Lincoln PGR supervisor development programme

http://doctoralschool.lincoln.ac.uk/

Programme outline

➢ Structure follows student journey;
  ➢ Induction and early meetings
  ➢ Supporting and monitoring progress
  ➢ Preparing students for assessment (interim and final)

➢ Focus is on your practice as a supervisor, with guidance and signposting in relation to process, regulations and documentation

Learning outcomes

➢ Reflect on different approaches to supervision and the role of the supervisor.

➢ Monitor, support and assess student progress and provide feedback on work.

➢ Prepare students for assessment of their research project (i.e. thesis/viva, but also progression documents such as MPhil transfer) and support them in their career aspirations.

➢ Support students in both their research and career development.

Useful sites

PGR Office (on portal under registry) for some blank PGR forms, guides and links to regulations (others are on OneUni)

https://ps.lincoln.ac.uk/services/registry/Assessments/PGROffice/SitePages/Home.aspx

Doctoral School for PGR student training and events, registers of trained/approved supervisors and viva chairs

http://doctoralschool.lincoln.ac.uk/

Secretariat Blog for PGR regulations

https://secretariat.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/university-regulations/

Vitae and Researcher Development Framework

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

The PGR Student in Current HE Environment

➢ Too much emphasis on producing thesis and research outputs and not enough on career development and employability in academic and non-academic paths (Roberts 2002)

➢ Number of PGR students is expanding in UK.

➢ Most will not follow careers in academia once they complete.

➢ Academia increasingly competitive and KPI orientated

➢ Approximately 1 in 3 experience mental health issues compared to 1 in 5 of their employed peers.

➢ Most supervisors have followed careers focused in academic research and/or teaching, and are less familiar with other careers.

➢ How do we support PGR students' aspirations and careers goals in this environment?

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PGR Student Feedback (PRES 2023)

➢ PGR students are positive about their overall experience at Lincoln with 79.4% satisfied or very satisfied in the last national survey (above sector norm).

➢ Highest correlation with overall satisfaction

   ➢ Supervisor's support for the student's research development.

   ➢ Supervisor's engagement in the student's career plans and preparation

   ➢ Student feels their research project is valued.

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Supporting PGR Students:
Virtuous and Vicious Circles

➢ High student satisfaction generally associated with completion in good time and good working relationship with supervisors.

➢ Poor working practises leads to increased stress in PGR students, poor outcomes and complaints.

➢ This can range from poor communication and mis-matched expectations to perceived bullying and harassment
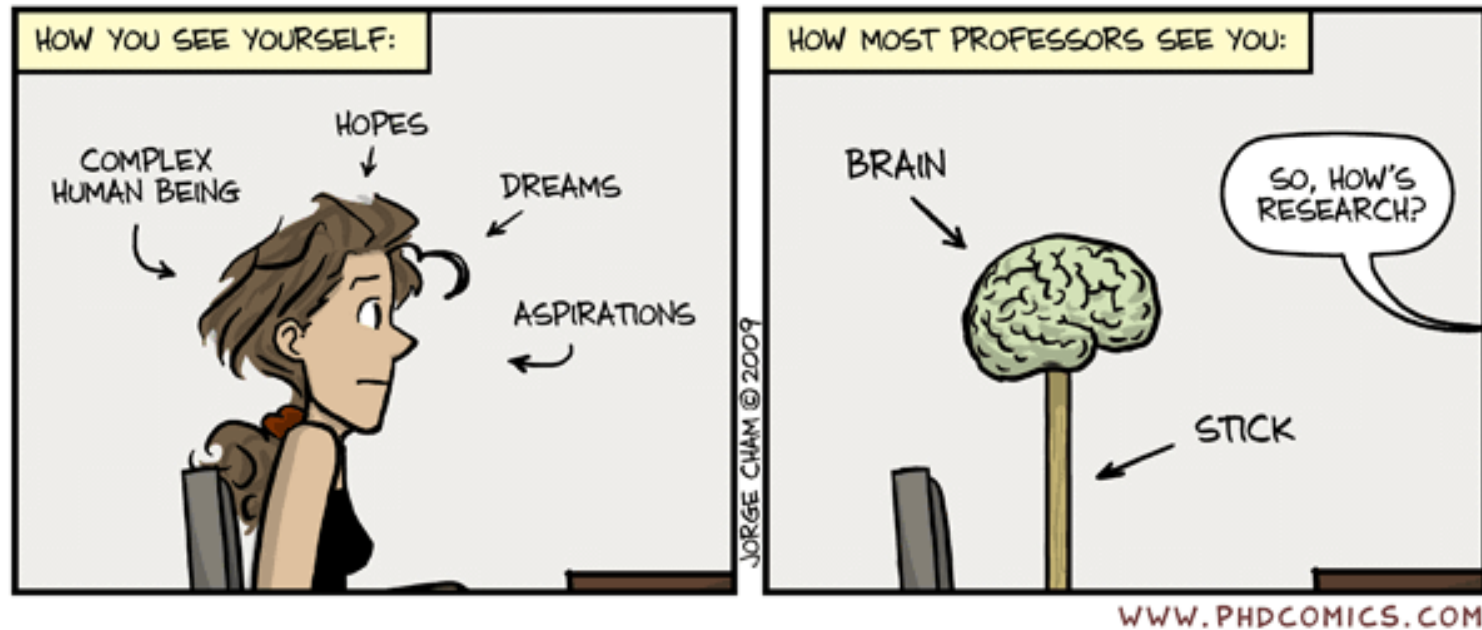
Experiences of being supervised/supervision

What practices did your supervisor employ that you found supportive and helpful?

Were there aspects of supervision that were less helpful and if so what were they?

Can you identify/describe your supervisor's style?

- Dictator or Facilitator?

- Active listener or Casual observer?

- Did they tell you what to do and expect you to do it, or did they engage with you as if you were peers?

How do you apply these to your own students?

The importance of the supervisory relationship

➢A key factor in the successful completion of the PhD is the supervision process

➢The process is a partnership between students and supervisors

➢Good communication is essential throughout but **especially at the start when expectations must be clarified and agreed**

➢Academic issues vs Personnel Issues

The initial meetings (PGR Study Plan)

➢ Ensure that the student is properly enrolled

➢ Organise tour of relevant department/school/areas

➢ Ensure that they are aware of central/school/college induction processes

➢ Discuss expectations (yours and theirs) concerning your working relationship

➢ Discuss training needs

➢ Check on disability/learning difficulties/long term medical conditions and direct students to appropriate university support where appropriate

➢ Explore other things that may be problematic

➢ Assess ethical/health and safety issues with project

Discussing expectations

➢ The 'PGR Study Plan & Personal Development Log' should be discussed and agreed

  ➢ Establish key milestones such as ethical approval, Confirmation of Study, MPhil transfer and/or Annual Review and submission of thesis.

  ➢ Establish roles of supervisory team and student

  ➢ Agree ground rules and working practices

  ➢ Ensure they are aware of support from Doctoral School, Careers Service and Student Wellbeing

  ➢ Ensure they enrol on Doctoral School induction

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Establishing Ground Rules and Working Practises.

➢ Who will take responsibility for setting meeting agendas and completing the PGR Progress Meeting Forms?

➢ How will the supervisory team work? Will you all meet together at each meeting?

➢ How will you maintain contact between meetings?

➢ How far in advance of a meeting should work be submitted for feedback?

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Planning the Research

➢ Encourage your students to develop research plan or project timeline

➢ Incorporating key dates/milestones

➢ Plan backwards from key dates such as Confirmation of Study, MPhil transfer or submission of thesis.

➢ Project management tools and techniques include

– Monthly or quarterly plans

– Objectives and milestones

– Timelines and agreed actions

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Progression and support

Supporting Progression

- Planning and Monitoring
- Writing up and Feedback
- Problem solving.
  - Your job, their job or a shared responsibility?
- Presenting work.
  - Internal and external presentations
  - Posters, seminars and papers
 - MPhil transfer and thesis chapters.

Encouraging early writing and reflection

- PGR students often fear their work is not good enough for supervisors to review.

- The sooner they write and share, the more time to address key issues and generally reflect, alter, develop and improve.

- Early writing on focused tasks and regular presentation of work to supervisors is beneficial and vital

- These can be short reviews, outlines of planned work or short sections of results and their discussion.

Encouraging early writing and reflection

- PGR Students should write early and write often

- They do not need to get it perfectly right in first instance, but they do need to get it written

- Small tasks can identify issues and build confidence

- Reflective diary/journal useful to review improvements in style and understanding

- Log book useful for library, field and laboratory based work to ensure data and its context is recorded
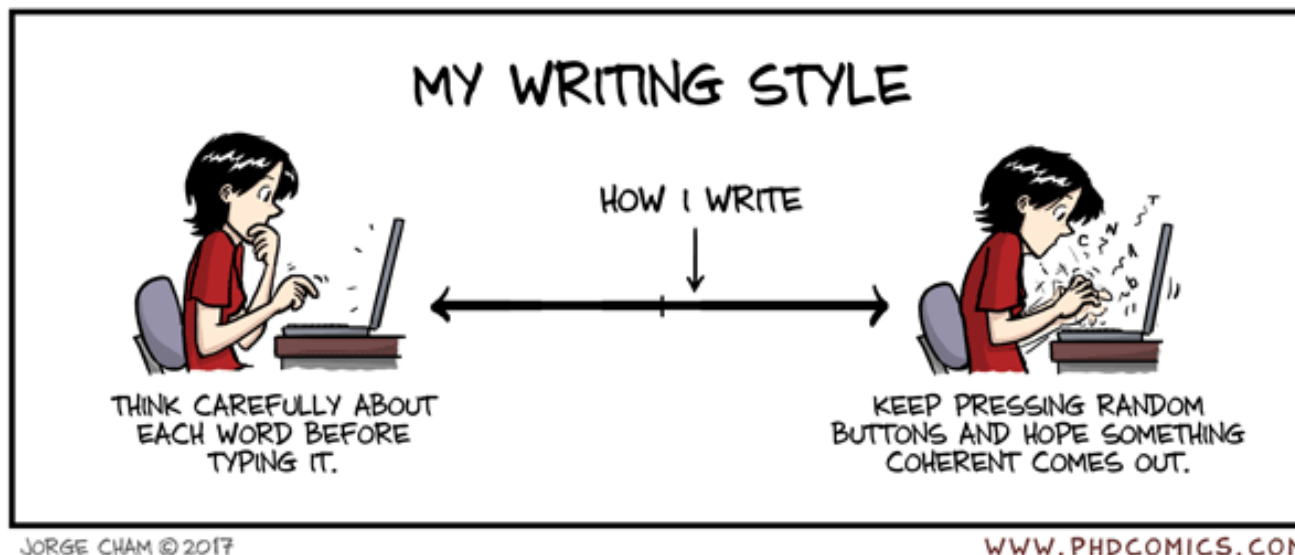
Top tips for good practice

- Establish a common understanding with student about what constitutes feedback
- Work with student to identify what works for them
  - What type of feedback do they want?
  - When do they need to be led, and where can they show their initiative?
- Encourage critical thinking through the use of questions
- Student should reflect on what is good and bad about their own and related work
- Supervisors should reflect on the effectiveness of your guidance and feedback
- Discuss issues with appropriate colleagues.

Summary: Supporting PGR Students

- Frequent and regular contact is the most important factor in successful supervision
- One of the key roles of the supervisor is to meet regularly with the student
- UoL regulations are designed to support this practice.

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Monitoring Progression (Monthly)

- ➢ PGR Progress Meeting report
    - ➢ To be completed after each supervision meeting
    - ➢ Or at least once per month (2 months PT)
    - ➢ Meeting agenda and actions agreed by all.
- ➢ Used to monitor student engagement, but required for all students
- ➢ Valuable for successful students as a record of progress and agreements.
- ➢ Valuable where students are struggling to help identify additional support and areas for improvement.

PGR Confirmation of Studies

➤ Confirmation of studies should normally be submitted within

  ➤ 4 month of enrolment for full-time student

  ➤ 8 months of enrolment for part-time students

➤ Nomination of suitable supervisory team

➤ Up to 1000 word description of the proposed research

➤ Research Development Needs Analysis (RDNA)

➤ Consider Ethical issues

➤ DBS or research passport for work with vulnerable people and medical data

Research Development Needs Analysis (RDNA)

- RDNA mapped to the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) supported by Vitae
- Initial report
- Annual reports and final report.
- Available via the PGR office site

See: http://doctoralschool.lincoln.ac.uk/
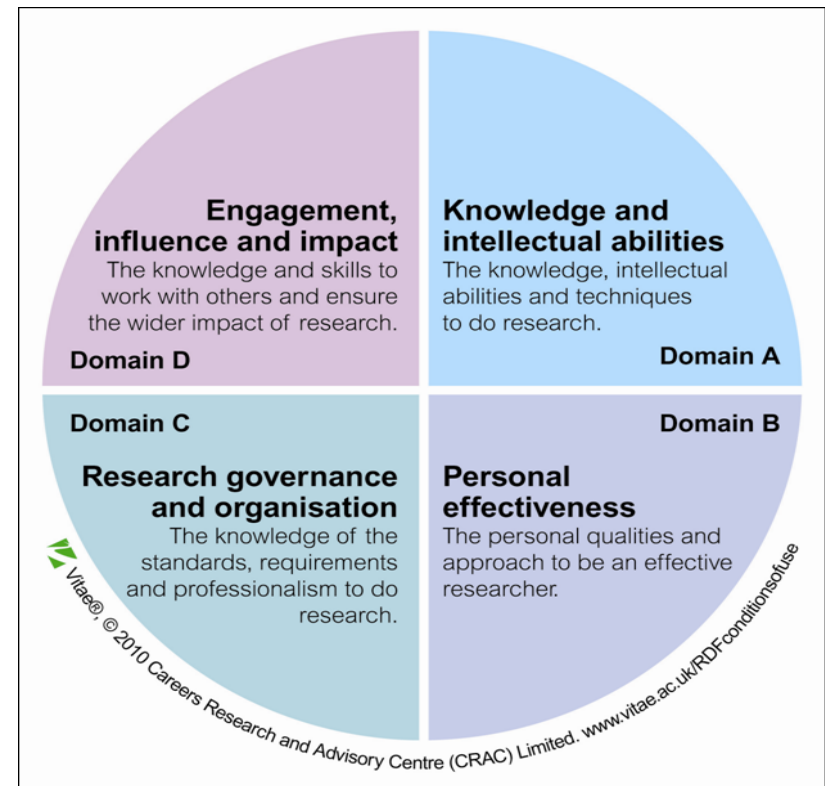
Purpose of PGR Confirmation of Studies

- To confirm the supervision team
  - Appropriate training and experience
  - Appropriate subject and methodological expertise
- To ensure that the planned research is appropriate for the programme of study
  - Potential for original contribution to knowledge
  - Ethically sound
- Identify any additional facilities or resources and check whether the planned research is achievable in the time frame

Ethics Update

- The new system, the **Lincoln Ethics Application System (LEAS)**, is live for **all staff** and **all PGR students**

- Help and guidance can be found on the **Research Ethics & Governance portal**

- Information about when a **Project Registration Form** is required can also be found on the **Research Ethics & Governance portal**

- Templates within LEAS are mandatory to use for: Participant Information Sheets, Consent Forms and Debrief Forms

- We have created Academic Supervisor Guidance which is now available for you to view

MPhil Transfer

➢ PGR Request for Transfer and Transfer Report

  – Transfer Request within 12 months of registration for FT students or 24 months for PT students

  – Normally short (e.g. 5000 word) report (MPhil to PhD) covering progress against work plan set out in PGR Confirmation of Studies.

  – Evidence of understanding literature (e.g. short review)

  – Evidence of research competence (e.g. experimental write up)

  – Evidence of route to completion (e.g. updated work plan)

  – Updated RDNA required

  – Two attempts allowed

• To fit into one year timescale, transfer panel should be identified early by School, and panel in position to meet student and make recommendation by 12 months of enrolment.

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MPhil Transfer Outcomes

1. Pass with no requirements. Student progresses to PhD programme.

2. Pass with recommendations. Student progresses to PhD. Actions monitored through PGR Monthly reports and PGR Annual report.

3. Fail with opportunity to resit. Student provided with requirements to address. These need to be addressed within 3 months of student being informed of outcome of transfer meeting. Resit normally involves a second transfer meeting with student. Only one resit allowed under normal circumstances.

4. Fail and complete lower award. Normally this would be MPhil, but Masters by Research can also be considered. If student transfers to lower award then end dates may need to be updated to give at least 12 months to submit.

5. Fail with no award.

- MPhil transfer panel indicate recommendation to candidate and provide feedback on work to date at end of transfer meeting.

- MPhil transfer panel send recommendation to CRDB for ratification.

Annual Monitoring

- PGR Annual Monitoring record on anniversary of enrolment for PhD and Masters by Research
  - Except where MPhil transfer has been approved in that year
- Approval is normally required for re-enrolment at start of next academic year
  - Requires updated RDNA
  - Requires input and signatures from at least 2 members of supervisory team
- Assesses progress against milestones of project in previous year.
- Should also include
  - Work plan for next 12 months.
  - Focus on timeframe for completion.
- Where student enters writing up/thesis pending stage, then focus can be on chapter writing and deadlines.

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Supporting Struggling or Failing PGR Students

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Why PGR students struggle?

1. Financial Issues
2. Other roles and responsibilities (e.g. teaching or their job)
3. Ill health/bereavement
4. Stress and Mental Health
5. Lack of Motivation
6. Unexpected Delays or Outcomes
7. Poor Relationship with Supervisory Team
8. Insufficient Academic Ability
9. Poor Professional Practice

Support Structures

1. Supervisory Team. Different members may be better placed to advise/share burden
2. Academic Community. Informally seek advice from trusted colleagues, but respect confidentiality
3. PGR Leads in School and College.
4. Professional Services including
   A. Student Wellbeing
   B. Registry/Research Admin/Finance
   C. Doctoral School
   D. Careers Service
   E. Library including MASH
   F. English Language Support

Potential Actions

1. Interruption (online form on portal).

   Up to 2 years allowed (unless supported with extenuation)

2. Change in status such as FT to PT (online form on OneUni)

3. Withdrawal (online form)

4. Submit for lower award (transfer form)

Normally signed off by supervisor and noted by registry

Useful to record actions in PGR Progress Meeting and/or PGR Annual Review forms

Change of Supervisory Arrangements

Head of School approves supervisory arrangements or(more usually) delegates to PGR School Lead.

- Can be adding to team to provide additional support
- Can be change of roles (e.g. swap Director of Studies and second supervisor)
- Can be removal of supervisors due to changes of circumstances such as leaving academia
- Can be related to breakdown in relationship between student and supervisor(s).

Where supervisors and student agree on changes then relevant PGR form is completed and signed by both.

Breakdown in Student:Supervisor Relationship

Where there has breakdown in relationships there needs to be sensitivity to student and supervisor.

Normally there would be a period of mediation before any permanent changes to supervisory arrangements were made. This can be mediated by Head of School, PGR Lead or designated staff member.

Where mediation does not resolve issues to satisfaction of student and supervisor then student needs to make formal request to Head of School/School PGR Lead to review supervisory arrangements.

Based on evidence provided and suitability of remaining/alternative supervisors, HoS etc can remove supervisors and/or nominate replacements.

Withdrawal

PGR students who do not wish to continue on their PGR program can withdraw at any stage via online form on portal.

PGR students may also be withdrawn by their School for lack of engagement.

Lack of engagement should be supported by clear evidence.

Suitable evidence would include lack of PGR Monthly Progress Forms for prolonged period (e.g. 3 successive months for FT PGR student).

Before withdrawal, students should be contacted regarding their poor attendance, deadline for re-engagement and options to request review or appeal against decision

Academic Failure

PGR students have a number of progression points before thesis submission where their progress can be monitored, remedial actions may be required and/or alternative outcomes can be enforced.

These include the PGR Confirmation of Studies, which assesses student's ability to present a cohesive study plan, MPhil Transfer and Annual Progression.

These provide means of independently assessing student's progress against project milestones and potential to complete planned program in timely manner.

Recommendations are approved by CRDB (exam board)

Student has right of appeal against CRDB decision

Keeping Good Records and Feedback to Students

Withdrawal and academic failure can be challenged by students through appeals process.

Appeals process will have access to formal (i.e. PGR forms) and informal communication with students (e.g. emails).

Where students are encountering difficulties it is vital to maintain timely, accurate and professional records of communications.

PGR Progress Meeting Forms can be used to set clear objectives and realistic timelines to navigate through periods of difficulty.

Feedback on progression documents should provide accurate information on remedial actions, timelines for completion and consequences.

Assessment of Masters by Research

From 2020, Masters by Research students are normally assessed on basis of written thesis, unless viva is requested by examiners. Normally examination by one internal examiners and 1 external examiner.

Examiners independently review work and determine outcome (e.g. Pass following minor corrections).

Agreed outcome and amendments collated by internal and submitted to CRDB via PGR officer in School/College

Examiners may informally share feedback with student/supervisors, but should copy in PGR officer in school.

Formally outcome is passed to student via CRDB, including list of corrections. Timescale for corrections begins once CRDB has contacted candidate.

Where viva is required see process for MPhil/PhD students

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Assessment of Mphil/PhD/Doctoral candidates

The examination of research degrees has two stages

a) The submission and preliminary assessment of the written thesis

b) Defence by oral or approved alternative examination

The decision to present the thesis for examination is the sole responsibility of the student
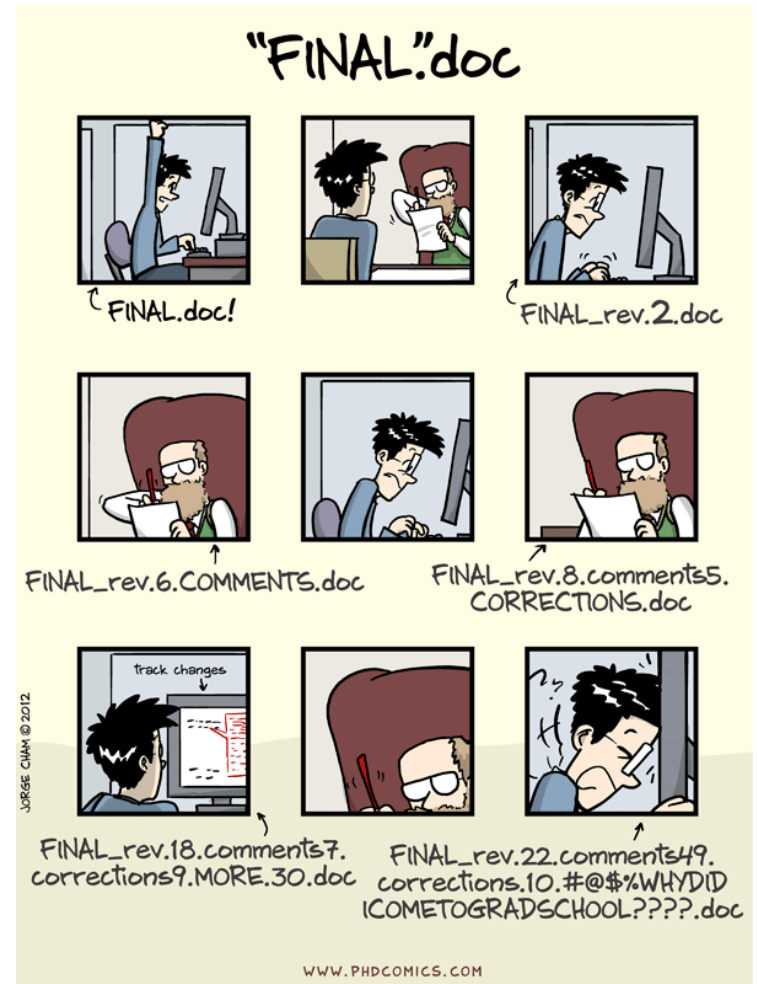
When should PhD students submit?

- Full-time PhD students can submit their thesis for examination after 27 months of enrolment and no later than the end of the fourth year (48 months)
- Normally aim to submit at around 3 years and ideally submission, viva, corrections and award within 4 years.
- Part time students get up to 8 years to submit (changed this year from 6 years)
- Extensions for 6 months may be approved by CRDB when supported by School and/or Extenuation.
- Future employers would want to know time to completion (and outputs) for thesis.
- Completions (submission and award) are primary KPI for external PGR audits

When should Masters students submit?

- Full-time students can submit their thesis for examination after 9 months of enrolment and no later than 16 months after start date (2 years for part time)

- Normally aim to have finished data collection/be ready to submit at around 12 months (18 months PT)

- Masters by Research students are not charged thesis pending/writing up fees

- Extensions may be approved by CRDB when supported by School and/or Extenuation.

Thesis pending/writing up

- Thesis pending fees status (Max 12 months)

- Entitles students to reduced fees in the final write up stage

- Full time PhD students enter Thesis pending fees status after 3 years of enrolment, P/T after 7 years.
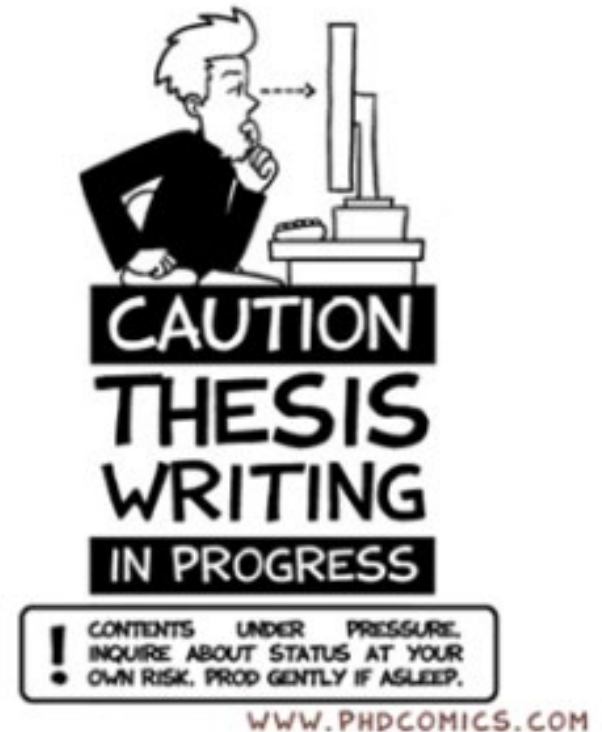
Assessment procedures

- PGR Examiners and Viva chair form
- Examiners should be appointed 6 months prior to intended submission, or at the stage the student applies for 'thesis pending' (whichever is sooner)
  - At least two examiners, not normally more than three, at least one shall be an External Examiner
  - Staff candidates require 2 external and one internal.
  - PGR students can not act as examiners (see exception for staff enrolled on PGR programmes)
  - Require trained viva chair from different School to candidate.

Purpose of Viva and Preperation

➢ To provide students opportunity to defend their work

➢ To engage students in a dialogue about their work

➢ To evaluate and assess to what extent the candidate has full ownership of their written thesis

➢ Many students feel anxious about the viva

➢ Helping them to prepare is a key role of the supervisor

Supporting students to prepare for the viva

➢ Knowing the thesis: advising and providing feedback.

➢ De-mystify the process

➢ Dealing with the practicalities

➢ Managing stress

➢ Work through typical viva questions

➢ Mock Viva?

➢ Prepare them for life after the viva!

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Summary and useful sites

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Summary: Paperwork and Procedures

- Forms and Guidance on PGR Office Portal site or OneUni.

- Completed forms normally submitted to OneUni or to local School/Collegel Office to log, check and forward to relevant bodies*.

- Supervisory arrangements require Head of School (more usually School PGR Lead) approval

- Progression documents (Confirmation of Studies, Annual Progression) need approval from School PGR Lead or committee and ratification by CRDB

- Interim examinations (e.g. MPhil Transfer) require nomination of panel by School PGR lead. Panel make recommendation to CRDB.

- Final examination (i.e thesis and viva) require nomination of examiners by Head of School (or School PGR lead) and approval by CRDB.

- CRDB act on recommendations of viva panel.

- Formal correspondence on progression and award by registry.

*Except ethics forms

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Supervisor Refreshers and Further Training

- PGR Supervisor Training
  - You are now trained.
  - If you feel training was inadequate we can book you in again.
  - You may need a refresher in 4 years time
  - You will need to review annual updates on regulations and processes
- Viva chair training with more information on thesis and viva
- Local subject specific support, mentoring and sharing of good practise within colleges, institutes, schools and research groups.

- The Doctoral School develops and delivers the Researcher Development Programme for Research students. They work across the university with the academic and professional services community to enrich and cultivate the research environment at the University of Lincoln.

- The Doctoral School is always looking to improve and expand the programme and their activities and events, if you are interested in any form of collaboration or contribution, please contact the Doctoral School doctoralschool@lincoln.ac.uk

Useful sites

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Vitae and Researcher Development Framework

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

Further Reading

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