

Performance & Practice-based Doctorates: Delivery & Evaluation Issues

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What is performance?

- I **performing arts**: theatre, dance, live art, sonic art, music, burlesque, clowning, puppetry, mime, performance to camera...
- I **performance studies**: an *expanded field* that includes ritual, sport, carnival, political speech-making, gender, sexuality...

A practice-as-research PhD in performance could engage in any of these activities in a wide variety of forms. For example:

- | playwriting
- | choreography
- | acting
- | tight-rope walking
- | stand-up comedy
- | figure skating
- | lighting design

Disciplinary approaches: what types
of performance PhDs are not being
discussed today

- | music
- | creative writing
- | visual/fine art

Key Papers

- | Robin Nelson and Stuart Andrews (c. 2002) "The regulations and protocols governing 'Practice as Research' (PaR) in the performing arts in the UK leading to the award of PhD."
 - | includes 'best practice' guidelines on PaR PhDs and Ten Steps to a 'Perfect' PaR PhD.
- | Mark Taylor-Batty *et al* (2008) Draft report on standards in the external examining of "Practice as Research" PhDs.

Most of the guidelines in this presentation draw upon or directly quote these two papers.

Key Acronyms

- | **PARIP**: Practice as Research in Performance Project, 2001-2006. Led by Prof Baz Kershaw
- | **PALATINE**: HEA Subject Centre for Dance, Drama & Music
- | **SCUDD**: Standing Conference of University Drama Departments
- | **AHRC**: Arts & Humanities Research Council
- | **IFTR/FIRT**: International Federation of Theatre Research (Performance as Research Working Group)

Practice-as-Research (PaR) PhDs in Performance

“The admission of creative practice in a PaR PhD context is premised on the notion that research questions in the performing arts can be rigorously worked through in a range of practices (of which writing is only one). Where creative work forms a significant outcome of the research project, references to ‘thesis’ are understood to denote the totality of the submission without privileging any of the submitted components.”

(Nelson & Andrews, 2002)

Practice-as-Research (PaR) PhDs in Performance

“Practice should be accepted as methodological process of research inquiry and a mode of dissemination of research in its own right.”
(Nelson & Andrews, 2002)

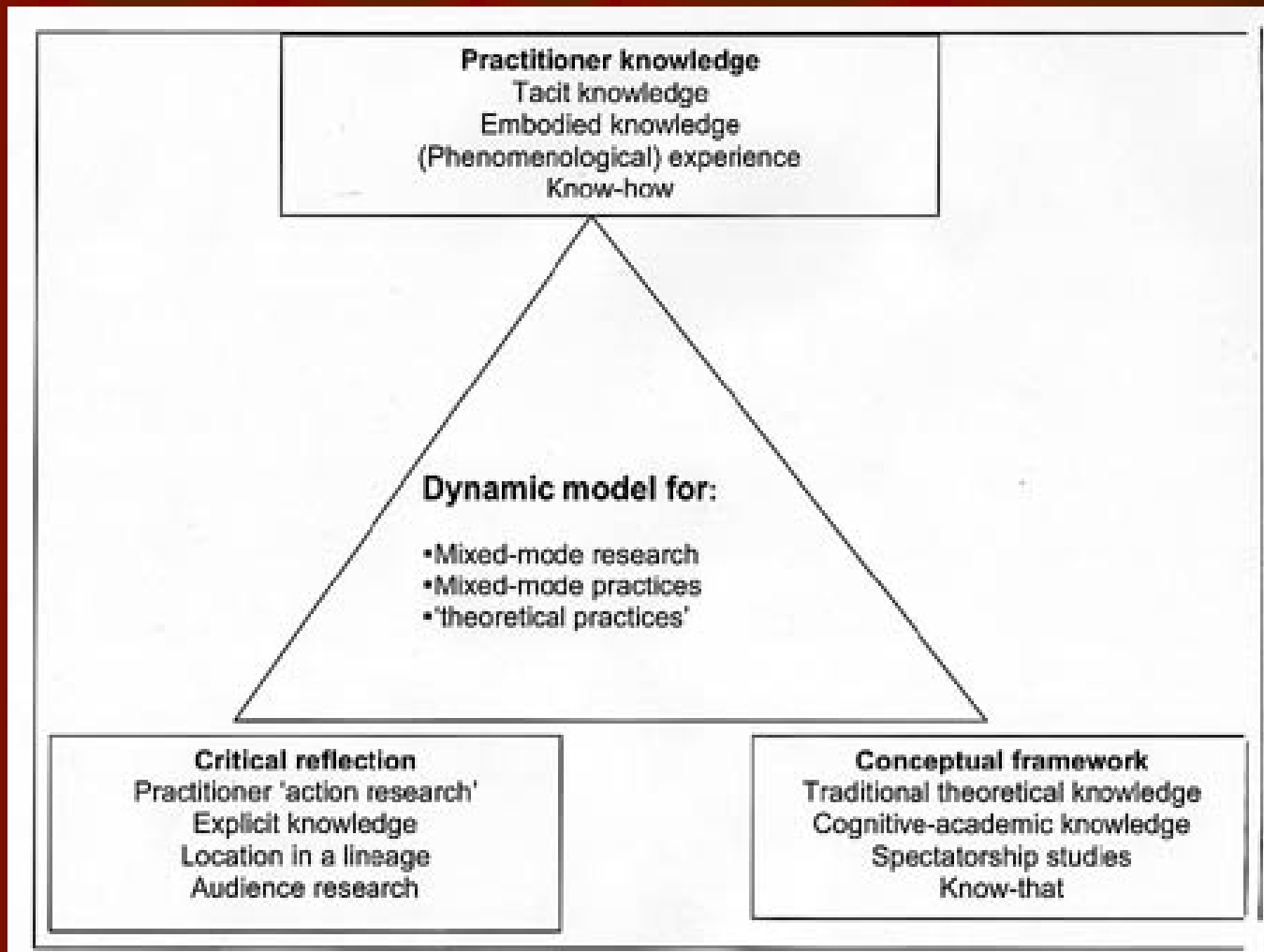
“No fundamental regulatory distinction should be made between a 'traditional' PhD and one involving practice; the submission as a whole (practice events and written material) should be considered.” (Batty/SCUDD working group, 2008)

Practice as Research (PaR) in Performance

OR?

- | performance as research
- | practice-based research
- | practice-led research

Robin Nelson (2006) "Modes of PaR Knowledge and their Place in the Academy"



First principles: Examination of PaR

1.1 We believe that it is axiomatic that the team of examiners (internal and external) must experience the live practice submitted for the degree of PhD. Practice, not the documentation/recording of practice, is that which is to be assessed. To accept otherwise is to downgrade the status and integrity of the work.

(SCUDD Working Group, 2008)

Partly Cloudy, Chance of Rain
Joanne 'Bob' Whalley and Lee Miller (2002)



<http://www.dogshelf.com/partlycloudy.html>

"The Diary despairs over academic standards. It has received a report that the renewal of two students' wedding vows will contribute towards their PhDs in the name of performance art.

While performance art quite interests The Diary, whether the following equates to a PhD chapter is questionable."

Times Higher, 4 October 2002.

Issues related to the **delivery** and **evaluation** of PaR in Performance PhDs?

- I **Resource** implications for your HEI?
- I **Procedural** implications for your HEI?

Applications & Admissions

- I candidates should hold **good Masters degrees** and/or substantial experience of appropriate arts practices evidencing a record of achievement at a high level.
- I always **interview** (by skype if necessary), preferably by supervisor(s).
- I sample of **critical writing** and **evidence of relevant practice**

Applications & Admissions

- | application by proposal/written statement to include
 - | the **topic** or area to be investigated;
 - | the **research questions and aims** of the project;
 - | the **methodologies** to be used to address the questions;
 - | the **conceptual framework**;
 - | the relationship to **current practices**;
 - | the **proposed outcomes** (specifying balance of practical and written/documentary outcomes).

Applications & Admissions

- | establish learning/research requirements:
 - | spaces and media technologies
 - | Where a student is proposing to supply her/his own resources, the adequacy of these to the fulfilment of the project should be established.
 - | availability of any production budgets
- | ensure appropriate supervisory experience and expertise and that these supervisors are available and accessible.
- | establish level of institutional support (e.g. conference funding)

Supervisory Practices

- | The number of supervisors and the relation between them should be established at an early stage.
- | Supervisors will see, and give feedback on, process and practice in a manner parallel to the tutorial process established with regard to written drafts.
- | Candidates are required to give supervisors (and examiners where appropriate) reasonable access to their working processes.
- | May involve sustained engagement and long hours of tutorial time in rehearsal spaces and attending performances: weekends, evenings, travel.

Milestones & processes

- | Where the practice of an HEI is to enrol students prior to **formal registration/acceptance of proposal**, the timescale and likely acceptance of the project under its over-arching regulations should be established.
- | **Transfer/upgrades** should include a consideration of both writing and creative practice; these should be explicitly inter-related.
- | Monitoring and nature of **'skills' training**

Ethical Implications & procedures

- | must be built into **regulatory procedures** (e.g. at formal acceptance of proposal, at transfer/upgrade, etc.)
- | what constitutes **'human participants'**
- | role of audiences? other performers?
- | research vs creative practice
- | health and safety/ potential harm to researcher

Scope, Form & Content of the Thesis

- | The **balance** between written and practical outcomes will be determined by individual students with their supervisors under the auspices of regulatory frameworks of the HEI concerned.
 - | Normally, a written submission of 40,000 words will constitute 50% of the thesis but the separation of writing and practice in percentage terms should be avoided.
- | Institutions must **avoid prescribing models** of creativity and reflection to allow students to develop their own **praxis**.

Scope, Form & Content of the Thesis

- I The specificity of each project, its scope and the location(s) of its examinable presentation(s) in terms of PhD submission must be established in the applications and admissions procedure and then renewed/reconsidered via transfer/upgrades from MPhil to PhD and Annual Programme Monitoring

Scope, Form & Content of the Thesis

- I The practical component must demonstrate a high level of skill in the manipulation of the materials of production and involve a research inquiry.
- I The practice should 'embody knowledge' that needs to be communicated experientially

Scope, Form & Content of the Thesis

- I The written outcome will contextualize the project and include a retrospective analysis of the process and outcomes, reflecting on chosen research methodologies and production processes and the relation between them.

Scope, Form & Content of the Thesis

- I **Documentation** (written journals, artifacts, images, scores, videos) should support both the written and practical elements of the thesis by drawing attention to methods, methodologies and research processes.
- I Generally, this is of the same status as 'traditional' **appendices**.

Submission

- I Collaborative work may be accepted
 - I Normally, specific individual contribution of each participant to be examined should be clearly indicated in the written submission.
 - I Need to recognize the processes of creative collaborations are dialogic and that it is not always easy to demarcate contributions.
 - I In such instances, the written submission should clearly indicate the working relationship of the collaborators.

Submission

- | A permanent record of the research practice must be submitted by the candidate (video/audio cassette, CD-rom, DVD, scores, drawings, photographs) and must be bound into the document deposited with the HEI library/repository.
- | In addition to other forms of recording, the written submission will normally include a short descriptive account of the examined process/practice.

Submission

- | The **written elements** of the thesis will be of a standard of presentation commensurate with established HEI protocols for PhDs
- | The **submission as a whole will be the subject of a *viva voce* examination.**
- | Models, sketchbooks or other exhibition materials too bulky to be included in the permanent record should be presented to the examiners immediately prior to the *viva voce* examination.
 - | The status of such submissions in the process of examination **needs to be clearly understood in advance** by all concerned.

Examinations & Examiners

- | May need to **appoint examiners at an earlier stage** than is usual
 - | If process or product (perhaps presented well in advance of the written submission) is to be examined, both examiners will need access to that process and/or product.
- | Where **process** is to be formally examined, the times and places of access by examiners must be broadly established at the outset

Examinations & Examiners

- | Examiners should be appraised of, and asked to confirm that they understand, the form and nature of the thesis **prior to accepting** their appointments.
- | External and internal examiners are **required to see any examinable component** of the submission.
- | **Make contingency plans**

Examinations & Examiners

- | Where examiners meet candidates prior to the final *viva*, care must be taken to maintain **appropriate professional distance**.
- | Where work seen is processual and not formally examinable, examiners **should not offer formal feedback** so as not to influence subsequent process.
- | In the event of a post-presentation discussion of an examined practical outcome, the examiners may wish to **confine their questions to points of clarification** about the process leading to the outcome and issues concerning the practice itself.
- | Conceptual issues should not be raised until the *viva*.

Examinations & Examiners

- | Contact between candidate and examiner that is captured within the practice event, or crucial to its experience, should be unrestricted.
 - | e.g. participatory audience activities, the utilisation of the subject (examiner) within the practice, or the direct experience of the examiner of sensory elements of the practice event, as controlled by the candidate.
- | Such contact should operate within the appropriate ethical frameworks.

Examinations & Examiners

- I **Remuneration and expenses** of External Examiners for visits in addition to that for the final viva voce examination should be at established HEI rates.
 - I Normally such visits would not exceed one per year of registration.

Assessment Criteria

- I PaR PhDs should meet the established generic criteria of 'making a contribution to knowledge' or 'affording substantial new insights'.
- I it is likely that new knowledge or substantial new insights will be afforded by ideas in practice (writing being just one of several practices in this context) rather than via an entirely 'original' practice (i.e. unlike anything that has ever come before)

Assessment Criteria

- I Examiners should consider the practice event(s) in relation to the written submission and how the two have been **framed** as complementary or in dialogue by the candidate.
- I Practice that is not wholly successful as a discreet unit may nonetheless succeed within the **parameters of the enquiry** undertaken.

Re-Submission

- | The examiners can request the revision and re-submission of either the practical component or the written submission or both.
- | The terms of that re-submission should be as clearly articulated and recorded as for a wholly written submission.
- | HEIs/ departments may wish to consider an appropriate **re-submission fee** in the case of practice.



Thank you.

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