



SFHEA Case Study Exemplar

<p>8.2 Written Case Study Title:</p>	<p>Doctoral Student Supervision, PhD and DProf (V1, V2)</p>
<p>Since 1995 I have a sustained effective track record of supervision of PhD students at SHU. I have 15 PhD completions and 3 professional doctorate (DProf) completions (A2, V2). I am currently supervising one International PhD student and 5 part time Professional Doctorate students based in NHS laboratories (V1, V2, V4). In 2015, I was one of only two PhD supervisors in xxxx to be nominated for an inspirational supervisor award. Reflecting back on 20 years of PhD supervisory experience I have learnt a lot in terms of my own practice and how to adapt my teaching/supervision style to get the best out of students (K2, K3). However each one is an individual with specific strengths and weaknesses that I have had to manage to ensure they achieve their PhD degree, but I am also aware that my role is to prepare them for a career beyond the qualification (V1). I have had only one PhD student who failed to complete his studies and write up his thesis. The individual concerned was a very bright mature student who had gained a 1st class degree at SHU with seemingly little effort. However, he seemed to think that this approach of limited amount of work would see him through a PhD degree, which was not the case. He had many personal problems which I tried hard to support him through. Through this I learnt that not only directing and supporting their research work, my role also encompassed personal support to students¹⁹ (V1, V3).</p> <p>Of the students I supervised that completed, many have gone into permanent jobs in HE, one is now a senior lecturer in the Department of xxxx at SHU, one is a lecturer at Sheffield University. Three of the students I supervised were xxxx based at the Hallamshire Hospital, and two of these have gone on to become consultant xxxxs. Thus the skills, qualification and publications they achieved under my supervision were essential to their future employability (V4). In my early years as a DoS, I was very demanding and on one occasion I reduced a student to tears as they had worked very hard to achieve some results that I then went on to criticise. I now realise that I need to be less direct with my criticism and be positive as well as making suggestions for change, which has led to better responses from students (A2 K2). This transition from my early practice as a functional PhD supervisor to one of emancipation, supporting students in their personal growth and ability to cope in the future has led to long lasting working partnerships with my students²¹.</p> <p>All of my students were able to attend national and international conferences to present their research on xxxx to the wider research community. These conferences are essential for updating my own subject knowledge and networking (K1) but also for PhD students, particularly when nearing completion of their degrees, so that they can network with</p>	

academics from other research groups and hopefully go onto do postdoctoral research in other laboratories. It is vital for PhD students and their supervisors to publish their research in peer reviewed journals and I see it an essential part of their training that they achieve a publication (K6). I was an early adopter of the University's on line publication archive (SHURA), which is now being used directly to assess research outputs at SHU for the next REF (K4). I now disseminate this good practice with academic staff in xxxx and run training sessions for PhD students on writing for publication (A4). I give sessions to final year students on PhD degree choices as well as meeting with students on a 1:1 basis to offer guidance. I have organised two career events for PhD students and postdoctoral researchers to look at the career options inside and outside HE, inviting in successful alumni to share their experiences.

Many of my PhD students were able to undertake some teaching duties, predominantly demonstrating on undergraduate laboratory classes, as well as supervising final year project students in my research group. This link between research and teaching has been highly influential in supporting some of the best final year students to go on to do PhD degrees at SHU and other universities. One of this year's undergraduate project students I supervised, has been awarded a highly competitive PhD scholarship at The University of Sheffield on xxxx research. I believe the research environment that undergraduate students under my supervision experience working as part of a research group in xxxx (K2, A4), prepares them well for a PhD degree, which is evidenced in their success, over many years, in going on to complete PhD degrees. Thus my role as an active researcher and academic at SHU has positively impacted upon students' career choices and progression in HE.

Through my research networks I have been invited to examine PhD students at over 10 UK universities. My experiences of external examining have influenced my own practice as well as the practice of others in my research centre¹⁹. I have learnt from the very first tentative viva over 15 years ago at xxxx where I had many pages of typed up notes of questions, which I doggedly went through, to the latest one in xxxx, where I gradually led the student through the thesis and encouraged them to expand on key areas. I received good feedback from the internal examiner who was impressed with my conduct of the viva examination (K5). These vivas have not always been easy, two students having to have 12 months to do major corrections, but finally getting through. This has been very informative in allowing me to benchmark standards of UK research degrees in my own research centre, against that at other HEIs, ensuring we meet the required nationally recognised standards (K6). I also introduced a process of mock vivas for all our PhD students in xxxx based on my experience as an external examiner, a few weeks prior to their viva. (A2, A3, A4, K5). This gives students greater confidence to talk about their research in the viva (A2, K2).

I recognise the important role that PhD students play in the research environment. In support of this I introduced a weekly seminar scheme, the xxxx xxxx soon after starting at SHU, which continues to be a central part of our week, with PhD students, staff and external speakers giving talks to staff and students in the research centre (A1, V1, V2). This provides a supportive environment in which students can begin to increase their expertise and confidence in presentations, with staff providing valuable feedback, not only on presentation style but on experimental work. I also introduced a Blackboard site for staff and students in the research centre, which supports many aspects of our activities (K4).

Summary

I believe that I have provided strong support and supervision of my PhD students over the years and have promoted a strong PhD student community, growing from a handful of

students in the 1990s to over 40 PhD students currently enrolled. I use my experience to support the postgraduate research tutor and share my expertise with staff through the annual PhD supervisor training sessions, where I also gain from other staff's knowledge and experiences²⁰ (A2, A5). Having such close interaction with a stimulating group of postgraduate research students also I believe makes me feel younger!

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