

# The Research Process and Write-up

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## The next 30 minutes

- Outcomes of the PhD
- Supervision expectations – from the perspective of both parties
- Research lifecycle and key milestones
- Management of research and thesis writing



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## Outcomes of a Good PhD (Philips & Pugh. 2010)

- A doctorate of quality completed on time
- Advancing the topic as a result of the research
- A paper presented at a conference so that the student has faced external criticism
- Meeting other professionals, with the student arguing with and impressing them so that they may be used as possible additional referees
- A paper published in an academic journal, so that the student has experienced the journal refereeing process
- A commitment by the student to post-doctoral research and publication
- A stimulating experience for both the student and the supervisor, which has started the student on a research career

# Supervision (Phillips & Pugh, 2010)

- Principal & Second Supervisor Roles (or shared supervision)
- Golden rules for managing your supervisor:
  - Accept responsibility for managing the relationship
  - Discuss and agree the division of tasks within the supervisory team
  - Establish that you can discuss working relationships, adequacy of supervisory provision etc (in addition to research content)
  - Always ask questions
  - Always give effective feedback
  - Set agreed deadlines and always be punctual in meeting them
  - Ensure that the date of your next meeting is always agreed and in the diary

# Students Expectation of Supervisors (Phillips & Pugh, 2010)

- Students expect to be supervised
- Students expect their supervisors to read their work in advance
- Students expect their supervisors to be available when needed
- Students expect their supervisors to be friendly, open and supportive
- Students expect their supervisors to be constructively critical
- Students expect their supervisors to have a good knowledge of the research area
- Students expect their supervisors to structure the tutorial so that it is relatively easy to exchange ideas
- Students expect their supervisors to have sufficient interest in their research to put more information their way
- Students expect their supervisors to be sufficiently involved in their success to help them get a good job at the end of it all

# Supervisors Expectation of Students (Phillips & Pugh, 2010)

- Supervisors expect their research students to be independent
- Supervisors expect their research students to produce written work that is not just a first draft
- Supervisors expect to have regular meetings with their students
- Supervisors expect their students to be honest when reporting on their progress
- Supervisors expect their students to follow the advice that they give, when it has been given at the request of the research student
- Supervisors expect their students to be excited about their work, able to surprise them and fun to be with
- Supervisors expect to learn from the research student

# Research Lifecycle & Milestones

Stage	Description	Time f/t	Time p/t
A	Initial ideas and individual motivations (Share these 2.30 – 3.00)	?	?
B	Formal proposal to chosen institution	?	?
C	Generic skills research module (HUBS – Funnel effect)	4	4
1	Completed large portion of training; substantial progress with literature search; developed a plan for data collection & begun process; MPhil/PhD upgrade process completed	8-12	16-20
2	Research training substantially complete; core literature review complete; Data collection complete or substantial progress made; outline of thesis contents agreed; substantial amount of written work approved by supervisor	12-24	20-40
3	All research training complete; complete draft of thesis submitted & comments received from supervisor	24-36	40-60
4	Final revisions of thesis; secondary literature review completed; notice of submission form submitted; completed thesis submitted	36-39	60-66
5	Viva-voce examination completed	39-42	63-69

# Emotional Lifecycle

- Emotional Lifecycle:
  1. Enthusiasm
  2. Despondency
  3. Running down blind alleys
  4. Panic
  5. Elation
  6. Deflation
  7. The finishing line
  8. The void
- Cathedral Metaphor
  - Cathedral
  - Wall
  - Shape of Wall
  - Brick



# Management of Research and Writing the Thesis

(With thanks to: John Burgoyne/Caroline Gatrell, Lancaster)

# Context, Process, Content

- Context
  - The goal, the examiner, & you.
- Process
  - How do I achieve it?
- Content
  - How do I plan, structure & present it?



## Management of Research: Context

- Context: from examiners perspective. Who are they? What do they want?
  - Experienced: well read; know subject; read many theses
  - Attitudes: Sceptical (you need to convince them) but open minded; prepared to go with you if you have defended your ideas well and demonstrate you have read widely
  - Knowledge: some knowledge of your area but you may need to give background about your chosen topic
  - Logic: an account that's carefully constructed, well balanced, reflective, analyses rather than describes.
  - References show you have read academic literature widely beyond course requirements
  - Work meets assessment criteria
  - Signposting: what your thesis is going to do (and how & why), explain what you have done and sensible conclusions ('Aim' matches 'Claim'
    - Murray, 2002)

## Management of Research: Context

- Context: from examiners perspective (cont).
- What do examiners dislike:
  - Ill-structured, unfocused writing with poor editing & misspellings (give yourself enough time, consider professional editing if English 2<sup>nd</sup> language)
  - Opinion unsustainable by evidence from literature
  - Unwarranted conclusions

## Management of Research: Context

- Context: from your perspective.
  - Taking responsibility for your own learning
  - Decide your own learning outcomes
  - Set yourself clear goals
  - Timetable your activities and allow twice as much time for writing than you think you will need

## Management of Research: Process

- Process : choosing a topic identifying your research question
  - No magic formula
  - Importance of the thesis title
  - Broad or narrow scope & focus
  - Is topic practical? What are constraints? Is it interesting?
  - Do you want topic to stretch you, or one which is familiar
  - Consciously define & develop your writing routine (means different things to different people)
  - For example, time, place/space, how you begin, how you close

## Management of Research: Content

- A written plan may help:
  - Notes of what you intend to include in each section
  - Clear statement of aims/purpose so you know what you are doing, why you are doing it, relevance to a given situation. Re-visit this as you develop your work.
  - Lay this out so it looks like a thesis from the word ‘go’
  - This will be motivational & time saving

# Management of Research: Content - Structure

Title	i	3. Research Methodology	83
Acknowledgements	ii	3.1 Research Design	85
Abstract	iii	3.1.1 Type of investigation	90
Synopsis (perhaps)	iv	3.2 Population & sampling	95
Contents	vi	3.2.1 Target population	102
List of figures	ix	3.2.2 Research sites	110
List of tables	xi	3.2.3 Sampling size & strategy	116
1. Introduction	1	3.3 Research instruments	124
1.1 Industry background	2	3.4 Reliability & Validity	133
1.2 Organisation background	5	3.5 Data collection and analyses	136
1.3 Statement of the problem	9	4. Presentation & analysis of results	140
1.4 Purpose of the research	14	4.1 .....	148
1.5 Research Questions	16	4.2 .....	156
2. Literature review	18	5. Discussion of results	180
2.1 Job satisfaction.....	20	5.1 .....	192
2.2 Organizational commitment.....	27	5.2 .....	202
2.2.1 As a multi-dimensional construct.....	40	6 Conclusions & implications	230
2.2.2 Affective commitment .....	49	6.1 .....	238
2.2.3 Continuance commitment .....	58	6.2 .....	245
2.2.4 Normative commitment...	65	7 Limitations of the study	250
2.3 Detailed Questions/Hypotheses	80	8 Future research considerations	252
		10 References	255
		11 Appendices	295



# Management of Research: Content - Structure

- Abstract
  - A brief summary of your thesis. Two pages maximum. What the study examined and sought to determine. Methodology employed. What the findings were.
- Introduction
  - Explain what you are writing about and why it is important. Indicate the theoretical approach you will use and why. Outline your research questions & objectives. Research questions will be more open-ended with qualitative research. Beware, if research is too open ended this can lead to the collection of too much data and a lack of focus.
- Literature Review
  - Situates the research within a theoretical and disciplinary context. Provides up-to-date position of research in the field. What we know now. Relationships between concepts. Gaps in our understanding. Contribution this study will make. Leads to refined set of research questions and/or hypotheses. Leads to which research design and methods might be appropriate.
- Research Methodology
  - Epistemological position, Design, population, sampling approach, data collection procedures, methods of data analyses, research instruments, reliability and validity of findings.
- Results & Data Analyses
  - It may not be possible to discuss all of your results. Focus on those that relate directly to research questions/hypotheses. You may choose to report some ‘unexpected findings’. Use a variety of methods when presenting quantitative data (tables, graphs, statistics, .....). For qualitative research, difficulty is often experienced in leaving out large parts of data. Be selective. Focus on presenting the data that relates to your research questions.
- Discussion
  - How do your results illuminate your research questions/hypotheses? Provide a solid and reasoned discussion for those research hypotheses that have been supported or refuted. Close the loop – revisit your overall purpose, research questions & hypotheses and answer the ‘so what’ questions. Identify your unique contribution to knowledge.
- Conclusions & Implications
  - Bring out your arguments. Relate your findings to the overarching research questions. Hammer home to your readers (& examiners) the significance of what you have done. What are the implications of your findings – for new theory – for the field of business and management – for practice. What were the limitations? Proposals for further research?

# Writing the Thesis

- Research should be written ‘down’ before, during, and at the end of the research – not just ‘up’ after it is over!
- Writing for publication should be a process of editing together text accumulated during the course of the research

# Writing the Thesis

- **Title**: *brief, captures the essence of what you are about, attention getting without being too gimmicky*
- **Abstract**: 300-600 word summary of the whole thing
- A sentence on each of the following will suffice:
  - *The question addressed is .....*
  - *The question is important because .....*
  - *The method used is .....*
  - *The response to the question is .....*
  - *This moves on research in this field as follows ...*
  - *Next research steps in the area might be .....*

# Writing the Thesis

- **Introduction:**

- *The question at the heart of the research reported here is*  
.....
- *The author’s concern with and interest in this question*  
*arises from* .....
- *The theoretical importance of the question arises from*  
.....
- *The practical importance of the question is*  
.....

## Writing the Thesis

- **Substantive literature review**: *(that means literature to do with the topic or question). This part needs a plot or storyline. One of the following will probably do the trick:*
  - *The history of theory and research in this field has passed through a number of phases as follows .... The current frontier therefore is ... The next contribution needed is therefore ... which is what this research addresses .....*
  - *The most important pieces of existing work in this field are ... Therefore the next useful piece of work will be ... and that is what is attempted here .....*
  - **This should end with a specification of the research question (s)**

# Writing the Thesis

- **Methodological literature review:**
  - *The main methods used to research this issue have been .....*
  - *The strengths and weaknesses of these have been ....*
  - *There are other methods that could be applied to this question but appear not to have been used so far, which are ....*
  - *The method approach most likely to move on research in this field appears to be ..... So that is what is used in this study ....*
  - *Methods should be discussed in terms of both broad theoretical philosophical positions and operational technical issues.*

# Writing the Thesis

- **Research Design:**

- *Use an ‘ends driven’ approach:*
- *The analysed data that will most usefully illuminate the research question is:*
- *Therefore the data analysis required is ....*
- *To do this the following data is therefore required ...*
- *And the best way to get this is ....*
- *So here is the plan for collecting and analysing the data*  
.....

# Writing the Thesis

- **Results and Analysis:**

- *Brief account of the execution of the above. Concentrate on the presentation of data collected in suitably summarised form, and the analysis as planned above.*
- *The focus of this section is the key quantitative or qualitative (or both) data summary that the reader will look at as a summary of what you have done – it could be tables, graphs, diagrams, models, taxonomic lists, .....*



# Writing the Thesis

- **Discussion and Conclusion:**

- *The contribution of this research as a response to the research question is .....*
- *Some of the following may apply:*
- *The results offer something of an answer to the question as follows*
- *.....*
- *The results suggest that the question needs to be reformulated as follows .....*
- *Given the contribution of these results the next question that needs addressing is .....*
- *With reference to the key theoretical and research debates in the field, these results add the following .....*
- *The implication of these conclusions for practice and policy issues are as follows .....*
- *The whole thing has been a complete disaster, but at least I know why, and I am writing it up to help others avoid getting into the mess I have .... beware the following .....*

# Writing the Thesis

- **Methodological Reflections:**

- The strengths and weaknesses of the method used has been as follows ..... And ways of dealing with these in the future might be .....
- The strongest criticism that might be leveled at what has been reported here is ..... And my response to that would be .....
- The next methodological approach to try out in this field could be .....

## Getting Published Why?

- ❑ Apart from excitement of contributing new knowledge ...
  - ❑ You can be the best teacher, the best administrator, .....
  - ❑ Formal and informal rewards are linked to traditional research output
  - ❑ Expectations for promotion .... Good quality research outputs, academic leadership, ...
-

## Getting Published How?

- ❑ A PhD is the perfect vehicle (though not the only one)
  - ❑ I think I'll write another article over the Christmas break ....  
true perspective ...
    - Expectations of the RAE .... 4 x ..... 1000 hours each ???
  - ❑ Value of co-authors for the mentoring process .... another apprenticeship
  - ❑ Value of peers for providing early feedback ....
  - ❑ Value of conference presentations (full papers)
    - Blind review process
    - Networking opportunities
    - Inspiration and idea generation (AoM example – LMX, mentoring)
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## Getting Published How?

- Logical sequence ... blind reviewed conference paper ... research memorandum ... submission to a journal
- Aim high .... Consult journal ranking lists (e.g. ABS)
- My first attempt ..... more like a text book chapter ...
- Learn to take the knocks ..... pick yourself up, dust yourself down, and .....
- My first significant success ..... and watch for that 4<sup>th</sup> reviewer ..
- Revise and re-submit ..... hang on in there ....
  - The covering letter .....

## Getting Published – key points

- Know your journals
- Choose your journal
- Know the pecking order and league tables
- Follow the style and format rules including length
- Sport the ‘communities of practice’
- Network with authors in the field
- Use conferences to pilot your paper and get feedback
- Understand the timescales
- Show the reviewers that you ‘know the field’
- Be prepared for delay and rejection
- Manage a portfolio of papers in progress

## Getting Published – key points

- Make the best of reviewers feedback
- Follow revision advice meticulously and resubmit with a clear and concise summary of changes
- Think of your work from a reviewers point of view
- Recycle rejected work
- Manage your publication efforts as a risk portfolio
- Volunteer to review articles yourself