

## The DPhil process and the supervision relationship

### – clarifying tasks and roles

#### 1) What are the components of the DPhil?

Over the period of the DPhil, at what point(s) do students encounter the phases or requirements below? (Some may be relevant only to some disciplines, and others may be specific to faculties or departments.) Are there other issues that should be added to the list?

- i) selection and clarification of the research topic
- ii) pilot project
- iii) literature review
- iv) data collection
- v) data recording
- vi) data analysis
- vii) writing up
- viii) submission of transfer paper or report
- ix) preparation of thesis outline
- x) viva on transfer paper
- xi) termination of financial support from research board
- xii) time limit for submission expires
- xiii) research method seminars
- xiv) graduate skills development support (e.g. report or thesis writing workshops)
- xv) departmental induction
- xvi) (compulsory?) departmental seminars
- xvii) (compulsory?) presentation of research report
- xviii) (compulsory?) poster presentation
- xix) transferable skills training
- xx) introduction to / integration in disciplinary community

#### 2) What sorts of personal issues emerge for students during the DPhil?

- i) Why do graduate students undertake a DPhil? Do any of the different reasons pose particular issues for graduates and their supervisors?
- ii) What is it like to be a graduate student in Oxford?
- iii) Following their arrival in Oxford what personal issues face new graduates (i.e. those who have not studied here as undergraduates)?
- iv) Does graduates' motivation for their research have a tendency to diminish towards the end of their second year (the so-called 'plateau phase')?
- v) What sorts of personal issues face graduates who are completing their research and are at the end of their 'career' as a student?

### 3) How does the focus of supervision change over time?

Taking into consideration the academic tasks and personal issues that have been identified, what objectives, issues and supervisory responsibilities might underlie supervisions at different stages?

E.g. Year 1, Michaelmas term:

- i) establishing the relationship
- ii) determining supervision roles and boundaries
- iii) teaching how to approach a literature review.

Brockbank and McGill argue that there are seven supervisory tasks. Do some of these take precedence over others at different stages of doctoral research?

1. teaching (e.g. research methods)
2. evaluating student work and providing feedback
3. monitoring the development of research and research capability (i.e. monitoring progress in relation to the research objectives, and alongside this monitoring and promoting the development of the students' research capabilities)
4. fostering a structured approach to supervision and to research (i.e. agreeing and enforcing arrangements for regular meetings as well as promoting an organised approach to the research project)
5. consulting (i.e. helping the student to find the right balance between focussing on the research and pursuing other worthwhile objectives. This might mean, for example, helping the student to arrange some part-time teaching whilst advising that they limit the number of hours they undertake.)
6. relating (i.e. establishing a relationship of mutual trust and respect)
7. using counselling skills (i.e. not counselling the student but acknowledging the existence of personal problems and encouraging use of other agencies where appropriate)