

**UKCGE European Conference 2008
University of Edinburgh, UK**

Institutional Strategies for Developing Research Supervisors

**Professor Tony Fell
University of Bradford, UK
<A.F.Fell@Bradford.ac.uk>**



Institutional Strategies for Developing Research Supervisors

- **International / National context**
- **Modes of Programme Delivery**
- **Key Elements of Programmes**
- **Current issues & future perspectives**

International / National context

- **Bologna Declaration – EHEA – 1999 / 2003**
European dimension, QA, mobility, ECTS, Integrated Training & Research, European PhD
- **QAA Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes – September, 2004**
 - September 2004 – Special Review 2005
<www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/cop/contents.htm>
- **IUQB: Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes in Irish Universities**
 - National Guidelines – February 2005 <www.iuqb.ie>
- **Bergen, May 2005 – EU Charter for Researchers**
- **London, May 2007 – 3rd Doctoral Cycle**
- **QAA audits in England & Wales – review of training**

Modes of Programme Delivery

- **Dedicated programmes at Faculty/subject domain level**
- **‘Generic’ programmes for all scholastic domains across Institution**
- **Mixture of both – with materials (eg Case Studies) focused on specific subject areas**
- ***Essential pre-requisite:* top management seen to give strong support for formalised supervisor training**

Key Elements of Training Programmes

- A. Overview presentations on key stages & issues in supervision**
 - 1. Initial phase: Selection; Outline research programme ...
 - 2. Progress monitoring and review;
 - 3. Thesis completion and assessment
 - 4. Institutional Policies and Regulations
- B. Small group discussions on a range of issues**
- C. Development and discussion of Case Studies**
- D. General principle: Design programme to emphasise discussion of key issues among participants – with minimum of formal lecture presentations**

A. Overview of key stages –

1 Initial phase

- **Selection of research students – key issues**
- **Outline of research programme / research problem**
 - **Different Paradigms for Science, Engineering / Humanities**
 - **Gantt chart analysis**
- **Induction & developing research / employment skills**
 - **Training Needs Analysis – regular review and update**
 - **Generic & transferable research skills**
 - **Specific research skills**
 - **Training as Graduate Teaching Assistant**
 - **Attendance at / presentation of Seminars etc**
 - **Use of PDP / Electronic logs – significant trend**
- **Essential to manage expectations**

A. Overview of key stages – 2 Progress monitoring & review

- **Supervisor/s and student should meet appropriately**
 - Joint responsibility to define minimum contact
- **Records of supervisory meetings essential**
 - Student can e-mail draft record to supervisor (audit trail)
 - Can assess student's understanding of agreed goals
 - Edited & formative feedback – empowerment of student
 - Rapid distribution of final record (to sponsors etc)
- **Need for prompt, clear and constructive feedback**
- **Annual monitoring / transfer to PhD track**
- **NB Independent advice / process if relationship breaks down (cf UK QAA Code of Practice)**

A. Overview of key stages –

3 Thesis completion and assessment

- **Best practice for successful completion**
 - Develop Thesis plan – early start e.g. beginning of final year
 - Models of supervisory support for thesis writing
 - Value of Practice or ‘Mock’ Viva – esp. overseas students
- **Clarify Thesis submission process**
- **Clarify selection of Examiners and *Viva* process**
 - ‘Balanced’ team – experience, independence, expertise
 - Roles of External / Internal Examiners & Chair of Board
- **Clarify the *Viva voce* process**
 - Independent pre-Viva Reports (required in UK)
 - The *Viva* – How long ... ?
 - Outcomes – joint Report / independent Reports & Approval
 - Approval of Thesis corrections

B. Discussions in small groups (2 – 4)

- **Candidates' personal experience of being supervised and of supervision – followed by plenary debrief in bullet point format**
- **The nature of a PhD**
- **The characteristics of the ideal research student**
- **The ideal supervisor ...**
- **Role play scenarios of e.g. supervisor interviewing a new research student (or *vice-versa* !)**

C. Case Studies

- **Based on real life scenarios**
- **Illustrate typical supervision problems throughout the PG research programme e.g.**
 - “Amy’s first year” (with an absent supervisor ...)
 - “Jean-Pierre’s Final Year” (case of an unfocused student ...)
 - “Freddy’s *Viva voce* Exam” (two supervisors rarely meet ...)
- **Discussed in small groups (6 – 10) with Rapporteur and experienced facilitator**
- **Presentation by delegate Rapporteur in Plenary Session to explore general and specific issues**
- **Excellent basis for exchange of experience and for developing insight into supervisory process**

Current issues & future perspectives

- **Trend (in UK) towards academics studying part-time for academic HE teaching qualification – including module on Research Supervision – PGC(HE)**
- **Emerging practice (in UK) for Institutional or external accreditation of Supervisors**
- **Institutional policies required on retraining / refresher programmes**
 - How to update supervisors (inc ‘Backwoodsmen’)
 - How to extend / develop PGRS /ESR skills
- **Institutional policies required for management of Intellectual Property Rights – partition & exploitation**
- **Appeals & complaints – ‘age of litigation’ – Office of the Independent Adjudicator – Dame Ruth Deech**

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