DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT LEARNING THROUGH UNDERGRADUATE SUPERVISION

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1 | CONTEXT

The Research Project (RP) is a capstone module on many undergraduate courses. While varying in length and credit weighting, RPs share common characteristics, including: (1) the requirement of the learner to define the project; (2) the inclusion of a substantial research component; and (3) an in-depth engagement with the chosen topic (Todd et al, 2004). The RP provides a valuable opportunity for students to develop Independent Learning (IL) skills (Rowley & Slack, 2004).

2 | THE CHALLENGE

The RP supervisor plays a key role in supporting the development of IL skills (Longcroft & Pratt-Adams, 2020). However, observations of the NBS RP and literature show that:

C1: Students struggle to transition from directed learning to the autonomous learning characteristic of supervisions (Roberts and Seaman, 2018a).

C2: Absence of rapport, trust and empathy can limit the development of student confidence and help-seeking behaviours (Roberts and Seaman, 2018a)

C3: Discrepancies in student-supervisor expectations and support provision can negatively impact on the development of autonomy and IL skills (Del Rio et al, 2018; Figure 1).

C4: The role adopted by, and attributed to, the supervisor "influences the acquisition of autonomy-related skills" (Del Rio et al, 2018: 136). An ongoing paternalistic role can limit the development of IL skills (Mackinnon, 2004; Malcolm, 2020).

C5: Supervision is a complex and dynamic process. There is limited guidance to support staff to develop the skills required. Supervisors rarely share their experiences of supervision (Rowley and Slack, 2004; Roberts and Seaman, 2018b).

3 | AIM

To investigate the extent to which the interventions listed in section 4 address the challenges identified and, through this, help students to develop the IL skills. [Scan QR code below for objectives]

CONTRIBUTION

Little focus on UG supervision when compared to post-graduate. Adds to limited literature and guidance on the dynamics of UG supervision and how these link to IL skills (Malcolm, 2020).

4 | THE INTERVENTIONS

C1 → **Student induction:** Seminar introducing the process, expectations and challenges of supervision.

C2 → **Supervisor induction:** Time in first supervision to discuss research interests

C3
C4 → **Co-production of student-supervisor agreement:** Time in first supervision to discuss: (1) student and supervisor expectations; (2) how the supervisor role will change over time; (3) student concerns and anxieties about the RP. Ongoin discussions about changing roles to maintain transparency

C5 → **Supervisor workshop:** Including: (1) introduction to supervision process; (2) discussion about supervisor expectations and how these align with the needs of the student cohort; (3) opportunities to share experiences and challenges.

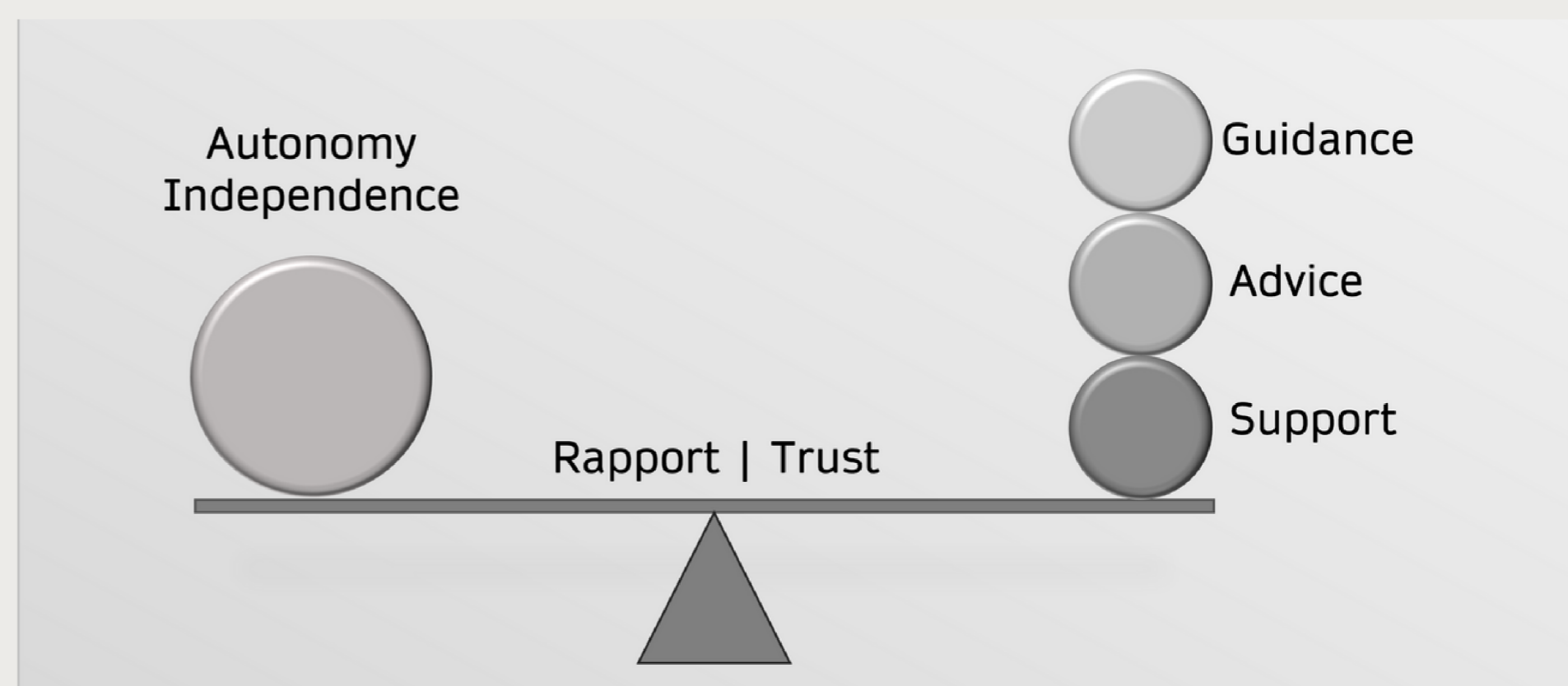**Supervisor handbook:** Outlining key responsibilities, including research ethics and assessment.

Figure 1: Delicate balance of supervision

5 | DATA COLLECTION

Observations of student induction and supervisor workshops.

Focus groups with supervisors and students to assess the success of the interventions.

The following data will be analysed to assess the extent to which the interventions supported the development of IL skills: (1) Completion of formative assessments; (2) Number of extension requested for formative and summative assessments; (3) Number of supervisions attended. [Scan below for detail]

REFERENCES, FURTHER DETAIL & FEEDBACK
Scan QR code