

## **Judy Jones' final year**

I am now nearing the completion of my first two years as a postgraduate student. It has been both a rewarding and a frustrating experience, and in the following comments I attempt to summarise my current situation.

### **Background**

Originally I was awarded a CASE studentship which meant that I had an outside body to whom I was responsible as well as academic supervisors. In the event this turned out to be both a good and a bad experience. Firstly it meant that I very quickly began to do fieldwork. As this is, I believe, what I am best at, it proved rewarding and stimulating, but unfortunately my co-operating body appeared to have been hoping for an academic 'rubber stamp' rather than a critical analysis, so after only a year we parted company, and I have been working independently since. I have three supervisors, all of whom shed different perspectives on my work. Sometimes this can be a great advantage, at other times it just seems confusing!

### **Current state**

I am now at the stage where I feel I have an enormous amount of data, both in fieldwork and literature reviews, and I also have the beginnings of a theoretical framework upon which to base the thesis. I have written everything up as I have gone along, and am now at the stage of trying to construct the thesis. Before the Easter of my second year I felt that I should systemically print off everything that I had written during the previous 18 months. This turned out to be nearly 400 pages, which I attempted to put into some coherent order - perhaps even a first draft. One of my supervisors has read this in its entirety, the other two in sections as I have written them. Feedback has been encouraging, but there is still a lot to do.

### **Immediate problems**

Firstly, I feel that I am near to suffering intellectual burnout! Having worked reasonably consistently for the past two years (with the odd period in the doldrums), I now seem to be lacking any clear direction. I already have a thesis length body of work, but it is still not a thesis (it has still not officially been upgraded to Ph.D status). I am trying to incorporate the comments from my supervisors into my re-drafts of each chapter, but as I attempt to do this it sometimes feels that I am just creating a muddle out of what I once felt I understood - will I ever be able to include everything they all suggest? And will it make any sense if I do?

Writing up as I went along has at least meant that I have a substantial piece of work and something to show for two years effort, but it also means that it is difficult to be flexible in the way in which I present it - re-writing is much more difficult than writing! At the moment I find it hard to believe that it will be a Ph.D. However, I am part of a very supportive group of fellow postgrads, and as everyone appears to be feeling the same to a greater or lesser extent, I suppose it just goes with the territory.

I have just over a year left, and in some ways feel that it should be plenty of time to construct a watertight thesis, at other times I feel as though the chances of achieving that would be low even if I spent the rest of my life working on it. I don't feel as though I am making any headway at the moment. I know that I have to reduce the length of my work while increasing the quality, no one can really help much with that process. I find it difficult to define what I would find most encouraging and helpful. While I have no specific problem, the whole thing appears to be enormously problematic, my faith in 'it' and in myself seems to be at an all time low.

**Discuss how would you respond to Judy?**

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**On the acetate provided, list the main guidelines you would have for**

- 1. Postgraduate research students**
- 2. Supervisors**
- 3 Departments**

**to address this kind of problem**

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