



RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES AT ROYAL HOLLOWAY

Professor Rosemary Deem, Vice Principal (Education)
& Dean of the Doctoral School

Welcome to the joys of doing a research degree



Becoming and being a research student

- It is a hybrid status between a student and a member of staff (you can eat in the SCR, for example), though some students may be staff as well
- How you regard yourself will change as your study progresses, from a beginning researcher to knowing more than your supervisor
- It's generally a less sociable experience than being a Masters or undergraduate student (though lab-based students will have more people around them)
- It will at different times be enjoyable, challenging and demanding and will always be hard work.
- Sometimes you will love your thesis, sometimes you will wonder why you began a research degree

sometimes you just don't want to think about research



What does doing a research degree mean ?

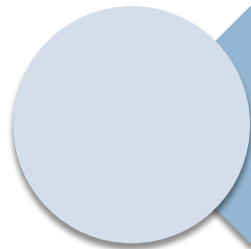
- You embark upon a process of becoming an independent researcher by the end of the period of study (3-4 years for a full-time doctorate, 6-8 for a part-time doctorate, 3 years for MPhil, 1 year full-time Masters by research)
- It is hard work and it can be lonely, so networking is crucial: try
- <http://www.linkedin.com/home>
- <http://www.researchgate.net>
- Use social media for open & closed discussions
- Also join learned societies, department/faculty/specialist reading and writing groups
- Research degrees have their own criteria, e.g. 'the thesis for the degree of PhD will form a distinct contribution to the knowledge of the subject and afford evidence of originality by the discovery of new facts and/or by the exercise of independent critical power'. You have up to 100,000 words to achieve this, excluding references & appendices.



Student



Main Supervisor + co-
or 2nd supervisors



Possibly an Advisor

Admin advice

- Department PGR administrator

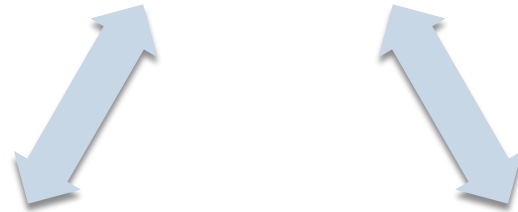
Academic & other
advice if
supervisor/advisor
can't help

- Dept Director of Graduate Studies
- Dept pgr staff-student committee

Beyond department

- Associate Dean (Doctoral School);
- Dean of Doctoral School;
- Students Union

Research Degree
Programmes
Committee



Academic Board



Research
Committee

The 3 Cs of doctoral study

- Cultures
- Collaborations
- Completions

Cultures

Student Slangage # 6 “Communi - caking” - A session where someone encourages students to network by bribing them with cake and donuts



Thanks to www.thepoke.co.uk for this cartoon idea

Integration into research cultures

- PRES survey regularly indicates student dissatisfaction with integration into their departmental research community & ambience (never above 70% satisfied)
- International students may feel particularly detached from their departments (Deem and Brehony 2000)
- In 2014 we set up a Doctoral School to further develop research student culture & have a Research Student social room, the Doctoral Hub, in the basement of the International Building which all pgrs can access and a dedicated room in the EWD building; social events like today's are also organised plus a regular tea drop in session

PRES results on research culture 2017

- 6.1 My department provides a good seminar programme 74.2% UK, 73.6% RH
- 6.2 I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students 66.3% UK, 67.7% RH
- 6.3 The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work 63.5% UK, 61.8% RH
- 6.4 I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department 61.3% UK, 64% RH

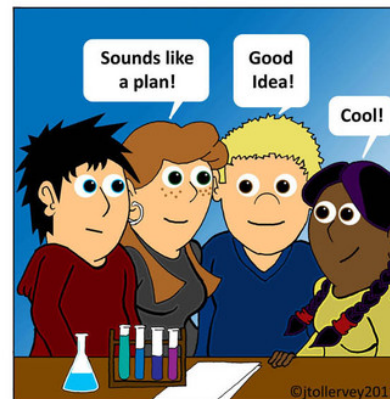


The new pgr reading room in Davison building – please use it!



Desk space and easy chairs/sofas in Davison building

Collaboration



Learning to collaborate

- Even if you are a scientist, your thesis will be judged on your own contribution (which may be part of a bigger research project)
- Outside of lab-based science, most research students will gain little or no experience of team work during their studies
- Yet team work is important in most postgraduate level jobs, including academe as well as the public, private and third sector
- Researcher development training offers opportunities for team work experience, as can volunteering, entrepreneurship schemes, placements and internships

Why does submission/completion matter?

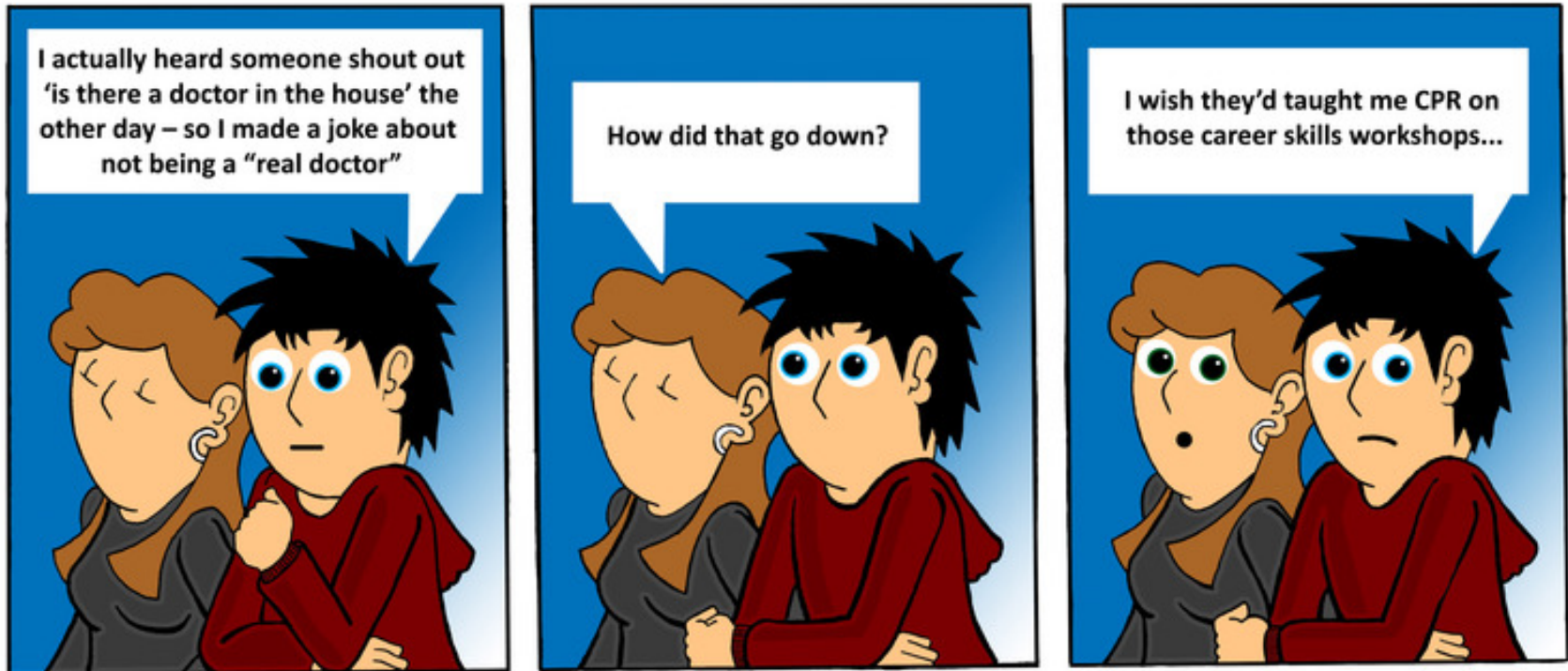
- Some students are unsure of the the difference between submission and completion. Are you? How long does a full time PhD student have to write their thesis?
- Since the mid 1990s, universities, under pressure from the UK Research Councils, have altered their regulations so doctorate can be done in 3-4 years full time
- Prompt completion helps students (topics up to date, not yet bored with thesis, more likely to get job if thesis finished), it helps supervisors (no students hanging around for years so can take new ones), helps external funding (Research Councils can remove scholarships if completion rates poor)
- Both supervisors & students may conspire to lengthen submission and completion rates – don't join them!



Graduation day

They made it: so can you

Finally a thought about researcher development & career skills training



Some suggested reading

- Dunleavy, P. (2003). *Authoring a PhD: how to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.
- Murray, R. (2011) *How to write a thesis (3rd Ed)*. Maidenhead, OU Press
- Phillips, E. and D. Pugh (2015). *How to Get a Ph.D (6th edition)*. Buckingham, Open University Press
- Thompson, P and Walker, M (2010) *The Routledge Doctoral Students' Companion*, London, Routledge
- <http://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/studentships/600/top-ten-tips-for-doing-your-phd>
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Get-a-PhD>
- <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/10-truths-a-phd-supervisor-will-never-tell-you/2005513.article>
- For a laugh; <http://www.phdcomics.com/comics.php>