

# “Getting on with strangers”: collaborations, expectations, and doctoral relations

Symposium



UK Council for  
Graduate Education

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6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Developments in  
Doctoral Education & Training, Apex Hotel, Bath, UK.  
21<sup>st</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024

## **Abstract:**

### ***“Getting on with strangers”*: collaborations, expectations, and doctoral relations**

For successful learning ‘on passage’ through the landscape of doctoral education, honing a skill for ‘getting on with strangers’ seems to be a requirement for positive and productive outcomes at Level 8 (strangely). This skill is expected of both the candidate and supervisors who are often new to each other at the start of their 3 or 6 year learning relationship. Given the relatively high stakes of committing to a doctorate, either to supervise or undertake one, we feel that this aspect of the learning experience, for both parties, could be better prepared for, by both parties. Our research is looking into issues around establishing collaborations in research supervision, managing expectations, and fostering good learning relationships, especially in the formative stages of a doctoral programme. But also, at any point when ‘strangers’ are encountered or, more for the candidate, when ‘strangeness’ occurs in the shape of new events, language or judgements being made about them.

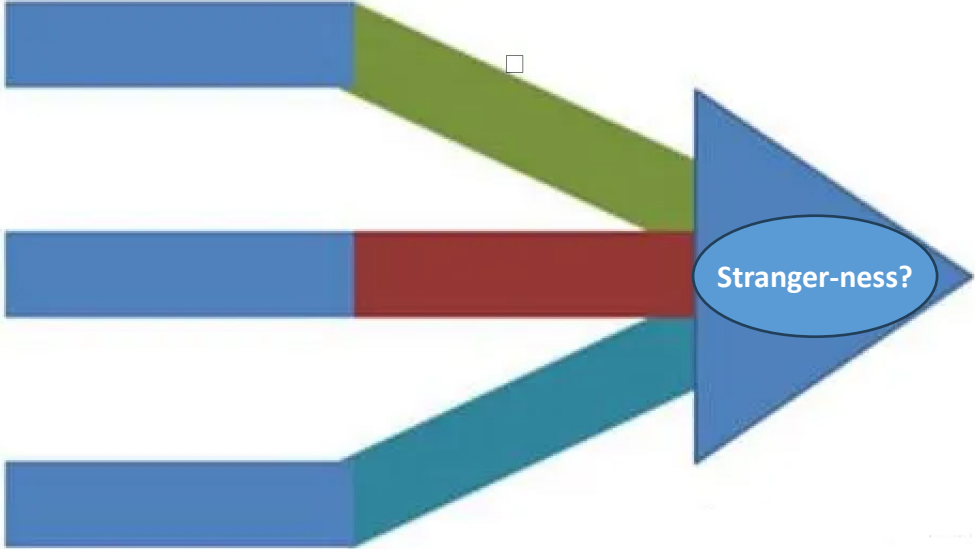
From our collaborative activities as doctoral education leads across our two institutions, three rich veins of research intersect, informing our symposium:

- (1) coaching colleagues to write for UKCGE Professional Recognition,
- (2) data from live Expectations Research, and
- (3) establishing a new practice-based doctoral pathway called PhD by Portfolio.

PhD by Portfolio is attracting highly accomplished career professionals, where the raw importance of good collaborative supervision and well-managed expectations, are leading to positive learning relationships. Data from our current Expectations Research, generated from the timeless questions in Brown and Atkins’ (1988) Role Perception Scale, will be revealed to shed some contemporary light on how responsibilities in supervision management are being shared between candidate and supervisor. The importance of the conversations prompted by the questionnaire are benefitting supervision on the ground, and improving the quality of reflection on supervisory practice for UKCGE Professional Recognition.

Timing (60 mins)	Content
5 mins	<p><b>Introductions:</b></p> <p>Context and Overview - intersectionality of the research areas presented (these are not 3 areas in isolation)</p>
12/13 mins	<p><b>(1) Coaching colleagues to write for UKCGE Professional Recognition</b></p> <p>(Conference theme [4]: Communities of practice in doctoral supervision)</p>
12/13 mins	<p><b>(2) Data from live/ongoing Expectations Research</b></p> <p>(Conference theme [1]: Measuring the success of doctoral provision)</p>
12/13 mins	<p><b>(3) Establishing a new practice-based doctoral pathway called PhD by Portfolio</b></p> <p>(Conference theme [2]: Innovations in doctoral programme design)</p>
15/16 mins	Q and A Open discussion to the floor

**'New' can feel strange at first – but if we really do want change, we have to embrace 'strange'**



- Q: Prompts**
- How do we measure the success of our doctoral provision?
  - How does collaboration work in contemporary supervision?
  - How has the 'doctoral experience' changed in light of increasing demands for skills development and training?
  - What is the future of doctoral assessment?
  - What's next for the doctorate?
  - How should we supervise talented and accomplished people?

1. Stranger-ness in Professional Recognition for Research Supervision

2. Stranger-ness in learning relationships – managing expectations

3. Strangeness of the new – working with experts on a new PhD pathway called PhD by Portfolio – who is the stranger?



**Q: So, what's new here?**

*Ans: PhD by Portfolio...*



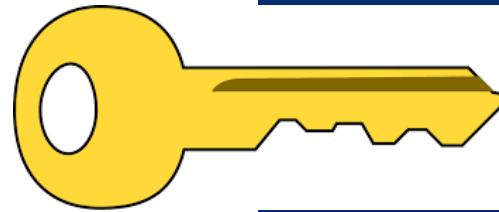
*Engaging 1 and 2  
is yielding material benefits  
in 3*



# (1)

## Coaching colleagues to write for UKCGE Professional Recognition

(Conference theme [4]: Communities of practice in doctoral supervision)



## GOOD SUPERVISORY PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

Dr Stan Taylor  
June 2019

UK Council for  
Graduate Education



## ➤ HOW TO APPLY:

<https://supervision.ukcge.ac.uk/your-application/how-to-apply>

UK Council for Graduate Education | Research Supervision Recognition programme

Good Supervisory Practice Framework | Your application | Resources

### How to apply

**Reflect** | **Apply** | **Review**

#### 1. Decide which award to apply for

We offer two levels of recognition, depending on your level of experience:

- **Recognised Supervisor (full award)** — for those who have seen doctoral candidates through final examination and completion
- **Recognised Associate Supervisor** — for those who have not seen doctoral candidates through final examination and completion and/or are involved in research supervision informally.

➤ Find out more about which level is right for you

#### 2. Complete your structured self-reflection form

To apply for recognition, you must submit a reflective account of your supervisory practice against the **Good Supervisory Practice Framework**, using the appropriate UKCGE template for your level of award.

This should have an overall length of **approximately 5,000 words (Full) or 2,500 (Associate)**.

- Recognised Supervisor Reflective Account Form  
WORD | 56,398
- Recognised Associate Supervisor Reflective Account Form  
WORD | 56,408
- Find out more about structured self-reflection

#### 3. Gather your references and supporting documentation

To authenticate your reflective account, you are required to provide supporting documentation.

For the full award you will need:

- A reference from a former doctoral candidate
- A reference from a colleague who knows about your supervisory practice (for example, co-supervisor)

For the Associate award you will need:

- A reference from a colleague who knows about your supervisory practice (for example, a co-supervisor).
- A **Supervision Observation** report

- Personal Reference Form  
WORD | 51,368
- Supervision Observation Form (Associate award only)  
WORD | 51,938
- See further guidance for referees

#### 4. Submit your application

If you are submitting an individual application, please use our [online application portal](#).

There is a one-off application fee charged on a per-application basis. We request payment of this fee during the online submission and is payable by card.

- £100 for full recognition
- £50 for Associate recognition

If you are an institutional representative who is coordinating multiple applications in bulk, [please contact us directly](#)

#### 5. Await review outcomes

Your application will be peer-reviewed by a two-person review panel familiar with both research supervision and the Good Supervisory Practice Framework.

To undertake the review, each panelist independently evaluates your application against the same guidance given to applicants. For each of the ten criteria, they consider whether your application provides appropriate evidence of each criterion in your supervisory practice.

[Reviewers can email up to 5 queries from the close of the application window.](#)

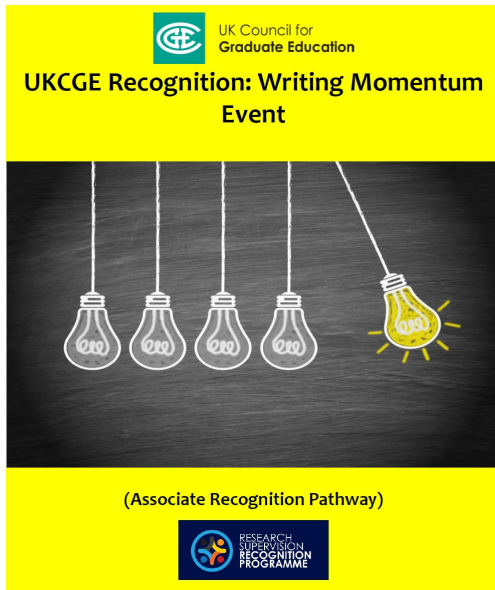
Reviewers have three potential outcomes:

- **Criteria Met** — If both reviewers decide your application does provide appropriate evidence, an outcome of Criteria Met is given. In this instance, you will become a UKCGE designated Research Supervisor / Associate Supervisor.
- **Referenced** — If only one of the reviewers decides your application provides appropriate evidence, it will be sent to an Assessor to make a final decision on the application.
- **Not Met** — If both reviewers decide that your application does not provide appropriate evidence, an outcome of Not Met is given. In this instance, the application will be returned to you with feedback on the areas of improvement required to provide appropriate evidence. If you would like to address the feedback and re-submit, you can do so at no extra charge within 12 months of the initial application.

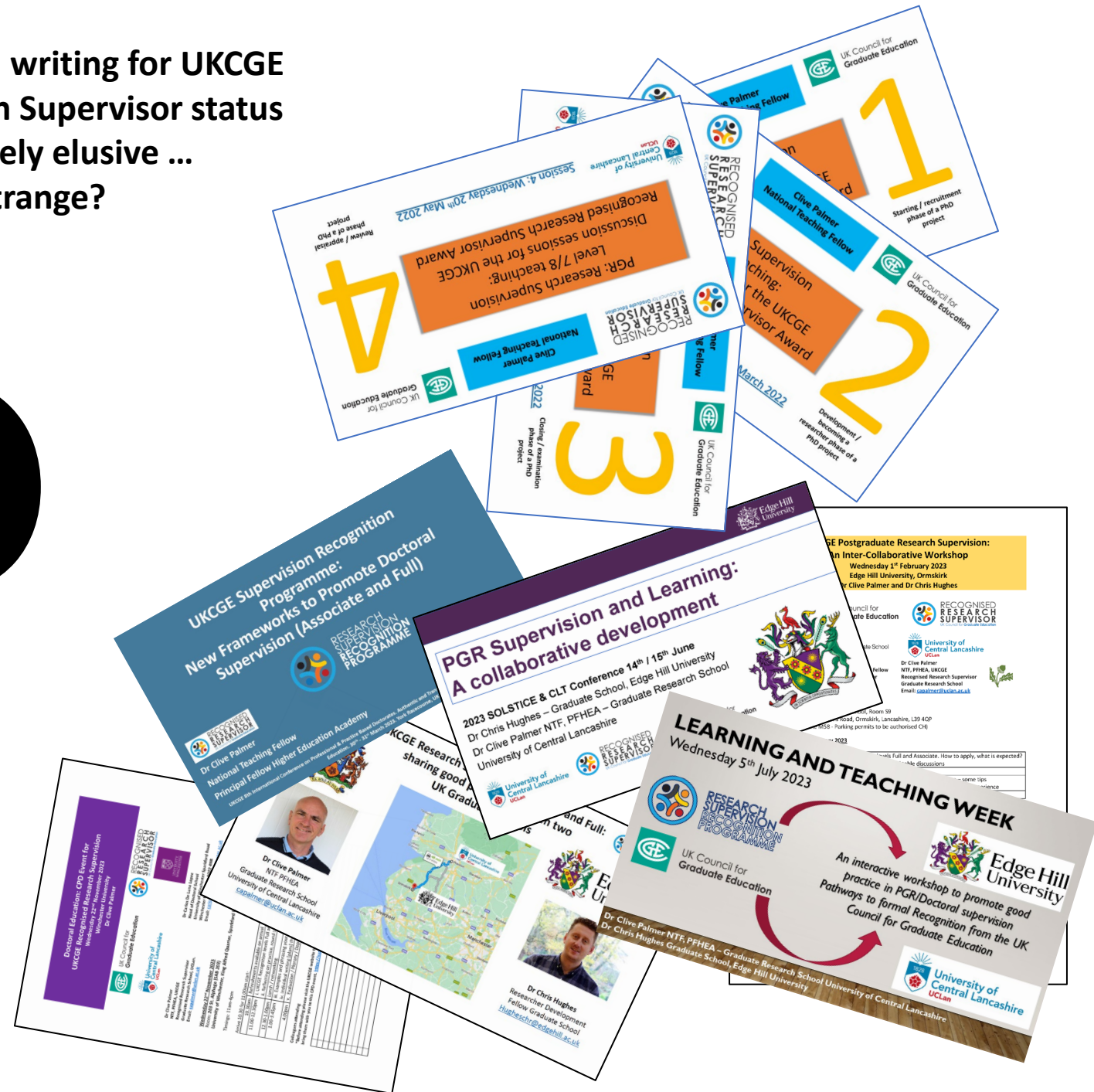
All applications, regardless of the outcome, will receive comprehensive constructive feedback from the reviewers. Where appropriate, this will include recommendations for development opportunities.



After so much effort, writing for UKCGE  
Recognised Research Supervisor status  
remains strangely elusive ...  
why so strange?



'Sometimes I feel like an Alien in my own world'.



# 1<sub>-2-3</sub>

What is the contribution of UKCGE Professional Recognition to our whole enterprise?

- 1) We have realised some of the difficulties that people encounter when reflecting.**
- 2) We need reflective supervisors to do something different, bring about change, and embrace the strange.**

(2)

Data from live/ongoing  
Expectations Research

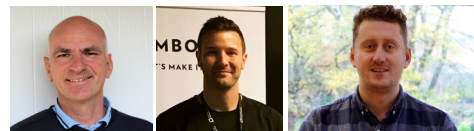
(Conference theme [1]: Measuring  
the success of doctoral provision)

# 'You Expect Me To Do What'



11 'simple' questions to  
students and supervisors  
about supervision.  
10-12 mins response time

Clive, Andy and Chris



*Investigating the expectations of students and research supervisors  
concerning their roles and duties in the learning process.*

**May 2023 – May 2024**

Student-Supervisor Expectations  
Questionnaire



<https://forms.office.com/e/Rt9trvHyDU>

Data

**Topic: Research Design**

1 *Selecting a topic:*



2 *Which theories?*



3 *Whose plan or ideas to follow?*



**Contact / Involvement**

4 *Personal relationships important?*



5 *Who should initiate meetings?*



6 *Control versus freedom on time?*



7. *Terminate or support to the end?*



**11 questions across 3 areas:  
Topic – Contact - Thesis**  
50/50 split responses –students and supervisors  
May '23 to May '24.  
150+ responses at 2/3 data 'grabs'.



Data

**Thesis / Examination**

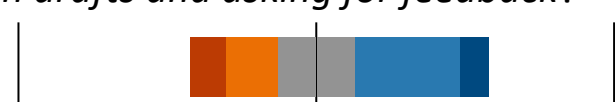
8 *Meet deadlines, or finish whenever suits?*



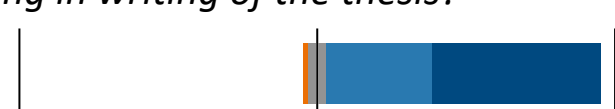
9 *Responsibility – for standard of work?*



10 *Eyes on drafts and asking for feedback?*



11 *Assisting in writing of the thesis?*



**Legend**

- It is entirely the supervisor's responsibility to
- It is mostly the supervisor's responsibility to
- It is a shared responsibility to
- It is mostly the student's responsibility to
- It is entirely the student's responsibility to

# Emerging Typologies:

## Of the candidate...

1. **Expectant voice** – *“Tell me what to write and I’ll write it”*
2. **Passive voice** – *“Ok, if you think that’s best for me”*
3. **Imagination voice** – *“I Didn’t know what to expect, so I made it up” “No-one told me I had to write a thesis and have a viva!”*

## Of the Research Supervisor...

1. **Worthiness voice** – *“Give me something worth looking at” (and then we’ll meet)*
2. **Eager-to-impress voice** – *“I’ll read anything, anytime, give you loads of feedback”.*
3. **Safe pair of hands voice** – *“Don’t worry, I’ll sort it”*  
– Gets a project ‘over the line’, experienced.
4. **Contractual voice** – *“If you do your bit (first) I’ll do mine”*  
– A gamble of who’ll make the effort first.

## Motives and Currency of this Research

- **Post covid** – increased expectations from students
- **Fee culture** – value for money?
- **Appeals culture** – increased accountability in supervision
- **Industrial alignment of the Doctorate** – career progression dependent upon qualification



Managing  
Expectations....



balancing act?

# Data reveals a disconnect – has supervision in research lost sight of the person?

## 1. The 'P' in a PhD = Professional Person + Project -

Q: Has the person (and to some degree their learning needs) slipped into the shadow of the 'Research Problem' ... the person becoming invisible ... and/or is research supervision itself becoming invisible?

## 2. Appreciating the Power Imbalance -

- The Learner thinks it's (i.e. all aspects of project development) their responsibility
- The Supervisors think it's (i.e. all aspects of project development) the students' responsibility

## 3. Consistency versus Standardisation -

*Consistent* good supervision does not necessarily mean *Standardised* supervision

e.g. the standard edict to meet every 6 weeks, may not be an indicator, or lead to consistently 'good supervision'.

### Our current thinking is that:

- Candidates come to us (for our doctoral 'powers') to learn through research - **They have to put their trust in a stranger.**
- Recognise when a learning relationship is working, and when it's not – **Recognise where strangers persist.**
- The power imbalance between 'learner and teacher' means the onus is upon the supervisor to act 'proactively' to set up positive learning relationships e.g. anticipating key milestones, for learning through research – **Something made harder when it comes to strangers. Estranging oneself?**



# 1-2-3

What is the contribution of our Student-Supervisor Expectations research to our whole enterprise?

- 1) The research is showing a different perspective of learner relationships.**
- 2) It is highlighting the differences between the 'passive' and 'proactive' learner, and how we recognise those pedagogically – anticipate their needs and act accordingly.**
- 3) Astute people might still be vulnerable learners (not too dissimilar to the supervisors we work with!) and this must be recognised where and when it comes to a new way of doing a PhD, one that is strange...**

(3)

Establishing a new  
practice-based doctoral  
pathway called PhD by  
Portfolio

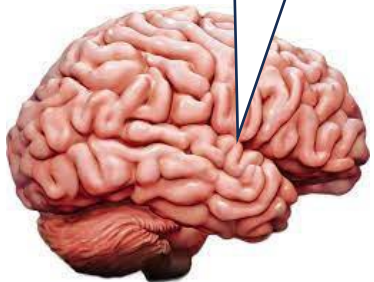
(Conference theme [2]:  
Innovations in doctoral  
programme design)



*How to teach*



*"I was talking to  
this brain  
surgeon the  
other day"*



# Who is it attracting?



**Meet some PhD by Portfolio candidates:**

*Suzanne, Pete, Cath, Damien, Laura, Leon, David, Glenn, Justine, Lee, Lou, Mark Stuart, Vynne...*

***Seasoned career-professionals / national-international operators / experts in their fields***

*(But all share the vulnerability of new learners)*

**Featuring:** *Sociologists, architects, clinicians, surgeons, nurse consultants, Advance Nurse Practitioners, Allied Health Professionals, orthotist, professional animator, CEOs, practicing counsellors, playwrights, artists, journalists, executive coaches, a police commissioner, a food standards official, creative writers – staff CPD from uclan and attracting colleagues from across the sector.*

University of  
South Wales  
Prifysgol  
De Cymru



**Dr Beth Pickard  
(NTF)  
UCLan Visiting  
Fellow**

# What is it?

Programme design

PhD by Portfolio - how it works

## Title of the Thesis

PhD Thesis:  
80k equivalent in total  
15k word Synopsis

Project 1

Approx 20k  
(Distinct body of work  
(Retrospective))

Project 2

Approx 20k  
Distinct body of work  
(Retrospective)

Project 3

Approx 20k  
Distinct body of work  
(Prospective – 'live')

Linked and distinct – synthesis towards the title

Registration period  
Registration period is up to 60 months

Strong applications identify clearly what (and how) retrospective evidence (projects 1 & 2), will support the live project 3.

### Milestones: PhD by Portfolio

1. Application: Initial Proposal
2. Supervision capability/capacity
3. RPA: Research Project Approval
4. Ethics Application (1/3 projects to be 'live' to trigger ethics application)
5. Supervised Portfolio design, synopsis writing. \*There is no transfer stage from MPhil.
6. Examination.

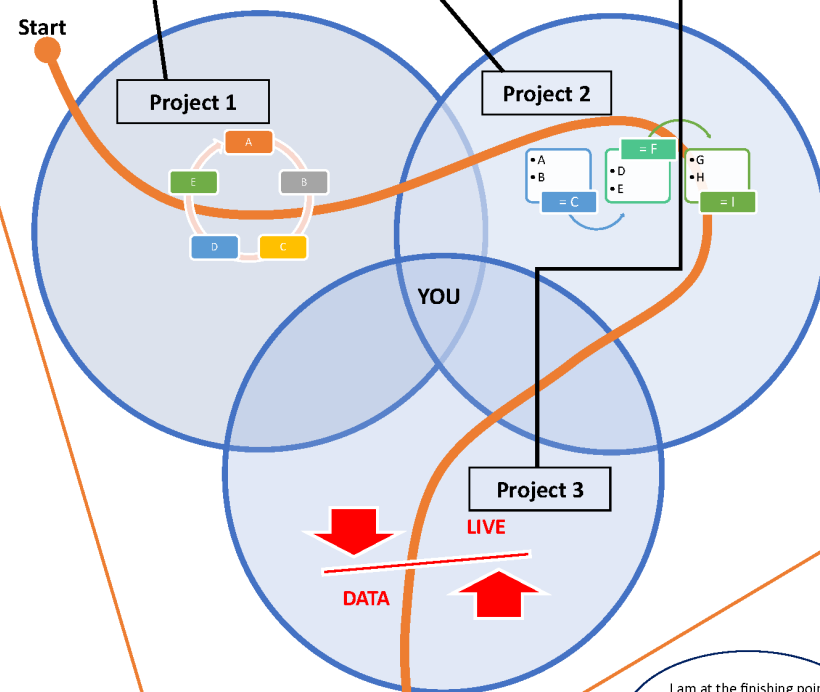
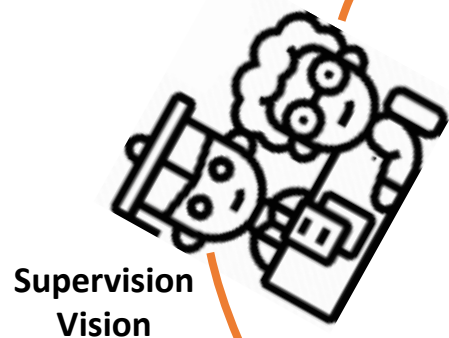
# A different way of looking at the PhD

## PhD by Portfolio: A Non-Linear Thesis

*Linked and Distinct*

*It's PhD but different... strangely*

Sharing Ideas	Expression of Interest
Ordering initial Content	Application
Thesis Construction / Thesis Writing	Proposal
	Write / reflect / edit and manage content
	Ethics (live)
	Examination




I am at the finishing point of my research – but is this where the Conclusion should be? Otherwise, where and how does this whole doctoral thing end???

Student Perspective

Finish

# 1-2-3

What is the contribution of our new doctoral pathway, PhD by Portfolio, to our whole enterprise?



*"You've thrown me a lifeline in education, I thought PhD had passed me by".*

- Industry ready
- Industry relevant
- Industry appeal
- Industrial impact (immediate)
- Economically good sense – faster, cheaper, part time
- Values current expertise and past experience
- PhD learner experience put to work while study is in progress – research applied in context
- Candidate ownership of their research dialled up
- Attracting professionals back into Higher Education
- Enables professionals to conduct cutting edge research
- Unique professional learning community – *my USP*
- Sharing academic wealth
- Coaching candidates, supervisors and examiners - all together in one room
- Transdisciplinary supervision
- Transdisciplinary examination



**If we can help, please don't hesitate to contact us:**

**Clive:**

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**Chris:**

**[Hugheschr@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:Hugheschr@edgehill.ac.uk)**

**Andy:**

**[ASprake@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:ASprake@uclan.ac.uk)**

# Selective Bibliography

This bibliography contains a series of resources created by Clive Palmer, Chris Hughes and Andrew Sprake containing ‘tried and tested’ ideas, to promote good supervisory relationships and good practice in PGR supervision, between both candidates and supervisors in collaboration.

Chris Hughes, Clive Palmer, Andrew Sprake

QPR Adelaide, Australia, 1-19<sup>th</sup> April 2024 (Quality in Postgraduate Research)

**i. Supervision – Some Conceptual Remarks (Chris Hughes)**

**ii. Undergraduates have a habit of becoming postgraduates – Managing Expectations**

**iii. Postgraduates have a habit of becoming academics – One key to a Healthier University**

Clive Palmer and Chris Hughes (2024) **‘A Tale of Two Institutions’ and the UKCGE Recognition Scheme - case study** (chapter 5). In, Clegg, K., Houston, G. and Gower, O. (Eds.) *Doctoral Supervision and Research Culture: what we know, what works and why*. Taylor & Francis, UK. ISBN: 9781032163376 [in press]

Chris Hughes and Clive Palmer (2024) **Modelling Doctoral Supervision** (Chapter). In, Fiona Hallett, F. *Reflective Practice in Doctoral Education* (Edge Hill University). [abstract accepted]

Clive Palmer and Andrew Sprake (2023) **Investigating the expectations of students and research supervisors concerning their roles and duties in the learning process**. University of Central Lancashire, UK.

Clive Palmer, Andrew Sprake and Chris Hughes (2023) **Managing the expectations of doctoral students and their supervisors: UK perspective**. *Encyclopedia*, 3, 1474-1488. Clive Palmer (2023/4)

**Preparing your student for viva: Research Supervisor [online] Workshop**. UCLan Graduate Research School CPD Series. University of Central Lancashire, 2023/4 cycle

Clive Palmer (2023) **Managing expectations with your supervisory team**. PGR Induction: An Essential Introductory Workshop. UCLan: Graduate Research School. 2023/24 cycle

Clive Palmer (2023) **Doctoral Education: CPD Event for UKCGE Recognised Research Supervision**. Doctoral School, Winchester University. 22nd November.

Clive Palmer and Chris Hughes (2023) **An interactive workshop to promote good practice in PGR/Doctoral supervision**. Pathways to formal Recognition from the UK Council for Graduate Education. Learning and Teaching Week, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK. 6th July.

Chris Hughes and Clive Palmer (2023) **PGR Supervision and Learning: A Collaborative Development**. SOLSTICE and Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) Conference. Edge Hill University, Ormskirk, UK. 14/15th June.

Clive Palmer (2023) **UKCGE Recognition: Writing Momentum Event**. Graduate Research School, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, UK. 6th June.

Clive Palmer (2023) **UKCGE Supervision Recognition Programme: New Frameworks to Promote Doctoral Supervision (Associate and Full)**. UKCGE 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Professional & Practice Based Doctorates. York, 30-31<sup>st</sup> March.

Clive Palmer (2023) **PhD by Portfolio: creating a new doctoral pathway for researching professionals**. UKCGE 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Professional & Practice Based Doctorates. York Racecourse, 30th-31st March.

Clive Palmer (2023) **From Application to Proposal to Thesis: laying the foundations for learning through PhD by Portfolio**. Post Graduate Research School Symposium, UCLan, Preston, UK. 1st March.

Clive Palmer and Chris Hughes (2023) **UKCGE Postgraduate Research Supervision: An Inter-Collaborative Workshop**. Graduate Research School, Edge Hill University, Ormskirk. 1<sup>st</sup> February

Clive Palmer (2021/2) **Starting / recruitment phase of a PhD project**. PGR Workshop 1: coaching staff towards the UKCGE Recognised Research Supervisor Award. Graduate Research School, UCLan.

Clive Palmer (2021/2) **Development / becoming a researcher phase of a PhD project**. PGR Workshop 2: coaching staff towards the UKCGE Recognised Research Supervisor Award. Graduate Research School, UCLan.

Clive Palmer (2021/2) **Closing / examination phase of a PhD project**. PGR Workshop 3: coaching staff towards the UKCGE Recognised Research Supervisor Award. Graduate Research School, UCLan.

Clive Palmer (2021/2) **Review / appraisal phase of a PhD project**. PGR Workshop 4: coaching staff towards the UKCGE Recognised Research Supervisor Award. Graduate Research School, UCLan.

Clive Palmer and Emma Gillaspay (2021) **Navigating the bumpy digital road: Different journeys of doctoral supervisors to the same destination**. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 58, 6, 672-681.

Clive Palmer (2021) **Fostering freedom in PhD students: how supervisors can shape accessible paths for doctoral research**. *THE Campus*. Times Higher Education, posted: 16<sup>th</sup> November [online].

Clive Palmer (2011) **Supervision: 20:20 clarity or blurred view of care?** *Journal of Qualitative Research in Sports Studies*, 5, 1, 159-170. ISSN: 1754-2375