Managing the quality of research education in different environments

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Universally universities are striving for more research output, and to this purpose are energetically erecting support for doctoral students (Carter, 2006; Denholm, 2007). At this institution we train supervisors to supervise (Grant, 2005), and doctoral students to manage supervisors. We also have developed a good generic support for doctoral students through a coordinated Doctoral Skills Programme (DSP). Thus supervision’s individual support has been firmed up and so has across-campus support. But what of the middle tier: departmental support, not quite individual but discipline-specific? Currently this occurs in an ad hoc manner with some departments doing extremely well and others being less active. Departmental Graduate Advisors (DGAs) are given training but are variously busy and may find it hard to establish a departmental research community. This paper investigates the ways that the institution might strengthen the role of Departmental Graduate Advisors (DGAs), specifically how the Student Learning Centre tertiary advisors might develop material to facilitate better departmental support of doctoral students. What sort of material would DGAs find most useful? What are their prime needs? How can learning advisors best design material for some one else to use for teaching purposes? Where are the lines drawn between what can be taught generically by tertiary learning advisors and what can best be taught within departments by DGAs?

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Bibliography

