Worth the paper it’s written on?

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One: My journey:

‘Pasts’

(Or setting the scene)
My first semester as an academic
Five conversations with my supervisor

1. I am a fraud
Five conversations with my supervisor

2. I have writer’s block
Five conversations with my supervisor

3. I understand (when I had no idea)... ‘smart person syndrome’
Five conversations with my supervisor

4. I cannot do this...
Five conversations with my supervisor

5. I want to change topic
Five conversations with my supervisor

5. I want to change topic (or supervisors)
5. I want to change topic (or supervisors or universities)
Two: The PhD
What we now know...

• 50 percent of postgraduates do not go into academia...
What we now know…

• 50 percent of postgraduates do not go into academia…?
What we now know...

• 50 percent of postgraduates do not go into academia...

• Inter-discipline skills are valued...
What we now know...

• 50 percent of postgraduates do not go into academia...

• Inter-discipline skills are valued...

• Collaboration is highly valued… but difficult to achieve...
What we now know...

- 50 percent of postgraduates do not go into academia...

- Inter-discipline skills are valued...

- Collaboration is highly valued... but difficult to achieve...

- Pressure on completion and finances
ACOLA: Review of Australia’s Research Training System
A tension...

‘Training’

Scholarship
A (false) binary…

Scholarship

‘Training’
A (false) binary…
ACOLA (DDOGS)
ACOLA (DDOGS)
ACOLA (DDOGS)
Three: A changing environment:

Futures
Imagination...
A rapidly changing world…
What is our value proposition?
What does a PhD mean in a time of disruption?
A PhD established in Germany

• 1880s
What would these dudes say...

...about this?
Has the PhD kept up?
Four: The person
What we know?

- Majority of research on *undergraduate* student FYE “very little reported research” on postgraduate (Larcombe & Malkin, 2011)
What we know?

• Majority of research on *undergraduate* student FYE “very little reported research” on postgraduate (Larcombe & Malkin, 2011)

• A high proportion of under-grads are unsettled or dissatisfied with their first year experience (Kift & Nelson, 2005; Brown et al., 2013)
What we know?

- Majority of research on *undergraduate* student FYE “very little reported research” on postgraduate (Larcombe & Malkin, 2011)

- A high proportion of under-grads are unsettled or dissatisfied with their first year experience (Kift & Nelson, 2005; Brown et al., 2013)

- We have little information on how this translates to the first year experience?
## What is the experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Sentiment</th>
<th>Staff (N)</th>
<th>Students (All) (N)</th>
<th>Students (First Year) (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>5 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
<td>2 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>22 (49%)</td>
<td>22 (58%)</td>
<td>6 (55%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>18 (40%)</td>
<td>8 (21%)</td>
<td>3 (27%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentages represent the proportion of responses per staff/student group.*

Source: The First Year Postgraduate Student Experience – Bond, OLT, ACER, CAPA, USQ, VU, JCU
Results: Overall Sentiment

- **Staff**: 49% Negative, 11% Positive, 40% Neutral/Unclear
- **Students**: 58% Negative, 21% Positive, 21% Neutral/Unclear
The student feedback...

If I could think of one word it would be ‘struggle’... my experience has been coloured by external, sort of, unrest, be it housing stress, having to navigate a part-time job and full-time Uni and have a life, spend time with my partner and my friends... I feel it is a struggle to balance that and there is not a lot of support. So I think the experience is hard... obviously there is a lot of stress that goes on. ...it is very challenging because like a lot of us postgrads we are ...working... it is time, flexibility, learning the work life balance.

Student Comments
Student…

• more of being a Lone Ranger running, not always with that knowledge that you need, not always with the support that you need and not always knowing where to find that and how to get. So I suppose it is good training in that sense but it is not always an enjoyable experience…
Staff thoughts

…the postgraduate student experience… means huge strain, isolation, very little interaction with other people doing the same thing. For a lot of students it is a very lonely process, this is because the face-to-face experience is not there for most of them.

People do not realize how frightened they are. How much lack of confidence exists, how nervous they are and that first introduction to study is an experience which could either make or break them.
Four: How to respond
Knowledge
Skills v. Culture
Knowledge
Knowledge + Skills and Culture
Information scarcity v. information abundance
Four: What we are doing…

Achievement
i. A scaffolded journey
Year 1
- 3 months: early candidate plan
- Ethics complete (if required)

Year 2
- 12 months: Confirmation of Candidature
- Annual Progress Report

Year 3
- Submission
Year 1
Before semester:
academic literacy workshop

3 months: early candidate plan

6 months:
confirmation of continuation

12 months:
Confirmation of Candidature

Year 2
Ethics complete
(if required)

18 months: career planning

3MT

Year 3
6 months prior to submission:
Intention to submit

Annual Progress Report

Submission followed by presentation
Year 1
- Before semester: academic literacy workshop
- 3 months: early candidate plan
- 6 months: confirmation of continuation
- 12 months: Confirmation of Candidature

Year 2
- 18 months: career planning
- Ethics complete (if required)
- Unit 3 complete
- Unit 4 complete
- 3MT
- Annual Progress Report

Year 3
- Unit 5 complete
- 6 months prior to submission: Intention to submit
- Unit 6 complete i.e. the presentation
- Submission followed by presentation
ii. Career Planning
iii. Communication: Knowledge Translation
Knowledge Translation
(based on Graham et al., 2006)

1. Review and select knowledge
2. Adapt knowledge to context
3. Assess barriers to use
4. Apply knowledge (intervention)
5. Monitor knowledge use
6. Evaluate application of Knowledge (intervention)
7. Sustain knowledge use
8a. Toward next generation research (based on KT experience)
8b. Toward continued KT

Source: Canadian Institutes of Health Research - http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/48802.html
iv. Supervisor Development
iv. Multiple feedback mechanisms
Year 1

- Before semester: academic literacy workshop
- 3 months: early candidate plan
- 6 months: confirmation of continuation
- 12 months: Confirmation of Candidature

Year 2

- Ethics complete (if required)
- 18 months: career planning
- Annual Progress Report

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- Unit 1 complete
- Unit 3 complete
- Unit 5 complete
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Annual Progress Report

Year 3

Unit 5 complete

6 months prior to submission:
Intention to submit

Unit 6 complete
i.e. the presentation

Submission followed by presentation
v. Defining expectations...
Final thoughts

• We must not reify the postgraduate process…
Final thoughts

- We just not reify the postgraduate process…

- We need to contextualise it into the contemporary world…
Final thoughts

• We just not reify the postgraduate process...

• We need to contextualise it into the contemporary world...

• We must maintain standards despite these pressures...
Thank you...