# Individual strategies for research supervision

*Below are some strategies experienced supervisors report using with their students.*

### Ask me a question every week

> *"I try to get my students to initiate; I tell them 'if I don't see you I am going to fill my time up. I'm going to forget about you', so I want you to ask me one question that will tie me back into the project once a week." (Lee, 2008).*

### Structuring writing feedback (adaptable to hard copy or audio exchange)

Kumar & Stracke (2006) suggest that while students might view feedback as 'error correction' supervisors generally see it as a teaching/learning process, hence supervisors can encourage students to view feedback in this more active and positive way by attending to whether the feedback is:

- Referential (i.e. editorial, organisational and content comments)
- Directive (i.e. suggestions for change, questions regarding change and then instructions for change)
- Expressive (i.e. praise, criticism and opinion)

Further, to facilitate this kind of analysis, ask students to email their writing (e.g. a draft chapter, review of an article, summary of a seminar, etc.) a week before the meeting when you will discuss it. Use word-processing editing tools to insert written or audio comments and return to the student a few days before the meeting, asking the student to read over the comments and be prepared to address them (including discussing contrasting points of view).

### What did we decide? Tracking decisions and actions

In order to avoid misunderstandings and ensure clarity at meetings with researchers, provide, or ask the student to provide, within a few days of any meeting, a brief description of what was discussed, what was decided and what actions each individual is to take (see the downloadable **Meeting Summary Template** (on the ***Improving your supervisory practice*** page at http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/supervision/supervisor/improving). If anything has been overlooked or misinterpreted, it can be clarified quickly. This also provides an ongoing record when one wants to review progress or make formal reports.

### See also:

Wisker, G. (2005) *The good supervisor: Supervising postgraduate and undergraduate research for doctoral theses and dissertations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lee, A. (2008) How are doctoral students supervised? Concepts of doctoral research supervision. *Studies in Higher Education*. 33(3), pp267-281.

Kumar, V. and Stracke, E. (2007) An analysis of written feedback on a PhD thesis. *Teaching in Higher Education*. 12(4), pp461-470.