

## Discussion Lecture - Session 5

Tuesday 10th November, 11.15 - 12.15

**New doctorate, new challenges:  
A reflexive consideration of the  
development of a professional****Ms Jane Creaton**

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Jane Creaton is a Principal Lecturer in Higher Education at the University of Portsmouth. She has been seconded from the Institute of Criminal Justice Studies where she was Associate Head (Quality) and lectured in criminal law and criminal justice. She participated in the development of the Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice and continues to be involved in the delivery of the programme. Jane was recently awarded Associate status by C-SAP (the Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics) and will be working with the Centre on issues relating to the learning, teaching and assessment of professional doctorates.

**Dr Phil Clements**

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Phil was a Metropolitan Police officer for just over 25 years. His last three years in the Police Service were spent on secondment to the Police Staff College where he managed a number of projects to deliver the training recommendations arising from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

He moved to the University of Portsmouth, Institute of Criminal Justice Studies in 2003 and has since had a number of different roles. He is currently Associate Head of Department with particular responsibility for quality and standards. In 2007, with his colleague Jane Creaton, he was jointly responsible for the successful validation of a new professional doctorate (Doctor of Criminal Justice) which is now in its third year.

Phil's first degree is in theology. As a serving officer he then went on to do a full time Certificate in Education and subsequently a Masters degree in Educational Technology at Brunel University. He completed a Professional Doctorate in Education in June 2000. He has authored or co-authored a number of books, including *A Practical Guide to Facilitation Skills*, *Facilitating Learning: A Sourcebook of Activities*, *The Equal Opportunities Handbook*, the *Diversity Training Handbook*, and *Policing a Diverse Society*.

Professional Doctorates are proliferating in a range of subject and workplace areas and, despite reservations in some quarters, are continuing not only to thrive, but to provoke debate in and between institutions about the purpose and status of doctoral education more generally. This session provides a reflexive account of the experience of designing, delivering and developing a Professional Doctorate in Criminal Justice (DCrimJ) at the University of Portsmouth, with the aim of locating some of the specific issues that emerged in their wider disciplinary, national and international contexts. We begin by charting the progress of the programme to date and then go on to address three particular challenges that have been encountered in the design and development: articulating the differences between a professional doctorate and a PhD, researcher positionality and the nature of final thesis. The paper addresses the way in which academics may conceptualise the professional doctorate particularly in relationship to thinking about more traditional doctoral level work and locates these within the wider epistemological and ontological debates within criminology as a discipline. We argue that professional doctorates may present a challenge to what counts as knowledge within the academy, how students should be positioned in relation to that knowledge and how it should be represented.

By taking as its starting point the value of the professional knowledge, skills and experience of a practitioner, and by drawing on action research, autoethnographic approaches and reflective and reflexive practice, the professional doctorate tends to present a view of research that lies in opposition to some of the research paradigms in criminal justice. This contrasts quite strikingly with a discipline such as education, where such opposition is much less marked. Although criminology draws on a range of sub disciplines and research methods, some threads of criminology and criminal justice are strongly positivist in nature and strongly privilege “objective” over “subjective” approaches. For some staff the notion of students undertaking research in their own organisation or in relation to their own practice is seen as highly problematic either for ethical reasons or because the validity of the research appears to be compromised. The related issues of the nature and extent to which the researcher should be positioned within the thesis and how that positionality should be represented in the thesis has also provoked considerable debate. Discussions about the use of the first person in the writing of the thesis are not simply stylistic issues but, we suggest, link to wider issues around the nature of reality and how it can be investigated which lie at the heart of criminology as a discipline.

One practical outcome of all this relates to the allocation of supervisors for the research and thesis stage of the professional doctorate. It is self evident that supervisors need, at the outset of the supervision, not only to have expertise in the topic area but also to have a clear conceptualisation of the nature of the thesis that is to be produced. Experience has shown that this conceptualisation can be variable and in some cases over simplified to a view of the thesis as being a ‘mini PhD’. Such a view, although rightly highlighting the need for the generation of original knowledge, tends to overlook the requirement for the candidate to demonstrate a contribution to professional practice and the insider nature of much of professional doctorate research. As a consequence, professional doctorate theses may often involve elements of reflexivity, reflectivity and “subjectivity” than may often (although not always) be absent from a traditional PhD thesis in the discipline.

The paper and workshop will therefore also address the importance (for supervision among other things) of an appropriate orientation towards the notion that professional doctorates aim to develop researching professionals as opposed to the professional researchers more associated with traditional PhD programmes. We conclude that there is a bright future for professional doctorates in this sector, especially given the increasing prominence of the research and knowledge transfer agenda, but that more work needs to be done to clarify the message and thus attempt to secure the support of a broader spectrum of academic staff. We see such discussion as being valuable not only for the criminal justice sector but for other sectors where the development of professional doctorates is yet to take place.