Tasks for Doctoral Education

ADAMS, Gillian <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2088-8708>, DONAGHUE, Helen, HERON, Marion and MCGRATH, Lisa <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2598-4942>
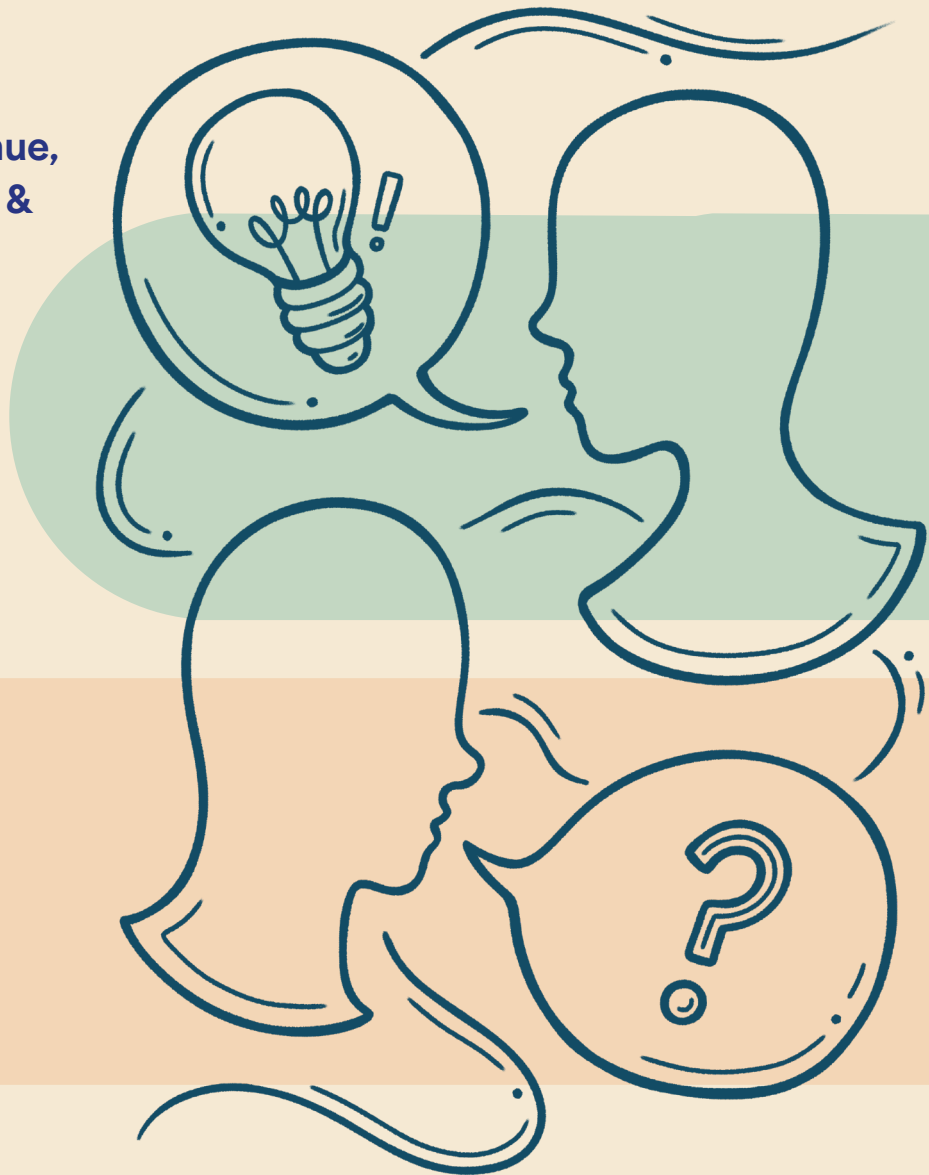
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TASKS FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION

Dr Gill Adams,
Dr Helen Donaghue,
Dr Marion Heron &
Dr Lisa McGrath

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Sheffield Hallam University

Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

UKRI
Economic and Social Research Council

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INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit has evolved from the authors' research and experiences in the areas of doctoral education and in particular, the role of pedagogy in doctoral supervision, doctoral literacy practices (Gravett et al, 2023; Heron et al., 2023), doctoral tutorial talk (Adams & Donaghue, 2023; Donaghue and Adams, 2023), language and genre awareness for lecturers (McGrath et al., 2019) and doctoral writing pedagogy (McGrath, 2023; Negretti & McGrath, 2018, 2020, 2022).

We were motivated to design this toolkit for a number of reasons. Firstly, research in the field of doctoral education has identified the need for a focus on 'teaching' within doctoral supervision, with writers highlighting for example, a dissatisfaction in feedback approaches (Carter & Kumar, 2017; Stracke & Kumar, 2020) and the need for a doctoral pedagogy (Smith, 2022; Zeegers & Barron, 2012). Although the research is convincing, there is also a need to explore what this pedagogy might look like across disciplines. Secondly, the project team recognised that the changing landscape of doctoral education has also had an impact on supervisors who can benefit from guidance on how to best support their doctoral students (Taylor & Wisker, 2023).

Drawing on the team's scholarly, supervisory and teaching experiences, we have developed a series of tasks and resources designed to guide supervisors and doctoral students' in navigating the doctoral journey. Doctoral students can benefit from intentional, purposeful, scaffolded tasks to support their doctoral studies (Donaghue & Adams, 2023; McGrath, 2023). The tasks in this toolkit are organised into several broad themes: understanding expectations of the doctoral journey; becoming a researcher and communicating your research.

NB We deliberately use the term doctoral student (rather than e.g. postgraduate researcher, doctoral candidate) in this toolkit as this term best reflects our position that doctoral education should involve explicit teaching and development. See Key Ideas section for further discussion on the concept of doctoral pedagogy.

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

THEME	TASK & RESOURCES
Understanding expectations of the doctoral journey	A: Reflecting on assessment B: Dealing with feedback C: Supervision talk
Becoming a researcher	D: Doctoral literacy practices E: Developing researcher identity
Communicating your research	F: Genre analysis G: Developing your writing practices H: Communicating your work to non-specialist audiences I: Talking about your work

The primary aim of this toolkit is to surface and make explicit many of the implicit expectations and understandings of doctoral literacy practices which are a fundamental part of doctoral education.

The toolkit is designed to be used in any of the ways below.

INDEPENDENTLY

Doctoral students and supervisors can use the activities and resources to reflect on aspects of doctoral education independently.

SUPERVISORY MEETINGS

Doctoral students and supervisors can use the tasks in the toolkit as the basis for discussion in supervision meetings.

RESEARCH GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

The toolkit can also be used as the basis for scaffolded discussions in research groups in which doctoral students at various stages in their doctoral journeys can contribute and share experiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DR GILL ADAMS

Dr Gill Adams is a Reader in Education at Sheffield Hallam University and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). She supervises and examines doctoral research in education, particularly mathematics education and professional learning. Her research focuses on doctoral researchers' experiences, mathematics education and teacher learning. She is currently leading an evaluation of the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) (Research England). Until recently Gill co-led the national Doctorate in Education (EdD) network, was Deputy Director of the education pathway of White Rose Doctoral Training Programme and strategic lead of postgraduate research in education at Sheffield Hallam University.

DR HELEN DONAGHUE

Dr Helen Donaghue is a Senior Lecturer in Academic Practice in the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) Centre, Queen Margaret University. She supervises doctoral students and has examined theses on topics in the fields of education, language education and applied linguistics. Helen's research is situated within higher education at the nexus of education and language. Her published work focuses on teacher talk (specifically post observation feedback), teacher and researcher identity development, academic literacy development, assessment and feedback, and doctoral pedagogies.

DR MARION HERON

Dr Marion Heron is Associate Professor of Educational Linguistics in the Surrey Institute of Education, University of Surrey. She supervises doctoral students on topics in the field of applied linguistics and higher education and has extensive experience of supervising and examining PhD theses. She researches in the areas of language and education, with a particular interest in classroom discourse, genre and doctoral education.

DR LISA MCGRATH

Dr Lisa McGrath is Associate Professor of Educational Linguistics in the Sheffield Institute of Education, Sheffield Hallam University. She supervises multiple doctoral students and has examined theses in the UK and internationally on topics in the field of education and applied linguistics. Lisa's own research interests span English for academic and research and publication purposes, genre theory and pedagogy, and writing in the academy more broadly. Lisa's external roles include deputy director of the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (Education, Childhood and Youth pathway) and associate editor of the Journal of English for Academic Purposes.

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The doctoral student co-designers who designed and developed the materials in this toolkit.

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KEY IDEAS UNDERPINNING THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is framed by the following educational theory and research.

METACOGNITION

Metacognition is generally understood as thinking about thinking – the awareness of and ability to reflect on our own knowledge. There are two facets to metacognition: first is metacognitive knowledge - knowledge of ourselves, the task we are undertaking and the strategies we are using to complete that task; and the second is metacognitive regulation – how we plan our tasks, set goals for completing the task, monitor our progress and finally evaluate our performance or learning. Research by scholars such as Schraw (2001) and Serra and Metcalfe (2009) have shown that when students' metacognition is activated, they learn and perform better; therefore, tasks in the toolkit are designed with activating or consolidating doctoral students' metacognitive knowledge or regulation in mind.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES AND GENRES

When a student undertakes a doctorate – irrespective of whether their research is highly theoretical or professionally-oriented and applied – they are joining an academic disciplinary community. We conceptualise these communities as discourse communities (Swales, 1990). Discourse communities have shared goals and channels of communication among their members through which information and feedback are conveyed. They use genres to facilitate this information exchange (e.g., research articles, conference presentations, abstracts, blog posts); use specific language (e.g., vocabulary, grammatical structures etc.); and require members to have a level of content and communicative expertise relevant to the interests and goals of the community (Swales, 1990). In short, 'discourse community' captures the communality of the disciplines' shared activities and the language that arises in the undertaking of those activities.

Some of the tasks in the toolkit are aimed at developing doctoral students' communicative expertise, which we theorise as genre knowledge. Expertise in a specific genre (a thesis, an abstract, a viva, a conference presentation) entails the integration of four facets of genre knowledge: subject-matter

knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, process knowledge and formal knowledge (Tardy, 2009). Subject matter knowledge pertains to the content knowledge of the disciplines – the theorems and proofs in mathematics, say. Rhetorical knowledge refers to the purpose of the genre (e.g., one purpose of a research article abstract is to highlight contribution to knowledge), audience expectations and values (e.g., what is my examiner expecting from me in the viva) and author positionality. Process knowledge refers to the procedures and stages of producing a genre. For instance, there are a range of processes involved in putting together a competent literature review, from locating the literature, narrowing down, synthesizing, drafting and so on. Finally, formal knowledge pertains to the language and structure, the conventionalised oral/textual form of the genre. Some tasks in the toolkit scaffold the development of different facets of genre knowledge.

DOCTORAL LITERACIES

We understand doctoral literacy practices to mean socially constructed practices (Lea and Street, 2006) comprising explicit and implicit norms in doctoral studies. For example, a clear and explicit doctoral literacy practice is the writing of the doctoral thesis, and this is a practice which is recognised by all doctoral students, regardless of discipline. But doctoral students are also expected to engage with more hidden literacy practices such as reviewing conference abstracts or writing a blog. Expectations around these literacy practices are often not visible, resourced (time and materials) or supported. Some doctoral students and their supervisors may not be aware of the expectations of the academy in terms of their participation in these less visible doctoral practices. One of the aims of this toolkit is to make visible some of these literacy practices and to provide targeted guidance to

support doctoral researchers' awareness and development of a range of literacy practices. For a discussion of doctoral literacy practices see Heron et al (2023) and Gravett et al (2023).

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

We believe that doctoral students and supervisors can learn effectively when they participate in communities of practices (CoP). CoPs are "groups of people informally bound together by shared expertise and passion for joint enterprise" (Wenger and Snyder, 2000, p. 139). An example of a CoP is a research group which may or may not be situated in a department or faculty. A CoP is structured in terms of function and purpose. Firstly, a CoP is focused on domain, where members seek to develop understanding and competencies around a shared area of interest, such as their discipline. In the case of this toolkit, the domain is doctoral education and the development of doctoral literacies. The second feature is community, which describes the way in which members build relationships through regular interaction. In the case of this toolkit, this refers to the interactions with other doctoral students and supervisors which are part of the tasks. Thirdly, a CoP is interested in exploring and surfacing practices. In the case of this toolkit, practices denote the doctoral literacy practices shared, discussed and co-constructed with doctoral researchers, supervisors and external experts. See Heron et al. (2024) for an example of a research group as a community of practice.

TASKS

The tasks we have designed in this toolkit are built on a number of features (McGrath & Negretti, 2023; Swales & Feak, 2023) which we believe are important. We outline these features here:

- **Sensitive to content:** The tasks focus on content that taps into some facet of supervisors' and students' background knowledge and/or provide students with something interesting to work with.

- **Relatable:** The tasks align with activities or practices (e.g. writing) which are required in actual academic or professional communicative situations. The tasks also point to other genres or writing situations to which the intended learning outcomes of the task apply.

- **Developmental:** The tasks enhance already existing knowledge, skills and practices. For example, some enhance linguistic awareness, some raise awareness of rhetorical expectations in doctoral literacy practices, and others help students and supervisors to see choices that can be made, leading to autonomy

- **Engaging:** The tasks promote analytical thinking and provide opportunities for students and supervisors to make meaning and links across other tasks.

DOCTORAL PEDAGOGY

One of our strongest beliefs underpinning this toolkit is our commitment to a doctoral pedagogy. We believe doctoral support is more than supervisory meetings and research groups. We believe that a purposeful, planned series of activities and events should underpin the doctoral experience – we refer to this purposeful guidance as doctoral pedagogy. We argue for a doctoral pedagogy to be embedded in the doctoral curriculum, rather than adopting a 'how to' and ad hoc approach to supporting doctoral students.

A doctoral pedagogy can be seen by taking doctoral writing as an example. Doctoral students write in response to people and texts from the research community (Ivanič, 2004). These writings can be a range of texts from the thesis itself to blogs and conference abstracts. Because this writing is context dependent and situated, it means that doctoral practices need to be taught within the discipline and with disciplinary experts. Adopting a doctoral pedagogy problematises an approach common to many universities in which writing support is delivered outside the disciplinary context, segregated, and outsourced to peripheral locations on campus such as study skills centres (McGrath et al. 2023). The fact that doctoral education is often misunderstood and marginalized means that a defined pedagogical approach to writing is also lacking at institutional (e.g. curriculum) and individual (e.g. supervisor) levels (Cotterall 2011).

DEVELOPING WRITING PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Structured and guided writing groups can support doctoral students' writing development and confidence in writing a variety of genres (e.g. conference abstracts, parts of the thesis, peer reviewed papers).

THERE ARE TWO TASKS IN THIS SECTION

1. Experiencing writing alongside others

2. Creating writing spaces

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- explore the benefits of writing alongside others

- identify the structures that enable doctoral students to write productively

- consider the value of setting and sharing writing goals

- consider how to facilitate supportive spaces for writing

NOTES

This writing retreat activity can either be conducted online (via video-conferencing) or in-person. Regular writing spaces, groups or retreats can provide guided time for both researchers (supervisors and students) to focus on their writing. Groups with students and more experienced researchers writing in shared spaces are valuable opportunities for us to see and hear how others approach their writing, tackle challenges and celebrate successes. Various techniques and tools can be used to structure the writing session such as Pomodoro Technique or an adapted form of the popular Shut up and write! sessions (see https://thesiswhisperer.com/shut-up-and-write/ for examples). At Sheffield Hallam University, writers start the twice weekly Write! sessions by sharing intentions for the writing, coming back together at the end of the hour to briefly reflect on progress.

STEPS

WRITING ALONGSIDE OTHERS (REFER TO RESOURCE A PART 1)

Find a writing buddy or group

Many university doctoral schools advertise writing groups or spaces, others are advertised more widely online. Doctoral students can spend some time investigating what is available and try going along to one or two. It might be easier for doctoral students to go with a buddy. Alternatively, they can meet up (in person or online) and write - each working on their own writing, but sharing goals and progress at agreed times. If the students already participate in a writing group, they can maybe explore alternatives such as longer/shorter writing blocks, writing retreats.

CREATING WRITING SPACES (REFER TO RESOURCE A PART 2)

After reflecting on experiences of writing alongside others, doctoral students may decide to organise their own writing spaces at times and with structures that work for peers/colleagues. The suggestions below are designed to support this.

PLAN

- Consider working with others to co-facilitate the writing spaces - it really helps to share experiences, administration and facilitation.

- Identify dates/times/frequency and location/video conferencing software.

- Consider how the writing time will be structured, building in time to share intentions, progress and silent screen breaks.

- Think about which participants might come and how invitations will be circulated.

- Prepare brief information on session aims, structure and outline how participants can prepare for it. Allow additional time in the first session for brief introductions to the space and participants.

STRUCTURE

- At the start of the writing event, explain the structure of the event. Agree on how participants will work together (often these events are in silence. At online events participants may prefer cameras on or off whilst writing) then invite everyone participating to briefly state the task they will be working on and their goal for the session

- Use a timer (e.g. for 25 or 30 minutes) where everyone can focus exclusively on

their writing.

- Have a 5-minute screen break at the end of the first block.

- Let participants know that the break is over and set a timer for the second block of focussed writing.

- To finish, make time for everyone to share progress in relation to their goals.

REVIEW

- Reflect on what worked well and any challenges.

- Additional suggestions to support writing include reading work aloud, to others; working in pairs to provide feedback on aspects of each others' writing.

FURTHER READING

https://patthomson.net/

Lee, A., & Murray, R. (2015). Supervising writing: Helping postgraduate students develop as researchers. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 52(5), 558-570.

Murray, R., & Newton, M. (2009). Writing retreat as structured intervention: margin or mainstream? Higher Education Research & Development, 28(5), 541-553.

DEVELOPING WRITING PRACTICES

PART 1: WRITING ALONGSIDE OTHERS

REFLECTION

How do you usually write? What spaces work best for you? Think about various factors that might facilitate or get in the way of writing - being mentally prepared, the physical space, the background noise. If you find some kinds of writing more challenging than others, think through strategies that may be helpful. It can be helpful to write some notes on this - a writing journal can be useful to track your writing approaches and successes over time.

REVIEW

Review your earlier reflections from part 1 above and add to these, using the same prompts plus others of your own. Consider arranging a coffee conversation with a buddy or someone in your writing group to share experiences. Allocate some time in supervision to share experiences of writing.

PART 2: ORGANISING WRITING SPACES

BEFORE WRITING

- What are your writing goals for today? (be specific – e.g. how many words?)

- What resources do you need?

- Do you need to talk to anyone during the session? Who and why?

- What would you like feedback on?

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Whilst reading your peer's writing, consider the following:

- What are the strengths of the writing? Think about flow, coherence, fluency, language (grammar & vocabulary, organisation, communication of ideas, voice & argumentation).

- What questions do you want to ask the writer? (they may be about the points above, or other questions you have).

- What areas could the writer improve? (Consider the points above).

- What does the writer want feedback on?

AFTER WRITING SESSION

- What have you learned about writing from reviewing another's writing??

- What have you learned about your own writing?

- What are your next steps? Be specific and identify dates e.g. To write 1000 words of my methodology by [date].

COMMUNICATING YOUR WORK TO NON-SPECIALIST AUDIENCES

TASK B

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

These days, academics are increasingly expected to share their work with the wider world and not just within their disciplines. There are many opportunities along the PhD journey to present research to non-specialist audiences (whether that is the public or other PhD students/academics outside of their area of research). For instance, this could be a job interview for a research assistant position, a doctoral conference, a poster presentation at a conference with a broad or interdisciplinary theme, or a three minute thesis competition. When presenting to a non-expert audience, it's important to recontextualise your ideas so that those outside of academia can see the relevance. This does not necessarily mean simplifying your ideas, but it will entail repackaging them according to the interests, background and experience of your audience. In this task you will prepare to present your academic research to a non-expert audience:

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- analyse the genre of the activity

- identify the rhetorical triangle for the activity

- apply these insights to the structure and language of the activity

- consider the audience

- explore ways of engaging the audience

NOTES

This task can be delivered either one-to one with the supervisor and the doctoral student or as a workshop. Below are some tips for putting together a presentation for a non-specialist audience:

- include some diagrams, illustrations, animations

- use real life examples to make it easier to relate to the topic

- refer back to the key message a few times during the talk

- don't try to pack too much in to the presentation

- summarise the key points at the end

STEPS

1 Decide what aspect of your research you are going to share with a non-expert audience.

2 How a text is constructed (written or spoken) is shaped by the three points of the rhetorical triangle: the author (e.g. who they are, their relationship to the audience), the purpose of the text (e.g. what the author is trying to achieve with this text) and the audience (e.g. how much knowledge they have of the topic, their relationship to the author, their interests). Think about these points and the text that you are putting together for a non-expert audience.

AUTHOR

MESSAGE

PURPOSE   **AUDIENCE**
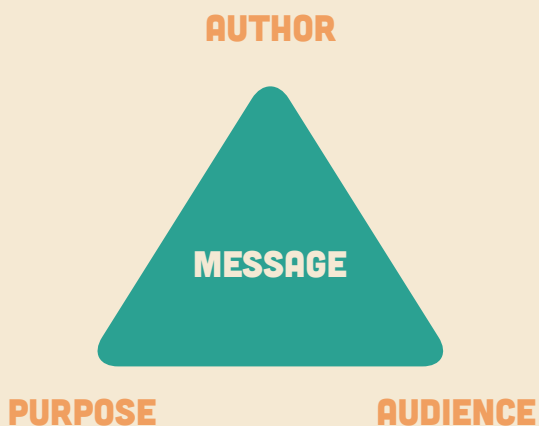
3 Watch one of the videos suggested in the references. They all give good and clear suggestions for making your work accessible to a general audience. Some of them draw on the 3 minute thesis, which encourages you to communicate your ideas to a non-specialist audience in a concise and engaging way.

4 Complete the table in Resource B.

Here is an example of a short presentation on the topic of the use of technology to support dialogic pedagogy

1. Start with an anecdote on the importance of dialogue in education.

2. Through visuals, define dialogic teaching and digital tools with everyday examples and/or analogies.

3. Showcase a few digital tools and demonstrate how to utilize them in teaching and learning.

4. Mention the possible benefits of dialogic teaching with technology and what impact this can have on education.

5. Summarise key points and offer some resources.

6. Remember to be enthusiastic about your topic throughout the presentation.

5 Practise your presentation with your supervisor and get feedback.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

When preparing the presentation, ask yourself: What knowledge can I expect a non-expert to have? Practise the presentation with a non-expert friend. Ask your friend questions such as: What am I presenting? Can you summarise what my research is about? A good presentation should be one where the audience can provide a brief summary of what you were talking about.

You can deliver the talk to your supervisor and get feedback, and then reflect on what aspects of the presentation could be improved. You can also reflect on what they have gained from the task and how you adjusted the content and the language used in light of the non-expert nature of their audience.

FURTHER READING

Specifically for engineers, but advice relevant to all disciplines.

https://www.southampton.ac.uk/englishforengineers/understanding_assessed_tasks/key_skills/communicating_with_a_nonspecialist_audience.page

Bill Nye the Science Guy – this is a series of videos for children, but notice how he uses visuals and objects to explain science.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XsmShFLTTI4

Tips and ideas from the publishing company Taylor and Francis on how to present your work to non-specialist audiences using ideas from the 3 minute thesis. This includes an example.

https://authorservices.taylorandfrancis.com/blog/research-impact/tips-for-presenting-your-research/

University of Surrey advice for preparing for 3 minute thesis with examples.

https://www.surrey.ac.uk/researcher-development-programme/researcher-community/three-minute-thesis

https://www.vitae.ac.uk/events/three-minute-thesis-competition

https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/sioe/2024/06/03/sharing-the-knowledge-training-doctoral-students-to-write-beyond-academia/

RESOURCE B

COMMUNICATING YOUR WORK TO NON-SPECIALIST AUDIENCES

To prepare your talk or written output, use the prompts below:

What is your topic?	
Who is your audience?	
What might they already know about your topic?	
What might they not know?	
How long is the presentation?	
What hook are you using? Why?	
What visuals are you using? When and why?	

What are the difficult terms to describe your topic? Note these down and note the alternative, every-day words you will use.

How will you check the audience understands?

What is the structure of your presentation?

What real-life examples or analogies will you use?

What questions will you ask? What questions do you hope the audience will ask you?

DOCTORAL LITERACY PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Doctoral literacy practices refer to the range of activities doctoral students can participate in as part of their doctoral education e.g. reviewing conference abstracts, presenting in a research group, writing a blog. Some of these activities may seem obvious, but some may not be familiar. This task allows doctoral students and supervisors to think about the different activities that can form part of doctoral education.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

* broaden doctoral students and supervisors' repertoire of literacy practices as part of doctoral education.

* reflect on how doctoral students and supervisors might access these literacy practices.

NOTES

Doctoral students and supervisors may be familiar with different activities (written and spoken) which form part of doctoral education. However, there may be other literacy practices which would be useful and helpful to the doctoral journey which are less obvious or visible. Knowing what these activities might be can help doctoral students to broaden their range of repertoires.

Some activities might be useful at different points in the doctoral journey, so it is important that doctoral students and supervisors discuss these together and think about the relevance and timing. There are some suggested activities as well as blank spaces for the doctoral students and supervisor to add more. These activities can also be shared and discussed in research groups to gain further examples.

STEPS

1 Refer to resource C. This can be carried out in groups or as part of the supervisory meeting. If in groups, the resource can serve the purpose of doctoral students and supervisors getting to know each other. The resource aims to encourage all parties to think about the range of doctoral literacy practices and think about who can help them and how they can help themselves.

2 If in groups, once participants have completed the table, they can share with each other what worked and what did not work well Other doctoral students can ask questions about these activities.

3 Participants can then add to the boxes as they progress through the doctoral journey, recognising that some activities are more appropriate at different time points.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

Doctoral students and supervisors can use this resource to help complete the progress reviews as part of the doctoral requirements.

FURTHER READING

https://uacesoneurope.ideasoneurope. eu/2024/04/22/10-reasons-why-academic- conferences-are-a-must/

Gravett, K., Heron, M., & Ahmad, A. (2023). The doctorate unbound: relationality in doctoral literacy research. Literacy, 57(3), 305-314.

Heron, M., Gravett, K., & Ahmad, A. (2023). Doctoral literacy practices as sites of connections, competition and discomfort. International Journal of Educational Research, 119, 102175.
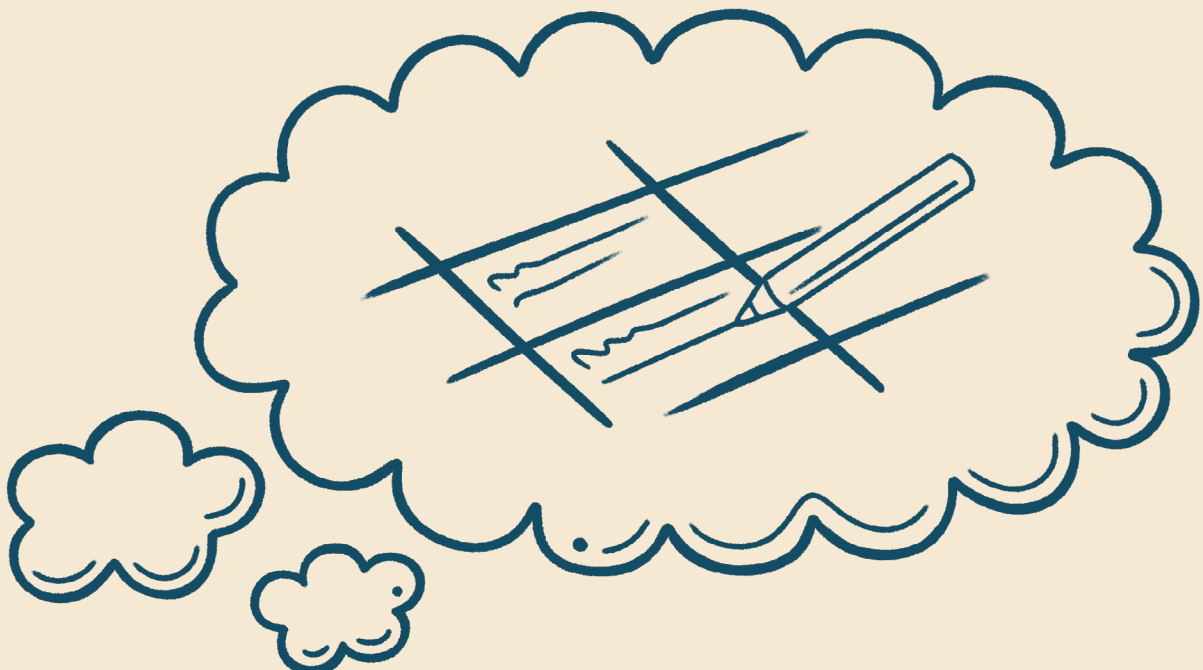
DOCTORAL LITERACY PRACTICES

Doctoral literacy practice	Who can help	When might this activity be useful	Further resources / information
Writing a conference proposal			
Writing a conference presentation			
Presenting at a conference			
Co-chairing a session at a conference			
Writing peer reviewed paper			
Writing a blog			

Doctoral literacy practice	Who can help	When might this activity be useful	Further resources / information
Preparing a vlog			
Attending workshops e.g. methods			
Reading and discussing articles			
Writing workshops / retreats			
Reviewing conference abstracts			
Participate in formal courses e.g. PGCert			
Join a mailing list for your discipline / professional body			

GENRE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Underpinning this task is the idea that academic writing expertise involves learning to communicate via genres within a disciplinary community (Negretti, 2017; Johns, 2008; Tardy, 2009). Genres, e.g. doctoral theses, are conventionalised social and ideological practices which have evolved over time. Within the academic and disciplinary community, there are expectations about what a particular genre (e.g. a doctoral thesis) will look like. Doctoral students need to learn and reproduce the conventions/expectations within their discipline. However, it's also important to realise that genres can be flexible and can change over time (Negretti and McGrath, 2020). For example, doctoral theses can now include aspects such as animation or digital artefacts which were not possible (or acceptable) previously.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- help doctoral students prepare to write a specific genre e.g. confirmation report, conference abstract, journal article, doctoral thesis chapter.

- introduce doctoral students to genre analysis as a means of noticing (and later producing) structural and linguistic features of particular genres

NOTES

This task uses genre-based pedagogy (Swales, 1990) which involves guided analysis of selected disciplinary texts aimed at raising students' awareness of the organisation and language of specific genres. In this task doctoral students and supervisors will notice and discuss the conventions and features of a genre the doctoral student needs to write (e.g. research proposal, literature review). It is hoped that doctoral students and supervisors will develop analysis and noticing skills which can be used beyond this task and can be replicated with other genres.

STEPS

The task is broken down into three principal steps:

- **Preparation**

- **Analysis**

- **Discussion**

Preparation: Doctoral student and supervisor identify the genre the student needs to write e.g. a journal article abstract. They both collect instances (a sample) of the genre, taking care to choose examples which they consider to be effective and relevant. For example, if the student is writing an abstract for a particular journal, the sample could include some abstracts from the targeted journal.

Analysis: Doctoral student and supervisor analyse the structure and language of the genre - see Resource D.

Discussion: Doctoral student and supervisor discuss their analysis and the doctoral student plans how this analysis will inform their own writing.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

How useful was this task for writing the targeted genre?

Do you think you could apply this process to other genres?

FURTHER READING

Swales, J. 1990. Genre Analysis. Cambridge University Press

Swales, J. and Feak, C. 2012. Academic Writing for Graduate Students (3rd Edition). University of Michigan Press.

Swales, J. and Feak, C. 2020. English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide. Michigan ELT.

Tardy, C. 2009. Building Genre Knowledge. Parlor Press

RESOURCE D

GENRE ANALYSIS

ANALYSING YOUR SAMPLE.

Having collected a sample of the genre you want to write, you will now analyse your examples. Here are some suggestions for aspects to look at, but the genre chosen may have other aspects to notice, especially language features.

- **How long (i.e. number of words) is the genre? For example, an abstract is typically 150-200 words.**

- **Organisation:**

  ◊ What is the overall organisation? What elements or 'moves' does the text have?

    For example, an abstract commonly has the following 'moves': (1) background/topic/situation/ introduction; (2) purpose/aim/justification (which can involve presenting current research); (3) methods; (4) findings/results; (5) discussion/implications. Note that not all abstracts have all these moves and they are not necessarily in this order. Note also that some journals have structured abstracts with specific headings.

  ◊ Does the genre have paragraphs or headings? For example, an abstract is typically one paragraph but this could

vary depending on type (e.g. structured abstract), length, journal and discipline.

- **Citation:**

  ◊ Does the genre cite literature/sources? For example, abstracts typically don't cite literature sources but it may depend on the discipline/journal/ individual abstract

  ◊ What are the formatting conventions for in-text referencing? What are the formatting conventions for the reference list?

- **Language**

  ◊ What is the tense? For example, abstracts often have a mix of present and past (e.g. to report findings) tenses.

  ◊ Is the genre written in first ('I') or third (e.g. 'the researcher') person?

  ◊ Is hedging (i.e. being tentative) common in this genre?

  ◊ What verbs are common?

  ◊ How are ideas linked?

  ◊ Are there any phrases you like that you could use in your own writing?

REFLECTING ON ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

This task aims to support doctoral students and their supervisors throughout the assessment milestones (e.g. confirmation of the doctorate, professional doctorate assignments, the viva) so that the experience can be one where assessment can be viewed as not only a progression point but also a learning and reflection opportunity. The task therefore involves reflection, preparation and evaluation of aspects not officially included in the assessment components. This includes ensuring that both supervisor and student are aligned in their understanding of the assessment, its requirements and the potential learning opportunity.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- understand the assessment guidelines and expectations at different assessment points

- develop a plan to complete this assessment which complements the wider research project plan

- reflect on and discuss assessment submissions

- integrate the assessment feedback into future work

NOTES

While it may be different at each institution, it is often the case with doctoral assessments, that there are two main aspects. These include 1) a written aspect and 2) a presentation or verbal discussion. With this in mind, this task includes two points of reflection, one after each major element of the assessment.

Both supervisors and doctoral students should be clear on and regularly review what the assessment criteria for their university is. Keep in mind that regulations do change, and it may not be the same for each candidate year to year.

Note that Resource E is organised in two parts and can be used multiple times for different assessments.

STEPS

1 Both parties review assessment guidelines with the goal of understanding what is expected of the candidate at each progression point.

2 The doctoral student discusses with their supervisor where they are currently in their research and what would be suitable to submit for this particular assessment at this stage.

3 The doctoral student chooses an assessment, draft and get feedback from supervisors (can be written or oral assessment).

4 Following the draft feedback, the doctoral student completes the first part of Resource E (Pre-assessment) and discusses with the supervisor.

5 After all the elements of the assessment are complete, the doctoral student reviews the experience using the prompts in Resource E (post-assessment) and discusses these answers with the supervisor.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

- What have you learned about the role of assessment in the doctoral journey?

- What is a good way to prepare for assessment?

- Who can support the assessment process e.g. before and after?

- What can further support be found?

FURTHER READING

Denicolo, P., Duke, D. & Reeves, J. (2020). Delivering inspiring doctoral assessment. Sage Publications

REFLECTING ON ASSESSMENT

REFLECTION POINT 1: PRE-ASSESSMENT

- What has changed since you submitted the written / oral piece?

- What have you accomplished since?

- What feels like it may still need some work? Have you explored any training that might help solidify this element or have you spent any time post submission working on this element?

- What elements of the piece do you think the assessors might want you to expand on?

- Are there any elements of the work you're particularly keen to get some feedback on? Or any burning questions you have for your assessors?

REFLECTION POINT 2: POST-ASSESSMENT

- What went well? How did you feel about the experience?

- What didn't go as well? Why?

- What did you learn from the experience overall?

- What kind of feedback did you receive? Has this feedback spurred on any further ideas or reflection?

- How might you approach the next assessment? What would you do differently? What would you keep the same?

SUPERVISION TALK

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Supervision remains the primary way in which doctoral researchers are educated, with supervision meetings being 'THE key way in which the doctorate is achieved' (Kamler and Thomson, 2014 p.x, original emphasis). Although it is a key aspect to doctoral success, supervision is often unexamined. This includes doctoral supervision meetings, which are 'private and somewhat mysterious' processes 'occurring behind closed doors' (Kamler and Thomson, 2014, p.x). This task draws on applied linguistics methods, asking the doctoral student and supervisor(s) to carry out a simple discourse analysis of the interaction during a supervision meeting.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- raise awareness of talk in supervisory meetings in order to maximise their affordances
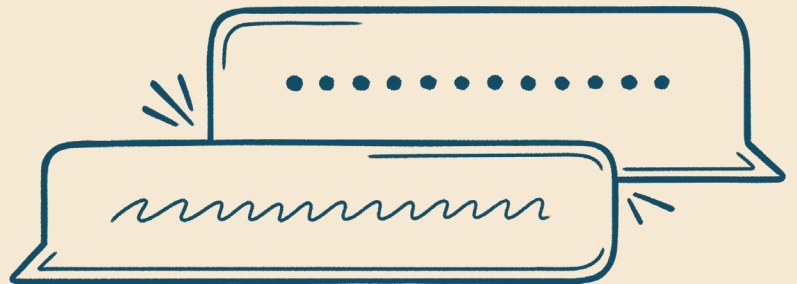
NOTES

This task is potentially sensitive because it might reveal habits or practices that individuals are unaware of e.g. a tendency to dominate supervisory conversations.

STEPS

1 Doctoral student and supervisor can discuss the transcript in Resource F. Questions to consider are:

- Who talks the most?

- Who seems to control the interaction? How do you know?

- What is effective about this interaction for the doctoral student/ Supervisor?

- How could the interaction be more effective for doctoral student/ Supervisor?

- How similar or dissimilar is this interaction to your typical supervision meeting interaction?

2 With the agreement of supervisor and student, record your supervisory meeting to produce a transcript. If the meeting is online, use the record function to produce a transcript. If the meeting is in person, you could use the 'Dictate' function in MS Word to transcribe talk but you will need to audio record your meeting as well so you can add the speakers into the transcript (i.e. who says what). Consider aspects such as silence, laughter, interruption and so forth.

3 After the meeting, doctoral student and supervisor(s) should analyse the transcript individually by considering the following questions:

a. Who talks the most/least? Should this change?

b. Who decides on topics i.e. what to talk about? Should this change?

c. Does anyone control the structure of the meeting? Should this change?

d. What was the purpose of the meeting? Has this been achieved? Could this have been improved?

e. Were any actions identified?

4 Doctoral student and supervisor(s) meet to compare analysis. Discuss whether any changes should be made to supervision meetings in light of the analysis

5 Optional Pre-Meeting Stage: Doctoral student or supervisor (or both) creates the agenda/goals for the meeting and analysis includes achievement of goals/agenda items

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

- How did this task make you feel? Did it uncover or reveal any aspects of your talk you would like to change? How easy was it to talk about analysis together? How useful was this task?

- Who might you talk to to address any issues this task has highlighted?

FURTHER READING

Wisker, G. (2008). The Postgraduate Research Handbook (2nd Ed.). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. [ch. 10 Managing your supervisor]

You might also like to consider other aspects of supervision as well as interaction during meetings.

1. Scheduling meetings. How are your supervision meetings planned? Whose responsibility is it to plan and set up meetings? Do you have regular meetings or are they arranged individually? How well are they attended? Who sets the agenda of supervisory meetings? Do you have a set structure? Are you happy with these arrangements or would you like to change anything?

2. Between meetings? Doctoral students: How do you plan work in between supervisory meetings? Is this an effective process? How do you feel leading up to a supervisory meeting? Why? How could you maximise the time between meetings?

SUPERVISION TALK

Look at the transcript below and consider the following questions:

- Who talks the most?

- Who seems to control the interaction? How do you know?

- What is effective about this interaction for the Doctoral student / Supervisor?

- How could the interaction be more effective for Doctoral student / Supervisor?

- How similar or dissimilar is this interaction to your typical supervision meeting interaction?

Excerpt from supervision meeting with Margot (Supervisor) and Marc (doctoral student). Marc has just passed his confirmation / upgrade exam and is discussing the feedback with Margot.

MARC

I think it it was OK and then I agreed with a lot of things. And then we got loads of feedback and it made me really think how what I really want to do now. So the after that feedback I draw this diagram because that's what I agreed with you in June. This is what I want to do because the another question was about research methodology. So I was thinking about that one and then I think normally, but I thought I needed to approach this one from research methodology and I think about research question, research methodology and then find the findings. But I think for me it was the slightly like a different way like opposite way to see how I will find the answer for this one. The other one is lack of critical, critical points in my writing, but they said how you actually defended a question was much better, thank goodness.

Yeah. So I think they, I'm going to, I have a plan how one can, how I can run more critically. Even though I attended doctoral college workshops, I'm going to be honest. It didn't help at all because how they do this workshop is OK. This is how you supposed write and then doing it. But this is critical or not. But sometimes some examples I couldn't understand what paragraph was talking about because that's something about like a biology or science. So I think I really don't understand.

One sentence at all, and it didn't help. But now I find the way how I'm better now. So I'm going to write more than before. That's I think how I can actually improve it. So that's the plan for this one.

MARGOT

You can also get one-on-one help from the doctoral colleges where you can book an appointment. So I think they're mostly with a staff member, but that might be really helpful. And then and then because then it will be about your own topic not done randomly, you

know, other subjects as you say that you may not know anything about. So do book in those sessions if you can.

MARC

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah

MARGOT

There's also the Manchester Phrase bank, some really useful phrases there.

MARC

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MARGOT

So that that might be helpful if you've looked at it.

MARC

Yeah, I've looked at it. And so because you shared, that link with me. So that one and I think.

MARGOT

Alright.

MARC

How I read literature, so for literature review and how I summarised all different literature actually didn't help me to be more critical, but I think I need to use a slightly different approach. When I read the literature and then summarise it and they use that one for my literature review. So that's the another one. So yeah, there was the everything I got out from there.

MARGOT

I think. I think that's sort of the key there, Marc, in the terminology that you're using, it's not necessarily about summarising the literature, it's like pulling out what is or isn't relevant for you and arguing why it is or isn't. So it's sort of going that step beyond the summarising. I do take what you mean in that respect, but yeah, it's just sort of you know.

MARC

Yeah. Hmm. Yeah.

MARGOT

Something that I know some people do is I don't know how you summarise it. If you use Excel or just a table or whatever, but just having that extra column there to say, how might this be useful or questions I have about this reading or this paper or, you know, critical comments about this paper if you have that extra dimension to your notes, then you can use that for your criticality as well. Also, sometimes there's limitations of the studies that you are citing, so there may be a wonderful citation, but actually when you look at it, they only interviewed 3 people, or

they only interviewed females in Afghanistan or something. So it was a limited scope and there's things like that that you can critique what they did, their methodology and their approach.

MARC

Hmm. Yeah.

(Adapted and anonymised from supervision transcript with permission).

RESPONDING TO FEEDBACK

TASK G

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

It is common for doctoral students to feel anxious about their first feedback on the doctorate, and we all have examples of bizarre and baffling feedback that we have received! Supervisors often give extensive feedback on proposals, assignments, and of course chapters of the thesis. But feedback can be a thorny subject and an area of tension between the student and supervisor. Detailed feedback is well-intended, but can feel bruising; students sometimes struggle to decode the intended meaning of the feedback, giving the impression that they haven't responded carefully to their supervisors' advice. Therefore, learning to receive, discuss and act on feedback effectively is a crucial part of the doctoral journey. This task is designed to support doctoral students and supervisors to get into good feedback habits that, importantly, work for both. The aim is to give doctoral students voice and underscore their responsibilities when it comes to managing feedback. This is also about relationship building and managing feedback expectations – supervisors are experienced academics, but they are also human.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- support students and their supervisors to discuss their expectations and preferences when it comes to giving and receiving feedback

- monitor how the feedback practices are working

NOTES

This task is potentially sensitive because it might reveal feedback practices that individuals are unaware of e.g. a tendency to be very honest or vague.

STEPS

1 In the first few months, supervisor and doctoral student complete the questionnaire independently (see Part 1, Resource G).

2 In the meeting, they share their answers and use these as a prompt to discuss similar and differing expectations, and then agree a way forward.

3 Supervisor and doctoral student conduct periodic review and consider the following questions:

- What is and isn't working well with the feedback and how the doctoral student is responding to that feedback?

- What needs to change? What should stay the same?

4 Doctoral student completes Part 2 of Resource G and discusses with supervisor in a meeting.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

Reflection prompts for supervisor

What have you learned about your student?

What have you learnt about how you give feedback/tone/clarity?

What if anything might you change about your feedback practice in light of these tasks?

Reflection prompts for doctoral student

What have you learnt about how you receive/ respond to feedback?

To what extent have these tasks highlighted your role and responsibility and the control you have over feedback practices.

FURTHER READING

https://patthomson.net/2019/03/18/giving-feedback-on-writing-be-specific/

https://patthomson.net/2017/08/14/a-thesis-completion-writing-feedback-calendar/

Carter, S. (2023, June 7). Giving and receiving doctoral writing feedback. The Times Higher Education. https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/giving-and-receiving-doctoral-writing-feedback

Carter, S., & Kumar, V. (2016). 'Ignoring me is part of learning': Supervisory feedback on doctoral writing. Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 54(1), 68-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2015.1123104

Lee, A. (2018). They think I'm stupid: dealing with supervisor feedback. In K. Townsend & M. Saunders. How to keep your research project on track. Edward Elgar Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786435767.00037

Thomson, P. (2019, March 18). Giving feedback on writing - be specific. Patter. Giving feedback on writing – be specific.

RESOURCE G

FEEDBACK

Part 1: Take a moment to reflect. What is feedback? How do you define feedback? In what forms might feedback come? What is the purpose of feedback?

Part 2: In the first few months of supervision, doctoral student and supervisor complete the table below:

DOCTORAL STUDENT QUESTIONS	SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS
As a rule, how long do you expect to wait for feedback?	As a rule, how long do you need to give your doctoral student feedback?
What is your preferred format for feedback, or some combination of these (e.g written, spoken, in a meeting or recorded, handwritten, printed)?	What is your preferred format for giving feedback (e.g written, spoken (in a meeting or recorded, handwritten, printed)?
Who should decide what the feedback focuses on? You or your supervisor?	Who should decide what the feedback focuses on? You or your doctoral student?

DOCTORAL STUDENT QUESTIONS	SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS
Would you prefer feedback on full drafts of text or smaller chunks more often?	Would you prefer to give feedback on full drafts of text or smaller chunks more often?

Your supervisor thinks the way you have presented your data is unclear. How would you rather they expressed that?
 	
For example:
 	
    a) You might like to have another look at how you have presented your data?
 	
    b) You need to rethink how you present your data – it doesn't make sense.
	You think the way your doctoral student has presented their data is unclear. How are you most likely to express that?
	
	For example:
	
	    a) You might like to have another look at how you have presented your data?
	
	    b) You need to rethink how you present your data – it doesn't make sense.

DOCTORAL STUDENT QUESTIONS	SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS
What would you do if you disagreed with your supervisor's feedback?	How would you respond if your doctoral student didn't agree with your feedback?
When/where is the appropriate time/place to ask for clarification on feedback? (e.g. wait for the next supervision meeting, email, pop along to thesupervisor's office)?	When/where is the appropriate time/place for your doctoral student to ask for clarification on feedback? (e.g. wait for the next supervision meeting, email, pop along to the office)?
How do you evidence that feedback has been acted on?	How do you know/expect evidence that the doctoral student has responded to feedback?

Part 3: After some feedback has been given, the doctoral student pastes four or five feedback comments into the grid and completes their sections. In a supervisory meeting, they discuss their answers with the supervisor, who then reflects on their columns.

	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	SUPERVISOR	SUPERVISOR
PROMPTS	What is the feedback?	What does that mean to me? How do I interpret it?	How do I feel/react? (e.g. confused, happy, proud, clear, disappointed motivated demotivated...)	What I'm going to do to respond to this feedback?	What do I expect the doctoral student to do in response to this feedback?	How might I word this feedback differently (if needed)?
EXAMPLE FEEDBACK	What do you mean by this term?	I haven't explained it clearly enough	Indifferent	Rewrite for clarity or use an established definition and references.	The doctoral student needs to rewrite for clarity and show they understand the meaning of the term and how they are using it in the thesis.	I could be more specific and suggest the doctoral student provides a definition.
A						

PROMPTS	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	DOCTORAL STUDENT	SUPERVISOR	SUPERVISOR
	What is the feedback?	What does that mean to me? How do I interpret it?	How do I feel/ react? (e.g. confused, happy, proud, clear, disappointed motivated demotivated...)	What I'm going to do to respond to this feedback?	What do I expect the doctoral student to do in response to this feedback?	How might I word this feedback differently (if needed)?
B						
C						

Part 4: A tip for dealing with challenging feedback

Even after good feedback practices have been established, there may be times when feedback feels particularly bruising or difficult to process. The following task (based on Speech Act Theory, Austin, 1962) might help.

Words are used to perform actions. For example, if I am on a train and say to my fellow passenger "it's cold in here", what I might actually mean is "please shut the window". If the passenger is an obliging person, these words may result in her closing the window. This can be broken down as follows:

Locutionary act (What you say): "it's cold in here".

Illocutionary act (what you mean / what you want): I want the person sitting next to me to shut the window.

Perlocutionary act (the outcome): She shuts the window.

In terms of feedback, it might work like this:

What the supervisor says: "This doesn't make sense. What do you mean?"

What the supervisor means: My supervisor has not understood what I have witten.

The outcome: I need to make sure the point I am making aligns with the data so I need to go back to the data to check and then add a couple of sentences to show that link.

Working through the feedback using this analytical approach can take the emotion out and help you think more clearly about next steps.

DEVELOPING RESEARCHER IDENTITIES

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Providing opportunities to reflect on and talk about ourselves as researchers can provide researchers at all stages of their careers with valuable insights into their learning, achievements and future goals. It is particularly important for doctoral researchers to talk with more experienced researchers, including those further along in their doctoral journeyings. Formal and informal activities can all support doctoral researchers in identity work, supporting them in beginning to see themselves as researchers.

In this task, we encourage doctoral researchers to reflect on their personal biographies, considering strengths and identifying actions that will contribute to them developing their sense of themselves as researchers. We recommend using a research journal and returning to these reflections each year, reviewing and updating. In addition to journaling, conversations with doctoral researchers, supervisors and other researchers will also contribute to identity work, providing encouragement and raising alternative possibilities.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- create spaces for reflection on and talking about ourselves as researchers

- reflect on our identity work and identify strengths and areas we want to develop

TASK H

NOTES

Notes for doctoral student
Doctoral study involves developing knowledge and research skills but equally importantly it also involves identity formation i.e. seeing yourself as a researcher. However, developing a researcher identity takes time and is not always easy. Doctoral students achieve researcher identities through recognition, from themselves and others, of their competence, confidence, autonomy and agency in scholarly activities, products and communities. This legitimacy is achieved through engaging with formal and informal activities such as completing milestones like the confirmation (Heron et al., 2023), presenting to other doctoral students, discussions with a supervisor, conversations with student peers, and reading literature. Development and recognition as a researcher also comes from reflection, supportive relationships (e.g. with tutors, supervisors, peers) and talking to others – to individuals such as supervisors and peers or with groups such as writing groups, doctoral programme cohorts or conference attendees.

Who are the researchers in my field? Researcher profiles, public images and individual's lives

Explore public profiles of researchers in your area on university webpages, ResearchGate (researchgate.net), LinkedIn etc. What do they highlight? Look at profiles of individuals you know.

Researchers as experts in their field – is it easier in some disciplines than others to consider yourself an expert? What might 'expert' mean in your discipline?
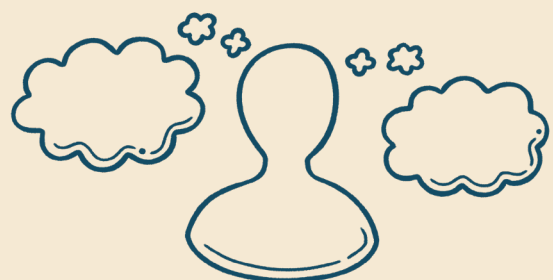
NOTES

Notes for supervisors Support your doctoral students in developing a researcher identity. Encourage doctoral researchers to make connections by looking for opportunities and signposting them to individuals, organisations, events and resources. Set up opportunities for small group discussions to give doctoral students the space to talk and share experiences. Be mindful of how you give feedback - ensure that you give positive comments as well as constructive criticism that shows how doctoral students might develop their work. Encourage doctoral students to share their feelings of being a researcher and what validates their researcher identity. Encourage conversations around experiences of transitioning from student to researcher as part of the doctoral journey and the impact of assessment and other key milestones.

Am I a researcher?

1 In the first few months of your doctoral education, complete the part 1 of Task H. Discuss the answers with your supervisor/peers

2 Making connections - finding your space Identify communities/groups where you can join other researchers e.g. reading groups, writing groups, email lists for journals, societies etc. If you can't find anything appropriate, consider setting something up yourself.

3 Consider creating a social media presence around your research and/ or developing a personal biography focused on research, for example using LinkedIn. Look out for support sessions on this before you get started.

4 Complete part 2 of Task H. Discuss the answers with your supervisor.

REFLECTIONS ON TASK

For the last two activities you are encouraged to discuss your responses and the questions raised with one or two peers. You may also wish to discuss some of the issues with your supervisors, particularly where you have identified areas that you wish to develop.

FURTHER READING

Blogs and other resources:

https://patthomson.net/category/imposter-syndrome/

https://thesiswhisperer.com/2020/10/07/beryl/

https://thesiswhisperer.com/2012/09/12/are-you-really-a-student/

Hugh Kearns https://impostersyndrome.com.au/index.php/the-free-guide/

Researcher profiles and biographies – various university websites

Researcher stories e.g. Researcher Stories - Meet the ResearchGate Community

Journal articles:

Donaghue, H., & Adams, G. (2023). The role of situated talk in developing doctoral students' researcher identities. Studies in Continuing Education, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2023.2274925

Mantai, L. "Feeling more academic now": Doctoral stories of becoming an academic. Aust. Educ. Res. 46, 137–153 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0283-x

Xu, L., & Grant, B. (2020). Doctoral publishing and academic identity work: two cases. Higher Education Research & Development, 39(7), 1502–1515. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1728522

RESOURCE

H

RESEARCHER IDENTITY

Note: Part 1 is to be completed early on in the doctoral journey. Part 2 is to be completed after one year of doctoral supervision.

PART 1: THE BEGINNING OF THE DOCTORAL JOURNEY

1. Write a summary paragraph, personal biography of who you are, your research – and what your future researcher self will have accomplished. Choose 3 words that define who you are – use these in your profile.

2. Identify key milestones for you on your research journey, reflect on these and your progress towards them. Identify your strengths and areas to work on in the future. Use a private journal to work out what you think.

3. Answer the questions below and discuss these with your supervisor and other doctoral student.

• What do you think makes a researcher?

• Do you consider yourself to be a researcher? If yes, why? If no, why not?

• What do you need to do to help you feel more like a researcher?

• Conduct a self-assessment of your skills, identifying strengths and areas for development. How do you acknowledge those strengths (privately and publicly)? Can you prioritise areas for development?

• What would you want to accomplish as a researcher? e.g. publications, outreach, development of skills or knowledge,

• How do external validation and presence contribute to feeling like a researcher?

PART 2: AFTER 12 MONTHS OF YOUR DOCTORAL JOURNEY

1. Look back at your answers to Part 1. Write your reflections on your earlier statement and on your development over the year. What do you hope to have accomplished in another year? Can you add some more detail this time?

2. Review your key milestones. What has been accomplished and what do you still need to achieve?

TALKING ABOUT YOUR WORK

INTRODUCTION TO TASK

Conference participation can provide an important learning environment for researchers yet it may also be a daunting experience for doctoral researchers. This task aims to scaffold that participation, encouraging doctoral researchers and their supervisors to make spaces for conversations about the value of sharing research in progress. Such conversations can help to demystify academic conferences for new researchers and support planning, engagement and reflection.

THE AIMS OF THIS TASK ARE TO:

- identify appropriate conferences in consultation with supervisors

- develop a plan to facilitate and encourage conversations about the doctoral research (including conference attendance)

- develop an understanding of what is involved in designing and sharing a poster within the discipline

- reflect on conference experiences

- plan the next stage

NOTES

There are four parts to this task:

a) An initial conversation with supervisors

b) A poster activity

c) Conference attendance

d) Reflection.

The focus is on the value of talking about the doctoral research (in addition to the reading, thinking and writing activities that are often prioritised). We encourage participants to use these as a guide for the first year, then adapt for subsequent years. Conversations can be incorporated into supervisory meetings and other forums e.g. research groups.

A. CONVERSATION ABOUT SHARING YOUR RESEARCH

Within the first 3 months of starting the doctorate, doctoral students and supervisors plan a discussion about sharing research, aiming to draft a timeline of activities for the first year. In preparation, **doctoral students** are encouraged to look at which societies and/or conferences (internal and external) are a good fit for their research, find out what presentation opportunities there are (poster/paper/alternative), note timelines e.g. when abstract submission is due and whether there is a poster/paper submission deadline in advance of the conference. **Supervisors** are encouraged to consider what opportunities are available and review the doctoral student suggested conferences to advise on which are most appropriate.

Consider the following suggestions for the meeting:

- Set a target e.g. to go to at least one internal and one external per year

- Go to one conference as an observer

- Make a conference plan - what needs to be done before writing the abstract and poster?

- Have a contingency plan in case experiments or other data generation activities don't go to plan.

- Talk to others about their conference experiences (including discussions with supervisors)

- Discuss questions about conference practices and conventions in the area of the doctoral student's research e.g. how do you write an abstract months in advance when you don't have all your data/findings? How much data is enough?

- Set a target to talk to one person at the conference about their work

B. DESIGNING A POSTER:

See Part A in Resource I.

C. THE CONFERENCE:

Doctoral student and supervisor can consider the suggestions below:

- Download/print a copy of the conference programme and identify sessions that look interesting.

- Seek out Early Career Researcher workshops/talks.

- Take a notebook/notes app and use it for reflections and notes.

- Look at the programme for someone who is doing research in a similar area and make contact.

- Pay attention to how others present and note the strategies which seem effective.

- Take a friend/colleague for support, to share experiences with and to write down questions during the poster/paper presentation

- Think about how to respond to difficult questions e.g. note them, return to them and discuss them with peers/supervisors for support. Have some responses ready e.g. 'that's a very interesting point. I hadn't thought about that, I'll make a note of it' – don't feel like you have to have an answer

for every question.

- Think about how to manage confrontation - these don't happen very often but it can help to be prepared. Listen to how others respond in similar situations.

Drafting your own checklist to aid conference preparation. This might include a timeline for preparing your contribution that includes making practical arrangements (applying for funding if opportunities exist, planning travel and accommodation), planning one or more practice runs with a critical friend/supervisor, checking the programme for related research...

D. REFLECTIONS

See part B in Resource I. In addition to completing this part of the task, read Kim-Daniel Vattoy's paper (see Further Reading below) and consider what, if anything, resonates with your experience. How does it help you plan?

FURTHER READING

Fakunle, O., Dollinger, M., Alla-Mensah, J., & Izard, B. (2019). Academic conferences as learning sites: A multinational comparison of doctoral students' perspectives and institutional policy. International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 14, 479-497. https://doi.org/10.28945/4383

Schumacher, K. (2024, November 20). Global connections: A postgraduate researcher's perspective on international conferences. BERA blog. https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/global-connections-a-postgraduate-researchers-perspective-on-international-conferences

Thomson, P. (2024, May 29). Do you read – or talk – your conference paper? Patter. https://patthomson.net/2024/05/29/do-you-read-or-talk-your-conference-paper/

TALKING ABOUT YOUR WORK

PART A: DESIGNING A POSTER

A Before you do the task, sketch out some ideas for your poster

B Look at academic posters from four different disciplines – note down:

- which disciplines they are from and why you think that.

- anything that they do that's the same

- any differences

- how you account for the differences and similarities – think about the purpose of the poster and the audience it's aimed towards (i.e. narrow topic conference vs doctoral school conference) of the poster.

C Now find a poster from your discipline – identify the aspects you like about the poster and things that you don't. Consider:

- Clarity

- Colour scheme

- Layout

- Use of images

- Concision

- Organisation of idea

- Use of terminology and other facets of academic language?

- Other

D Reflect
– what observations will you put into practice when designing your own poster
– what will you need to consider in terms of the target audience?

E Go back to your sketch (see (a) above) and develop in light of what you have observed in the tasks. Use this as a template for your poster.

PART B: REFLECTIONS

Review your targets and notes from the conference.

These questions might help you reflect on the experience, thinking about the conference as a whole, your presentation and your interactions:

- What went well?

- What didn't go so well? Why? Is there anything you might do to prepare differently?

- What questions did you get about your poster/presentation?

- What did you learn?

- Did you enjoy the conference? Did you get any feedback on the project? Any new ideas?

- Which conferences might you go to next year or in the future?

- Who have you been able to connect with, follow up with?

- Did you meet anyone working on a similar study and if so, is there any scope for collaboration?

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