Supervising PhD candidates in Practice Led Research degrees

Dr Josie Arnold, Professor of Writing, Writing Discipline.

Abstract

Supervising Practice Led Research both enables a broader view of knowledge than conventional academic gatekeeping, and involves a significant teaching and learning experience. This paper addresses some of my challenges in developing an understanding of the pedagogical practices involved in supervising PhD candidates in Practice Led Research that culminates in a submission of an artefact and exegesis. It indicates the supervisor’s responsibilities in developing pedagogical insights and signposts as an informed critic/critical friend, with knowledge of genre inscription and textuality and discourse questions and theories. This paper develops from my interest in how to produce a directive and supportive yet non-didactic program that enables both the candidate and the supervisor.

In this paper I utilise the postmodernist methodology of a ‘mystery’ based on Gregory Ulmer’s proposition that there is in academic writing the self and the researched, the conscious intellectual semiotic and that arising from storytelling. ‘Mystery’ encompasses the self, the story and the mystery of this and puts under erasure all claims to fact in writing, revealing the academic text to be sewn together as a compilation of the scholarly, the anecdotal or popular, and the autobiographical. This paper displays how the mystorical approach enables academic writing and language to be open, explorative and aware of its own evanescent nature.

Critical framework for this paper

This paper utilises postmodernist theories about textuality and discourse to advance the thinking about (and practice of) linear analyticoreferential knowledge-model being overtaken by lateral postmodernist discourse. The conceptual framework involves Ulmer’s ‘mystery’ and the pastiche of the dispersal of certainties in considering the practice of writing a discursive piece on ‘Learning from psychotherapy for postgraduate supervision’.

In this paper, then, I utilise a conceptual framework following The Canadian academic Gregory Ulmer’s ‘mystery’ (a scholarly story involving the personal, the socially learnt and the applied intellectual that is a combination of ‘my story’ and ‘mystery’). Ulmer (1989) identifies a ‘mystorical’ approach to thinking and research. A ‘mystery’ puts under erasure all claims to fact/authenticity in writing. It shows all writing to be both personal and mysterious (my story and mystery) whatever its claims to authenticity and depersonalisation. It reveals the academic text to be sewn together as a compilation of the scholarly, the anecdotal or popular, and the autobiographical. It questions the dominant analyticoreferential model of knowledge. At the same time it accords with much late 20th and early 21st century thinking about the self, the culture and even the world as a text to be constructed and read both in and against.

Ulmer’s mystorical approach opens up the text to many possible readings: there is no ‘one way’. Thus even the act of writing, much less the lived experience of being, displays itself as non-authoritative in the conventional sense. The implications of this are manifold. For me, perhaps the most important-and the most galvanising—is that the academic life and academic writing and language are now able to be seen as open, explorative and aware of their own
evanescent nature in the same way as any other form of written or lived discourse. That is, academic writing can be understood as related to and made up of multiple ways of respecting various personal experiences.

Ulmer’s ‘mystery’ enjoys many of the elements of ‘narrative non-fiction’ or the ‘literature of fact’, a new and enticing genre that challenges and even eliminates paradigmatic expectations of factual writing. (See ‘Bruce Dobler’s creative nonfiction compendium’: [http://www.pitt.edu/~bdobler/readingnf.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~bdobler/readingnf.html)) A model such as Ulmer’s gives me room within the academy to speak in multiple ‘voices’ from multiple personal and professional experiences and areas of knowledge. It confronts the expectations of the establishment/academy, and in doing so brings forward a richer mix after the diminution of the ‘qualitative/quantitative’ binary and the ‘academic corset’ model. When ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’ are revealed s constructions not unlike fiction, new possibilities of/for multilinearity may emerge. (Arnold 1994)

**Introduction: The shape of the elephant**

The most common puzzle identified by candidates is how to come to an early understanding of the shape and form of the PhD model and also to establish some guidelines for the journey. (Sinclair 2004). A certain mythology seems to have arisen with PhD supervision that it has no pedagogical components. Rather it seems to be presented in quite a mystical light as something very particular and individual undertaken by the candidate as a mission that they must define, plan execute and so on. In this scenario, the supervisor seems to play a central yet strangely detached role that emphasizes the supervisors role as being a determined critic who largely leaves the candidate to her or his own devices. There are, as in any mythology, strong elements of truth in this. The PhD candidate and supervisor are always on a singular journey whatever the constraints and demands of the academic area.

This **mystic** element should not be mistaken for a **mystifying** one. Too often such mystification leads to candidates feeling that they made it through the PhD journey as much despite as because of their supervisor. There are, again, strong elements of truth in this in so far as the journey must finally be the responsibility of the candidate and lead to her or his growth. If such a perspective is too dominant, however, it can lead to abrogating from the supervisor much responsibility for throwing light on the process of the students’ journeys that helps them on their way. After all, it is significant enough for the candidate to bring content and process to writing-up and submission and success without having to spend the preliminary months floundering around trying to discover (like the blind men and the elephants in the adage) just what the **shape and form** of the PhD might be as well. The PhD in writing calls for the production of a piece equivalent to a production of publishable original writing of 80,000 words accompanied by an exegesis of 20,000 words.

Mark Sinclair’s research shows the importance of ‘hands on’ supervision for the candidate, but I consider it to be valuable for **both** the candidates and the supervisors. In a successful alliance with candidates, the PhD supervisor, like any teacher, has to establish the scaffolding for a relationship with candidates that is mutual, deep, intimate, yet detached. The working alliance is quite interactive: there is no sense of Freud’s famous (or infamous) ‘tabula rasa’ of classical analysis in which the supervisor holds back entirely. Rather, the working alliance is co-operative and leads to mutual helpful disclosures, hints, direction-giving, building on academic experiences and insights and even personal and social interactions. Sinclair calls this ‘hands-on’ and compares it very favourably with its opposite: **‘Some supervisors take a**
‘hands off’ approach to supervision that leaves candidates largely to their own devices. Except in a minority of cases where beginning candidates are already self-confident, independent, knowledgeable, skilled, organised and socially adroit, ‘hands off’ approaches tend to be associated with slow and non-completion.’ (Sinclair 2004:vi)

In the initial development of this PhD in writing by artifact/product and exegesis, I was very aware of my interest in learning and teaching. The basis of my teaching philosophy is that the student’s journey is paramount. Facilitating that journey has been my life’s work in the classroom and lecture theatre, in planning and publishing curriculum, in developing programs for flexible deliveries, in my own research, and now in the postgraduate Master of Arts (Writing) and this very attractive, dynamic and successful PhD by artifact and exegesis.

The most significant question underpinning such an approach is, for me, how a learning and teaching journey can be developed that is clearly understood by the student and that signposts the acquisition of skills rather than the accumulation of information. As my teaching philosophy arises from my practical and research interest in the students’ journey, my teaching strategies and methods are student-centred and facilitate deep learning as well as a lifelong-learning culture expressed in graduate attributes. My curriculum development mirrors this as well as a commitment to a flexible learning environment promoting student choice and addressing questions of access and equity. This philosophy and practice underpins the Practice Led Research model of the Swinburne PhD.

So consideration of my learning and teaching approach is based upon:

- the development of a positive learning environment through understanding where the students begin and relating this to where the learning journey offers to take them;
- my professional engagement with ensuring that the course content is current and appropriate;
- a belief I have sustained through 45 years of teaching that learning is a potentially transformative and intellectually galvanizing opportunity.

Bringing pedagogical questions to the supervision of the PhD, particularly this Practice Led Research model of the non-traditional style of PhD, meant that I wanted to clarify the steps that a candidate might take throughout their journey. I was not so concerned with the artefact/product as I am aware that those who want to make an inscription, whether on the blank page, online or in other media, are bringing a driving creative force with them. The artefact/product that makes up 80% of this Swinburne PhD is, then, able to be left largely in the hands of the candidate with the supervisor reading, editing, encouraging, critiquing and playing the artful role of a critical friend.

This is not to diminish the supervision aspect of artifact element of the PhD. The supervisors must have expertise in the artefact/product area as well as the academic one. As the artifact/product makes up 80% of the candidate’s work, it is clear that the supervisors must be able to contribute meaningfully to the process. The selection of supervisors with this expertise and a readiness to be open towards the artefact/exegesis model as well as to the non-traditional elements of the exegesis itself, is critical. As we have seen, most academics have worked within a situation where a binary exists between qualitative and quantitative but are now within an academic environment that encourages and accepts both where they are shown to be appropriate.
The publishable original artefact to 80,000 words or its equivalent.

- This includes a variety of written genres traditionally within the ‘creative writing’ or ‘personal writing’ genres such as:
- **A traditional literary novel.** In this genre the writer investigates aspects of life and living that involve quite complex philosophical ideas and activities being delivered through plot, characterisation, tone, style that are demonstrably calling for the ideal reader who is able to wrestle with them, who invites their complexity and who has a familiarity with the use of language to evoke a fictional truth or series of truths within a storyline.
- **Crime fiction.** In this genre the elements of crime fiction are particularised while the recognised and accepted modes of establishing detective characterisation, bringing forth forensic evidence and practices, delivering motive and characterisation of both the criminal and the investigators, introducing witnesses and alibis and perhaps above all extending to the readers the problems and puzzles that are available as clues to the solution of the crime so as to ‘outguessing’ the author.
- **Autobiography** in which the author ‘now’ investigates in an historical context the author ‘then’, bringing forth personal and psychological insights as well as contemporary commentary and photographic detail.
- **Biography** in which people, place and time are developed into a sociological investigation through the detective work, insights and perspectives of the biographer.
- **History, local history etc.** In this genre a particular geographic are is placed within historical, personal, and background detail.
- **Fantasy literature** including magic realism, magic, science fiction, time shifting and other elements that enable contemporary ideas, activities, challenges etc to be developed within a framework that distances the reader from the exigencies of reality while enabling similar fictionally constructed challenges to be confronted, thought about and met.

- The publishable original writing includes means of discourse and inscription that are not traditionally within the ‘creative writing’ or ‘personal writing’ genres. These include such productions as:
  - **Curriculum:** This would be a major product such as a curriculum guideline leading to a publication.
  - ‘**How to:**’ This would lead to a publication within a specified area of authorial expertise.
  - **Business writing:** A large-scale review, proposal, overview, market analysis etc.
  - **Professional writing:** This genre obviously covers many areas of communication including, for example, Quality overviews, in-house publications, projects and reports. This area introduces questions of commercial-in-confidence.
  - **CD Rom and WWW sites** such visual and electronic publication could involve any of the writing and textuality genres.
  - **Filmscripts:** This discourse has its own areas of scripting expertise and also involves characterisation, plot movements, the eye of the camera and a clear understanding of the industry demands.
  - **Visuals such as paintings/photographs:** This discourse produces visual texts that stand within the chosen genre and its critical analyses.
The Exegesis of approximately 20,000 words.

The exegesis is an extremely flexible production that retains some elements of the traditional PhD thesis while at the same time transcending that template. In itself it is also a creative work, a parallel piece of writing that sits alongside the above personal product. However, it is not separate from the product itself nor does it act as an academic ‘justification’ of it.

The exegesis acts:
- as an original piece of work contributing something new to knowledge about the process of the production of the work by the individual.
- to enable personal reflections about the production of a text to be made and to then be placed within the broader context of writing about the chosen genre, within the chosen genre and by academics that have reflected upon textuality and discourse itself as well as critically analysed the genre.
- to enable the reader to understand the ‘implied author’ of the personal/creative product in another and more direct way.
- to enable the PhD candidate to contribute further to an understanding of the ‘ideal reader’ in the author’s mind as she or he develops the work.
- to bring forward a reference list and bibliography that enhances the understanding of the ways in which such ‘personal/creative’ work can be situated within an area of academic discussion.

As in the ‘personal/creative’ component above, the exegesis will develop as the PhD candidate moves through the candidature. Each student’s journey will be different, and each must be enabled to make that journey without didactic supervision. At the same time, as in the traditional thesis, that journey can and should be facilitated by the supervisor.

Exegesis Methodology: the reflective journal

Perhaps the most pressing need in this model of PhD supervision is to convey to the candidate an understanding of the relationship of the exegesis to the other PhD component. Here we come to my assertion that this is an H not an I. By this I mean that the two components are not separate. Each develops as the candidate proceeds through the candidature. In this way, they enrich one another. As the larger component is usually undertaken before the exegesis, how can this be? In what ways can the two parallel works be linked together in the process as well as in the final product? How do they ‘talk’ to one another?

The artefact and exegesis are not parallel conversations that do not touch directly upon one another. The link between the two is the ability to reflect upon the writing, the reading, the thinking, the process as it is occurring by the keeping of a ‘reflective journal’. The easiest way to understand this in traditional terms is to see this reflective journal as the data for the exegesis. After all, the new contribution to knowledge is BOTH the creative/personal product AND the insights into how the author brought this about.

The reflective journal, then, will record in real time such elements of the authorial journey as:
- **The beginning: what is the motivation?** In what ways is this project undertaken as a creative necessity, an urge, a task or whatever? What light might my reflections cast upon this process of beginning, facing the blank page/canvas/CDROM etc? What
readings are there about this that engage me as both a practitioner and self-critical/reflective person? In what ways is this reflected upon by other thinkers/academics/practitioners? What will I add to my bibliography? What might I want to quote?

- **Each Step of the way**: What’s working? What are the problems? How do I solve them? Are there other practitioners whose advice helps me? In what ways do academic readings help me or hinder me in my understandings of the project, the journey?
- **Memory points and signposts** for the PhD journey from beginning to end.
- **Mindmaps and plans** for the journal and for the creative/personal product.
- **Materials for each meeting** with the supervisor so that engagement is made both with the candidate’s journey and with the supervisors’ also.
- **Other perspectives** are given to the candidate through meetings and readings.
- **Major headings and sub-heads for** the first cut of the final exegesis that can be identified by highlighting repeated words/sentences.
- **Opportunities for cross-referencing of ideas** brought up in the exegesis so as to feed them back into the creative/personal product and vice-versa.
- **A record of the personal authorial journey** which is, after all, a major contribution to new knowledge alongside the new component of the product itself.
- **The bibliography and references**. This can be enhanced by annotations on useful books made during the reading process in the reflective journal.

It is the reflective journal that provides the bridge between the two elements of the PhD. In itself it is of course not an examinable component. However, without it the two elements could easily become very separate. All examiners emphasis that the two elements must ‘talk to one another’ in a way that is readily identifiable by the examiners.

In traditional thetic terms, this reflective journal provides the data for the exegesis. It also provides the methodology. In so many ways, then, this activity that goes on at the same time as the production of the major artifact itself is indeed the bridge between the two elements of the PhD by artifact/product and exegesis: it is the bar of the H that draws together the parallel but interdependent elements of the PhD.

1. **The Reflective Journal as a record of data:**

   The traditional forms of collecting academic data have called for a more detached sense of the self. Indeed it was thought that the use of the first person and even the active tense was not serious enough for an academic treatise.

   This began to change over the latter part of the 20th century when the scientific model of quantitative data was challenged by more qualitative approaches from, for example, sociology and literature.

2. **The Reflective Journal as a record of methodology.**

   The natural sciences have given us a too often intransigent model of academic methodologies. As I have described in me Ulmeric model of a ‘mystory’, the exegesis is able to be enriched by a more discursive and subjective model that is, nevertheless, ‘academic’. It is in this journal that candidates can begin to see how their work came about and developed not only through their own eyes, but also through a more reflective prism as a ‘critical friend’.
3. **The Reflective Journal as a record of genre reading**
Because candidates are referring to their own artefact and to other works within that genre/area, many of the references will be from practitioners’ works. These are valid as one of the many rich perspectives that such a PhD brings forward into the academic arena.

4. **The Reflective Journal as a record of other genre practitioners reflections upon their own works**
There is increasing interest in academic circles as to how creative artefacts are performed. References to the insights other performers/practitioners have given us into this element is another aspect of the richness of the literature review/referencing that comes about in this model.

5. **The Reflective Journal as a record of academic reading**
Most importantly, the PhD by Practice Led Research is a valid academic area. As such, it is imperative that candidates can situate their work within the academic discussion from its germinal works to current academic references.

6. **The Reflective Journal and its interactions with the artefact/product.**
The Swinburne advice to examiners and candidates emphasizes that the ways in which the reflective journal enabled the exegesis and the artifact, and also the links between the two, should be made evident to the examiners.

**Traditional elements of textual discourse**

In the postmodernist moment of the early 21st century, the idea of a text has far broader and deeper application than a definition of an inscription of writing upon a page. Textuality and discourse also applies to (for example) the construction of people, activities, and multiple cultures and cultural events in both time and space. Hence, the creative component of the PhD in Practice Led research is entitled an ‘artefact’ so as not to confine it to traditional writing, in particular the genre of ‘creative writing’.

In acting as critical friends of the candidate in the development of the artefact/product the supervisor might essay relevant elements of textuality and discourse. For example, when reading a text, the reader traditionally enters into a form of contract with an author who displays a knowledge of information that they wish to share. In this conjunction, the reader is always in a subordinate position to the writer. The reader also brings a number of expectations to the authoritative text, and asks a number of questions of it. These questions are not necessarily at the forefront of the readers’ attention; they arise from an interaction with the text and as such are always subject to the authority of the writer. Indeed, the two most dominant elements attracting the readers’ attention involve genre and content. They answer the unspoken basic questions:
- What is this about?
- How do I classify it?
- What might I learn from it?
Clearly, these are questions that relate to the authority of the text. They involve understanding the text within a context that enhances the writer over the reader.

Even within this traditional authoritative model and context, the reader brings a large number of critical questions to the text. A number of concerns develop over the process of reading that are brought to it through enculturisation regarding that very process of reading. Such questions form the basis of textual criticism and can be seen as valid whatever the genre of writing under the critical eye of the reader.

For a conventional written text, these may broadly involve such areas as the following:

- **Tone:** Does the work have an appropriate way of addressing its intended audience through the selection of language and vocabulary as well as content and form?
- **Register:** Does the work show an understanding of the genre that it places itself within? Are the genre spaces the most appropriate even if they might be internally disputed?
- **Style:** Is there a sense that this work evokes an interest in the writers’ material and interactions that appears at worst seemingly unforced and at best irresistible?
- **Scope:** Has the work been developed in such a way as to provide the reader with a sense of its integrity so that the readers are given the feeling of going on a journey that has a purpose?
- **Continuity:** Is there a focus to the work that indicates the writers’ capacity to develop detail and to provide expert opinion as well as produce explicit actions, interactions and reactions within the broadest dimensions of the work?
- **Characterization:** In what ways do the explicit or implicit characterizations work to enhance an understanding of the materials?
- **Plot:** How are the basic reasons for telling this story and/or writing this work made evident? How are they developed by the writer without appearing to be too controlling or controlled? How, at the same time, are they shown to be clearly within the domain of the author’s authority?
- **Storyline:** In what ways is the textual information/story developed from conception/introduction to denouement with reference to the ebb and flow of the authorial discourse itself?
- **Appropriate Language:** How is tense used? In what person is the discourse? How well structured is the text grammatically, including vocabulary; sentence structure; order; a sense of verbal rhythms; paragraphing; an idea of play; pleasure in the text itself?
- **Dialogue:** In what ways does the text exhibit a knowledge of the rhythm of language? How is the exploration of aural resonances explored including appropriate language and discourse?
- **Sections/chapters:** Is the work divided in a way that supports the thread, focuses and leads to conclusions? How does it attract and maintain the readers’ interactions with a lively discourse?
- **Imaginative and Creative Grasp:** In what ways is the work invigorating? How does it invite the readers’ participation so as to bring the writing to life? How does it act to enable readers to extend and broaden their own insights and experiences?
- **Interest:** How does the work attract readers and establish and maintain interest throughout without apparent difficulty or artifice?
- **Ideas:** Does the reader leave the work satisfied that ideas have been introduced, surveyed and established?
For other ‘texts’, a similar series of checkpoints should be developed by the supervisors both with and for the candidates.

The artefact/product 80%

This is the original inscription in the chosen genre. In this pedagogy, I see the supervisors’ roles as acting as ‘critical friend’ to the candidates. However, to apply a pedagogical model to the exegesis and not to the production of the artefact would be to dodge the very issue that I’m addressing.

This major aspect of the PhD calls for a timetable of delivery to the supervisors according to how the candidate works at her or his production. This is obviously a very personal part of the creative journey of every artist, writer, and producer of inscriptive material in any genre.

The PhD candidate may choose to begin with this artefact/product. It is the major aspect of the PhD and all other aspects rely upon it. These include:

- the reflective journal that records the creative/inscriptive journey itself
- questions/ideas/practices that lead to further readings within the genre
- questions/ideas/practices that lead to academic readings and insights about genre, creative journeys, inscription, cultural practices and influences, textuality and discourse and knowledge itself
- insights from critical friends
- insights and support from the critical friendship of the supervisor
- elucidation by the supervisors of other academic/genre references that may be useful to the candidate and that may extend the candidate’s understandings of both the genre and her or his practices so as to situate them within useful literature; ideas; knowledge; questions; and resolutions etc.

Useful checkpoints for the inscription leading to the artefact/product.

In what ways, then, might some checkpoints be developed to provide a ladder and not a cage for the candidates? We might begin by encouraging them to set up:

- a timetable that establishes productive but not overwhelming work habits
- self-critical faculties within their own genres
- a network of ‘critical friends’ to workshop if desired
- regular expectations of delivery of work to supervisors for feedback as desired
- an understanding with supervisors of what feedback the candidate needs or expects

A timetable could involve the delivery each month to the supervisors of an agreed section of the final artifact. For example, these are 24 month very general meeting plans that can be adapted as necessary to any number of months:

Hints about examination

Examiners are gatekeepers to the Academy and they examine your thesis to see if they should let you in. The Practice Led Research model shows the practice as being extended by an interactive relationship with the research that it leads the practitioner towards. It’s research as a scholar, so it concerns more than the artefact. All examiners agree that there are usually
few problems with the artefact itself: it is the exegesis both in itself and in its relationship to the artefact that needs attention.

The exegesis should:
- place the writing and the reflections upon it within the relevant academic and intellectual discussion
- have a literature review and methodology
- display/signpost the literature review clearly even if (perhaps especially if) the literature review is embedded in the sections. If there is no formal lit. review, but it’s contextual, establish the grounds for it and the space it operates in as well as the field of the creative work/artefact.
- engage vigorously with the literature about the area under discussion to demonstrate your critical thinking. The candidates must make it clear that they don’t just canvass others’ opinions, but put their own as well. This is often the heart of scholarly engagement, so make it clear where the lit. review sits in the exegesis, which is a ‘manifesto of the performative’.
- have DEPTH rather than BREADTH: the exegesis has a relatively small word count and every word should count!

Examiners have to tick ‘boxes’:
1. Accept as is
2. minor revisions submitted to supervisor
3. major revisions submitted to examiners
4. total rewrite and resubmit
5. fail

In considering the exegesis, they ask themselves: ‘where does this sit?’ In making their final decision, examiners need to be able to identify what changes (if any) are needed for a solid work of scholarship. They are interested in how scholars talk about the work i.e. express their data.

Whilst it is useful to read other theses in your discipline, it is necessary to remember that your work is a substantial new addition to knowledge in the area. Be masterful and assert that you are now expert in this small focussed field. Stipulate clearly what it’s about and canvass the literature to argue about the research question/problem/focus. Say ‘My work fits in…’ by referencing creative practitioners, the relevant academic literature, and the genre.

THE ARTEFACT AND EXEGESIS ARE A PACKAGE: draw them together with the Preface.

The Swinburne model calls for 3 pieces to be submitted for examination: The Preface; The Artefact; and The Exegesis. The Preface plays a significant role in introducing examiners to the works and in particular to how these two works interact or ‘speak to each other’. In the Preface and Exegesis introduction, candidates have the opportunity to show how this is so: ‘I argue that...’ ‘I do this...’ ‘This is the relationship between these 2 pieces of work...’ ‘This is how I show it...’

Candidates are advised to do the final preface and introduction last: ‘I’m writing about this question... and using this method ...to show that...’
All examiners agreed that the role of the exegesis was critical to the success of the candidature. It was the most commonly weak aspect of the candidates’ submissions. They advise all candidates to ensure that the quality of the artefact is matched by the quality of the exegesis. It is the Preface that can help candidates to articulate clearly and incisively what they have achieved in the exegesis. Through writing a preliminary draft quite early in the candidature and altering it throughout, the candidates and supervisors can keep the academic work on track and ensure that it reaches the same quality ad the artefact.

Examiners can only evaluate the PhD in terms of the model the University has developed for evaluation. The following is the advice to examiners and candidates form the PhD by artefact and exegesis here at Lilydale: The Swinburne Model.

Swinburne University of Technology:
Advice to examiners and doctoral candidates in the PhD in writing by exegesis and artefact

Submitting the artefact and the exegesis
1. There are three components to be submitted, in this order: Preface, Artefact, Exegesis.

2. Although all elements should satisfy the examiners, the artefact will represent 80% and the exegesis 20% of this model.

3. Referencing and bibliography must be presented according to an appropriate academic referencing style (e.g. APA, Harvard) and be consistent within the exegesis.

4. All elements should be well-presented and show evidence of careful editing and proofreading. A proof reader may be utilised.

5. Word length or viewing time must be followed as appropriate to the artefact, and between 20,000 and 30,000 words for the exegesis, including the Preface.

6. The artefact and elements of the exegesis may have been published within the course of the candidature.

7. Most written material should be presented on A4 one side, with spacing either double or one-and-a-half. Other material, whether written or otherwise, will be presented according to the expectations of the genre.

8. Where practical, the two elements of the PhD will be bound together. A CD Rom will be placed in a pocket within the binding.

Details of the components

The Preface

1. The preface must demonstrate the synthesis between the artefact and the exegesis. It must show how the relationship has been conceptualised by the candidate. It should be approximately 1000 words in length.
2. The preface should identify the genre in which the artefact is placed by its practitioner, and provide the context for the audience/examiner.

**The artefact**

1. This consists of a piece of writing or other form of communication such as a CDRom.
2. It should be of a length appropriate to its genre (e.g. 60,000 to 80,000 words in prose, or equivalent).
3. The artefact and the exegesis must interact in some ways to show that the different authorial voices in the two elements draw them together, that they ‘talk to each other’ as Practice Led Research. There should be a dialectical relationship between the exegesis and the artefact that is clearly evident to the examiners. There are two voices at work for the candidate, but they are talking to one another.
4. It should be evident that the two elements were done in tandem over the course of the candidature.
5. The work as practice should display itself within its genre as original, vivid, engaging; well-written and well-presented.
6. Appraisals of its success should be made within the accepted practice for the genre. Candidates will clarify this in the preface and exegesis and examiners will bring their own critical expertise to the work itself and its clarification within the exegesis.

**The exegesis**

1. The exegesis should clarify the relationship between the exegesis and the artefact and show how they are aligned.
2. The exegesis should present a clear idea of the research question/s showing what the candidate set out to discover, investigate or extend.
3. The exegesis will have a contextualised literature review that may be embedded in the development of the exegesis or presented in a section of its own.
4. The methodology should demonstrate knowledge and practice of Practice Led Research, and how the writer’s working journal contributed to the project as a whole.
5. It should show clearly the scope of the research and its contribution to scholarship, that is, to theory and knowledge.

**Practice Led Research leading to artefact/exegesis PhD**

*I would like to acknowledge here that many of the ideas in this section are based on my immersion in PLR at The 11th Annual AAWP conference Nov. 23-26 QUT Brisbane,*
The growing emphasis on employability as a graduate attribute has led to the establishment of what is broadly called ‘Creative Industries Groups’ in many universities. Their goal is to show how many of our graduates from a variety of courses, but most particularly from practice-based courses, are employed in areas that are not always seen as ‘business’ oriented. This group might contain design, visual arts, new media, creative writing, dance, theatre arts, circus arts and general writing undergraduate and postgraduate courses that lead to graduate employment in many areas. Methodological research practices in the Creative Industries lead to new terms such as PLR strategies and Studio Research, but there is no single methodological template. At the same time, it is not an ‘easy option’, for PLR must conform to the broad protocols of ALL research e.g. protocols of what stands as research and what does not. For example, research (particularly for a PhD) should add to the given area of knowledge; be original; situate itself within a given body of literature; be ethical; and make a significant contribution to knowledge.

Placing ‘the creative industries’ within an artefact/exegesis PhD framework (Arnold 2005) means that we are enabled to look beyond performativity as an end in itself and see it as leading to new research and valuable insights. Traditional narrow problem-setting and rigid methodological requirements do not suffice for PLR, as the major milestones of PLR are derived from the practice led researchers. This differs significantly from the gate-keeping model of evidence based research that in the Natural Sciences is also replicable.

Unlike traditional research protocols and traditional thetic demands practice LEADS the research, hence the exegesis articulates the research ‘question’ in an emergent way so that trajectories develop provisionally and indeterminacy is permissible.

In the late 20th century, the research community saw a heated debate about, and an engagement with, placing qualitative research on to the conventional research agenda alongside quantitative research. (Aldridge; Carr & Kemmis; Cotterill & Letherbym; Lincoln & Guba.) Much of this was led by ardent feminists who saw the ‘rational’ of quantitative methodologies (and even templated qualitative methodologies) as narrowly masculine and non-gender-inclusive. (Harding; Kasper; Przbylowicz)

This was a great struggle, but whilst most Universities have accepted that there are valuable insights into knowledge to be gained by either qualitative or quantitative research methodologies, and most particularly by a combination of each, not all academics have accepted this, and many still find PLR a distraction from ‘real’ research.

In general, Qualitative Research attempts to engage with the complexities of practice in such areas as Action Research, Grounded Theory, Biography, Stories and Narrative Theory. The theory leads the practice in interpreting it through an academic prism. PLR research strategies are carried out through practice and harness the tools and the methodologies of those practices. They lead to a multi-levelled research which has:

- the practitioner’s work,
- the practitioner’s insights into that work,
- other practitioners’ works that are relevant
• their insights into that practice of their work,
• apposite academic writings and theories that enliven and enrich the practice and show how it leads the research.

In this way, PLR takes practice and brings it into the academy as a central factor in academic research: otherwise, the practice would sit within its own arena of film, dance, photography, the novel, poetry, multi-media etc. PLR, hence, is a very rich way of drawing together practice and research as a natural uber-production. Hence, PLR takes the traditional academic view of knowledge-production further so as to transform our understandings of qualitative research into more creative research strategies that arise from a practice producing an artefact. In this model, the practice leads the research: it is not subsumed into it as a form of data, nor does it arise as the result of a research question being identified and articulated. In our artefact and exegesis model, the questions, problems and challenges identified by the practices, insights, and needs and so on of the practitioners entice the practitioner to look even further than the initial creative act to another that is creative yet resides clearly within the gatekeeping of the academic world: the production of the exegesis.

PLR is not an orthodox research methodology/presentation: it is a multi-methodology that takes the discourse of traditional research formats beyond the operational mind that is displayed in the dominant mode of research thinking. It does not replicate the abstract and general; the analytical; the sequential and linear (etc), but moves it to the discursive and propositional. Thus, traditional narrow problem-setting and rigid methodological requirements do not suffice for PLR as the major milestones of PLR are derived from the practice of the researchers. So PLR can bridge the gap between its research protocols and traditional thetic demands by articulating the problem in an emergent way so that trajectories develop provisionally and indeterminacy is permissible.

PLR enables knowledge by importing ‘messy’ forms of research and challenging established and quite comforting academic paradigms. In doing so, it produces serious methodological research procedures that may well contain elements of traditional protocols and/or be aligned with them, but yet remain fundamentally different. In this way, whilst there is a significant new contribution to academic knowledge and insights, there is a rupture with traditional orthodoxies as PLR:
• develops as multi-method led by practice
• works performatively
• develops a performative utterance from action to enunciation and performance and affect to naming things done
• expresses and also BECOMES the research
• is scholarly reporting of protocols, principles, validations and procedures in a different from traditional way

In the artefact/exegesis model of the PhD, PLR draws together two aspects of scholarship that may once have been seen as diametrically opposed. There is an enthusiasm of practice that conveys the exciting; imaginable; new; and even fun: certainly not the traditional ‘gravitas’ knowledge profile for a PhD. The artefact comes from the practice that is an experiential starting point from which the problem/idea/conscious flow and order follows. There is also a clearly established question/problem/enthusiasm of practice drive the study as it identifies the issue: problem; aims and objectives; statements of purpose; relevant literature.
All research is under scrutiny for its methodological framework/bases and has the obligation to make this transparent. This is essential, as methodology shows the steps that you take to do what you do to complete the research by clarifying the process of what you did and how you did it. As well as utilising methodologies from other traditions, PLR (as distinctive within itself) should also show itself in its methodology as:

- persistent
- on-going
- clarified by showing the process of the needs and practices of the practitioners
- having an enquiry cycle from active research
- re-purposing practice techniques into research
- reflecting upon the practitioner’s practices
- reflecting upon comparable practitioners’ practices
- reflecting upon the genre, style, etc of others
- understanding other practitioners’ reflections upon their styles, genres (etc)

In PLR, the research undertaken is located within its field of enquiry and associated conceptual terrain. There is much discussion in PLR of the place of the Literature Review as compared with its place in the traditional research paradigm. Within PLR the Literature Review, as in traditional Research Protocols:

- covers the relevant field of research and practice
- is relevant to the study
- is well-organised
- helps to define the research question/area by identifying gaps in the field
- relates to the genre/style
- has academic validity
- has practitioner validity

It does this also in PLR, but it has other attributes and may do the Literature Review differently from the traditional Thetic Chapter. These may include:

- a contextual literature review throughout the exegesis
- a sense of practice rather than an identification of a problem
- references beyond the text to capture perspectives contextually to show intersections between past and present and to locate the work in an aesthetic terrain as well as an academic one

Indeed, PLR acts within and from a different consciousness. It is presentational rather than a linear/literal connectedness of determinant concepts. It animates us as it draws upon sensuality, emotions and feelings: in doing so it leads to an expansion of epistemologies that count as research itself. Furthermore, qualitative researchers have turned to

Knowledge claims reported to others and demonstrating the benefits of the study in social, cultural or environmental terms are not always Quantitative or Qualitative but may well be practice-led as, for example, in the primacy of the chosen genre. To evaluate research outcomes in PLR there needs to be an experiential element that takes current research imperatives into reporting research and/as practice. What becomes known is then made available for sustained and verifiable peer review. Traditional truth claims (such as numbers; propositions; citations; problems; peer assessment; text-based) can be enriched OR BECOME time-based disciplines as in the Performing Arts where there may, for example, be
a system for annotations/commentaries/digital capture and review/citational architecture for comments throughout performances.

Conclusion.

Whilst there is much debate about PhD supervision being seen/practised as pedagogy, and increasing academic publication about it, little is as yet resolved in University practices and regulations. The University may have some formal means of supervisor-training, but this is fleeting or rare, and all of the supervisors interviewed by Mark Sinclair for his in-depth Australian study ‘...learned their supervisory knowledge and skills informally, on-the-job...’ (Sinclair 2004:23). This is also true, of course of the pedagogical training for the majority of University lectures and tutors who were traditionally rarely if ever required to have any teacher training. This trend is being challenged in Australia in the 21st century in response to new Federal funding regimes.

Rather than defining and announcing itself as a teaching and learning event, Sinclair says that ‘The PhD candidature appears to be a rite of passage into distinct research cultures that manifests in discipline-specific completions and times to submission.’ (2004:iv) Yet the candidacy occurs in real-life, real-time and has very particular goals and outcomes: it changes candidates’ lives. The importance of empathy, warmth, congruence, complex verbal skills, approval, supportiveness, optimism and respect (Lambert & Hawkins 2001:131-2) is significant and central to any learning and teaching engagement: it’s not less in supervising a PhD candidate. Indeed, it may be more acute as the interaction becomes an intense one on one of teacher, mentor, guide, colleague, critical friend and...particularly in the final stages...quasi-examiner who must ultimately recognise the superior knowledge of the candidate within the chosen thetic area.

Works Cited


Dobler, B ’Creative nonfiction compendium’: Http://www.pitt.edu/~bdobler/readingnf.html. Accessed 10/03/07


