

Honouring Eva's expectations

Christminster College: Postgraduate Training and Research Code of Practice compared with my experience

Regulation #	Point of Particular Importance	Level to which it was honoured?
	•	•
• Supervisors' Responsibilities		
C. 37	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature of research and standards expected • Literature Review Assistance • Availability and requirements for attendance at seminars/classes • Research techniques • Questions of originality/plagiarism/ and publication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards expected never really made clear • Very helpful • According to supervisor, there are no requirements, at least in my understanding • Ok I guess for techniques but not for theoretical issues, which has always seemed inadequate to me • Doesn't seem to me he reads what I have written carefully enough to comment or that comments are never detailed enough to know if there are questions or really for me to improve it. The response to my question that has always been that it is too early to make real comments, which makes me lose motivation to continue working because I have no idea what to do with what I have already done.
C 38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal consultation at least 3 times per term • Regular seminar meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will meet if I request it. Sometimes the waiting period is quite long because he is out of the country without having given me notice (so I could plan around it) but will always meet if I request. • In the three years of enrolment, there have been 3 seminars, one at the beginning of the second year where I presented something (Oct 2005), one at the beginning of the third year (Oct 2006) that I and another student requested for a specific purpose which in the end was not the purpose of the meeting and once in term 2/year3 (march 2007) where I was supposed to present, but did to because I was in discussion with him/department about withdrawing. Also, the timetable suggests that there are regular, weekly seminar meetings for all students, but these do not happen. It seems the consensus around the department is that students simply meet with staff individually whenever rather than weekly as scheduled. This was a problem point in the first year in particular because students were often looking for these/wanting to attend, but they didn't actually exist. In the last two years, students and I have commented to each other that we would like to have more

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisor responsible for structuring minimum number of meetings and maintaining records/progress/plans and future meetings 	<p>regular meetings to discuss things, but even when requested, they don't seem to happen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not request meetings, or keep records/inform me of any if he does; claims formalities are only formalities. Basically, I have no idea how the 'formalities' work, what the results are, what my official progress is. I am completely in the dark about all of these kinds of issues.
C. 39	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As I said, he makes himself accessible if I request it, or at least did. It was not until I contacted him for an appointment in term 2/yr3 (Jan 2007) for an appointment that I learned he was on research leave, which I feel I should have been notified of before hand, if only to plan myself better. He did make himself available while on leave, but only after commenting that he was on leave and if he came into college a lot it made being on leave pointless, which surely motivated me NOT to contact him again during his leave.
C. 40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand of supervisor's responsibilities in terms of written submissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We did not discuss this. He did not make it clear what he would do. He did not inform me of college/uni regulations. It was never made clear what the supervisor will offer.
C. 41	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice on detailed planning/successful completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No advice given. When asked, he repeatedly says that those are just uni formalities and that I shouldn't worry about them. There are no 'successive stages' as far as I have been made aware. There is no 'required' time to submit. There have been no formal arrangements between he and I, nor has there been any communication between me and any other official of the college or university in terms of requirements for completing/maintaining appropriate progress/etc.
C 42	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice on presentation in conference and papers, particularly of plagiarism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He sends students notification of conferences, particularly that he is involved with, but does not encourage participation much more than that. The school has no stipulation for funds for student attendance (although I was given a special grant in the first year (March 2005) to go to Manchester to present- a very nice gesture honestly), so most conferences are well beyond my financial means (particular with the very high cost of fees). Further, I don't feel like I have anything to contribute in the way of presenting because I don't feel I have been able to complete anything sufficiently well enough to present it because I don't get enough feedback on what I am going.
C. 43	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate research through either other contacts or with materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> His suggestions are often to contact the person directly, which in some cases seems a bit silly... if the questions are rather basic and fundamental, would you go to the famous source (ie email Chomsky to explain UG?)? In the few instances that I have contacted the source, they haven't really replied, leaving me with no support. In terms of accessing materials and facilities at other institutions, I can't

		<p>really comment. He has previously put me in contact with a colleague in the US, but I can't recall why and I never really understood what she was 'supposed' to be doing for me. I mean, it was all rather vague to me and felt really inappropriate because why would I be bothering her with questions when I am not her student, paying her university, etc.</p>
C. 44	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for and feedback on work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has never been a request for written work, nor a timetable. He has said he doesn't like to work that way. Feedback has always been limited to a very few, very short comments (like, I agree, ok! meant for very specific points) and a few comments on additional references (helpful!), but no comments on the overall picture, the progress, the development. This way, with no requirements ever placed on students, there is very little motivation to do anything. This is the main point of contention for me. In the nearly 3 years of enrolment, I have gotten so little feedback, even when requested. I have no idea what I am doing, how to do, what is good/bad about what I have done. The main and repeated comment to me is that I am smart, which really doesn't help me in any way. I feel as if there is really no reason to be paying the university. I could have written the whole thing on my own, then enrolled for a year and be done with it much cheaper. It feels like it takes 3 years because that is how long it takes to get feedback and not how long it takes to actually do it. I have in the past 5 weeks (yes, 2.5 years into the PhD) gotten a second supervisor. 4 weeks ago I submitted a chapter to her and requested via email an appointment to discuss what I submitted, to which I got no response. I had to go to her office for a different matter and it was only then that she gave me 7 out of 20 pages that I submitted. I took those 7 pages and made some adjustments, continued writing a bit and resubmitted, again requesting an appointment. 3 weeks have now gone by with no response. What is a reasonable amount of time? It is Easter holidays, but, when I specifically asked, she did specifically say that she would be around at some point, so I have been waiting for her to tell me when. Is it reasonable that I have to write more than 3 emails requesting an appointment? Is it reasonable that I feel the only way I will get feedback is if I sit outside her office and ask her to read it while I am there? Is it reasonable that I get better feedback from other students who are kind enough (and completely inexperienced) to read and make comments? Reasonable is not a clear enough definition, clearly.
C. 45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangements for seminars/practice with oral examinations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As mentioned above, seminars are listed on the timetable and in the handbook, but appear to only be formality for those on the outside looking in. They don't happen often enough (one a year in my third

		year (03/2007) and it seems that many students have cancelled their presentation and have not rescheduled). It is likely too early to comment on oral examinations, but I have not heard of or read anything about it, so I don't think it exists, but I could be wrong.
C. 46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For award-holders, regulations and procedures for reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am an award-holder from the school itself and have no idea what the regulations/stipulations are for me. They have never been communicated to me. Again, like with other formalities, I THINK my supervisor would say they are only formalities.
C. 47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of inadequate work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to the comment on feedback, as there isn't any, I have no idea what is inadequate.
C. 48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referral to other support services as necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As there is very little communication between me and anyone in an official capacity at the college, I do not think anyone would notice if I needed additional support. Having once mentioned to my supervisor that I was feeling very depressed about the whole process and life in general, he suggested I contact the counseling services, but provided no other information, or checked that I had. I have myself finally contacted them and THINK I am now on the 8 week waiting list to speak to someone. 8 weeks is a very long time when someone is depressed and not making progress because time is simply passing without me accomplishing anything, but that does not appear to be of much concern to the college, in my view.
C. 49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual report to school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I cannot comment on this because I have no knowledge of any reports, the results/comments/suggestions.
C. 50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publicly funded students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am not publicly funded, so no comment.
C. 51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures for submission of thesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not at that stage, so no comments.
C. 52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overseas Students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seems an endemic problem to the department (from having spoken with other students) that students feel lost and alone. There is no 'environment' in the department (the nature is part-time, evening students), so for overseas students, the experience can be extremely lonely and disconnected. There are a number of overseas students and seemingly little support/community for them, so it seems the college is interested much more in the higher rate of fees than the actual development of the students.
C. 53	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My responsibilities, in a formal sense, have never been discussed with me. It was really only in going through this process that I was aware of this document. That said, I have always been a diligent student and wanted to know my responsibilities, the processes and procedures related to the expectations of me, but again, my supervisor's response has always been not to worry about formalities.

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• Schools' Structures and Responsibilities		
B. 1	• Admission	•
B. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student participate and benefit from postgrad life • School has responsibility to create and sustain a sense of intellectual and academic community, particularly of importance in Humanities where students are not part of a research team • Encourage participation in seminars/etc • Encourage participation in academic conferences • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no 'life' as far as I can see. There is no community, little connection between research students unless we make it for ourselves. The department in my view does not in anyway live up to this responsibility • The comments from both my first and second supervisor are that in this area, research is lonely, you are completely on your own, that it is part of the process (self-torture??? Why? Does it necessarily have to be this way?) From conversations with other students, I feel that students would actually welcome a bit more community, a bit more intellectual environment, being a bit more part of team, even it were 'forced' at the beginning to make it happen. • Encourage... again loose word... sending emails that events are on does not really ENCOURAGE people to go. • Encourage participation in academic conference: The completely student run Society is planning a conference (4/2007) and from what I can see, the staff is as disconnected from it as possible. Students from within the department are not registering to attend. A number of my 'friends' are presenting, but it is only through student connections that the conference is happening. A very small number of students have been able to make a community for ourselves, but it is only the very small core group who participates. Staff do NOT attend the events we give (which has been commented on by staff from other universities... how strange that staff does not seem to be supporting you???), have not really participated in conference planning, and some have not registered to attend. They seem completely disconnected from the students and do not seem to be encouraging us really to participate in conferences, even our own.
B. 3	• Record keeping	• No comments
B. 4	• Monitor progress of publicly funded students	• No comments
B. 5	• Admission	• No comments
B. 6	• Provide applicants with appropriate publicity information	• Before I came to London, I had no idea that Christminster specialized in part-time, evening, adult education. Had I known that, I am curious if I would have attended because I really wanted a university with a strong intellectual environment that would really challenge me. I was really looking for a place with a strong sense of community, with space for students to work together and where students would benefit from being around not only each other, but also the staff. It is very disappointing that this was not the case, but it was much too late by the time I had

		<p>gotten a visa, completely left my life in my country and moved here, so I thought to make the best of it. It has not really been possible to create the sort of environment I was looking for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On specific points made in this section, the nature of supervision was not clear and then also did not quite fulfill what it was supposed to be (see point above on seminars). Finding out information, either through the website, or talking with my supervisor is an amazingly difficult process. Either he does not know, or suggests I talk to someone, who asks me to talk to someone else, who asks me to talk to someone else. The effort required to learn about funding options for research projects, conference attendance, support for overseas students, etc is such that the energy is lost to find it long before much progress is made. It is simply too time consuming and complicated to care after awhile. • It has never been made clear what to do in the case of difficulties or grievances. I have finally spoken to a student support person in the Student's Union. The result was looking at this document and talking to my supervisor, which I did. That did not prove to be helpful really, so I was lucky enough to have had a friend attend your seminar.
B 7g	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School must ensure appropriate supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not appear that the school fulfills this requirement. As I said above, my supervisor went on research leave and it was not until he was already on it that I found out. And school had not contacted me about this, neither had he. Surely the school knew he was going on research leave and knew they had a responsibility to ensure there was proper supervision available. • Further, and this is speaking about someone else... Another student's seminar presentation is coming up, at which I assume our supervisor is meant to be present. She has been informed by him with 2 weeks to go and only as she requested assistance from him, that he will be out of the country presenting at a conference on that day. Surely, not only is he but also the school failing to support her properly. This seminar, in my view, should have been rescheduled by HIM as HE is the one who cannot be there. But I do not know the policy on this and this situation is not mine to battle.
B 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there was an induction, it is not clear to me whether MPhil/PhD students were required to be there. It was mostly aimed at MA students. • More importantly, a copy of the Code of Practice was not distributed, nor were any responsibilities made clear. It mostly involved a quick intro of staff/department and a library visit.
B 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research methods Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research methods was a 'required' subject, but I don't think it was actually required of me. I did not receive any results and am not aware that it has

		<p>affected my status in anyway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The college as a whole offers other training sessions, but these appear in no way to have an affect on status/progress and are in no way 'required' as far as I can tell. Again, it seems that these exist mainly for those looking outside into the department because I do not see that these events are required in anyway. One point as an example...I was forwarded an email from my supervisor about the Roberts-at-Christminster-2007 event coming up. This email specifically states <i>that this event can count towards MPhil/PhD assessment with the agreement of your supervisor and department.</i> This statement baffles me... is there an assessment requirement? I have never known any staff from my department to attend any of these events or encourage students in any way beyond the forwarding of an email.
B. 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General research skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See comments above
B. 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching and Demonstrating duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department has no provision for students to do teaching, which is another expectation I had before I came. Very disappointing. I have been asked to cover lessons while my supervisor is away at a conference, but doing a one-off lesson is not really the same, particularly for someone who has been teaching for 10 years. It is not the act of standing in front of a room and talking that I need practice in, but being an academic in the field of humanities generally means eventually being a lecturer and the department does not offer access to this experience as far as I am aware.
B. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to develop knowledge and presentation skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to other comments above, encouraging students and actually offering a consistent and required environment for developing these skills are two different things. Weekly seminars do not occur. Once year presentations in the third year is not sufficient to develop these skills, particularly as this is the final year if all goes well. The students in the Society also ran an informal conference in summer 2006 on a Saturday to practice presenting their work, but it was entirely student run and attended by the same very small body of students who are also running the conference this year. The staff and school has nothing to do with these events. It is only with financial support from the Students' Union that either was possible.
B. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff training in supervision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not able to comment as I don't have information on this.
B. 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervisory Staff Principal Supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal Supervisor was an appropriately chosen member of staff For 2.5 years I did not have a second supervisor. When I asked my supervisor about this, he would suggest a name but in my view, the person did not seem appropriate. Nothing came of the initial questions about a second supervisor.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second Supervisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 2.5 years, I sought a second simply to get feedback on the written argument and how well it was constructed. The person is not really aware of the area, which is not that important, but rather I thought she would be critical enough to encourage me to formulate arguments better, provide feedback in such a way to actually encourage me to work on rewriting and ensuring the argument set out what I had planned. Unfortunately, my limited experience so far as been that, I won't actually get the feedback I need, but I could be being unfair as it came just at Easter holidays. Still, timely response to emails (even explaining that it will take weeks to get full feedback due to the holidays) seems not only appropriate but also required by these documents. Unfortunately, I have not even gotten that much response. • The department is far too small for most students not to know most staff. So not knowing the staff/students should not be a concern.
B. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit of Supervision Responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have no idea how many students my supervisor is supervising. We do not interact. I cannot comment.
B. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties which jeopardize progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is now currently this situation, but the "School" (whatever that means) does not appear to be aware of it. • The school did not clearly communicate what to do should this happen to me at induction. • The school has not communicated to me any means of changing supervisor and even less managing this in a timely fashion. I certainly feel I have lost 2.5 years, despite my supervisor telling me that being a bit 'lost' and 'wandering' a bit is part of the process. • My funding ends this year and it has not been discussed with me what to do if I do not complete in the next 4 months (a complete impossibility at this moment). • It is not clear what/who the "school" is....The Head of School is an enigma. It has always appeared to me that my current 'second' supervisor is the person to talk to with issues but when I have, the general feeling I get from her is that it is the students' problem or the students are doing something wrong and not that the school has some responsibility to the students (particularly I am referring to my short-lived experience as the Staff-Student Committee student member in 2004/2005). • It is she that I went to when I tried to talk to my supervisor last month about quitting and it was she who agreed to second supervise me. Therefore, as far as I am aware, the 'school' knows nothing, but that is only as far as I am aware.
B. 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures for talking to Head of School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, Head of School is an enigma. It has never been communicated who it is, what their role is (again, an overseas student will not necessarily understand what this position is for), how to communicate with him/her, why I might communicate with him/her.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The above is particularly important because I feel like my work is not progressing for reason completely within my control. • First, I know that I am not fulfilling my responsibilities, but I no longer have any idea how to do that. I have submitted things, to which I get little to now feedback. I have made attempts to change the situation, but that hasn't helped. I have never been bad at being a student, so this is particularly painful for me. • Second, the lack of communication and despair I feel in going through this whole process has surely lowered my self-esteem, aided in my feeling completely depressed and unmotivated. I know that I cannot work to the best of my abilities in these conditions but I have no idea how to overcome them or proceed within this university environment. There does not appear to be enough communication between me and the school in this regard.
B. 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of information for support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posting information on a website and actually ensuring students are aware of things are not the same. It seems that publishing information on the web has taken away the need for human responsibility in ensuring students are aware of things, know how to proceed, and to whom specifically a student should speak. When faced with difficulties, it seems unlikely a student will follow a very long trail of contacting different people to finally find the one who can help. It seems like the college/school is not really aware of who does what or that that information is not effectively communicated.
B 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school itself is funding me and I have no idea what requirements it places on me. None as far as I have been made aware.
B 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension in special circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, no idea. I did speak to my supervisor about the possibility of holding off on the research while I attempted to sort out my thoughts a year ago (01/2006 or so), but he was no aware of how it would work. In the end, I opted not to do this, so it didn't matter but he should have known.
B 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision for progress • Stipulation for progress to be communicated to student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As I said above, there is no regular consultation on my progress in any formal or even informal sense. The approach seems to be 'go with the flow'. • If the Panel has made an assessment of me at any point in the last nearly 3 years, I am completely unaware of it. • I am not aware if re-admission was ever a question. • I was not made aware of any proposed targets made by the panel to my supervisor. • The School sub-committee decisions have never been communicated to me.
B. 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor view of inadequate progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not sure how my supervisor could form the view that my progress has been adequate. I do not feel it has been adequate. However, I have never been made

		<p>aware that he felt it was inadequate, rather that it was perfectly fine. I have roughly completed 2 chapters (25000 words or so) in the past year (since 06/2006) (nothing really before that) and the status of those 2 chapters has essentially remained the same for the last 4 months because without proper feedback, I have no idea what else to do.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back to the point, I have never been notified by the school that my supervisor feels my progress is inadequate.
B. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student opportunity to comment on supervision and other issues • Staff-Student Exchange Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have never been formally given the opportunity to comment, as far as I can remember. I am aware that very recently there was a review (external I think) to which some students were invited. I was not invited, but a friend was. In the invitation to my friend a comment was made that she seemed happy at Christminster and therefore would she attend. Selectively choosing 'happy' students and not inviting 'unhappy' once ensures higher ratings, no? • In my first year, I was the student representative for the Staff-Student Exchange Committee (2004/2005). We were meant to meet once per term. We met once that year. I collected feedback from students and went along to the meeting (with a staff member who is currently my second and who was on research leave that year, thus the single meeting--- perhaps would have been better to have a staff member who was NOT on leave). While explaining the comments/issues students presented, the response I was given was that students were stupid, complaining too much and wrong. The issues raised were not discussed in terms of solutions, better means of communicating to students, etc. After the one meeting (with no one present but me and this one staff member), I felt it was an entirely futile exercise meant only to be able to tick a box, again only for someone outside the department looking in. • A discussion of forwarding issues to the College Research School never happened and it is only through reading this document in detail that I have been made aware of this option, meaning most students probably have no idea.
B. 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures and timescale for upgrading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not know if these are clearly set out in school documentation. I have not been given any school documentation for this. I do not think I have my acceptance letter any longer, so cannot verify what I was told in it. • These were not made clear to me and where only explained to me recently in a way different from the handbook. See below.
B 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal Procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am sure the school does have a formal procedure for upgrading, but it was not communicated to me. • When I asked the second supervisor about the procedure, I was told that the department would not consider an upgrade until I had written such a

		substantial body of work that it was sure I would complete. This is the 'policy' to ensure that more students complete and that the results of the department are better, meaning the completion rate is higher because the department does not consider upgrading until the thesis is nearly complete. It seems very unlikely that this is the formal written procedure.
B 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline and expectations of upgrading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, I am not aware of any of this, except as explained above.
B 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student responsibilities for upgrading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As I have not even come close to upgrading, I have not been made aware of my responsibilities for such.
B 31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriacy of transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am not at this point, so I do not think I fulfill these requirements.
B 32-34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal for upgrade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comments
B 35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There does not appear to be much career development, at least in my experience.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Department		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
p. 47 all the following are copied directly from the handbook	3 compulsory units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no communication to me of results or requirements to attend these compulsory units. For the first two years, there were no research seminars (2004/2005 and 2005/2006) and in this last year (2006-2007), the emails did state the attendance was being recorded, but it did not make clear the consequences of not attending. Attendance is generally 10 students, and surely there are more than that.
	<i>Students are required to attend, and from time to time present reports on work in progress at regular Research Seminars</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With no seminars in the first two years, it was hard to fulfill this 'requirement'. • From time to time, must mean once a year in the final year?
	<i>At the end of the first year of study, all research students submit a report on work carried out to date, and a proposal for their MPhil dissertation, which will be reviewed under the Applied Linguistics Research Review system</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was not required to complete a report at all. • There was no review. • It was not possible for me to get recommendations on progress.
	<i>Applied Linguistics at Christminster is committed to promoting research in applied linguistics, and MPhil/PhD students are encouraged to attend conferences, present papers, and to submit research for publication</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging students... too broadly worded. What does that mean?
p. 48	<i>Upgrade review generally happens at end of first year</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of my first year, nothing happened. There was no discussion of progress/procedures or anything relevant to this point.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the second year, there was a review (end of June 2006?). I presented to two staff members who were not related to my studies with my supervisor was present. It was determined at this meeting that my topic was unlikely suitable for empirical research and perhaps it would be more suitable to make a theoretical argument. I was very disappointed by these comments, because for two years my supervisor had no made any suggestion like this or even hinted at the possibility that I should completely change focus. After the initial disappointment, I felt better and more able to manage the thesis, but since then have run into other issues, like getting appropriate feedback, feeling insecure with theoretical issues, feeling disconnected and left. • This point seems to contradict the 'policy/procedure' I was told as described above.
	<p><i>Research students are expected to arrange and adhere to a timetable of regular meetings with the supervisor,</i></p> <p><i>and you should ensure that at all times your supervisor is informed of the progress of your research, and of any problems which you are experiencing.</i></p> <p><i>In carrying out research at this level it is particularly important to maintain a steady output of written work,</i></p> <p><i>and your supervisor will expect you to submit regular written work from the beginning of your registration, and to draw up realistic timetables for completion of specific tasks, such as a review of the literature in your field and draft chapters of the thesis, in consultation with him/her.</i></p> <p><i>In turn, the supervisor accepts responsibility for monitoring the progress of your work, ensuring that it is of satisfactory quality, and that it is proceeding at an acceptable rate, as well as providing intellectual and</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This point seems to contradict the requirements set out by the college, which stipulates that it is part of the supervisor's responsibilities to ensure regular meetings are held. Again, when requested, meetings happen, but they are always informal. The meetings have been generally helpful. • I inform my supervisor of my progress by submitting chapters and explaining the particular issues I feel I am having. I do not feel I get adequate feedback on those issues. • Steady output of work is hard to maintain when the work I submit is not constructively commented on. Also 'steady output' is unclear definition. There have been no consequences of my not having done so. • My supervisor has not requested a timetable of propose progress, nor required one. • It appears that I am supposed to assume that the work I have produced is of sufficient quality as no comments have been made to the contrary, but it is difficult to continue when it is not clear to me that this is the case. • When I have questions of a theoretical nature, the response is generally to read more or that I do not

	<i>practical guidance.</i>	actually need to understand all the issues/theories that are related, but that is a highly unsatisfactory response in my opinion.
p. 49	<i>In return for submitting regular work to your supervisor, you have a right to expect that they will return your work within a reasonable, mutually agreed period, and that they will provide adequate feedback on your work.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonably, mutually agreed period... there has been no agreed period. Thus I am still waiting for feedback on work submitted three weeks ago. There has no even been confirmation that the work was received or a rough proposal of when I should expect an answer. The supervisor's opinion of adequate feedback and my opinion are clearly different and when I try to express that, I am more or less told this is how it is and I am smart. Neither proves helpful to me.
	<i>From time to time it may become necessary to change supervision arrangements, due for example to planned absence of the supervisor, or to a change of research topic.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My supervisor has had planned absences, but has never communicated those to me in advance (ex. Research leave this year). The school/department has not made arrangements with me for supervision in his absence.
	<i>Applied Linguistics at Christminster is committed to the promotion and publication of high quality research in applied linguistics, and research students are expected to actively engage in the dissemination of their work via the PhD Seminars, College, University, and conferences, such as the Christminster Applied Linguistics Society, British Association for Applied Linguistics meetings, and other forums. Research students will also be encouraged to publish work in appropriate journals and will be given guidance in doing so.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Again encouragement and accomplishment of this is not the same.
	<i>all research students are required to present a seminar on their own research at least once a year</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was not a requirement of me in the first or second year. I did present a review of literature and problems with in at the start of the second year, but I did not see this as a formal assessment, as part of requirements I needed to fulfill. Perhaps it was but that was not how it was presented to me.
	<i>Failure to present a seminar on current research could, save in specific circumstances, constitute grounds for review of a student's status, and possibly for discontinuation of registration.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In March 2007, I was supposed to present a seminar, and the entire department was aware the week before that I would not (I was at the time waiting to talk to my first supervisor about leaving the course). Once it was agreed that I would work with a second supervisor and therefore continue my studies, there was no discussion of the consequences, need to reschedule or any other discussion of the seminar that I cancelled. The school does not seem to

		'require' the student fulfill the responsibilities set out.
	<i>All research students are required to present a comprehensive annual report on the progress of their work, which will be reviewed by their supervisor and at least one other member of the academic staff in Applied Linguistics</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have sort of done this once (June 2006), in the form of an oral discussion, partly presentation and partly discussion at the end of the second year only. There was nothing written. The results were never communicated to me.
	<i>The deadline for submission of the annual report is <u>MONDAY 29th JANUARY 2007</u></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not know the format or expectations of this annual report and have never, in my experience or discussion with other students, known anyone to complete this. Or have any consequences for not doing this. I am not even sure that this point is the same thing as what I did in June 2006, but I am guess that it was.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Action Plan to solve the problems

1. Appropriate and timely feedback: This is my main concern really. I do not want to have to send 3 emails requesting an appointment and still have gotten neither a response for the meeting or any information on the feedback. I really want to have discussions and get feedback with answer/solutions/suggestions so that I can feel confident that I have learned something, am fulfilling my responsibilities and can actually achieve the task I set myself with the PhD in a way that makes me proud of what I have accomplished. I am not doing this PhD because I had nothing else to do with my life, because I have so much money to throw away on nothing or simply to join a club I am not sure I want to be associated with anymore. How to go about ensuring this will happen? I have no idea. I have been to see the Student Union counselor. Under his advice, I spoke to my supervisor on March 6 2007 (a meeting at which his young daughter was present because he did not have a child-minder, which I thought was completely inappropriate, particular as he knew I wanted to discuss leaving the course). I spoke to another member of staff, explained my issues with my first supervisor, and she agreed to second. Everyone in the department appears to know of the issues and it doesn't seem to have made a difference.
2. The department has failed to create an academic environment where intellectual information is shared and developed in a positive way, which is specified in one of the points above. This is not the case. A number of students also feel this way, which makes it so frustrating. It appears, from the students' perspective, that students also want what is 'encouraged' and suggested above, but realistically what can students do? Talk to the non-existent head of school? Speak to the registry? It also really feels that students no longer have the energy to care about their work, their research or their progress. These rather second-hand accounts are not really helpful, I know, but I know this is not a problem just in my opinion and how to solve it escapes me.
3. I have completely failed at writing up this 'action plan' as you requested. Sorry, I have no more ideas for solutions, aside from completely changing the atmosphere?
4. I have recently run into a new problem, completely and entirely of my own doing. On 12 April 2007, I was removed from the registry for non-payment. I had actually gone in on the 6th and paid 500 pounds and meant to send an email to the person in charge to arrange for other payments to be made, but battling with depression, feeling completely unmotivated to further this

endeavor, and not really knowing where the money would come from, I simply felt entirely too overwhelmed from the pressures created by this entire process to write the email. This is actually also the reason why it has taken 2 weeks for me to write this. The issues related to the difficulties revolving around actually doing this PhD, coupled with severe issues in my person life have made it almost impossible for me to function. That all makes it seem like I actually want to quit, but I don't. I want to learn something and feel proud of what I have done. I just want to focus on the work and not focus on fighting with the college to get what I am paying for and deserve and what they promised to give me.

Team task

After discussing the issues that arise in this account, and Eva's Action Plan, on the acetate provided list the main lessons here for

- 1. Postgraduate research applicants and students**
 - 2. Supervisors**
 - 3. Institutions**
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