

Supervision Styles

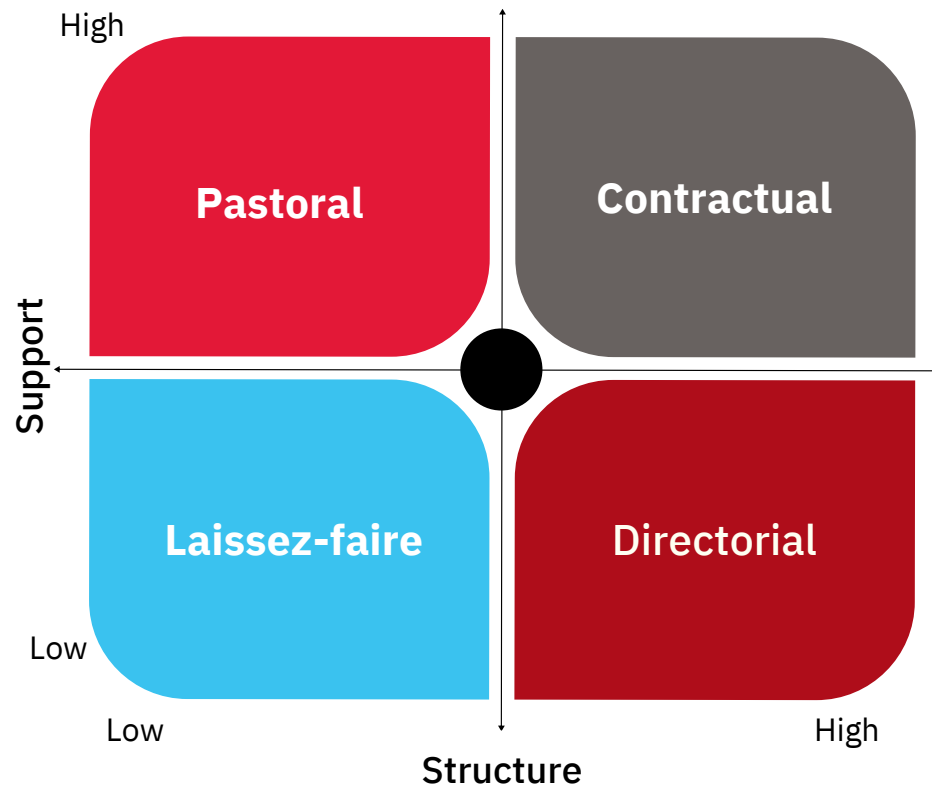
This infographic illustrates four supervision styles based on varying levels of structure and support and although supervisors may prefer one style, it does not preclude movement as needed to other styles.

* Pastoral Style

- Low structure high support
- Student has low personal management skills but uses all support offered
- Supervisor provides considerable personal care and support but not necessarily in a task-driven directive capacity

* Contractual Style

- High structure high support
- Student highly motivated and able to initiate direction and action
- Supervisor able to administer direction and exercises good management skills and interpersonal relationships
- Most demanding in terms of supervisor time



* Laissez-faire Style

- Low structure low support
- Student has limited levels of motivation and management skills
- Supervisor is non-directive and not committed to high levels of personal interaction
- Supervisor may appear caring and non-interfering

* Directorial Style

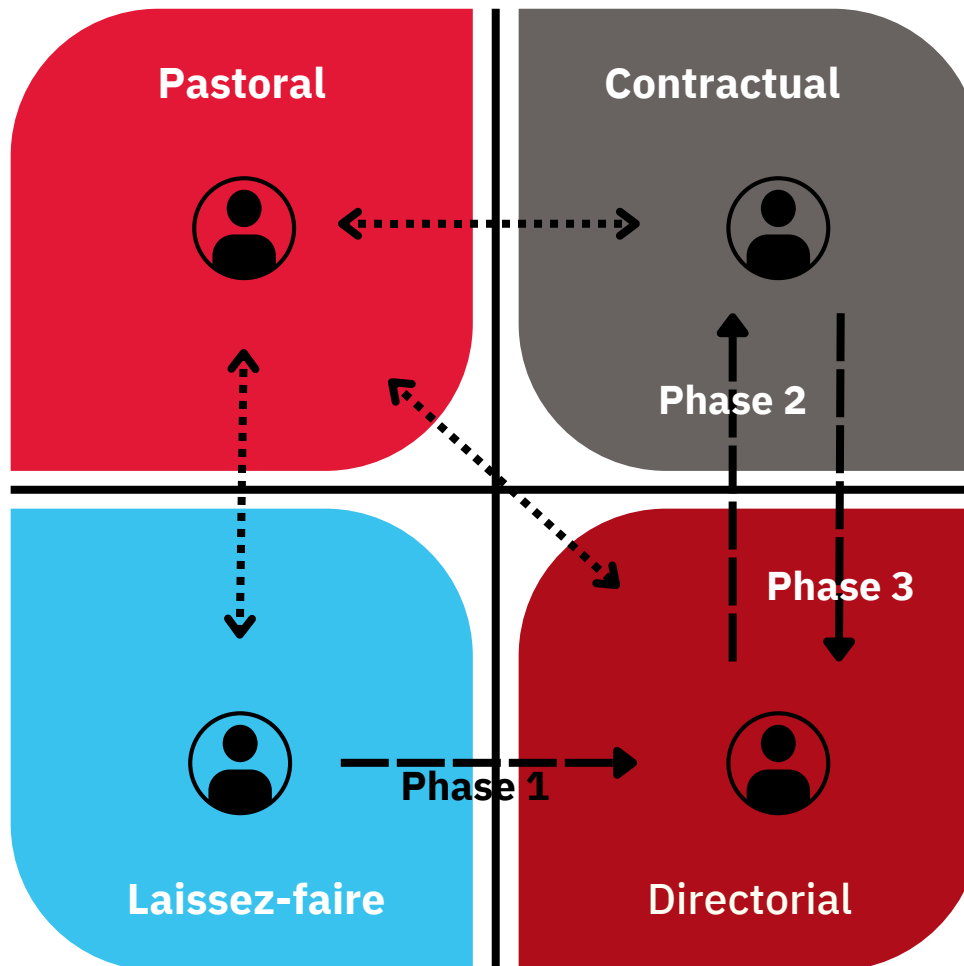
- High structure low support
- Student highly motivated and sees the necessity of engaging in high structural activities e.g., setting objectives and completing work on time
- Supervisor has a close, regular interactive relationship with student but avoids non-task issues

Supervisory Management & Changes Over Time

The dynamic model outlines the stages of Ph.D. completion, which may vary in length, and emphasizes that students are most successful when supervisors adapt their style to each phase. Different supervisory approaches are more effective at different points in the doctoral journey. The following are not strict approaches, but are intended to prompt reflection on different supervision styles and when they may be appropriately applied (Gatfield & Alpert, 2002).

Supervisors may need to temporarily adopt a **pastoral** style during times of student crisis or discouragement, regardless of the supervision phase or their usual approach.

In phase one, students typically broadly explore a thesis topic with limited focus, structure, or support. This stage often reflects a **laissez-faire** supervision style.



During the data collection and analysis phase, supervision typically shifts to a **contractual** style, requiring high levels of both support and structure. As the student progresses to the write-up stage, the need for support often decreases while the need for structure remains. This may prompt a return to the more structured **directorial** supervision style.

As students refine their thesis topic and research questions, supervisors typically adopt a more structured, **directorial** style to guide research design and methodology development.