

## **Sukhvir's appeal**

### **Summary of Sukhvir's case**

The purpose of this document is to provide a case for appeal against the decision of the Examining Committee for the non-award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The Candidate believes he has been very harshly and unfairly assessed, and also believes there has been considerable prejudice shown towards him by members of the Examining Committee.

The members of the Examining Committee are as follows:

- Convener – Dr N, Senior Lecturer
- Internal Examiner – Dr C, Lecturer
- External Examiner – Prof H

The supervisors are as follows:

- Main supervisor – Dr A
- Second supervisor – Dr R

The key dates are as follows:

- 1st October 1998 – start date.
- 30th September 2001 – end of initial three-year period and end of EPSRC maintenance grant.
- 30th September 2002 – thesis required to be submitted.
- 25th November 2002 – viva voce examination.
- 28th November 2003 – revised thesis required to be submitted.

The major concerns of the Candidate are:

- The Candidate has been subjected to unjust and unfair treatment, which contravenes the University Equal Opportunities Policy, as detailed in Section 5.1, paragraph (i).
- The Candidate was encouraged into making an initial submission of a below-standard thesis that he was not happy about.
- The Candidate was consequently required to carry out substantial additional work, to revise and resubmit his thesis, and to have a second viva to defend the revised thesis.
- Due to the importance of the additional work, the Candidate discussed ways to proceed with several key people including the owners of the experimental material the Candidate was requested to use, and the Internal Examiner.
- The Internal Examiner approved the additional work and was satisfied that the Candidate had addressed his concerns.

- The Candidate was highly confident with the revised thesis and was excited about the opportunity to discuss his work and the findings with the Examiners in the second viva.
- However, the Examiners failed to recognise the Candidate had addressed all points in the original Examiners report and the revised thesis was dismissed without a second viva, which was expected to have occurred. Therefore, the Candidate was not given the opportunity to defend his work in person, and to explain and justify the use of the research methods, as stated in Section 6.10 of the Code of Practice for Supervised Postgraduate Research.
- The Candidate feels this is not acceptable as there should have been a second viva to allow him to defend his work in person.
- Furthermore, the Candidate feels that the Convener has uncharacteristically behaved in a severely prejudiced manner towards the Candidate over the last two years. As well as showing a disinterest towards the Candidate and his research, the Convener has directed a number of inappropriate and insensitive comments at the Candidate.
- The Candidate does not know the discussions that took place behind the scenes, and whether the Internal Examiner forgot about his discussions with the Candidate, or, if there was any disagreement amongst Examiners, that the Convener persuaded the Internal Examiner to agree with the External Examiner to avoid any complications. Or perhaps the Internal Examiner simply felt he could not go against the decision of the External Examiner.
- The Candidate also believes the External Examiner has the wrong impression of his work, has lost sight of the fact it is a Computing PhD with some psychology/human factors elements, and assessed it as an Experimental Psychology PhD. Experimental Psychology PhD's take a more theoretical approach, with emphasis on research methods and statistical analyses, whereas the emphasis of PhD's in Computing is on building and testing software. A second viva would have allowed the Candidate to bring the Examiners back on track.
- There was an unacceptable delay of five months between resubmission of the thesis and the Examining Committee getting back to the Candidate with a response.
- In contrast to the Candidate's experience, other PhD students within the Division have received guidance and support from their supervisors, and have received feedback on their thesis within the recommended timescale after submission.
- There did not appear to be any ongoing contact between the Convener and the External Examiner when there was an inappropriate delay after the resubmission of the Candidate's thesis. When the Candidate was expressing concern about the delay, the Convener was assuming the External Examiner was busy without making any contact with her, and repeatedly told the Candidate that the delay was because the External Examiner was extremely busy. When he did eventually make contact with the External Examiner after considerable prompting from the Candidate, the Convener informed the Candidate that she had been busy with teaching through that term.
- The Candidate believes that because she was busy she did not give the revised thesis the time and consideration it deserved. The Candidate also thinks that the External Examiner was not interested in arranging a second meeting and that she is no longer interested in examining the work.

- In contrast to being told the delay was because the External Examiner was extremely busy, the Convener informed the Candidate at the meeting where he was given the response about the revised thesis that the delay was because the External Examiner needed the time to give the thesis proper consideration. The Candidate believes this to be incorrect and insulting.
- The Candidate believes he has been very unfairly treated throughout, has been dealing with considerable bias and prejudice towards him, and that the revised thesis has not been adequately assessed by one or more members of the Examining Committee.