

Simon smells something wrong

Thank you for requesting a summary of my experience in the Business School at one of the top five universities in the UK. I have already sent you the full text of my complaint and appeal, but the main features of my experience were as follows:

1. I had no experience of proper supervision during the whole eight years (2003 – 2011). My original supervisor disappeared for ten months in my second (2004/2005) full year on the PhD

2. My second supervisor did not know he was my supervisor until my first supervisor had left in December 2005

3. My new supervisor had apparently claimed in his annual report in 2006 that I did not listen to them/follow their advice but this was never communicated to me at any time

4. I have had multiple changes of PhD Directors, Heads of School in my time - on the average of one per year over eight years; though I requested changes of Supervisor, I was always told *'there's nobody available to supervise you at the moment'*)

5. I submitted my Thesis on the agreement of my (new) Supervisor in October 2006 and was orally examined (Viva Voce) in January 2007. The examiners passed me with major revisions that were very vaguely described. But before completing the revisions and only upon seeking clarification of a vague instruction, I was asked to do 'new things' by the Internal. After submitting the revisions, I was told I did not do what had been originally asked, so was failed by the External, who by that time, had pissed off to Australia and had been gone five months before anyone at the university noticed. (BTW, the Internal thought I had done what was asked but this was ignored.)

6. I successfully overturned the decision in an appeal (Aug 2009 of which you have a copy) but, rather than insisting on my revisions being checked against what I had been asked originally to do, I agreed to their proposal for a new Viva Voce with new Examiners (this turned out to be a big mistake!)

7. The new viva took place April 2010. For two hours I was asked about a host of things that are peripheral to my Thesis; for example, the categorisation in one question in my initial 'pre-research' survey (2005), and the sequence of my research. I had chosen a quantitative phase, followed by two converging qualitative stages as per Miles & Huberman (1994) but for some reason the old Professor could not get his head around this and repeated several times that I should have opened with qualitative and followed with quantitative research. And they did not like my reliance on Robert K. Yin (1994; 2003) for case studies. With

the help of the so-called 'Non-Examining Chair' (brought in especially for me and as a response to the College's recommendation but curiously not used for any of my colleagues that preceded or followed me), who grilled me about more questions peripheral to my research, the new examiners claimed my work was not good enough for a PhD and said that I could only be awarded a(n) MPhil - *but subject to 21 'presentational (editorial) revisions'*.

8. I was examined April 2010, I submitted my revisions by June 2011 but was not told until November 2012 (17 months later) that I had NOT done them to the new Internal Examiner's satisfaction, so was awarded nothing!

9. I appealed that decision too, but not before wiring an official complaint to the departing Head of School about the extreme pedantry practiced in my case by the Internal.

10. Still awaiting reply on my appeal but of course, no basis was found for the complaint. Like many before him, the Head of School appeared to be on the way out (an ad was published in November/December 2011) but is still in place. Appeal has been lodged (3rd May 2012); I am not optimistic about my appeal being upheld.

I have copied my complaints to the Vice Chancellor throughout without getting one reply.

My major disappointment is because I have done ALL of what was asked even the Business School presentational stuff, but have been sent away empty-handed; meanwhile many students including Chinese, Spanish, Indian, etc., who are struggling with basic English have waltzed out of this university with PhDs under their arms ... There is something that smells very wrong and it ain't the brewery that normally stinks the city....

Team task

What are the lessons here for

- 1. Research students**
 - 2. Their supervisors**
 - 3. Examiners**
 - 4. Institutions?**
-