

## Veronica's reasons for not appealing

As to my reasons for not appealing, although an appeal makes sense in terms of achieving a sense of justice, there are (sadly) far more reasons against:

- a) The appeal itself is designed to be hugely intimidating: the examiners are invited into the appeal room with me and give their point of view.
- b) The most likely outcome if the appeal is successful (realistically, bearing in mind my supervisor's comments), is up to eighteen months' rewrite. Do I want to punish myself with eighteen more months of it, especially now I have a full time job, and when I no longer have a desire for a career in academia? It all depends on what the second set of examiners would ask me to change. I could definitely manage a six month rewrite, even (perhaps reluctantly) a year, but if they were asking me to change a large amount of the thesis, which would realistically take eighteen months ... well, this is a huge risk considering that if my appeal is successful I have to go with whatever outcome the second set of examiners choose. The moment an appeal is upheld, the outcome of the first viva becomes void, and the candidate is forced to accept the outcome of the second viva. So if the outcome was eighteen months of rewriting, I would be forced to do this or come out of it with nothing at all.
- c) Because the regulations specify I can only appeal against how the viva was conducted, and excludes anything prior to this, I'm prevented from discussing one of the most crucial facts: what my (very dedicated) supervisor considered to be of PhD standard was clearly very different from my examiners. Of course, this huge discrepancy only became evident during the viva, so there was no way I could have complained about it previously. If my supervisor had given me concern that my subject was too broad to be considered of PhD standard, I would have immediately re-considered my subject and reformulated it to fit the criteria. I have a natural tendency to 'go wide' in my research work, but this does not mean that I would have stubbornly ignored advice to narrow my field. I greatly respected my supervisor and trusted her judgement as an established academic. In June 2005, after reading through a draft of my entire thesis, she issued me with some notes. In these notes, the issue of the broadness of my thesis is mentioned, but is done so in conjunction with many other points – it certainly isn't cited as a particular problem. She told me that it would probably be raised at the viva, because it was unusual for a thesis to be this broad, but at no point did she ever suggest that it didn't meet the criteria for a PhD. As long as I was able to argue why I had chosen a broad field of research, and relate it directly to my argument, she felt that I would be able to effectively defend it in my viva.

I'm familiar with the guidelines for the award of PhD, but these do not refer anywhere to how broad/narrow/focused a PhD should be, so I could not be expected to know from these guidelines exactly whether my thesis was correct in this matter; instead, for this I had to rely on my supervisor. Obviously in the course of my research I've looked at other theses, but

theses can differ immensely within the PhD structure, and it is often difficult to relate your own work to others.