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Doing and supervising China studies PhD projects in Australia: Experiences of Chinese PhD students and Australian supervisors

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The article examines the experiences of Chinese PhD students doing research in China Studies as well as the experiences of their supervisors who supervise their research in Australian universities. By conducting semi-structured interviews with both PhD students and their supervisors, we aim to understand the expectations, concerns and challenges of both students and supervisors involved in the PhD journey. We found that the main concerns and challenges of students lie in the tight timeframe of scholarship, their 'ideological dissonance' and their relations with supervisors. The supervisors hope their Chinese students could improve academic writing skills, critical thinking skills and social skills in order to well accommodate the research culture in Australia and successfully complete their PhD research. Our findings could help Australian universities to better understand the cultural and educational challenges of Chinese PhD students and to further build up the quality for research training

to attract more international research students from China and elsewhere.

***Keywords**: Chinese international students, Australian higher education, China studies, PhD supervision*

Introduction

According to statistics released by the Department of Education and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in Australia in April 2022, 28% of the total 465,811 international students studying in Australia came from China. Though the COVID-19 and geopolitical tensions between Australia and China in the last few years have seen a small decline in numbers, China is still the nation that sends most students to Australia, followed by India at 16% (International Education Data and Research, 2022). In recent years, Chinese international students have become a focus of media coverage in Australia. From contract cheating scandals at universities (Belot, 2016), Chinese student protests against their teachers' open discussion of contentious issues relating to China (Reynolds, 2017), to China warning students to avoid Australia for study (Kuo, 2020), media reports on this cohort of overseas students have provoked heated debate in Australia about how to respond to China's influence in Australian universities (Benney, 2017) and whether Australian universities are too reliant on income from China (Bolton, 2018).

Rather than discussing the escalating tensions over Chinese international students in Australia, the article focuses on a very specific cohort of Chinese international students – PhD students, who come to Australia from China to pursue their doctoral degree in humanities and social sciences and conduct research on China studies projects[1]. It aims to understand the motives, expectations, challenges and problems of overseas PRC PhD students doing research about their home country, as well as of the supervisors with China expertise, both ethnic Chinese

1 China studies projects in this article refer to research topics that mainly investigate Chinese issues from a wide range of disciplines in humanities and social sciences, such as media studies, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, political science and so on. PhD students working on these projects are based in various schools or research centres not limited to a China Studies Centre or a Department of Chinese Studies.

and non-Chinese, who supervise such projects. Understanding these individual experiences that may have only been shared with a small circle of friends, and even not shared unreservedly between students and supervisors, will help promote mutual understanding between Chinese PhD students and their Australian supervisors. Furthermore, it will enhance the quality of international research student experiences in Australian universities in the fields of China studies and area studies.

In order to understand individual research and supervision experiences, we conducted semi-structured interviews in early 2018 with 6 PhD students (4 ongoing and 2 completed) and 4 supervisors (2 ethnic Chinese supervisors and 2 non-Chinese supervisors) in Australian universities. Their research areas cover a wide range of fields about China, such as Chinese politics, media, arts, gender, history and literature. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face, via email or WeChat voice call and were based on two sets of interview questions for students and supervisors respectively (see Appendices 1 and 2). The face-to-face and WeChat interviews were of 30 minutes to an hour's duration and were conducted in Chinese. The email interviews were conducted in English. Though conducted in different languages, interview questions in each cohort were identical. The names of participants, their research projects, specific research interests and working institutions have been anonymised. The questions for both students and supervisors covered a wide range of issues including, among others, the political orientation of research topics, fieldwork in China, student-supervisor relations, and career expectations, to better understand their research and supervision experiences.

Students' experiences

The 13 questions for PhD students encompass four themes: research environment (Q1, 2, 9), experiences in conducting PhD research (Q3, 5, 6, 7, 8), relations with supervisors (Q4, 10, 11), self-evaluation and career expectations (Q 12, 13).

Research environment

Australia has long been perceived by Chinese students as a desirable nation to conduct PhD research. The six PhD students mentioned that Australia's excellent natural environment, high-quality higher

education, multicultural society, relatively relaxed immigration policy, and generous scholarships attracted them.

According to the Times Higher Education's World University Rankings for 2022, Australia has 37 top universities, among which six are ranked in the prestigious top 100 (Times Higher Education, 2021). The top-ranking universities all have research strengths in humanities and social sciences. Moreover, Australian universities have a long tradition of teaching and researching China studies. According to the Chinese Studies Association of Australia (CSAA), 23 Australian universities across 8 states and territories have established Chinese studies programs, departments, institutes or research centres (Chinese Studies Association of Australia, n.d.). As most Chinese PhD students in humanities and social sciences choose China-based topics for research, Australia's rich academic resources in China studies compared with other Western nations make it a suitable place for their PhD research.

> *There are Chinese or non-Chinese academics with research expertise in China in most disciplines in humanities and social sciences at my university. It is easy for Chinese students to find a suitable supervisor to work with. (Student participant 1)*

> *China studies is the most popular area among area studies in Australian universities simply because China is very important to Australia in many aspects. I believe more and more China experts will be needed in the future in Australia, so I chose here to do my PhD [sic.]. (Student participant 3)*

In addition, Australia is also believed to be a 'cost-effective' country to do PhD research compared with other nations with a strong international reputation for research excellence, such as the U.S., Canada and Singapore.

> *Australian universities do not require Graduate Record Examinations (GRE), which is an extremely time-consuming task for PhD applicants. The IELTS score that meets the English language requirement for PhD admission of Australian universities will suffice. (Student participant 2)*

> *Standard duration of a full-time doctoral degree in Australian universities is 3-4 years, which is shorter than the average 4-6*

> *years in the U.S. I can start working on my research project as soon as I enrol in the PhD program without taking any coursework. (Student participant 4)*

The six student participants who are in the 2nd or 3rd year of their PhD studies or have completed their PhDs are basically satisfied with the research environment, facilities and opportunities provided by their universities, including working space, library resources, and conference and fieldwork funding. Their PhD research projects are funded by a wide range of scholarship schemes, including PhD scholarships funded by the China Scholarship Council (CSC), scholarships for international Higher Degree Research students offered by Australian universities and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation.

Students' experiences of PhD research

The six student participants all chose China research projects because they believed their pre-existing knowledge about China's history, society, culture and politics, as well as their native Chinese language skills, gave them an incomparable advantage over non-Chinese students. Their networks in China also helped with their research data collection and fieldwork. The students also regarded the completion of a PhD thesis within the required timeframe of 3-4 years as being easier to achieve on a China-related topic than if they had chosen to write on a non-China topic. Most of the participants believed that the doctoral completion timeframe, of 3-4 years of full-time study at Australian universities, was their greatest challenge. The comments of two participants illustrate their anxieties on this matter:

> *My scholarship only covered 3.5 years. It is very challenging to finish a good thesis within 3.5 years. I started extensively reading English literature and writing in English when I began my PhD. I had to spend more time on reading and writing than local PhD students. My supervisor suggested I extend a semester, but I didn't have the money to pay for the tuition fee and had to hastily submit my thesis at the end of 3.5 years. (Student participant 1)*

> *Due to the limited time to complete my thesis, I only had two*

> *months to conduct fieldwork in China. I didn't obtain sufficient data which I expected to collect. If given a chance to re-do my PhD, I hope I would have more time to do fieldwork [sic.]. (Student participant 4)*

Another major challenge for several of the participants was the 'ideological dissonance' (He, 2000) they encountered during the early phase of their PhD candidature. The restrictions on academic freedom in mainland China are widely known. Especially in the humanities and social sciences, undergraduate and postgraduate students have to use textbooks compiled by scholars and research institutions approved by the Ministry of Education for core units. This ensures the teaching content of different disciplines at different universities continues along the right ideological track in accordance with historical materialism and Communist ideologies. For some disciplines which are closely related to politics and ideology, such as journalism, ethnology and religious studies, the Marxist view of these disciplines is greatly emphasized in theory teaching. Courses like Marxist Journalism Theories, Marxist Ethnic Studies, Marxist Religious Studies are core units with dedicated textbooks for certain majors (Chen, 2018; People's Daily, 2010).

Since President Xi Jinping came to power in late 2012, ideological control of teaching and research in higher education institutions, especially in social sciences and humanities, has been greatly tightened to enhance the guiding role of Marxism (Denyer, 2016). President Xi, in a speech delivered at a symposium on philosophy and social sciences for socialist development, in May 2016, stressed the importance of integrating Marxism, socialist practices and Chinese traditions in various fields of philosophy and social sciences and called for 'developing a system of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics' (Xinhua, 2016). Critical thinking to promote open discussion of controversial issues and free expression of different voices and positions without fear of penalty through meaningful and respectful dialogues, which is greatly emphasized in liberal arts education in the West (Pinto and Portelli, 2009), is seriously deficient in humanities and social sciences education in China because of the CCP's ideological indoctrination. Students from this background usually need some time to build up their critical thinking ability after they start their PhD research to adapt to the critical thinking tradition of Western academia.

> *I received my BA and MA in journalism in China. The readings suggested by my supervisor in the first year of my PhD opened up a new world for me. I felt very excited when I first learned new concepts and theories about alternative media, radical democracy, mediated social change and so on. The access to Western academic thoughts and theories enables me to reflect upon what I was taught in China and develop a critical thinking ability that is not encouraged in China. I do not want to say the media knowledge I learnt before is all wrong. But it is at least incomplete and could not explain the complex media environment in the world. (Student participant 5)*

However, some students still have to consider if their PhD topics are politically acceptable to the Chinese government, even though they are conducting research overseas and have full access to Western academic resources. We found that PhD students who are funded by the Chinese government or intend to go back to China to work after completing their PhD are more likely to exercise self-censorship in PhD topic selection. The 'political correctness' of their research topic is both a precondition of their Chinese government scholarship and essential if they wish to secure an academic position and develop a research career in China after graduation.

> *I am a CSC-funded PhD student. CSC had to review my research proposal before they offered me a scholarship. If my topic was not accepted by the government, how could I receive a scholarship from CSC? As agreed, I have to return to China to work after my PhD. I need to ensure my topic and argument are on the right political track. (Student participant 6)*

> *I have to go back to China to work after graduation. If my topic is too sensitive or too marginalised in China, it would be difficult for me to find an academic job. If I could stay in Western academia, I may work on a different topic. I think this is a common strategy for Chinese scholars. (Student participant 1)*

While relating experiences of doing fieldwork in China, all participants agreed that 'guanxi' (networks) was very important for research data gathering. Knowing an insider was extremely useful for recruiting interviewees or getting access to rare resources in libraries and

archives. All participants noted the lack of research networks and their international student status as difficulties that hindered their fieldwork in China. Moreover, as one participant who worked on a politically sensitive topic concerning Xinjiang observed:

> *It took me two months to finish my ethics clearance as the ethics review panel had assumed that China was an authoritarian state with restricted freedom of speech and that researchers who work on sensitive topics were likely to be detained. It took me a lot of time to explain China's political and research environment to the panel and persuade them to approve my application. In practice, I found my participants were very alert if they were asked to give comments on my topics of interest. Fortunately, an old classmate has some guanxi with the local archives centre so I was allowed to access the archives that I wanted to read. I collected less data than I had expected during my fieldwork but gained valuable experience while doing fieldwork in China. (Student participant 4)*

Relations with supervisors

As PhD training in Australia in the humanities and social sciences remains strongly reliant on the British tradition of one-on-one supervision, it is crucial for students to be assigned a suitable leading supervisor (usually with one or two co-supervisors or associate supervisors as a complement). Students must feel that their supervisors are approachable and able to provide timely intellectual support if they are to maintain a congenial and productive relationship with them throughout their candidature. When asked what criteria they used in choosing their supervisors, our participants said that they valued the research expertise, research excellence and academic seniority of their supervisors. The majority said it was immaterial to them whether the supervisor was Chinese.

> *I think the match of research interest between student and supervisor is the most important thing. It would be hard to complete a good thesis if your supervisor is not an expert in your area and could not offer you valuable feedback. Of course, whether the supervisor has research excellence and a good reputation in academia also need to be considered. (Student*

participant 2)

> *I think the academic position of the supervisor is also important. Most PhD students would like to work with senior researchers rather than junior ones because professors have more experience in supervising PhD students. Their extensive research networks and reputation in academia could be helpful for my future career. (Student participant 4)*

> *I'd prefer to work with non-Chinese supervisors and experience different teacher-student relations. As [far as] I know, most Chinese supervisors are very tough because they were educated in China and believe 'talented students are trained by strict teachers'. (Student participant 6)*

Most participants expressed satisfaction with the supervision they had received from their supervisory teams. They used the words 'timely', 'supportive', 'enlightening' and 'good' to comment on the quality of the supervision. However, a few students had complaints about their supervisors.

> *My principal supervisor is very busy because he has an administrative position and supervises three PhD students. He replies to my emails and gives comments on my writing very slowly. I have to look for support from my co-supervisor who doesn't know my topic very well. (Student participant 6)*

Self-evaluation and career expectation

Our participants were asked to evaluate what they perceived as the advantages and disadvantages of being an international student as compared to local PhD students. All of them regarded their inferior English writing skills as a clear disadvantage for them as international Chinese PhD students. Several participants felt that local students had also received better training in research methodology and presentation skills during their MA and BA studies, noting that Chinese students had to catch up on these skills during their PhD candidature. The majority also regarded local students as better at research network building, independent thinking and interpersonal communication. In

this connection, they noted that because of scholarship and visa time limits, Chinese international students were under significant pressure to complete their degree on time and thus often sacrificed their social time to stay focused on their research. For this reason, they also felt that their fellow Chinese international PhD students were generally more hardworking and self-disciplined than local students.

When asked about their career expectations, all participants said they hoped to secure academic positions, preferably at an Australian university. However, they acknowledged that the academic job market in Australia is highly competitive and said that they would also consider returning to China or applying for academic positions in other countries. Two of our participants had already completed their PhDs and had returned to China, with one working in the media industry and the other at a Chinese university.

> *It would be great if I could find a lecturer position in Australia. But the job market is extremely competitive in my area in Australia. My supervisor said I need at least two or three years after [my] PhD to build up my track record. It would be easier to find an academic job in China. My plan is to find a good university in China first and build up my English publications in the next few years. I will keep an eye on the job market in Australia and apply for jobs when I become strong enough. (Student participant 2)*

> *My PhD was funded by CSC, so I had to return to China to work for at least two years after graduation. I am currently a lecturer at a top university in my area in China, but I have found that I cannot fully concentrate on my research due to heavy teaching and administrative workloads. The relations among colleagues are much more complicated than in Australia. The research environment here is worse than I anticipated. Before I came back [to China], I had the plan of building up my research and [then] looking for an opportunity to go back to Australia to work. However, it looks like there is a long way to go to realize such a plan. (Student participant 1)*

Supervisors' Experiences

For supervisors, we asked a total of 5 questions (see Appendix 2) related to their experiences in supervising PhD students from mainland China. The interview questions ranged from general information about Chinese PhD candidates and the selection criteria used to enrol them (Q1, 2), to specific questions regarding the main difficulties faced by international Chinese students in their PhD research (Q3), supervisory challenges in ensuring that these students complete their degrees(Q4), and skill gaps for PRC PhD students to improve for success (Q5).

The four supervisors who answered our survey said that they regularly receive enquiries from mainland China applicants who wished to work on China-related research topics. The number of applications received by these supervisors ranged from two to ten per year. According to the supervisors, the quality of the research proposal, the relevance of the proposal to the supervisor's research expertise, and English-language proficiency were the three main selection criteria for deciding whether or not to accept an applicant for supervision. We concluded three main skills that supervisors suggested their PRC PhD students improve to achieve success.

Academic Writing in English

We found that supervisors have deep concerns about the English-language proficiency of Chinese PhD students and that they regard poor English as the most basic obstacle to their academic progress. Two professors singled out poor writing and an inability to think in English (Supervisor participant 4) and insufficient comprehension of English-language disciplinary literature (Supervisor participant 3) as particular concerns.

Clearly, Chinese PhD candidates must meet the English language requirements set by Australian universities or they could not be enrolled[2]. However, there is a striking gap between the skills that they acquired to pass the IELTS test and the academic writing skills required for PhD research. In other words, prospective PhD candidates who do well in the IELTS test, often through extensive study and training

2 The language requirement usually ranges from an overall band score of 6.5 to 7.0 for IELTS (International English Language Testing System) with no band below 6.0 to 6.5. This differs slightly according to different disciplines and universities.

in English language schools in China, may not possess the range of academic skills implicit in good research writing. This problem also exists among other international higher-degree research student cohorts in Australia (Son & Park, 2014; Yu & Wright, 2016; McCrohon & Nyland, 2018). On the issue of the heavier workloads resulting from supervising international PhD candidates, two of our interviewees stated:

> *A big challenge for me to lead a PRC PhD student to completion is still the language problem. I have spent far too much time correcting their English, fixing their grammar, and finding a better and more efficient way for them to express themselves clearly. (Supervisor participant 4)*

> *I find supervising PRC students very labour-intensive. I am very closely involved in shaping the writing that PRC students produce. In early to mid-candidature I find myself substantially rewriting large sections of their research notes and draft chapters. I do so to indicate how academic writing should be done and the level of scholarly argumentation required. (Supervisor participant 2)*

As these PRC PhD students study English as their second language in China, the difficulties for them to write academically in English lie not only in the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, but also factors such as differences in cultural and educational values, rhetorical strategies, and reader awareness (Jiang, 2011). The problem is not new and it also exists among students from other non-English speaking countries (Lin & Scherz, 2014). Earlier we noted that PRC PhD students view their lack of English proficiency as a disadvantage compared to local students and that all remarked that they did their best to improve their English language skills throughout their candidature. With the patient guidance of supervisors, their English writing skills usually improved significantly over time. Supervisor participant 2 noted that all her PRC students were very conscientious and that their English and academic writing improved 'fairly rapidly as they progressed through their candidature'.

Critical Thinking Skills

The four supervisors all indicated that critical thinking skills need

to be improved for their PRC students. As an interviewed supervisor remarked:

> *Biggest knowledge gap, apart from language difficulty, is what I call 'research literacy'. They are not used to doing critical analysis and independent analysis. To be able to develop a critical perspective and to develop the critical language is very important. (Supervisor participant 4)*

Critical thinking is associated with concepts like data-based decision-making, independence, open-mindedness, rationality, reflective evaluation and wisdom (Brodin, 2015; Holmes et al, 2015). Ronald Barnett (2015) suggests that there are three forms of criticality: critical reasoning through formal knowledge, self-reflection, and critical action towards the world. Doctoral education is expected to enable students to attempt criticality through questioning, writing, and developing relationships among the academy (Brodin, 2015). The insufficiency in critical thinking skills can arguably be contributed in part to the differences in educational practice between China and Western countries.

Dong (2015) has observed that the Chinese educational tradition has tended to encourage an uncritical culture in learning. Confucianism as a normative paradigm has been the dominant force in shaping Chinese pedagogy and in making it extremely exam-oriented. This has produced a fundamental difference between Chinese and Western approaches to key concepts such as 'truth'. Knowledge in the Confucian paradigm was considered 'infallible, and therefore the teachers were too... An answer that a Chinese teacher would give should be the final solution to their students' puzzles, not a clue or guide for the students to find their own answers' (Dong, 2015: 362). With 'truth' normalised as synonymous with institutional authority in this manner, there is little space for critical thinking in Chinese education. What Chinese education has focused on is mastery of received knowledge which is pursued at the expense of the students' ability to raise and answer questions (Anderson, 2016). Conversely, in Western universities, where undergraduate students not only acquire discipline-based knowledge but are encouraged to interrogate what they have learned as received 'truth', critical thinking is seen as essential for research at the graduate level (Sullivan & Guo, 2010). In our view, the cognitive orientation of

Chinese education is a formidable barrier to the teaching and practice of critical thinking. Indeed, research has found that this barrier to critical thinking in Chinese education does not reside with the students but with the teachers, who are generally reluctant to teach a critical thinking course (Chen, 2013).

Social Skills

In addition to the language and critical thinking skills mentioned above, three supervisors also emphasized the importance of improving social skills to better accommodate to Australian culture, communicate with supervisors and build up networks in academia. In the meantime, they also urged supervisors and universities to pay more attention to the welling being of international research students.

Doing PhD study in Australia, in many ways, is also a 'socialization' process for Chinese PhD students, as it is for other international students. They usually experience a variety of challenges –emotional, linguistic, intellectual and cultural– simply because they have not encountered similar situations in their previous living environment. For example, they may feel uncomfortable about local socio-cultural norms or feel alienated because they cannot understand local accents and jokes. They may also encounter discrimination, prejudice or negative stereotyping. One study has found that many international students from culturally 'hierarchical societies' struggle to openly express their expectations and different viewpoints with their supervisors, resulting in a situation of unhappy tension (Son & Park, 2014; Wang & Li, 2011). In addition, completing a PhD project within a tight timeframe can also aggravate anxiety and pressure. These challenges and problems, to a certain degree, have affected how Chinese PhD students, as international students, have interacted with their peers and supervisors in Australia.

The growing body of research on the social well-being of international students in Australia has documented issues including: culture shock (Hellsten, 2002), loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008), perceptions of discrimination from domestic students and academic staff (Guilfoyle & Harryba, 2011; Novera, 2004), limited interactions between international-local students (Yu & Wright, 2016) and social isolation associated with the relatively individualized nature of higher degree

research studies in Australia (Cotterall, 2011). These issues are reflected in the interviews we conducted with student and supervisor participants. To cope with these issues, it does not only require international research students to improve their social skills to accommodate a new learning environment but also needs supervisors and universities to provide constant support and care.

Conclusion

We conducted in-depth interviews with a small number of PRC PhD students doing China-related research in the humanities and social sciences and PhD supervisors in Australian universities, to better understand the concerns, challenges and expectations of both groups.

Our interviews found that the limited timeframe of the PhD scholarship posed by far the greatest challenge for PRC PhD students. They felt it was unrealistic for them to complete a high-quality thesis in a different language in no more than three years (or 3.5 years, if they were successful in applying for an extension of their scholarship). It became clear to us that their educational experience in China and their awareness that they must avoid placing themselves at political risk adversely affected their willingness to adapt to the critical orientation of the research culture in Australian universities. It was also clear that supervisors were not unsympathetic about the problems that their PRC PhD students faced. However, for these students to succeed, the supervisors had to remind them constantly of the need to improve their English and their critical thinking and social skills.

To date, there has been little public discussion or academic research about the many cultural challenges and educational difficulties faced by international research students from the PRC and other countries when they enrol as PhD students at Australian universities. This article aims to provide a vignette to initiate and shed light on further research. Especially when student learning experience and internationalisation have become Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring the success of universities across the world. It has been reported that many postgraduate research students suffer from inadequate support from supervisors and universities and have to drop out (Wakeford, 2004) and the duty of care to the increasing number of international students in Australian universities is often overlooked (Burton-Bradley, 2018).

Due to Australia's strict border closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, applications for Australian universities from international students have significantly dropped, which will have a long-term impact on Australia (SBS News, 2021). Moreover, the pandemic and geopolitical tensions between Australia and China in the last few years have already caused a decline in Chinese international students coming to Australia (Lehmann, 2021). It is therefore more urgent and important to understand the cultural and educational challenges of the cohort of international PhD students from China and elsewhere and think about how to improve their learning experience to further build up the quality of research training and global reputation of Australian universities in the post-pandemic era.

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Appendix 1: Interview Questions for PRC PhD Students

1. Why did you choose Australia to conduct your PhD research?
2. Who funded your PhD research?
3. Why do you want to research a China topic in Australia?
4. How do you like your PhD supervision?
5. What challenges do you have in completing your thesis?
6. As a PhD student who received BA and MA degrees in China, did you encounter 'ideological dissonance' in the early stage of your PhD life?
7. Do you exercise self-censorship in PhD research topic selection?
8. Did you have difficulty in doing fieldwork in China for your project?
9. Are you satisfied with the research environment in your university?
10. What are your criteria to choose supervisors?
11. Do you prefer to work with ethnic Chinese supervisors or non-Chinese supervisors?
12. Compared with local students or students from other nations, what advantages and disadvantages do you think Chinese PhD

students have?

13. What's your career plan after completing PhD?

Appendix 2: Interview Questions for Supervisors

1. Are you currently supervising PRC PhD students? How many PRC PhD students have you supervised?
2. How many PRC students express interest to do PhD with you every year? What are your primary criteria to select PRC PhD students?
3. What are the key challenges and difficulties for your PRC PhD students to successfully complete PhD?
4. What are the key challenges and difficulties for you to lead a PRC PhD student to completion?
5. What skills do you think your PRC PhD students need to improve?

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