# Doctoral Education in Context

## Perspectives from Africa

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CHAPTER 20

# The role of feedback in supervision and thesis writing

*Selma Tuemumunu Karuaihe*

**South Africa** has a population of 59.4 million. The country has 26 public universities with a total enrolment of 1.1 million students. Doctoral enrolments in South Africa have increased from 9 994 in 2008 to 23 588 in 2020 (CHE *Vitalstats*). Between 2000 and 2018, a total of 32 025 doctoral students graduated at South African universities. Doctoral graduates increased from 972 in 2000 to 3 339 in 2019 (SciSTIP Tracer Study).

The **University of Pretoria** (UP) became an independent university in 1930, tracing its origins to the Normal College (est. 1902) and the Transvaal Technical Institute (est. 1904) which merged to form the Transvaal University College (1908). UP has 2 217 academic staff members working in nine faculties and a business school, with a total student enrolment of 53 900, which makes it one of the largest contact-education universities in Africa. In 2021 UP had 2 537 doctoral enrolments.

**Namibia** is located in south-western Africa, and had a population of 2.53 million in 2021. The country has three public and 13 private higher education institutions. In 2020, a total population of 66 656 students were enrolled in higher education programmes, including 768 doctoral enrolments, and 75 doctoral degrees were awarded (NCHE).

The **University of Namibia** (UNAM) was established as an independent university in 1992, after combining the three entities of the Academy of Tertiary Education in Windhoek (a colonial apartheid institution, established in 1980). UNAM has approximately 2 500 staff spread across 12 campuses and 11 regional centres. UNAM has six faculties, five schools and a centre for Post Graduate Studies. UNAM offers 15 doctoral programmes.

## 1. Introduction

This chapter looks at the role of feedback in supervision and thesis writing, and why it is important for effective graduate supervision. Feedback is a critical element, and one of the most important aspects of ensuring success in graduate student supervision. Students use feedback to improve their writing, while supervisors use feedback to ensure quality of the final product (Bastola & Hu, 2021). It helps the candidates reflect on areas for improvement and get guidance that they can refer to during their studies. Similarly, supervisors can use the feedback as an assessment tool, but also as a way of monitoring and guiding future work (Bastola & Hu, 2021; Stracke & Kumar, 2020; Baydarova et al., 2021; Guerin & Green, 2015; Silva & Marcuccio, 2019). However, the success of feedback depends on whether it addresses the student needs (Bastola & Hu, 2021), such that feedback does not lead to confusion or to supervisors being seen as 'the bosses' (Guerin & Green, 2015). That is why Stracke and Kumar (2020, p. 266) emphasise the importance of expectations and the need for negotiation from both parties, as echoed below, "expectations play a crucial role in a supervisory relationship".

The provision of is the primary strategy by which students learned to write. While acknowledging the challenge of writing as a student, submitting a written section to my supervisor was the most effective way of 'communicating' where I was, and what I needed guidance on. Similarly, written feedback (sometimes oral feedback during meetings where I had to take notes) was very useful to me as I would always refer to the notes. The same approach has proven effective with my students, involving the use of 'Track Changes' to provide feedback and adding written comments in the margins as questions to seek clarification.

Hyatt (2005) describes different types of feedback, such as phatic, developmental, structural, stylistic, content-related, methodological and administrative comments. These comments all have different impacts and focus on different issues candidates need to pay attention to. Another issue raised in the feedback literature is the focus on language and editorial issues, instead of content, which tends to be more common (Hyatt, 2005; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Stracke & Kumar, 2020; Baydarova et al., 2021; Guerin & Green, 2015; Silva & Marcuccio, 2019). Such comments are both beneficial and can also be discouraging to students as as they overlook the more significant aspect of their efforts, the content (Bastola & Hu, 2021; Guerin & Green, 2015). Some of the comments are referred to as structural or stylistic (Hyatt, 2005), while others are referred to as referential, directive and expressive (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). For supervisors, it is important to go beyond grammar and sentence construction and focus on the important ideas students are trying to build for their research. Supervisors

and candidates need to develop and maintain healthy relationships for success in their respective supervision and postgraduate journeys (Hyatt, 2005; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Stracke & Kumar, 2020; Baydarova et al., 2021).

In the end, a negotiated approach to feedback that allows students to provide their own feedback is more beneficial. Thus, getting the students' views on feedback is important for the supervisor as well. Therefore, this chapter reviews literature and evaluates the role of feedback in thesis writing from selected graduate students at the University of Pretoria as a case study. The next section of the chapter reviews the literature, section three looks at the methods and data; four presents the results, five covers the discussions and the conclusion and limitations are elaborated in six.

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1 Providing feedback*

In evaluating the role of feedback to students it is important to note that there are different models of supervision, and each model provides its own benefits and associated challenges. The type of supervisory models include: the traditional single supervisor, the co-supervision of two supervisors, or the committee or team supervision models (Guerin & Green, 2015; Harrison & Grant, 2015). Each model has its own benefits and disadvantages, but the traditional model of single supervision is becoming less popular in the developed world, with teamwork seen as more beneficial for multidisciplinary feedback to the candidates. Caution should be exercised as such feedback could cause confusion for students if such diverse opinions are communicated without being well coordinated (Guerin & Green, 2015).

The advantages of co-supervision and research committees are beneficial for emerging researchers and junior academics, who benefit from a team of experts as co-supervisors. Among the benefits of such models are the distribution of tasks through shared responsibility, quality improvement through shared ideas and the development of a community of practice through mutual benefits for students and supervisors (Frick, 2019; Guerin & Green, 2015; Bastola & Hu, 2021; Harrison & Grant, 2015). Co-supervision is also beneficial for sharing diverse knowledge with the student, while developing and maintaining a healthy student–supervisor relationship. A healthy relationship is seen as essential in ensuring student success and is beneficial to both the student and the supervisory team (Baydarova et al, 2021; Stracke & Kumar, 2020). Such a

relationship lays a foundation for open and effective feedback from the supervisory team to the student.

According to Aitchison et al. (2012), there is little understanding of how doctoral candidates learn through research writing. Their study shed light on the academic realities (struggles and frustrations) that students and supervisors face in the supervision journey. The supervisors are expected to play a key role in ensuring that their students' findings are accurately communicated to local and global audiences through publications. As noted by Stracke and Kumar (2010), the main goal of doctoral education is to groom novice candidates into independent scholars and scientists. The challenge is for supervisors to endure the same journey as their students and discover their supervision qualities, which implies that supervision is a learning process for both. Stracke and Kumar's (2010) study provide a link between written feedback and the self-regulated learning (SRL) process between a supervisor and the doctoral candidate. In their study titled *tough love and tears*, Aitchison et al. (2012) built on the three aspects of *writerly identity* identified by Ivanic (1998) in the form of (i) the autobiographical self; (ii) the discoursal self; and (iii) the authorial self.

Furthermore, following the different types of feedback proposed in the literature (Hyatt, 2005; Stracke & Kumar, 2010) helped me to understand the impact of each comment I give my students during the review process. Using this approach, I appreciated to see how different types of comments different impacts on students' writing have, as I have applied some in my own journey of supervision. I found the phatic, developmental and structural comments more fascinating, as positive feedback can encourage even a weak student to do more next time, while negative comments can discourage even a good student. This kind of feedback also reminds supervisors to see their role as facilitators of learning (Guerin and Green, 2015).

Kumar and Stracke (2007) developed a model for analysis of feedback based on the three fundamental functions of speech classified as referential, directive, and expressive. For example, the expressive statements have a long-lasting effect when a student recalls what a supervisor said verbally or even expressed in writing. From my own experience, I try to remember that when giving comments.

### *2.2 The Feedback Expectation Tool (FET)*

The Feedback Expectation Tool (FET) was developed by Stracke and Kumar (2020). The main goal of the FET is to encourage dialogue, allow negotiation around expectations between supervisors and candidates. Such dialogue allows

for the setting of boundaries for mutual benefit and ensures effective feedback through negotiation for learning facilitation. The FET's main objective is to strengthen a working relationship that considers the views and expectations of both parties (Stracke & Kumar, 2020). This supports the building of relationships for long-term success (Baydarova et al., 2021).

The FET is open and applicable to all graduate supervision, with the aim of providing feedback. The tool (see Table 2 under the methodology section) uses the 1-5 Likert rating scale of three sections with 13 statements that cover different aspects (Stracke & Kumar, 2020). The FET lists important issues that the supervisor and candidate should consider and may face when giving and receiving feedback.

To implement the FET, both supervisor and candidate should complete it separately. Once completed, they can discuss their responses at their meeting and exchange views on how best to benefit from their relationship. This innovative pedagogical tool is flexible and can be adapted to different situations along the supervision journey (Stracke & Kumar, 2020). It is against this background that this chapter used the FET to get some views from graduate students at the University of Pretoria.

## 3. Methods and data

### *3.1 Methods*

The study applied the Stracke and Kumar's (2020) FET to analyse feedback from graduate students in the environmental economics programme at the University of Pretoria (UP). The FET is modified to unpack written feedback from graduate students on their expectations about supervision feedback. The survey was conducted in October 2020.

The study used a questionnaire (see Appendix) to conduct a survey with selected environmental economics graduate students in the Department of Agricultural Economics, Extension and Rural Development at the University of Pretoria. The questionnaire was administered online by sending it to the respondents and asking them to complete and return it. Analysis was done using Microsoft Excel. Most of these students were under my supervision, some with co-supervisors, and a few who were supervised by my colleagues. The study used convenience sampling to select students from one programme, under different supervision models, such as two supervisors, or teams of three or four supervisors. The questionnaire was sent to 18 students, but the results

presented in this study came from 15 students (see Table 1), representing an 83% response rate.

### *3.2 Data*

The data were collected in 2020 from 15 students in total, consisting of three female and twelve male students. Of the females, two were doing their PhD, and one a master's. Among the whole group, I was main supervisor of four PhD and eight master's students, under a co-supervision model. All the students were registered with UP and at different stages of their studies, except one former student who had completed his master's degree in 2019. The rest of the students were supervised by environmental economics colleagues. Table 1 presents the respondents by demographics and level of study.

**Table 1: Representation of Participants – Type of Students**

| | Program | Gender | Age | County/ Nationality | Supervision Model | Year of Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | PhD | F | 36-40 | Kenya | Co-supervision | First |
| 2 | PhD | F | 40 plus | Mozambique | Co-supervision | Second |
| 3 | PhD | M | 40 plus | Zambia | Committee | Third |
| 4 | PhD | M | 30-35 | Eswatini | Co-supervision | Fourth |
| 5 | PhD | M | 30-35 | Ghana | Co-supervision | First |
| 6 | PhD | M | 30-35 | Lesotho | Co-supervision | Third |
| 7 | MSc | M | 26-30 | South Africa | Co-supervision | Second |
| 8 | MSc | F | 30-35 | Eswatini | Single supervision | Second |
| 9 | MSc | M | 26-30 | Eswatini | Single supervision | Second |
| 10 | MSc | M | 26-30 | Zambia | Single supervision | Completed |
| 11 | MSc | M | 26-30 | Zambia | Single supervision | Second |
| 12 | MSc | M | 30-35 | Malawi | Single supervision | Third |
| 13 | MPhil | M | 26-30 | Sudan | Single supervision | Second |
| 14 | MSc | M | 26-30 | Zambia | Co-supervision | Completed |
| 15 | MSc | M | 20-25 | South Africa | Single supervision | First |

*Source: Student demographics*

## 4. Findings

### *4.1 Feedback expectation tool (FET) responses*

The findings of the study are based on the students' responses using the FET by Stracke and Kumar (2020). The responses are provided in Table 2. Since all

the students were supervised by at least more than one supervisor, it implies that their responses are not only referring to the feedback from one supervisor, but from more than one. The diverse opinions on the students' work by their respective supervisors are seen as a challenge for students (Guerin & Green, 2015), especially if such feedback is not well coordinated by the main supervisor (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2020). However, the extent to which feedback from supervisors can be beneficial to students (Guerin & Green, 2015), depends on whether it can address students' needs and challenges adequately (Bastola & Hu, 2021). Some of the benefits of effective feedback are guiding the study and ensuring that the research standard is maintained throughout the study period.

**Table 2: Feedback expectation tool (FET) responses**[1]

| Statements | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) | Total Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The supervisor should give feedback on any aspect of the thesis (for instance, content and language). | | | | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| 2. The supervisor should give feedback only on aspects the candidate asks about. | 5 | 6 | 1 | 3 | | 15 |
| 3. Feedback is an invitation to revise. | | 1 | | 11 | 3 | 15 |
| 4. The feedback must tell the candidate what they did well and what they did not do well. | | | | 5 | 9 | 14 |
| 5. The supervisor is responsible for handling issues about language. | 1 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 13 |
| 6. The candidate is responsible for handling issues about language. | | | 3 | 8 | 4 | 15 |
| 7. Handwritten and electronic feedback is the best way to give and receive feedback. | | | 3 | 7 | 5 | 15 |

1 The total column reflects responses as given. Some respondents did not answer some questions and that is why the total does not add up to 15 for some responses.

| Statements | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) | Total Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Oral feedback is the best way to give and receive feedback. | 1 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 15 |
| 9. The supervisor should give, and the candidate can ask for, feedback about sections and chapters that are not finished. | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 2 | 15 |
| 10. The candidate should regularly ask for feedback from the primary supervisor. | | | 2 | 7 | 5 | 14 |
| 11. The candidate should regularly ask for feedback from all their supervisors. | | | 2 | 7 | 4 | 13 |
| 12. The supervisor and candidate can ask other people (for instance, peers, other academics) to give feedback. | 1 | | 4 | 6 | 4 | 15 |
| 13. The supervisor and candidate can only ask the supervisory team to give feedback. | 1 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 15 |
| 14. The candidate should handle conflicting feedback from the supervisory team and decide the right direction to take. | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | | 15 |
| 15. The main supervisor should structure conflicting feedback from the supervisory team in a way so they can give the candidate clear direction. | | | 2 | 8 | 5 | 15 |
| 16. Feedback is effective when it highlights the strengths of the candidate's work. | | | 3 | 8 | 4 | 15 |
| 17. Feedback is effective when it highlights the weaknesses of the candidate's work. | | 1 | 1 | 9 | 3 | 14 |
| 18. The candidate should expect to get feedback quickly. | | | 2 | 9 | 3 | |

| Statements | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) | Total Respondents |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 19. The candidate should not expect to get feedback quickly. | 2 | 6 | 5 | | 1 | 14 |
| 20. The supervisor and the candidate should consider emotions when giving and receiving feedback. | 1 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 14 |
| 21. The supervisor and candidate should not consider emotions when giving and receiving feedback. | 1 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 14 |
| 22. The candidate should think about the supervisor's culture when receiving feedback from them. | 1 | 2 | 6 | 6 | | 15 |
| 23. Supervisors should provide feedback that is culturally appropriate to the candidate. | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 15 |

*Source: Modified from Stracke* **&** *Kumar (2020)*

**Data from student surveys, October 2020.**

## *4.2 Analysis of findings*[2]

About 53% (8 out of 15) of students strongly agree that the supervisor should give feedback on any aspect of the thesis (for instance, content and language), while 47% agree. The majority (87%) of students disagreed that the supervisor should give feedback only on aspects the candidate asks about, while most students (86%) agreed that feedback is an invitation to revise their work. All the respondents indicated that the feedback should tell them what they did well and what they did not do well.

With regards to handling issues about language, 63% (10) of students disagreed that it should be the responsibility of the supervisor. This makes sense since language should not be the main issue for the supervisor. However, most academics spend time on the language, and this is one of the aspects of writing that takes a lot of time and can, in fact, waste productive time in giving feedback. It is important to note that writing is a process (Inouye & McAlpine, 2019)

2 The 'agree' and 'strongly agree' statements are put together in the analysis to save space and remain within the set page limits. The same applies to the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' statements.

where grammar is a minor concern, and one should focus on the scholarly ideas pertinent to the thesis instead. 75% (12) of students agreed that the candidate is responsible for handling issues about language, while 4 were neutral.

Over 90% (15) of students agreed that handwritten and electronic feedback is the best way to give and receive feedback. Respondent views towards oral feedback as the best way to give and receive feedback was spread among the options.

About 63% of students agreed that the supervisor should give, and the candidate can ask for, feedback about sections and chapters that are not finished, and 19% were neutral, while 13% disagreed. 88% of students agreed that the candidate should regularly ask for feedback from the primary supervisor and 12% were neutral. Relating this response to my own view and experience, I agree that the main supervisor should be 'the go-to person' for regular feedback, while the co-supervisor or committee members should be consulted on specific components of the thesis. As a PhD student in the US, I had three PhD Committee members with my main supervisor as the Committee Chair. I would regularly consult the main supervisor and arrange meetings (sometimes he suggested) with other members for them to share their views, especially on the methodology and the statistical quality of the models during the data analysis sections. It is against this background that I try to apply the team supervision method to my students at UP, which has proven to be beneficial to the students, not only in terms of sharing knowledge, but also reducing the burden of having to read the thesis and commenting alone, where we now take turns to read and save time, while focusing on our core areas.

Like the question on consultation with the main supervisor, 86% (12/14) of the respondents agreed that the candidate should regularly ask for feedback from all their supervisors. Relating this to our current practice with my co-supervisors at UP, we usually meet at the start during topic identification. Thereafter, as the main supervisor, I refer the master's students to the co-supervisor after we have covered some groundwork, like the first three chapters. However, with the PhD students, we arrange to meet the student with the co-supervisor from the start, which I found beneficial as I do my part in terms of project management and other skills, while the co-supervisor does theirs. The early and regular meetings with PhD students help them get clarity on the objectives and the methods they plan to use.

Eleven (69%) respondents felt that the supervisor and candidate can ask other people (for instance, peers, other academics) to give feedback, compared to 5 (31%) who agreed that the supervisor and candidate can only ask the supervisory team to give feedback. With regards to the candidate handling

conflicting feedback from the supervisory team and deciding on the right direction to take, responses were spread among the various categories, with 20% (3/15) disagreeing. On the contrary, 88% (14/16) of students indicated that the main supervisor should structure conflicting feedback from the supervisory team so they can give the candidate clear direction. From my own experience, having a meeting with the supervising team is always beneficial, as it provides an opportunity for exchange of views in the presence of the candidate. Of course, this can be disadvantageous (or lead to conflict) if the supervisory team are not on the same page.

73% (11/15) students agreed that feedback is effective when it highlights strengths and 80% (12/15) agreed on highlighting weaknesses in the candidate's work. Comparing the two questions on how long the candidate should wait to receive feedback, the responses were interesting, with 63% students agreeing with quick feedback and 38% disagreeing with not getting quick feedback.

On whether the supervisor and the candidate should consider emotions or not when giving and receiving feedback, the responses are spread across the different options. To me, considering emotions is necessary as some comments (feedback) can 'destroy the emotions' of the students and they are likely to remember those negative remarks more than the rest of the comments. On the last questions about cultural considerations, the responses were spread on the issues of whether the candidate should think about the supervisor's culture when receiving feedback from them.

## 5. Discussion

The findings from the selected environmental economics students at the University of Pretoria, using the FET, reflected the diversity among respondents in terms of their demographics and stage or level of studies. Most of the students were aged between 26-30 and 31-35. The stage of their studies was diverse, with four PhDs, two in their first year, one in their second year, two in their third year, and one who was doing his fourth year of studies. Their responses are helpful since they are all at different stages of their studies and had different experiences of feedback along the supervision journey.

Another important observation is that while the responses come from students supervised by teams and/or co-supervisors, there seems to be consistency on what they agree and disagree on. For example, most students agreed on (see the questions 1-11 on the FET) issues concerning feedback on content, type of feedback, frequency and from whom. When it came to building and managing relationships (questions 12-15 on the FET), the students' views were spread

between those who agreed and those who didn't. Worth noting are issues on how to handle conflicting feedback, where the candidate is expected to handle that (question 14) or the main supervisor to handle conflicting feedback (question 15). These findings suggest that on the one hand, most students agree that they should be the ones to handle conflicting feedback from teams, while others felt that the main supervisor should handle the conflicting feedback. These findings shed light on what was highlighted as an important issue of team supervision models, which is that of building relationships and managing conflicting feedback to students. On the issue of timing and how soon feedback should be provided (questions 17 and 18), respondents were consistent. For the last section, that deals with considering other elements like emotional and cultural issues, the findings were spread between those who agreed and those who do not exist.

## 6. Conclusions

The study used the feedback expectation tool by Stracke and Kumar (2020) to analyse the expectations of graduate students completing degrees in environmental economics at the University of Pretoria. The findings are relevant to emerging and seasoned scholars of PhD supervision. It is advisable for academics to compare the feedback from students with their own expectations by completing the FET and use it during future consultations with their students. The diversity in student demographics provides useful insight on their expectations, since they were at different stages of their studies, especially the PhD candidates.

## 7. Limitations

This study is limited in scope, focusing only on selected graduate students doing environmental economics at the University of Pretoria. For a detailed analysis of feedback, it is recommended that future studies cover a larger sample that is representative of most PhD programmes and diverse in nature by focusing on different programmes. Another limitation is that the FET was only applied to students, and not to the supervisors or the supervision teams, which is recommended for future studies.

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## Appendix: Questionnaire

### *Introduction*

Hello, my name is Selma Karuaihe, from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the role of feedback in thesis writing. The survey will be conducted with graduate students in the Environmental Economics Program at the University of Pretoria (UP).

This study is meant to be anonymous and the information provided will be treated as confidential. Your information will be kept confidential and only used by me as the main and only researcher for this project. You are requested to give your honest and most possible responses to the questions. Your responses will be used to guide my supervision work in future and findings can be used for publications in books or journal articles.

1. Identification

| | |
|---|---|
| Name (student number) | |
| Degree | |
| Faculty | |
| Student status (full time or part-time): | |
| Year of enrolment | |
| Year of completion | |
| Nationality | |
| Current occupation | |

2. Gender of respondent

| | |
|---|---|
| Male | 1 |
| Female | 2 |

3. Age group of respondent

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| 20-25 | | |
| 26-30 | | |
| 30-35 | | |
| 36-40 | | |
| 40 plus | | |

4. Level of study. At what stage are you in your graduate/thesis work?

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| Beginning (1st year – course work) | | |
| Half-way (proposal writing) | | |
| Advanced stage (data analysis) | | |
| Final stage (write-up) | | |
| Thesis submitted | | |
| Studies completed/ graduated | | |

5. How many supervisors do (did) you have?

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| One | | |
| Two | | |
| More than two | | |

6. Was it easy to find a supervisor?

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | | |
| No | | |

7. Were you allocated a supervisor, or did you choose (spoke to) a supervisor?

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| Self-chosen/ approached | | |
| Allocated | | |

8. Type of funding for your studies

| | Tick one | List your answer here |
|---|---|---|
| Self/parents | | |
| Scholarship | | |
| Part-time job | | |
| Tuition waiver | | |
| Teaching Assistantship | | |
| Research Assistantship | | |
| Other: Specify | | |

### *Application of the Feedback Expectation Tool (FET)*

Feedback is at the heart of any learning and teaching process. Giving and receiving written feedback during a doctoral candidature is a complex task that covers many issues. This *Feedback Expectation Tool (FET*) lists some important issues that the supervisor and candidate may face when giving and receiving feedback. The *FET* helps each to state their beliefs and expectations clearly and

transparently. The *FET* aims to encourage discussion. Its objective is to establish a working relationship that is respectful during the research degree.

9. Use the statements below to provide your views about feedback. Use the five-point Likert scale to select the answer that you best agree with.

| | **Strongly disagree (1)** | **Disagree (2)** | **Neither agree nor disagree (3)** | **Agree (4)** | **Strongly Agree (5)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The supervisor should give feedback on any aspect of the thesis (for instance, content and language). | | | | | |
| 2. The supervisor should give feedback only on aspects the candidate asks about. | | | | | |
| 3. Feedback is an invitation to revise. | | | | | |
| 4. The feedback must tell the candidate what they did well and what they did not do well. | | | | | |
| 5. The supervisor is responsible for handling issues about language. | | | | | |
| 6. The candidate is responsible for handling issues about language. | | | | | |
| 7. Handwritten and electronic feedback is the best way to give and receive feedback. | | | | | |
| 8. Oral feedback is the best way to give and receive feedback. | | | | | |
| 9. The supervisor should give, and the candidate can ask for, feedback about sections and chapters that are not finished. | | | | | |
| 10. The candidate should regularly ask for feedback from the primary supervisor. | | | | | |
| 11. The candidate should regularly ask for feedback from all their supervisors. | | | | | |
| 12. The supervisor and candidate can ask other people (for instance, peers, other academics) to give feedback. | | | | | |

| | Strongly disagree (1) | Disagree (2) | Neither agree nor disagree (3) | Agree (4) | Strongly Agree (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. The supervisor and candidate can only ask the supervisory team to give feedback. | | | | | |
| 14. The candidate should handle conflicting feedback from the supervisory team and decide the right direction to take. | | | | | |
| 15. The main supervisor should structure conflicting feedback from the supervisory team in a way so they can give the candidate clear direction. | | | | | |
| 16. Feedback is effective when it highlights the strengths of the candidate's work. | | | | | |
| 17. Feedback is effective when it highlights the weaknesses of the candidate's work. | | | | | |
| 18. The candidate should expect to get feedback quickly. | | | | | |
| 19. The candidate should not expect to get feedback quickly. | | | | | |
| 20. The supervisor and the candidate should consider emotions when giving and receiving feedback. | | | | | |
| 21. The supervisor and candidate should not consider emotions when giving and receiving feedback. | | | | | |
| 22. The candidate should think about the supervisor's culture when receiving feedback from them. | | | | | |
| 23. Supervisors should provide feedback that is culturally appropriate to the candidate. | | | | | |

*Modified from Stracke & Kumar (2020)*