

How to choose a PhD supervisor?

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3 components for a successful PhD

- Topic
 - Personal interests
 - Sufficient skills and background
- Supervisor
 - Skills and knowledge
 - Personal appeal
- Environment
 - People
 - Equipment
 - Funding

TRY TO FIND THE BEST COMPROMISE



An ideal supervisor

An ideal supervisor:

- Shares your research interests
- Knows answers to all your questions
- Has a pleasant personality
- Is well connected and recognized
- Always has time for you

- **IDEAL SUPERVISORS DO NOT EXIST,
YOU HAVE TO MAKE A COMPROMISE**



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: do you and your supervisor have same interests?

- Research in TUT is project-based: researchers do research on topics that they have funding for.
- Choosing PhD thesis topic is a compromise between your and supervisor's interests, expertise and resources.

BUT

- Doing PhD means finding out something new, your supervisor never knows everything
- Every PhD is a journey to unknown
- Being interested in a subject does not mean you can define a relevant research problem (yet), listen to your supervisor



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: does the supervisor know how to do research?

How to find out?

- find and read her research papers, citations to papers, research projects
- compare it to other scholars in the similar field of research



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: is your supervisor successful as a supervisor?

- How to find out?
 - How many PhDs have been previously completed under his supervision?
 - How many PhD students have dropped out (statistics not public but ask dean office)?
 - How many PhDs have completed in a timely manner?
 - What his former and current PhD students think of him (go talk and find out)?
- NOTE: young supervisors have no splendid track records but may be less busy and more motivated.



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: is the style of supervision suitable for you

- How to find out?
 - Ask the potential supervisor:
 - How is the research in the workgroup organized?
 - What support (professional and personal) can you expect to get?
 - Are there others in the group who can support you (co-supervisor, postdoc, more advanced PhD students, retired professors)?
 - Talk to current and present PhD students
 - How much they interact with the supervisor?
 - Do they feel supported



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: is the research environment suitable for you

- How to find out?
 - Will you have your own office/desk where to come to work every day?
 - Is there a well-defined research group around your supervisor with whom to discuss and change ideas or get help when you are stuck?
 - **BUT:** don't assume people will have time and knowledge to assist you with every detail, the best they can do is to help you to become independent.
 - are the work routines and work culture and values suitable for you?



IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: are there enough resources to support your studies?

- How to find out?
 - Find out if your supervisor has track record of winning and managing research grants (search in ETIS or ask R&D Dept.)
 - Ask if your supervisor can secure you sufficient income during your studies
 - With this income, can you support yourself enough to focus on research?
 - Is there appropriate equipment to conduct your research?
 - Are there recourses available for consumables, travel, books, etc?



More links on the same topic

- <http://www.cc.gatech.edu/faculty/ashwin/wisdom/how-to-choose-an-advisor.html>
- <http://www.findaphd.com/advice/finding/choosing-phd-supervisor.aspx>
- <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19726442.500-the-phd-journey-how-to-choose-a-good-supervisor.html?full=true#.VABG1Va3dgI>
- <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/10-truths-a-phd-supervisor-will-never-tell-you/3/2005513.article>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/mar/27/phd-supervisor-university-seek-help-online-communities>
- <http://everydaylife.globalpost.com/pick-phd-thesis-advisor-6461.html>

