

Finding a Supervisor

For attendees of the ARiEAL Learning Series

Created by:

Rachelle Ho, Chia-Yu Lin, Kelly Nisbet, Chelsea Whitwell

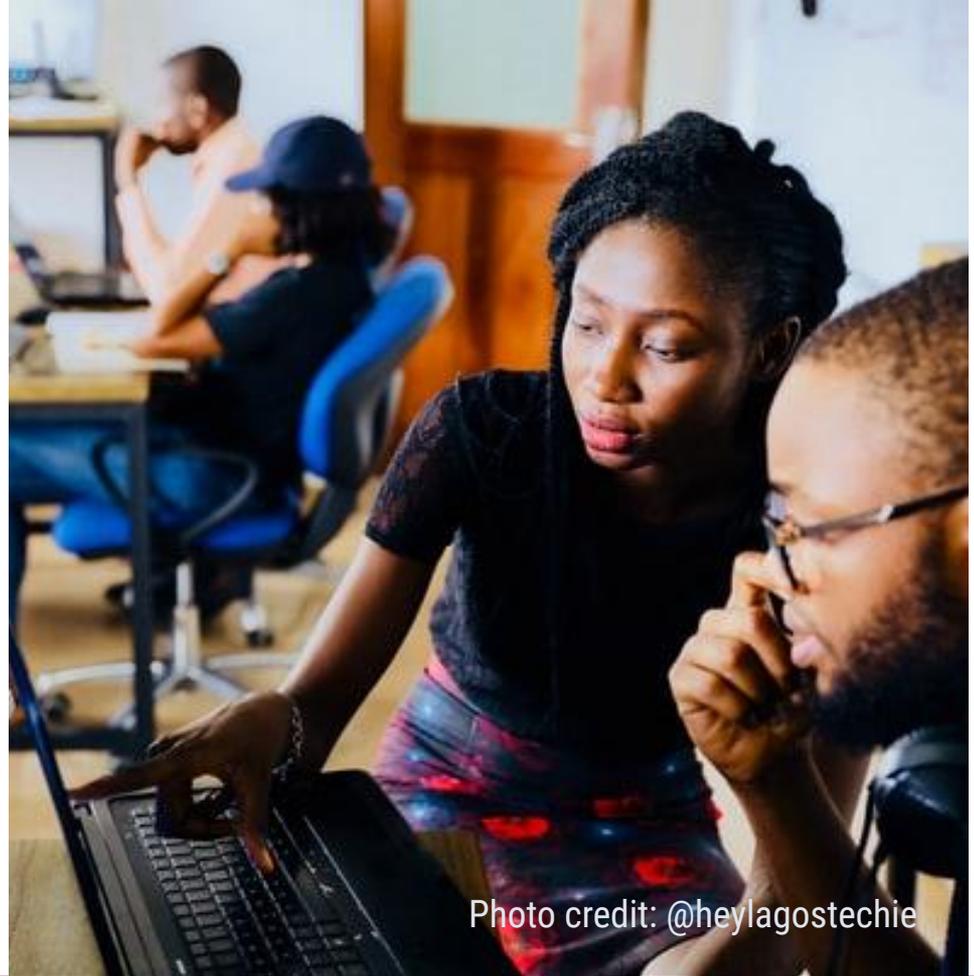
Funded by:

Student Partners Program, MacPherson Institute, Winter 2021

ARE YOU ASKING...

- What is a supervisor? Do I need one?
- What programs require a supervisor?
- How do I find potential supervisors in a domain that I'm interested in?
- How do I contact a potential supervisor?
- What traits should I look for in a supervisor?
- What questions should I ask a potential supervisor?

What is a *supervisor*?
Do I need one?



What is a *supervisor*?

Do I need one?

A supervisor's role is...

- To adhere to the University standards
- To mentor you through your academic journey
- To prepare you to a professional in your field (e.g., if you are a clinical researcher, that might mean learning to work with patients)
- You can look at the University website/Program website for detailed information on what an advisor is expected to do for your particular institution.
- Your program determines if you need one!

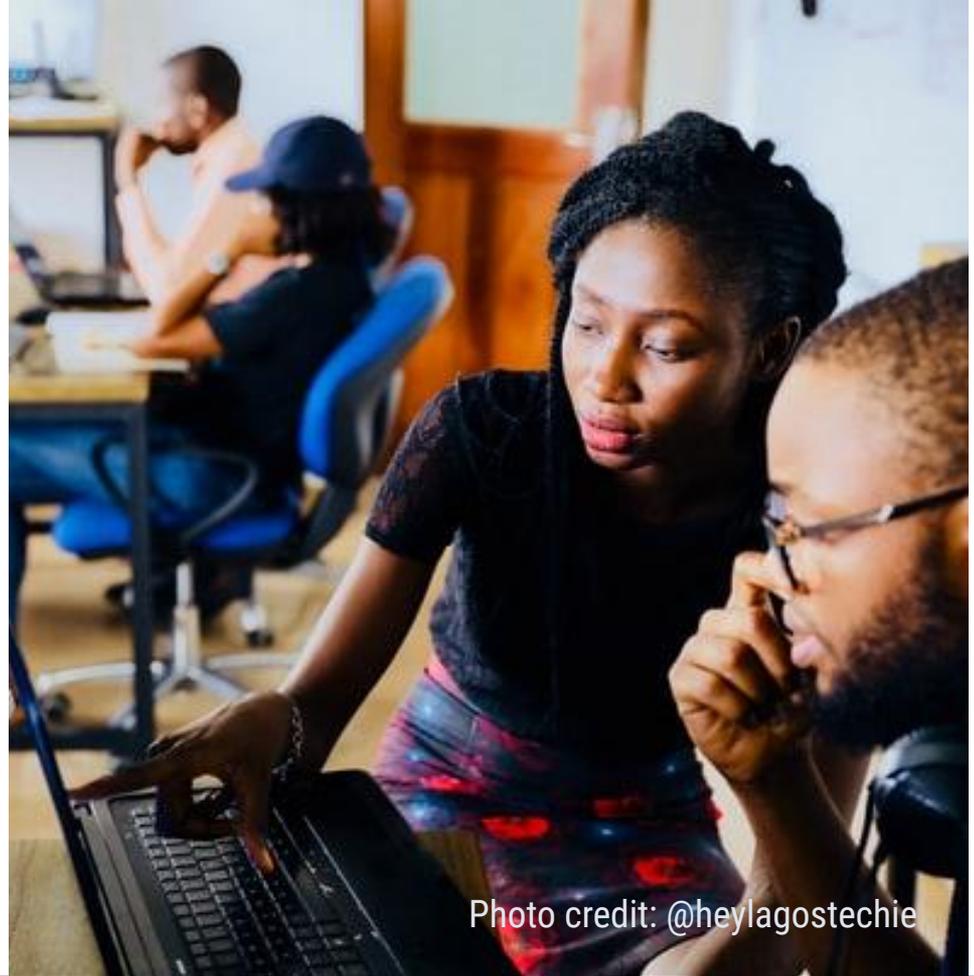


Photo credit: @heylagostechie

What programs require a supervisor?

- Most research-based programs require a supervisor
- Some course-based programs have small/course-based research projects that might require an advisor.
- Check the program / department website to determine if you need a supervisor to stay in the program!
 - Some programs allow you to choose a supervisor after admission.



Photo credit: LinkedIn Sales Solutions

How do I find potential supervisors in a domain I am interested in?

Tips from [McGill University](#):

1. Browse the program pages
2. Create a short-list
3. Think “laterally”

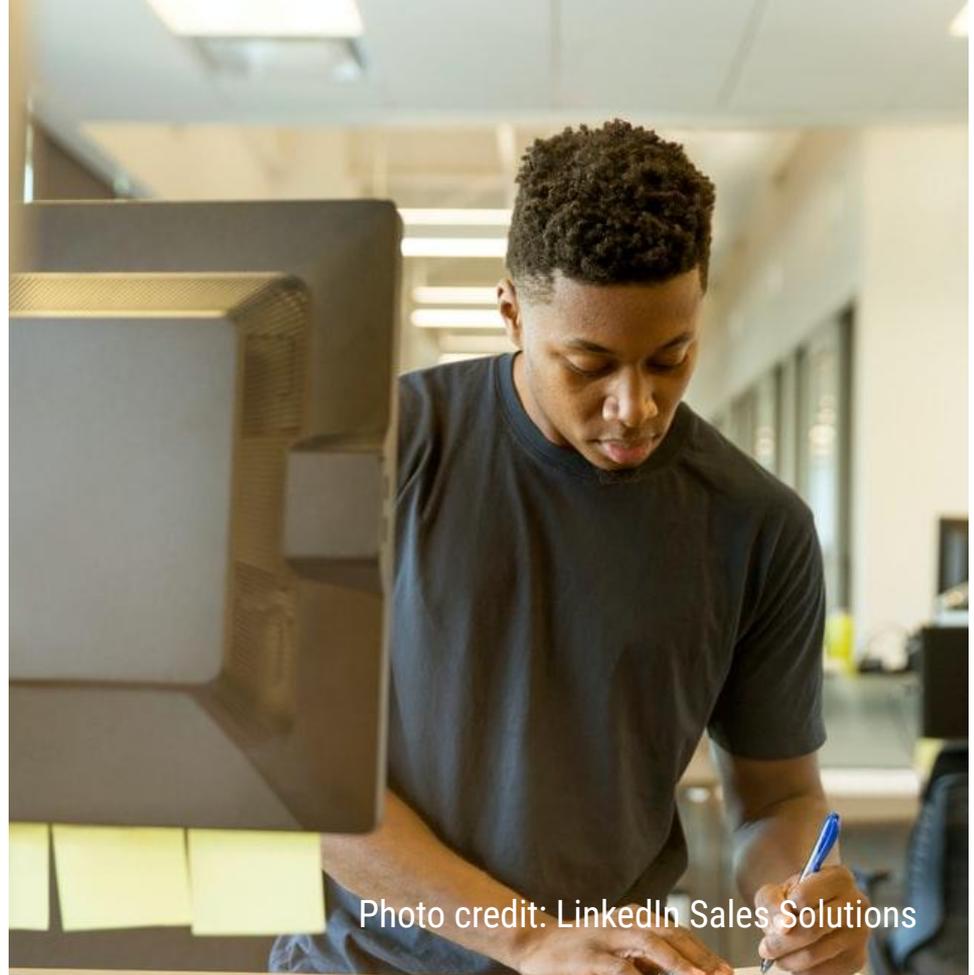


Photo credit: LinkedIn Sales Solutions

Finding potential supervisors:

1. Browse the program pages

- Look at faculty pages for researchers in your domain.
- Look at program pages where they might list faculty who are able to supervise in the upcoming year.

2. Create a shortlist

- Look for expertise in the area you care about.
- Look at the kind of work they conduct (e.g., do they work with humans? In a wetlab?)

3. Think “laterally”

- Thinking laterally means considering alternatives (other departments /universities/ etc.)

How do I contact a potential supervisor?

Consider the following:

- Do their current research topics interest you?
- How do they want to be contacted (if at all)?
- What materials should be included in your initial contact?
- What do I include in my email?
 - A short bio about yourself (year, program, program you applied to)
 - A brief description of your research interests / experience
 - A request to discuss further.

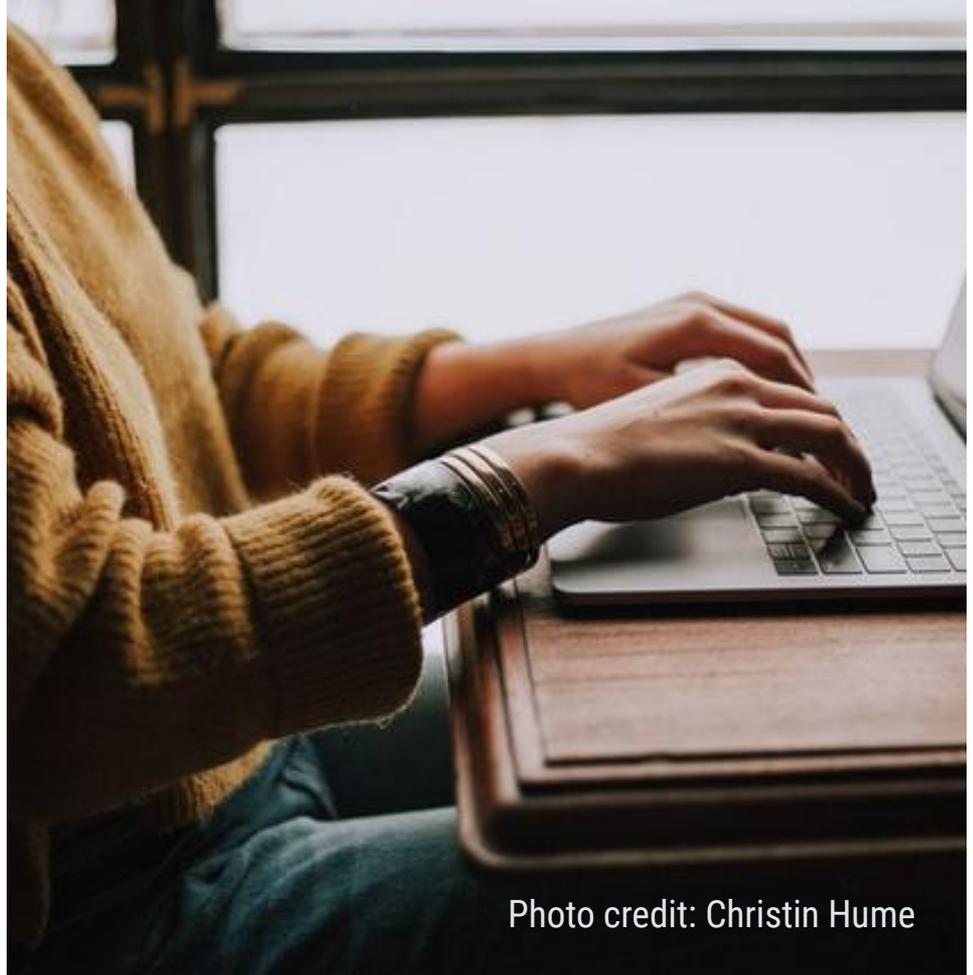


Photo credit: Christin Hume

AN EMAIL TEMPLATE

One possible format:

1. **Paragraph 1:**
 - a. Who are you (year/program)
 - b. What you are looking for (supervision for a course/program)
2. **Paragraph 2:**
 - a. What your are interested in / What you might like to work on with the supervisor you are contacting
 - b. Any relevant experiences that might catch their eye (an organization/a past supervisor)
3. **Paragraph 3:**
 - a. Opening yourself to future discussions

Dear Dr. Windsor,

My name is Prince Harry and I have applied/plan to apply to ARIEAL University's linguistics graduate program. I am contacting to inquire whether you are accepting students for Fall 2022. *[Alternative sentence: I am contacting you as I am interested in the development of linguistics in children and I am interested in working with you in the fall].*

I am a fourth year student in the Department of Linguistics at Linguistics University, where I have been working in the lab of Dr. Sarah Wilson. My research experience includes phoneme development using electrophysiological methods. I am interested in your research on the development of linguistics in children [broad research area], particularly your work on temporal lobe changes across childhood [sub-research area]. I have read your recent paper on abnormal brain activity in the medial temporal lobe [specific paper topic] and I am interested in exploring this area further including its application to reading ability [an application or future direction].

Please let me know if there is a possible opening for a graduate student in the Fall 2022 term. I have attached my CV and transcripts for your review. I am available to discuss this possibility further and to answer any questions you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
Prince Harry

What traits should I look for in a supervisor?

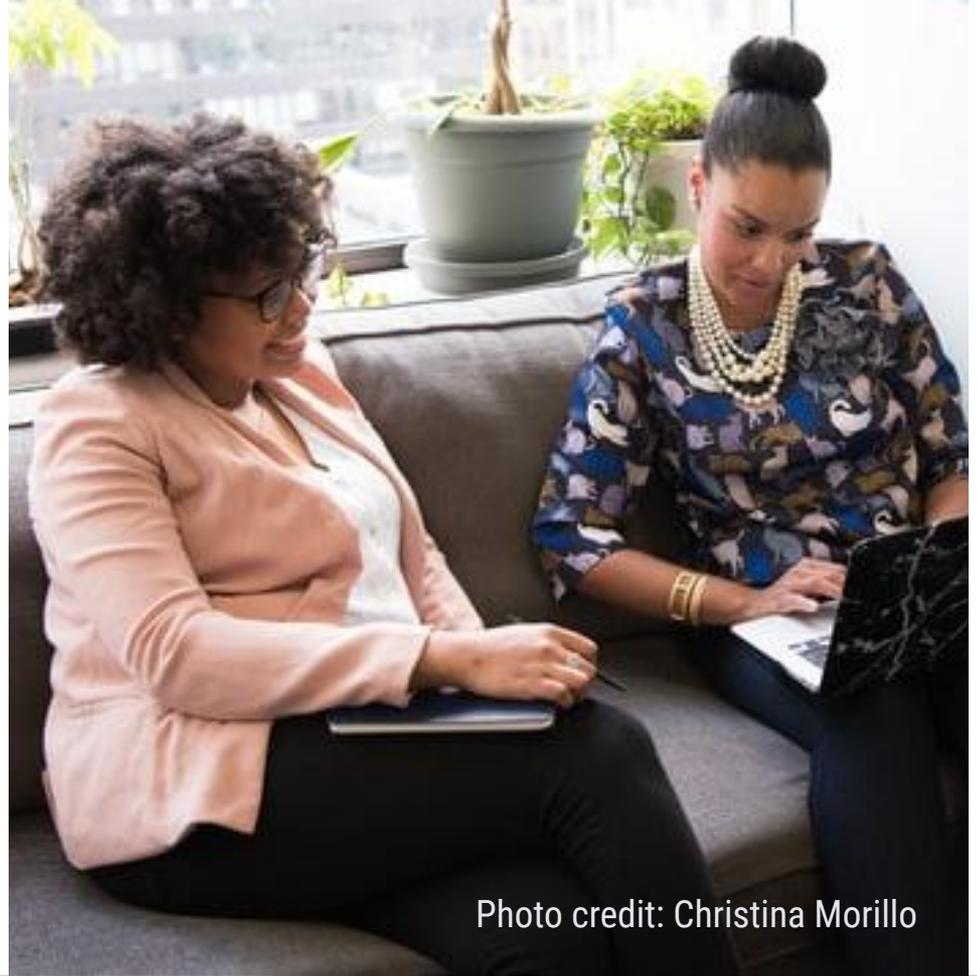


Photo credit: Christina Morillo

WHAT STUDENTS WISH THEIR PROFESSOR WOULD BE LIKE:



WHAT PROFESSORS WISH THEIR STUDENTS WOULD BE LIKE:



JORGE CHAM © 2017

WWW.PHDCOMICS.COM

The study

International Journal of Doctoral Studies

Volume 11, 2016

Cite as: Orellana, M. L., Darder, A., Pérez, A., & Salinas, J. (2016). Improving doctoral success by matching PhD students with supervisors. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies*, 11, 87-103. Retrieved from <http://ijds.org/Volume11/IJDSv11p087-103Orellana1629.pdf>

Improving Doctoral Success by Matching PhD Students with Supervisors

The conclusions

- The supervisor plays a critical role in a student's research experience.
- However, there is a discrepancy between student's and supervisor's interpretations of the role the student and supervisor each play in the success of a student.
 - e.g., Should the supervisor direct the student's research program, or should the student be expected to have autonomy in choosing their research program?

A Piece of My Mind

April 12, 2016

Mentorship Malpractice

Vineet Chopra, MD, MSc^{1,2}; Dana P. Edelson, MD, MS³; Sanjay Saint, MD, MPH^{1,2}

» [Author Affiliations](#)

JAMA. 2016;315(14):1453-1454. doi:10.1001/jama.2015.18884

What traits should I look for in a supervisor?

Consider the following:

- Was there ever a time that I really liked working with someone? What was my role in that relationship or partnership?
- What would I like to learn from a research supervisor?
- When I experience stress or new challenges, how do I typically respond?

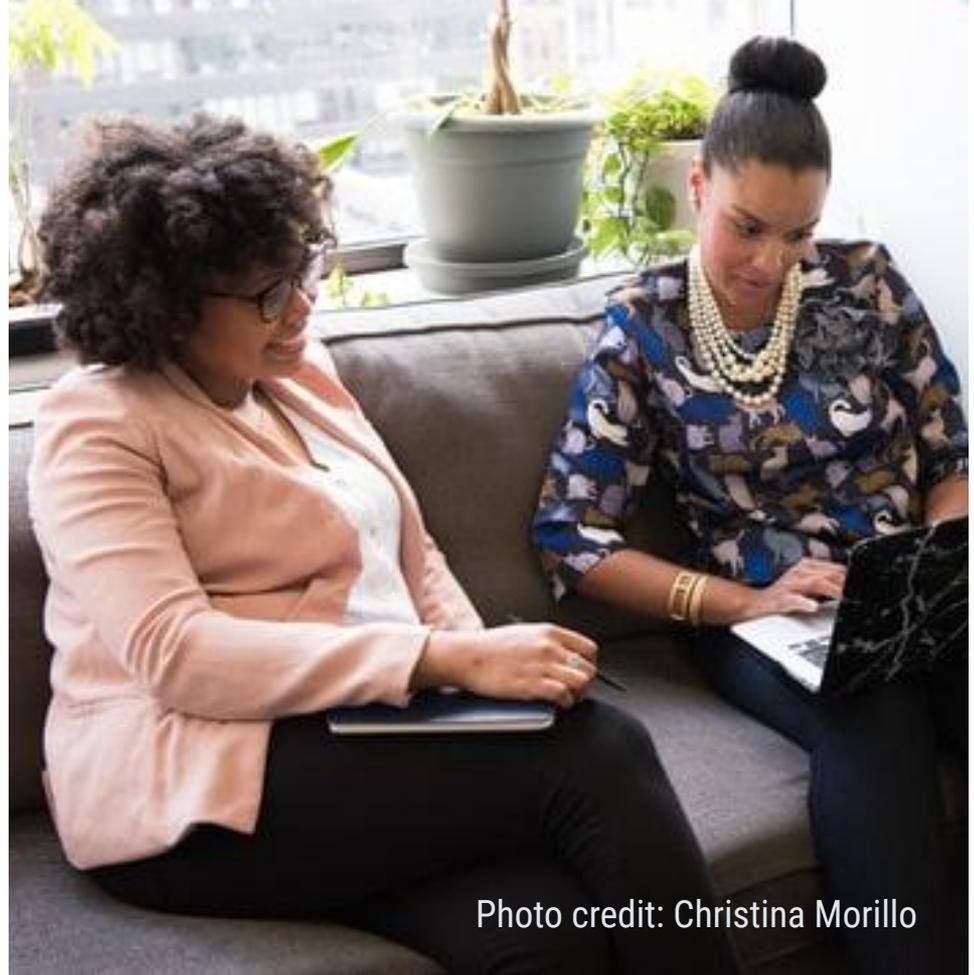


Photo credit: Christina Morillo

What questions
should I ask a
potential supervisor?

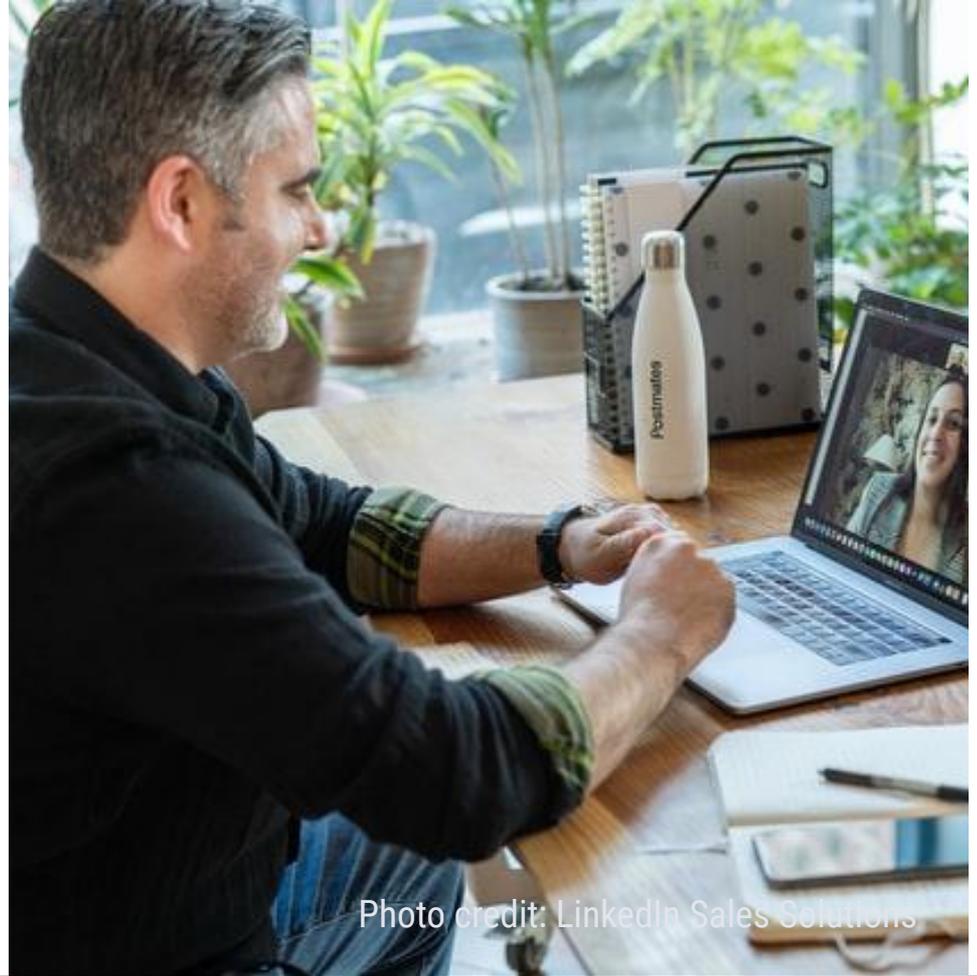


Photo credit: LinkedIn Sales Solutions

“

***Who you work with
is just as important
as what you do.***

- James Hayton, 2014

Which of these question(s) resonate with you most?

What would you expect from me as a student, and what could I expect from you as a supervisor?

How many students do you supervise, and how often do you see them?

Can I speak to current or past students in your lab?

Is there funding available for conferences, publications and other research expenses?

What kinds of future projects are you hoping your lab will work on?

FEATURING QUESTIONS CURATED BY JAMES HAYTON



Powered by  Poll Everywhere

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at pollev.com/app

Links from this presentation

TIPS FROM MCGILL UNIVERSITY:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gradapplicants/research-supervision/connecting-supervisor>

ARTICLE ON CHOOSING A SUPERVISOR FROM NEWSIDENTIST:

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg19726442-500-the-phd-journey-how-to-choose-a-good-supervisor/>

ARTICLE on QUESTIONS FOR A POTENTIAL SUPERVISOR FROM JAMES HAYTON:

<https://jameshaytonphd.com/quick-tips/questions-to-ask-a-potential-supervisor-before-starting-your-phd>

WHO YOU WORK WITH IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT YOU DO:

<https://jameshaytonphd.com/quick-tips/who-you-work-with>

MENTORSHIP MALPRACTICES:

<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/101/mentorship-malpractice-jama-2016.pdf>