

Sukhvir – the outcome

Email 8 August 2005

Dear John,

Please accept my sincere apologies for not getting back to you sooner. If you remember when we last spoke (last October I think) my appeal had been successful and my thesis was to be re-examined by a completely new examining committee. Everything has finally been resolved to a semi-successful conclusion and I would now be happy for you to use my experience anonymously, as we initially agreed.

The viva took place in January and, although I didn't have any say in the choice of new examiners, I was pleasantly surprised. The external would have been my first choice examiner, the internal perhaps only my second choice - he has a reputation for going for the jugular depending on his mood - and the chairperson was someone who I trusted and was confident would handle the re-examination fairly and professionally.

The viva lasted all day and was tough going. But I was happy that it was a fair and thorough examination and I was given a chance to defend my thesis. It was also frustrating for me as it was the same thesis from December 2003 that was being re-examined in January 2005 and, in the field of computer-mediated communication, things had moved on, as the external pointed out on several occasions. In the end, the external was not sufficiently convinced the work merited a PhD but the outcome was still far better than the previous outcome. If you remember the first time around, after resubmitting I was told the examiners could not award the PhD and that I would have to do more work for an MSc. This time I was offered an MPhil for the thesis as it was, or another 12 months to do additional experimentation and to resubmit for a PhD.

As you can imagine, by now I was tired of it all and, financially and emotionally, felt I could not continue. It took me a few weeks to weigh up the pros and cons and make my decision. Without looking at things such as poor supervision, the bottom line was that two external examiners were not sufficiently convinced the work merited a PhD. And so, in the end, I opted for the MPhil as I felt it was more important for me to get out into industry and get some experience under my belt. In terms of my career goals a Masters would be more than enough and I was happy with an MPhil considering all the hoops I had to jump through to get that far. If I did spend another 12 months on the PhD there was still no guarantee I would get it and I would be struggling along with the same standard of supervision.

Interestingly, although I'm trying not to analyse things too much now and to just forget about it, the two external examiners did manage to contradict each other on several issues, which I found quite amusing but couldn't say anything in the viva. For example, the previous examiner was happy with my parametric statistics but not the non-parametric statistics, whereas the new examiner thought the non-parametric tests were fine but didn't like the parametric ones!

Anyway, I am happy it's finally all over. The thesis was bound in March and graduation took place at the end of June. I'm currently stuck into the job hunt - I

need to salvage what I can of my career and the problem I am facing now is the lack of recent commercial experience. Although I would have liked to stay in academia when I started my research, I'm not too keen on it now after my experience. So we'll see what happens.

I've attached the formal appeal document as it was submitted to the University, and the formal complaint document, which I will have to look at again and still have to submit. I hope to get this done in the next couple of weeks. The information I've provided in this email, along with my previous emails and the attached documents, should allow you to build up a picture of my experience and to prepare any training materials. Please get back to me if you require any more information and I will be happy to assist.

Finally, thanks for all your assistance and advice in helping me prepare my appeal and get everything resolved. Best wishes,