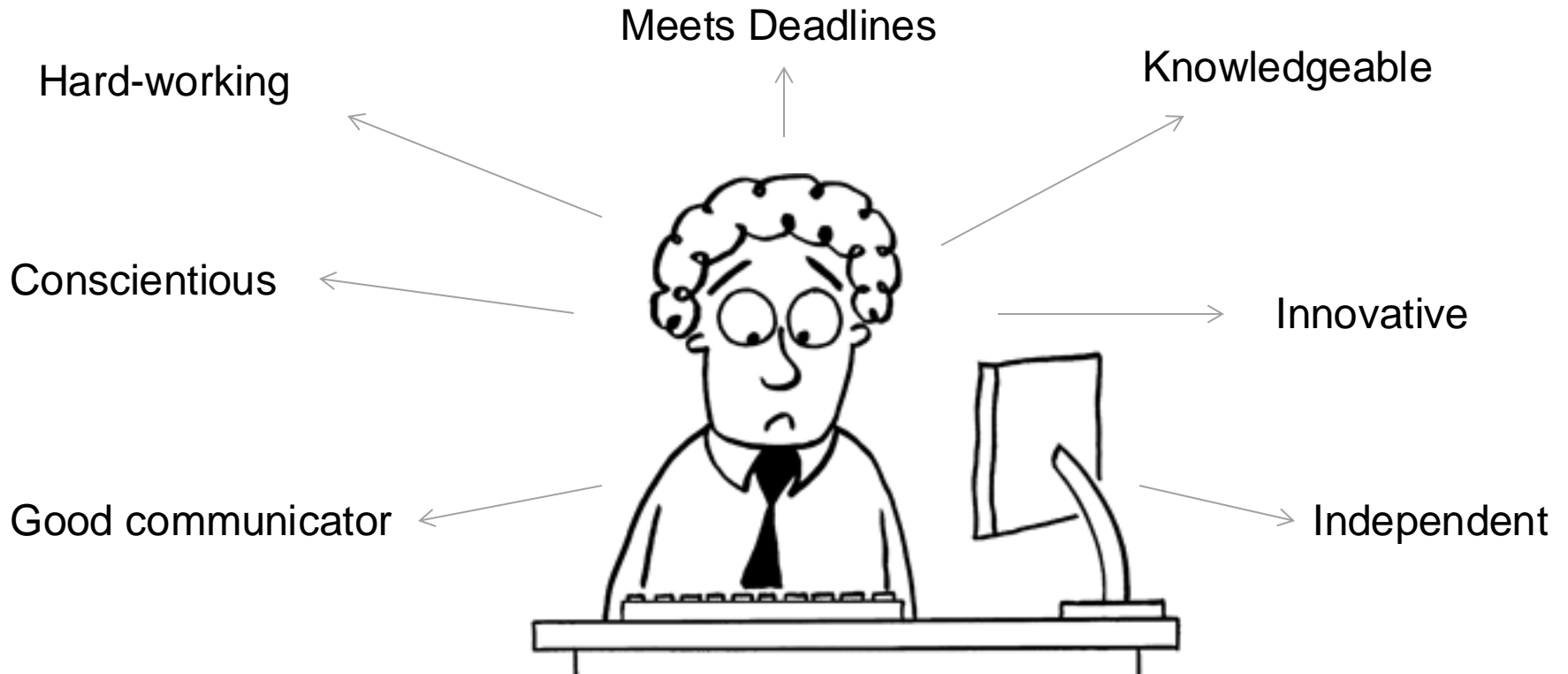
# Supervisor's Responsibilities

➤ Below is what Trinity expects of supervisors:

- **Guidance throughout**
- **Advice on quality**
- **Regular communication**
- **Regular meetings**
- **Sabbatical replacement**

- **Constructive Feedback**
- **Guidance on structure**
- **Guidance on writing**
- **Final reading**

# Are you the ideal student?



# Your Responsibilities

- **You take full responsibility for work submitted**
- **Undertake training as agreed**
- **Produce written work as agreed**
- **Ensure compliance with regulations/ethical requirements**
- **Stay in regular communication**
- **Come prepared to meetings**
- **Manage time effectively**
- **Seek support early**



**Responsibility**

# But...

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**These are the high-level guidelines**

**Structure and quality of supervision varies**

# So...

**How do you ensure that you get the most from your Supervisor?**

**What do you do if things aren't going to plan?**



# Empower yourself



# Change your perspective

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## **Supervisor as a hired consultant:**

- **Paid to guide you and answer your queries**
- **Use their expertise**
- **Make the most of their time**
- **Ask the right questions!**

**The supervisor is not the expert on your topic!**

# Be Proactive

1. Find out what to expect from them (different styles)
2. Find out what is expected of you
3. Organise and agree process, timelines, diaries
4. Tackle concerns early on
5. Take the initiative



# Know Your Supervisor

1

Before the first/ your next meeting find out:

Research **Interests**, Recent **publications**, **Experience** supervising

2

During the first/ your next meeting find out:

How much **time** they will have?

What kind of **role** does your supervisor expect to have?

3

After your next meeting decide:

**What do you need to do** to work within this paradigm?

# Know Yourself

What are you good at?

What areas need improvement?

e.g. Communication style?

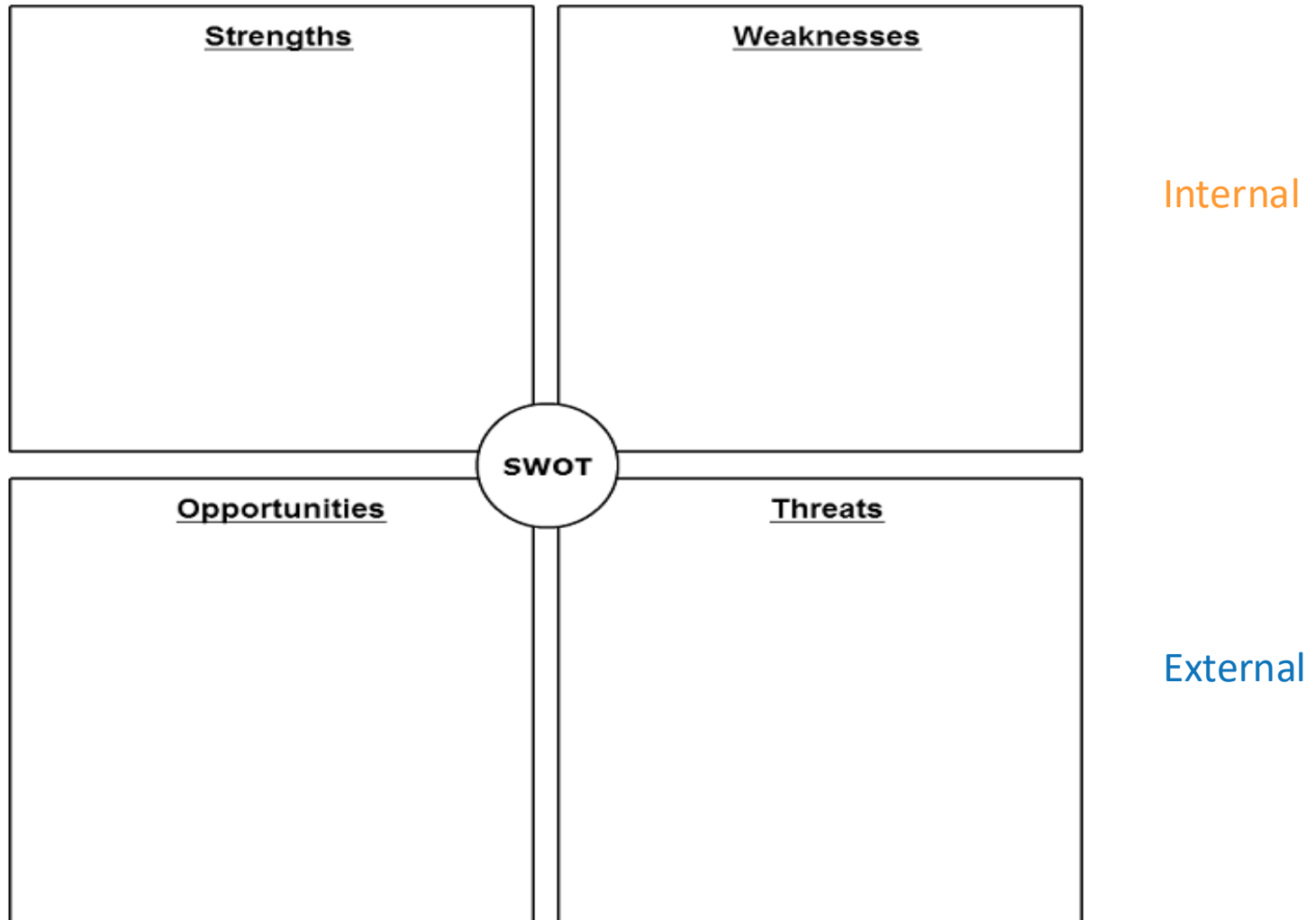
Organisation?

Training?

SWOT analysis



# SWOT Analysis



# Empowered meetings checklist

**Set the agenda beforehand**

**....ask if they have other topics they'd like to agree**



**Agree the date of next meeting at the meeting**

**....Put it in both diaries**



**Send a written recap**

**....Issues discussed, actions agreed, timelines for delivery**



**Always invite them to comment**



# Sample Agenda and Meeting Notes

Date of Supervision meeting:	1 June 2023
Agenda	Notes
Actions/ progress since last meeting	
Work submitted for this meeting	
Agreed tasks/ objectives for next meeting	
Administrative matters (taking leave, deadlines, reviews/ reports)	
Other comments	
Date/ time of next meeting	



# Communicate Professionally



- ❖ Remember, this is YOUR degree: be assertive (but not rude!)
- ❖ You can question/ disagree with your supervisor
- ❖ Some academics avoid giving ‘harsh’ criticism, so be sure to ask “is there anything else you think I need to know/ do at this stage?”
- ❖ Remember, some academics take good research/ writing for granted
- ❖ Try not to be disheartened

# Communicate Professionally

## Things it's ok... and important... to ask:

- **Clarify:** "I want to make sure I understand you completely, can you repeat that last bit about X again?"
- **Expand:** "Can you tell me a little more about what you mean when you say...X"
- **Disagree:** "I'm not sure I agree with that, let me tell you why..."
- **Ask Additional Questions:** "Is there anything else you think I need to know about the progress in general? Is there anything that I should have asked that I didn't?"
- **Next Meeting:** "Thanks again for your time, can we schedule our next meeting now, while I'm here?"

# Seek support early — you are not alone

- **Postgraduate Advisory Service – the frontline service**  
[www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate](http://www.tcd.ie/seniortutor/students/postgraduate)
- **Student's Union**
  - Welfare and Education Officers
  - Web: [www.tcdsu.org](http://www.tcdsu.org)
- **Student Counselling Service**
  - Web: [tcd.ie/Student\\_Counselling](http://tcd.ie/Student_Counselling)
- **Student Learning Development**
  - Academic Writing Centre + 1:1 sessions
  - Web: [tcd.ie/student-learning.tcd.ie](http://tcd.ie/student-learning.tcd.ie)

# So, for homework

1. Read the Research Student Handbook
2. Research your supervisor: publications, experience, etc
3. SWOT analysis:
  - What am I good at?
  - What do I need to work on?
  - What can help me?
  - What do I need to look for?
4. Further reading:
  - Rowena Murray, *How to Write a Thesis*, 2006

# Postgraduate Advisory Service

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[postgrad.support@tcd.ie](mailto:postgrad.support@tcd.ie)



Visit the [PAS website](https://www.tcd.ie/postgraduate-support/) on tcd.ie



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**Scan the QR code to  
fill in our 2-minute  
feedback survey**

**Responses are  
anonymous; no  
identifying  
information is  
requested.**

**Postgraduate Advisory Service  
Workshop Feedback 2023-24**





**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**Thank You!**

