

# Potential and pitfalls of the PGR journey

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# Session Aims

## **Part 1:**

- **Reflect on a PhD in the UK and how studies might be approached**
- **Some suggestions to engage with the wider research community**

## **Part 2:**

- **Reflect on the supervisory relationship**
- **Consider how to respond to particular issues that may occur in the supervisory relationship**

# **Two questions**

- 1. How is a PhD different from doing a Master's degree?**
- 2. How might you wish to approach your PhD?**

# **A PhD can be thought of as... (Pauline's thoughts)**

- **A journey –intellectual and personal**
- **A project – rather than a life's work**
- **An apprenticeship**
- **A contribution to knowledge i.e. to furthering the academic literature that is novel & rigorous**
- **Developed by you, rather than your university or programme or supervisor**

# **A PhD can be thought of as... (Tanja's thoughts)**

- Developing expertise in critical analysis and methodological rigour**
- The opportunity to focus in depth on important societal issues and develop one's own research agenda**
- Gaining exposure to new methods and an interdisciplinary outlook**
- Engage collaboratively with others to address key future challenges**

# **How to approach your PhD... (Pauline's thoughts)**

**As an opportunity to:**

- **Meet and connect with others with your research interests**
- **Find and engage with your academic communities in Manchester but also further afield**
- **Learn to be a researcher – broad based as well as specific**
- **Try things out and get things wrong**
- **Develop all kinds of employable skills – time management, project management, personal reflection, independent learning, research.**
- **A time for personal and intellectual growth**
- **Learn to know yourself better**

# **How to approach your PhD... (Tanja's thoughts)**

- **Looking for relevant research training opportunities at the whole university (and beyond)**
- **Constant reflection – do not act as if you know the conclusion to your PhD already**
- **Openness to co-authorship, project proposals, working with a broader team outside of your supervisory team and beyond academia**

# **Frequently seen challenges**

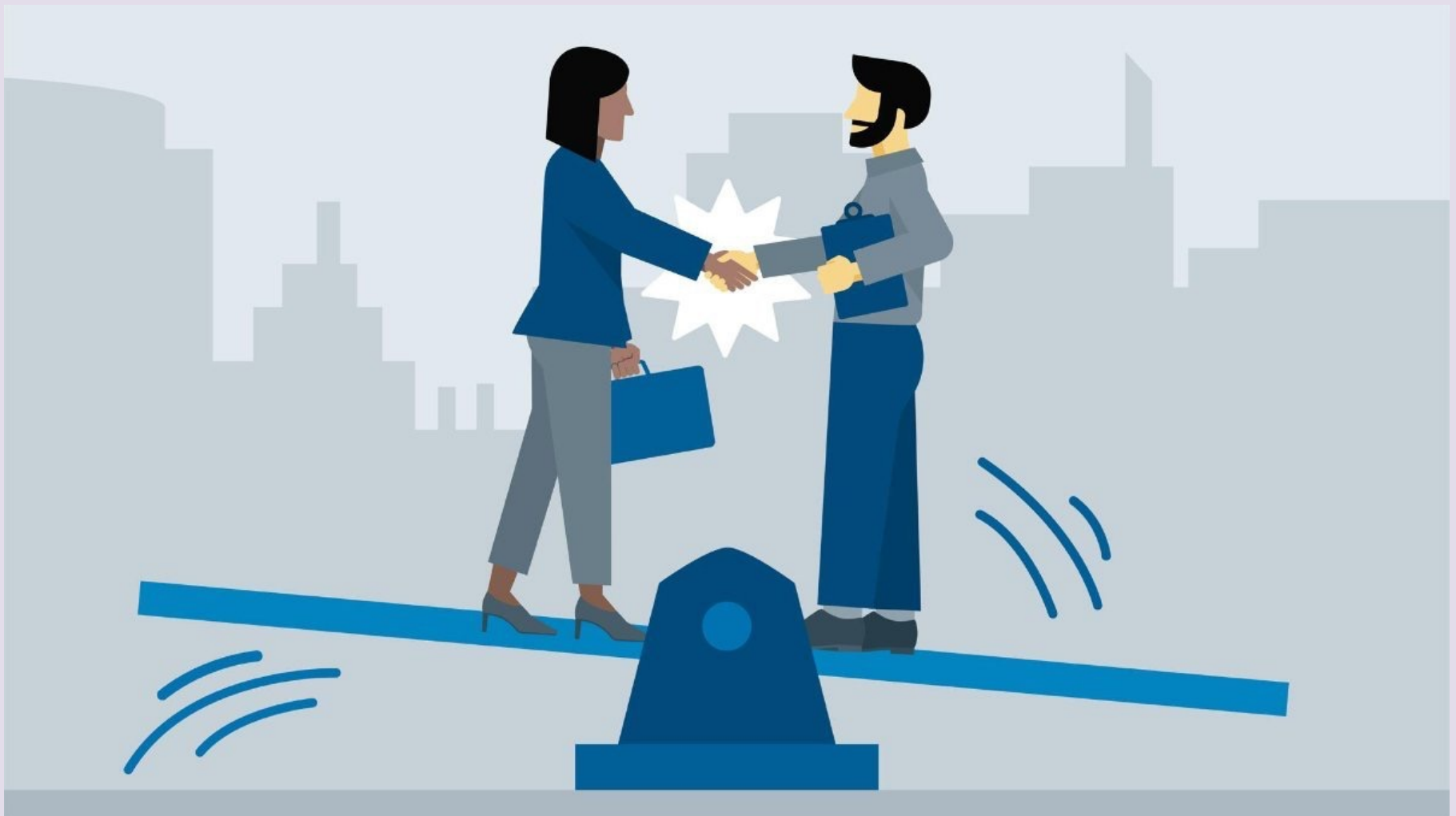
- **Time management and motivation**
- **Avoiding seeking support when necessary**
- **Feeling of not knowing what one is doing**
- **Forming a community while PhD is also a lonely adventure**
- **Supervisory issues (up next...)**



# **Engaging with and beyond your PhD cohort**

- **External training Funds**
- **Conference Funds**
- **Fieldwork support**
- **PGR Conference**

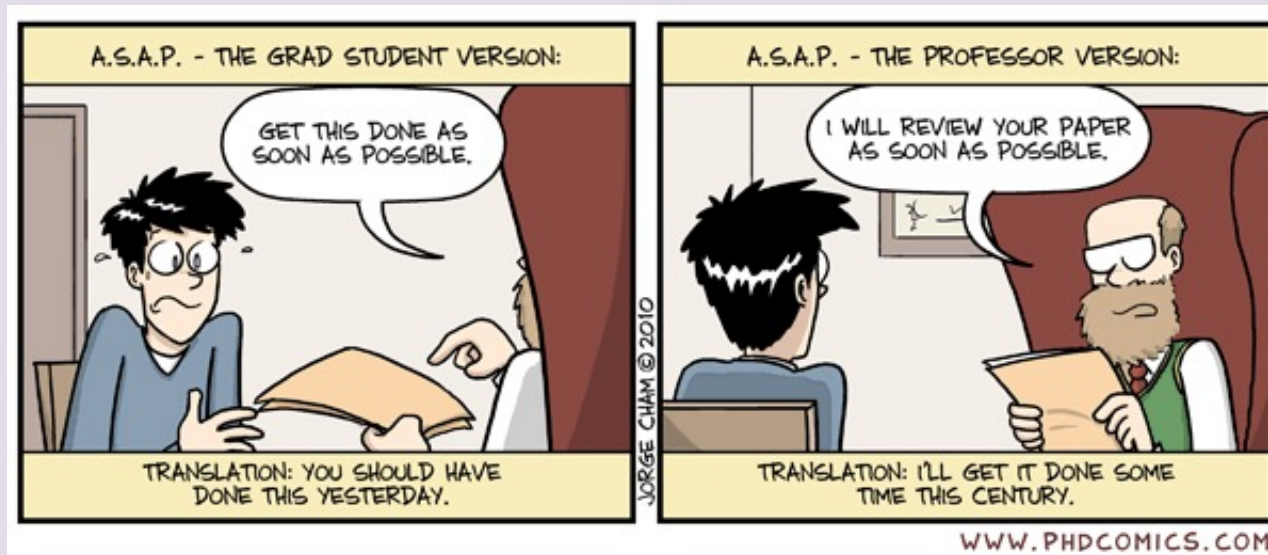
# Supervision as a negotiation



# **Common supervisory issues**

- **Mismatched expectations**
- **Unclear expectations**
- **Lack of communication**
- **Personality clashes**
- **Clashes between supervisors**

**Scenario 1:**  
**The PhD researcher sends a piece of writing to the supervisor for feedback, but doesn't receive a response and it has been over a month.**



## Scenario 2:

**The PhD researcher hasn't met with their supervisor in over a month and the supervisor isn't responding to emails.**



# Scenario 3: The PhD researcher's supervisor has forgotten crucial details about their research project (again!).



## Scenario 4:

The PhD researcher has left a supervision meeting and isn't quite sure what they should take away from it.



**Scenario 5:  
The PhD researcher's two  
supervisors have given  
opposite or conflicting advice.**





# **Pick one (or a few) in your group to discuss:**

- 1. Writing sent to supervisor but no response**
- 2. PGR hasn't met with supervisor for a while and they aren't responding**
- 3. Supervisor has forgotten crucial details about the project**
- 4. PGR has left the supervision meeting confused about what to do next**
- 5. PhD researcher's two supervisors are giving conflicting advice**

# **No feedback on writing: Some suggested solutions**

- Ask for a timeframe when feedback will be submitted in one of your first meetings**
- Agree to a deadline for feedback and advance submission at the start of your PhD**
- Give advanced warning that a piece of writing is coming if no regular submission schedule is agreed**

# **No response at all from supervisor: Some suggested solutions**

- **Set regular meeting dates for the next semester or year in advance**
- **Always plan the next meeting date at the end of the current meeting**
- **Go knock on their door to request a meeting**
- **Talk to the DCO if an intervention is needed**

# **When your supervisor forgets crucial details about your project**

## **- Some suggested solutions**

- Share a written summary after each meeting (in general good practice, ideally record on eProg)**
- Send a short summary before each meeting**
- Make an itinerary for the meeting and send it beforehand**
- Start every meeting with a recap**

# **Not knowing what to take away from supervision meeting - Some suggested solutions**

- Ask for explicit objectives at the end of the meeting: 'What should I do before we meet again?'**
- Send a summary of the meeting and ask the supervisor to review it for accuracy**
- Send a list of objectives for the next meeting and ask the supervisor if this is correct**
- Email the supervisor and ask for clarification**

# Conflicting Advice: Some suggested solutions

- Take both on board, but ultimately you need to make your own decision! **DO NOT FORGET: THIS IS YOUR PhD**
- Investigate both sides and develop good evidence for your decision

**QUESTIONS ???? ?**

