

**Name of collection**

Video 4 - Supervisor

**Tyrrell Golding:**

So, the kind of questions, or discussions, that we'll be having with candidates at interviews probably starts around focusing on motivation to study, what draws you to your research question in a research area. Studying, particularly part-time over a number of years, you really need to be clear about your motivation. It's great if you can write that down.

And I had mine on the-- I've got it to a post-it note so I could just have it on the computer and be reminded of that motivation. Because over an extended period of time, there are moments when you think, gosh, why am I doing this? You look at the post-it note, or you look at your notes and think, that's why.

There are other brilliant moments when you're sort of coming out of a focus group, for example, or you're seeing people complete an online survey and you're starting to see the conclusions come out that those are other really motivating points. For the doctorate, we're also going to want to explore with you around a clear connection to your professional practice area and the link between your research and that practice.

Within the broader scope, is your research feasible? Will you be able to complete the program, answer your research questions, submit your thesis within the time, those kinds of things. But it is about the coherence of your research questions being achievable. You're not trying to kind of survey the world, you're really clear about what it is that you would want to do at this stage.

We're also going to want to have a conversation with you about how you've arrived at your research questions. And for some of you, you may have been working in your area for a while. It might have been a decade of thinking, and it might be a year or so that you've been thinking, no, I want to take this into a proposal to doctoral studies, the understanding how you've come to this particular kind of point in time and this point in your research.

Within that, we're going to want to see a really good grounding in the literature. So what have you been reading? What are you drawing on that's already been published that's helped you

move from I've got a general sort of idea that this might be something worth researching to, actually, I've got a serious proposal here.

And I've looked at enough of the literature, I've got a sense of what's out there to know that this is a good research question to ask. And I know that some students do find the term literature a bit intimidating, but it is about your reading. So, I would highly recommend getting a really nice notebook and start your research journey and your research journal story so you can keep track of everything that you're reading.

And reading is a really big part of this work. So, we quite often focus on thinking, well, I'm going to be undertaking my research. But a big part of what you research is the literature that's already been published. So, we want to get a sense that, yes, you really are sort of fascinated by the subject and you're motivated to study, but that you are also motivated to reading quite widely at times around the subject area.

And that might be reading literature around certain methodologies, as much as certain sort of themes, or topics, or approaches. We do expect you to be informed, as well, in terms of thinking about your methods and the ethical implications of your particular proposal. And again, reading around sort of what does ethics mean both within your profession maybe, or what are research ethics, what are the big ideas in research ethics, and coming with some sense of what that means for your proposal.

And finally, it's having the time. Even a part-time route is 18.5 hours a week. That is not an insignificant amount of time.

It's thinking about, have you had the right conversations with anybody that-- maybe in your family, it might be work, around what this is going to mean if there are implications for them. Do you-- I need to speak to line managers and saying, I'm participating-- I'm going to be doing this. Do I-- what kind of support do I have?

It will mean evenings, weekends, that kind of thing, potentially, if you're working substantial amount of hours, as well. So, have you thought that through? Have you mapped out what that means and had those conversations? Because it's really important to do that right from the beginning because we want you to-- we want to support you to be successful, and that planning is key.

So, I think the two questions that-- or two areas that students often find most challenging interview are around they're used to engagement with literature and ethics. And I think students can prepare themselves in a number of ways. In terms of literature, I think students

do sometimes find that word intimidating, and it can feel like a bit of a monolith, and how do I get into the literature?

And I would just say, you've just got to start somewhere. What interviewers won't be expecting is for you to come with, well, I read this one book. We will be expecting an engagement with quite a broad amount of literature, both contemporary, but there may also be sort of key texts that are a little bit older that you would be expected to know potentially.

For me, I think it's about trying to talk to colleagues about your ideas, if you can. When you're reading things, you're potentially in the-- particularly, in the professional doctorate, you're doing something that's related to your practice. So it might be that over a cup of coffee, you can find a friend to say, oh, I've talked-- I've read about this or-- so that you're getting used to talking about what you're reading.

Talk to the dog if it helps just to get used to thinking about-- talking about the literatures. In terms of finding the literature, you can start with Google Scholar, and all those kinds of things. But actually, as you're reading, look at who they are referencing, look at whether it's books or journal articles and where those journal articles or books, or whatever it might be, is relevant to your research.

You can go and follow those up and then read the original texts that were being cited. So, that's one way of finding-- following up on who's talking about the key themes that you're exploring. I think in terms of ethics where students fall down, or applicants fall down, is thinking about ethics as a state in time that is a tick box that needs to be approved, and then we get-- then we don't worry about it and we get on with everything else.

And I think where applicants might think, OK, well, ethics to engage with children and young people might be too complicated. So, I'm going to go around and I'm going to interview adults because that ethics will be easier. That quite often can come across and be less coherent in terms of the questions that you're trying to ask and why you've chosen the methods you've chosen.

Working with adults is not necessarily easier and not necessarily automatically more ethical. You may be a leader in your workplace wanting to interview or collect data on your staff. There is a range of quite complex ethical issues there around power, around consent, around your participants' ability to not participate in your research that you would really need to consider and be thoughtful about in your interview.

So don't think that you've taken the path that's easier to dodge when it comes to ethics. Really do think about it. And if you do have people within your professional setting, or your

professional network that you could talk through some of the ethical implications of that, then I think it's always useful to talk about right from the beginning that the ideas that you're exploring and getting a sense check from people around you.

Every question that you get asked will ultimately help you be more clearer. If it's a question you haven't thought of yourself, that's great. That's a really helpful part of the research process.

It's not a negative to have people asking those sometimes challenging questions. It's about how that helps you get your robust sense of what you're doing and will build your confidence to have those discussions in your interview. So I think if-- my one thing is talk and talk and talk about your research, if you can, with people that hopefully are at least somewhat interested in what you're doing.

My top three tips for a prospective student would be practice. So have as many conversations with as many people as you can talking about the literature. If there are key names, making sure that you're confident in using those names, if there's particular approaches that you're confident in talking about them.

I would-- personally, I'm a bit of a mind mapper. You know you're going to be asked about your motivation for study, your connection to practice, the feasibility, the literature methodology and ethics. Map those out.

Think about, actually, what are some of the bullet points that you want to address under each of those and practice. As I say, read it to the dog, just-- whether it's a mirror in the bathroom. But rehearse and think about, perhaps, what you might ask yourself around those questions, if you can. I know that's a difficult one, but lots of practice.

I think it is also about knowing your research proposal. So, we're expecting you to come in and really talk us through what you're proposing to do at this stage. Now, we know that things might change as you enter into your doctoral studies. But at the moment, it's that proposal that we really want to know that you really understand that it's yours.

It may have been just a matter of weeks or months since you submitted it. So, rereading that really deeply before attending interview's really important so you know what you've said and you're aligning what you've said in your proposal with your responses. And I think enthusiasm for study, enthusiasm for this particular research proposal.

But keep that engagement with every bit of the research project. So, the methodology, I want to see if someone's going to be doing focus groups that-- or that's the current plan, that you're

really interested in hearing what your focus groups want to tell you. You're not sort of saying, well, I've got to do focus groups because that's what X person over here did.

That you-- dare I even say it, you're interested, you're engaged, you're enthusiastic about good ethics throughout your research project. So it is, I really want to come and do this at this doctoral program, this particular research, and address these particular questions, and lots of reading around the subject. So it is-- it's not just overenthusiasm, it's focused enthusiasm into these particular studies.