



OPINION PIECE

# Streamline dissertation supervision using Padlet

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## ABSTRACT

Dissertation supervision requires clear communication, consistent feedback, and effective progress tracking. Traditional methods often struggle to meet these needs, especially in remote or hybrid settings. Based on three years of ongoing use, this opinion piece explores how Padlet can transform supervision logs into an interactive, student-driven process that promotes assessment for learning and builds feedback literacy. The article emphasises why Padlet's design is important—how its visual and collaborative features promote dialogue, self-regulation, and reflection. It also covers practical aspects like training needs and digital access. Overall, Padlet improves formative feedback and collaboration, providing a scalable model for Learning Development practitioners who want to incorporate employability skills and foster student belonging.

**KEYWORDS:** padlet, dissertation supervision, supervision logs, higher education, student autonomy.

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## Introduction

Dissertation supervision includes planning, setting expectations, communication, and feedback. For many students, managing a dissertation can feel overwhelming; supervisors, meanwhile, handle multiple projects while providing fair, timely feedback. Traditional tools—emails, Word documents, and static spreadsheets—often limit the interactive exchange essential to effective learning. Research continues to emphasise the importance of feedback as a dialogue and self-regulation process (Carless & Boud, 2018; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

In dissertation supervision, the main challenge I identified was fragmentation: meeting preparation was scattered across emails, drafts were stored in multiple folders, and there was no persistent record of feedback or follow-up. I implemented a Padlet-based log to consolidate these processes in one place—student pre-meeting briefs, meeting links, feedback threads, and evidence of action. Over three years, this made feedback more conversational and visible, supporting students' feedback literacy and self-regulated learning (Carless & Boud, 2018; Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Winstone & Carless, 2019).

## **The role of supervision logs in higher education**

Supervision logs traditionally document meeting discussions, goals, and progress (Yeatman, 1995). While these methods serve an administrative purpose, their static formats, such as paper logs or spreadsheets, often impede collaboration and traceability. Digital tools like Padlet make supervision logs more interactive and scalable, allowing supervisors to maintain organised, accessible records for multiple students while promoting accountability and engagement (Fuchs, 2014). This interactivity supports not only efficient project management but also learning development goals, including formative feedback and reflection.

### ***Why Padlet?***

Padlet has become a valuable tool for engagement and inclusivity in higher education. It facilitates collaborative learning and active participation (Garnham & Betts, 2018; Hoo et al., 2022). Its accessibility and visual layout make it especially effective for students studying remotely or across different time zones. As Lee et al. (2024) observe, Padlet can help international students broaden their thinking through ongoing peer and instructor interaction. In the supervision context, Padlet provides a participatory, visual environment that supports both practical management and reflection. Organising materials in a transparent, dialogic space allows students and supervisors to co-construct feedback, aligning with theories of learning-oriented assessment (Carless & Boud, 2018).

### ***How Padlet enhances supervision logs***

Each student's Padlet supervision log includes a column for every scheduled meeting—typically five or six. Students upload drafts, summarise feedback needs, and note revisions.



For instance, before a meeting, a student may post a draft of their methodology chapter and outline specific queries about data analysis. This reflective preparation fosters assessment for learning, helping students identify their own learning needs and develop feedback literacy (Hoo et al., 2022; Little et al., 2024).

Meeting links are posted in a central column to streamline scheduling. After meetings, supervisors add comments or annotations to files, providing actionable feedback visible to both parties. This process embodies what Hattie and Timperley (2007) call the 'power of feedback'—clarifying where learners are going, how they are progressing, and what next steps are needed. Through this iterative exchange, supervision becomes a dialogic partnership that enhances students' ability for self-regulated learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). While Padlet's accessibility is a strength, challenges still exist. Some students may need help with digital skills, and unequal access or confidence can impact participation. Institutions adopting Padlet should provide training and guidance to promote inclusivity and ensure compliance with data-protection standards.

### ***Examples of Padlet logs in practice***

A typical supervision Padlet includes the following columns:

- Meeting preparation: students upload work and specify feedback questions.
- Meeting details: scheduling and meeting links are centralised.
- Supervisor feedback: comments or annotated documents remain visible for follow-up.
- Resource integration: embedded links to library guides, writing workshops, and wellbeing support.
- Progress tracking: students summarise completed tasks and plan next steps.

This structure changes how supervision is managed and experienced. Instead of static documentation, Padlet creates a feedback loop that shows ongoing learning with each update. This aligns with Carless and Boud's (2018) view of feedback as a social and participatory act in which meaning is built together. As projects grow, each Padlet becomes a personalised, evidence-based record of learning.



### ***Impact and feedback***

Over three years, Padlet has enhanced both student engagement and the efficiency of supervision. Students regularly update their logs and show progress between meetings. They report feeling more confident in managing research projects and have a better understanding of how to use feedback constructively. Supervisors get a clear overview of multiple projects simultaneously, enabling timely, targeted support.

These findings support the idea that ongoing feedback conversations help students improve their self-evaluation and regulation skills (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Winstone & Carless, 2019). Before using Padlet, engagement was often passive and directed by the supervisor. Now, students actively seek clarification, respond to feedback, and track their progress, showing increased independence and ownership.

### ***Future directions***

To further improve inclusivity, the Padlet supervision model can incorporate well-being and accessibility resources, such as links to mental health support, time management tools, and study skills guides for diverse learners. Addressing students' holistic needs promotes both academic progress and a sense of belonging (Thijm, 2023). Peer collaboration could also be expanded. By creating shared Padlets for reading or writing groups, students can exchange resources and summaries, fostering community and mutual accountability. This approach aligns with evidence that peer learning enhances engagement and identity as researchers (Rashid et al., 2019). Finally, embedding short reflective prompts such as 'Which feedback this week helped you progress most?' could deepen feedback literacy (Winstone & Carless, 2019) and strengthen students' sense of mattering within their academic network.

### **Conclusion**

Padlet provides a practical, theory-informed solution to supervision challenges. Its interactive, centralised design supports ongoing dialogue, allowing supervisors to give timely and actionable feedback while encouraging student independence. The approach embodies key principles of Learning Development—feedback literacy, assessment for learning, and belonging—by making supervision transparent and participatory. As higher education adapts to digital and inclusive practice demands, tools like Padlet can boost equity and engagement in supervision. Future efforts should focus on accessibility training and



institutional integration to ensure these innovations stay sustainable and aligned with graduate-attribute frameworks.

## Disclosure statement

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