

Using the UKCGE  
Supervision Framework  
to support development  
internationally

*(‘Sustainable, affordable  
and collaborative  
approaches to experienced  
doctoral supervisor  
development’)*

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## UCL IOE response to a perceived need to strengthen doctoral supervision : semi-structured collaborative workshops

- 2021 on, a *design research* approach to a series of six (core) **online collaborative** workshops that support UKCGE Framework activity and recognition (8-20 experienced supervisor participants), drawing on UKCGE and other resources.
- Aims: support sustainable and affordable deliberate and academically informed reflection on related issues, via the establishment of a genuine ‘**professional learning community**’ (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2015). *Transference to practice* is supported by approaches adapted from Timor-Schlevin et al. (2022).
- The involvement of two external ‘critical friends’ from Egypt and the University of Johannesburg has catalysed exploration of the global accessibility of such approaches via similar locally-informed work first in southern Africa (South Africa, Namibia, Zambia) – SAUSC – and now in wider sub-Saharan Africa, and in parallel, a comparative element to the research\*.



Workshop structure 1-1.5 hours

*Please volunteer for an area that is of particular interest or use to you, and use that 30-40 minutes to lead group engagement and reflection focused around both experience and some relevant literature. Feel free to be fairly ‘straight’ or to use whatever approach you think might be stimulating for the group. Thank you!*

*Note that eventual reflective accounts are required to be ‘**personal, recent, analytical, example-based, scholarly and systematic**’.*

UKGCE 1	Introduction, overview and developing ethical researchers
	Recruitment and selection
UKGCE 2	Supervisory relationships with candidates
	Supervisory relationships with co-supervisors
UKGCE 3	Supporting candidates’ research projects
	Encouraging candidates to write and giving appropriate feedback
UKGCE 4	Keeping the research on track and monitoring progress
	Supporting candidates’ personal, professional and career development
UKGCE 5	Supporting candidates through completion and final examination
	Supporting candidates to disseminate their research
UKGCE 6	Reflecting upon and enhancing practice
	Final steps for submission

# Participant response to 1st iteration 'in' UCL

- The best professional development I've had in 17 years at IOE: challenging, refreshing, reconstructive of both thinking and practice
- It has been transformative to approach supervision with a parallel academic and professional lens
- A wonderfully supportive, stimulating and humbling experience that is already impacting my supervision practice
- I feel privileged to have had access to so much wisdom and experience: my thinking about doctoral supervision has deepened and grown, and my practice is both renewed and developing further

## *But*

- \*Time for small group discussion of a stimulus question or case study is the jewel and shouldn't be rushed
- \*I should have been more disciplined about making notes on my learning as I went
- \*Not all initial applications for recognition were successful

# 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration 'in' southern Africa

- **Induction session**
- **Stronger steer** on centrality of small group discussion/activity and limited number of slides
- Stronger steer on **making notes of reflections and experiences during and after sessions** (supports depth of writing/manageability of reflective account)
- Active listening to, and probing for, **contextual or cultural affordances and constraints** on supervision practice: most students working in a second/third/... language; institutional incentives for timely completion; early academic foundations often insecure; insufficient supply of experienced supervisors; range of doctoral assessment systems.....
- Formal opt-in structure for **'educative' peer assessment of draft reflective account** , so as to support greater formal recognition
- UKCGE fees funded by UCL International; 12 UKCGE supervisor recognitions, with at least three now reviewing new applications



3<sup>rd</sup> iteration 'in' IOE, October 2022 – March 2023

4<sup>th</sup> iteration 'in' sub-Saharan Africa, March-July 2024

- **2024:** two parallel series of workshops led by southern African colleagues holding UKCGE recognition. Fees funded by UCL GDF.
- Six further colleagues from UJ, UNAM and UNZA, plus four each from Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe – significant welcome by university leaders. Colleagues from these last are more resource-challenged, so further adaptations, e.g. to meeting platform, necessary.
- **Late 2024:** On the basis of accumulated evidence, possibly seek funding to establish an Africa-specific supervisor recognition scheme, working with AAU.
- A [book](#) (2023) 'Doctoral supervision in southern Africa: from theory to practice'
- In preparation: **Annotated bibliography** of sub-Saharan literature focused on postgraduate research supervision, at present under-recognised and under-valued in the global field.
- Longer-term plans, in conjunction with AAU.

*The model from the workshops will be of interest to all institutions that train their supervisors. This has global appeal, particularly if it is pitched towards a CPD audience – it will reach out to international higher education staff and researchers, and those involved in international research partnerships (R1)*

## *In summary...*

- Short-term benefit **to all participants, including facilitators**, in two phases: via collaborative workshop engagement with the **supervision literature in relation to** participants' **shared and analysed experiences of supervision**, and then via **reflective application of that to practice, captured** in semi-structured scholarly reflective accounts on development of practice in submission for accreditation.
- Evidence of **medium-term benefits** to students and colleagues, including through enhanced sensitivity to possibilities/issues and through job satisfaction.
- Expansion of workshops to low-resource supervision contexts and also across academic disciplines, suggests the approach is **sustainable, transferable, affordable**, and richly **beneficial to participants, doctoral students and wider doctoral communities** (Golding, 2024, IJAD in press).
- The structure and facilitation of such workshops, are not rocket science, but a confident and UKCGE-knowledgeable facilitator helps. Given the UKCGE resources, we'd suggest the approach should be transferable to other contexts with only moderate effort.





*Thank you for  
listening.*

***To what extent  
would this model  
transfer to other  
contexts?***



# The research

- ***RQ1: How can workshops be designed so as to support supervisor development in affordable and sustainable ways that also enhance mutual collaboration and learning across the contexts concerned?***
- ***RQ2 (for SAUSC): How do contextual affordances and constraints across the initial four universities involved, inform academics' supervision practices, and their reflections on, and learning about, doctoral supervision in and through such workshops?***
- ***RQ3 (for 2024 iteration): what new contextual and cultural constraints/challenges are evident in wider sub-Saharan rollout? How can those be addressed?***
- ***Data collection:*** workshop recordings, participant end of intervention survey, interviews with key personnel probing workshop experiences and learning
- Focused initially around structure, people organisation, reported practices and content, but comparative interview elements around Halse & Malfroy's (2010) dimensions of supervision (the learning alliance, habits of mind, scholarly expertise, technê and contextual expertise), as well as Bruce & Stoodley's (2013) categories of supervision-as-teaching (promoting the supervisor's development, imparting academic expertise, upholding academic standards, promoting learning to research, drawing upon student expertise, enabling student development, venturing into unexplored territory, forming productive communities, and contributing to society).
- ***Analysis:*** reflexive thematic within the above themes

# Challenges with achieving UKCGE recognition

- Some (UCL and African) experienced and successful supervisors assumed the application was a formality, and needed to re-submit with a more carefully-crafted account
- Some southern African colleagues, even after participating in the peer review process, found it difficult to be genuinely reflective about their practice, and constructively critical about the norms with which they work, so were not able to follow initial feedback on draft applications and needed a resubmission to achieve that deeper reflection. That is indicative of cultural norms in the universities concerned, so that accreditation represents a very significant achievement for many of these colleagues. Current workshops in SSA will need very careful attention to building up the notion of active reflection on practice.