

The PhD as a learning process

Dr. Estelle Phillips

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'Originality' made manageable

On your own and without any discussion with anybody else, write a paragraph, or short list, to clarify

- What originality means to you in the context of a PhD
- How students can be original in their research work
- How to recognise originality
- How supervisors could encourage students to be original

5 mins

When you have completed that, in your groups

- Compare, contrast, discuss what you have written

15 mins

Finally

- re-join into the larger group for a plenary

15 mins

Originality

STUDENTS

- 1) Being cross-disciplinary and using different methodologies.
- 2) Taking someone else's ideas and re-interpreting them in a way no one else has.
- 3) Looking at areas that people in my discipline haven't looked at before.
- 4) Adding to knowledge in a way that hasn't been done before.
- 5) Looking at existing knowledge and testing it out.
- 6) Playing with words. Putting together things that others haven't bothered to do

SUPERVISORS

- 1) Saying something nobody has said before.
- 2) Carrying out empirical work that hasn't been done before.
- 3) Making a synthesis that hasn't been made before.
- 4) Using already known material but with a new interpretation.
- 5) Trying out something in this country that has previously only been done in other countries.
- 6) Taking a particular technique and applying it in a new area.
- 7) Bringing new evidence to bear on an old issue.

FRANCIS

- 1) Setting down a major piece of new information in writing for the first time
- 2) Continuing a previously original piece of work
- 3) Carrying out original work designed by the supervisor
- 4) Providing a single original technique, observation, or result in an otherwise unoriginal but competent piece of research
- 5) Having many original ideas, method and interpretations all performed by others under the direction of the postgraduate
- 6) Showing originality in testing somebody else's idea

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Originality

SMALL STEP
VS.
SEVEN LEAGUE STRIDE

AN ANSWER TO A NEW QUESTION
OR
A NEW ANSWER TO AN OLD QUESTION

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HOW NOT TO GET A Ph.D.

(the seven deadly sins)

- Not to want a Ph.D.
- Not to understand the nature of a Ph.D. by overestimating
- Not to understand the nature of a Ph.D. by underestimating
- Not to have a Supervisor who knows what a Ph.D requires
- To lose contact with your supervisor
- Not to have a thesis
- To take a new job before finishing

from Phillips & Pugh 'How to get a PhD'
2005 The Open University Press