Graduate Supervision System - self-assessment guidance for graduate students

Basis of this guidance note

Whilst it has always been compulsory for supervisors to submit termly reports on their DPhil students' progress, in the previous paper-based system students did not have the opportunity to submit a self-assessment. Early in 2008-09 a 'brainstorming session' was held with students in one department at Oxford, with a view to producing suggestions and/or recommendations as to how to go about making a self-assessment report for the purposes of the University's new online Graduate Supervision System.

It is hoped that the guidance below, which has arisen from the discussions held on that occasion, will help students who are unsure about self-assessment to recognise the potential value to themselves that regularly engaging in such a process can have and to get some ideas about what type of information might form the basis of the self-assessment report.

Self-Assessment Guidance

During the term you will have a number of targets and goals relating to your graduate work. These can be used as the basis for your Student Self-Assessment Report. The self-assessment should include a summary of your progress since the previous termly reporting and your plans for the next 3-6 months. You should also highlight particular difficulties or problems you are having with regard to your progress. The following areas may be used as guidance with regard to appropriate content:

Work in progress

At the moment, the over-arching topic/theme of my thesis/research is:
- under development
- very general at this stage
- difficult for me to understand
- clear, but quite broad
- clear and focused
- changing as my research progresses

So far, my review of the literature is:
- in progress
- small but focused
- broad and unfocused
- thorough but unwritten
- completely written

Activities/experimental work planned this term are:
- N/A
- in preparation
- awaiting approval
- awaiting equipment
- delayed
- underway as planned

Activities/experiments conducted this term were:
- N/A
- well planned, but poorly executed
- poorly planned, but well executed
- thorough, but with inconclusive results
- results pending
- publishable

Time Management

This term I spent some of my time on:

- Teaching
- Assisting others with their projects
- Participating in other people's projects
- Administrative tasks within my research group
- Administrative/pastoral care tasks for my college
- Personal training (e.g., IT, new techniques)
- Developing an ethics protocol
- Writing articles

The amount of time I spent on these activities...

- was not enough
- was appropriate for my general development as a researcher
- didn't interfere with my ability to do my own work
- made it difficult to do my own work
- was not part of my general timeline
- N/A (I only worked on my project, and am happy with that)

Training

Training for experimental work (e.g., programming, research methods)

- I will need training to conduct the experiments I have planned
- I have a plan for when I will undertake training for my project
- I am currently undertaking training for my project
- I have all of the skills I need at this stage

Training (general)

- I have no plan for general training
- I am too busy for any training which isn't directly related to my project
- I try to fit in general training when I can
- My supervisor and I discuss training opportunities as they arise
- My timeline specifically includes allowances for general training
- I am satisfied with the amount of training I get informally

Progress

Compared to the stage I feel like I should be at, my progress is:

- a little slow
- delayed by administrative complications (e.g., ethics approval)
- delayed by equipment complications
- delayed by other unexpected complications
- roughly following my original time-line
- exactly following my original time-line
- my time-line has been adjusted, and I am on-track

My timeline for completion is:

- under development
- very general (I know roughly how many projects I will undertake)
- very detailed (I have a clear timeline for each project)
- generous (I will have plenty of time to accommodate unexpected changes)
- ambitious (it will be hard to complete in the time available)