

The commandments of experienced supervisors

A summary of the corporate supervisor's role in thesis projects.

Show and share interest

Showing genuine interest in the thesis increases the student's motivation to succeed. It becomes much easier when you share an interest in the topic or problem the thesis is built on, which may mean being involved in developing the idea and recognizing the need for the problem to be solved. When you share this engagement, supervision also becomes easier and feels more natural.

Be supportive and develop a relationship

Try to get to know the student and focus on building a relationship where the student dares to ask when something feels difficult. Clearly show that mistakes and setbacks are okay and a natural part of the degree project. Try to encourage and motivate the student in both successes and setbacks. Practice giving forward-looking and constructive feedback adapted to the student's characteristics and needs.

Openness and flexibility

The goal of the degree project should be clear, but there can be different ways to reach it. The research questions are formulated together with the student and will likely evolve during the process. Students differ in skills and characteristics, so you may need to adapt your supervision, for example to their level of independence. You cannot expect a specific method or outcome. A good approach is to let the student's ideas and interests drive the project forward.

Be available to the student

It doesn't have to be time-consuming. Being available can mean regular and structured conversations to discuss the work and answer questions. It also means clearly showing that the student is not an inconvenience and that their questions are welcome. Daily communication in some form is often enough, and being physically nearby, for example, working in the same lab environment or sitting close by in the office, can make a big difference.

Introduction and inclusion

Inform the manager and colleagues that a student is joining the team, and encourage them to support the student throughout the project by sharing their time and knowledge. Introduce the student to relevant people in the company and create opportunities for them to connect with others. Try to include the student in the work environment in various ways, for example by allowing the student to participate in selected meetings.

Clear and attentive communication

Every student, thesis project, and collaboration with a university is unique. Regulations and practices differ between institutions, and students have varying needs and abilities. Make sure to listen actively, discuss openly, and clarify the structure, expectations, and shared goals - especially at the beginning of the project, but also continuously as the work progresses.

Would you like to read more? Take a look at the full guide "Supervising Student Theses - A guide for Companies" from BioInnovation.