

Transcript: KEY COMPONENTS OF REMOTE SUPERVISION (Dr. Bryan Hogeveen)

BRYAN HOGEVEEN: “A question many supervisors are asking today is, what are key strategies that will help me support my graduate students during the COVID 19 pandemic? In this video, I will offer some advice I hope you find useful.

“Hi, I am Bryan Hogeveen, Vice Dean in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research – criminologist, father, coach and very amateur cyclist. I am here to offer you a few key mentorship tactics.

“We are living in truly unprecedented times. This has professors seeking answers and Universities struggling to find creative solutions to these emerging issues.

“Graduate students are fundamental to the academic and teaching mission of the University. In this way, it is imperative that we start to knit together a comprehensive fabric of support.

“Let’s start here – mentorship does not begin and end in course work, or for that matter, research. As a supervisor you oversee their professional, intellectual and personal development. Ideally characterized by mutual respect, excellent communication, connection and trust, this is one of the most important relationships your students will have. And, all of this holds true whether you are mentoring remotely or in person.

“You may be asking, how do I possibly ensure all of this at a time like this? Exceptional mentorship can continue today, and, I would bet that you will want to carry forward some of these bits of advice. Let’s get going with some help with your pandemic mentoring puzzle.

“First, your role has not changed. You are still a mentor and coach. What has changed is the site. While gone are spontaneous meetings in the hallway, lab or office; effective and meaningful communication can continue. Try to be flexible and intentional. Have a plan for when, how often and the medium for conversation and check-ins.

“Second, create spaces for collaboration. You may be working together on a project or want to have a place for your students to store their work and files. Graduate education is collaborative. By now, you will likely have a preferred video conferencing platform, but you may not yet have explored collaboration applications. Some of my favourite free picks include google sites, dropbox and trello. Add your favourites to the comment section below.

“Third, and this perhaps should have come first. What do you expect from your students? What can they expect from you? How do you prefer to be contacted? How often do you prefer to meet? How long will it take for you to provide feedback?

“Setting clear and reasonable expectations from the outset will provide your students with direction, and will go some way in avoiding future conflict. Have continuing students? No problem, start having these important conversations today.

“Next, many graduate student research projects have been halted or interrupted during the pandemic. It is important at this time to be creative, flexible and open to other research

opportunities. You can, at the same time, use this as an opportunity to develop other skills. The FGSR has developed a document that speaks to this that we will link below.

“Fifth, during this time of isolation and physical distancing, many students are feeling disconnected from their friends, colleagues, the University and, often, from themselves. In this ethos, creating meaningful connections is a top priority.

“You can assist by fostering a sense of connection to your research team and to the University. Hosting virtual water coolers or a mocktail hour (I said MOCK-tail) is a keen way to create connections between graduate students you supervise. Creating virtual communities or pointing your students to existing ones is a way for them to broaden their connections. Whatever the case, be sure to frequently check-in, ask about how they are doing and about their physical and mental well-being.

“Finally and connected to the previous, find creative ways to celebrate successes and passing milestones. You can simply recognize the accomplishment during a team video call or, if you want to go to the next level, throw an online party. Whatever way you choose, recognizing accomplishments reinforces connections, builds confidence, and boosts motivation toward achieving the next milestone.

“That’s it for now, but not in any way an exhaustive list.

“I encourage you to contribute to the conversation by adding to the comments below. Let us know what topics you would like more information on and how we can assist you in supporting your graduate students in this unprecedented time.

“Stay safe and stay connected.”