

Claire's questions

October 2006

I am a health researcher and I started my part time PhD at Barchester University 12 months ago.

Briefly, my PhD is to what happens to people's drug and alcohol addiction when they go to prison. I am actually registered in the Sociology Department, although I do not have a Sociology background. My main supervisor was my Masters supervisor and encouraged me to undertake a PhD, hence why I registered through that department. He has no knowledge of addiction or of prisons, but is supervising me as he is a qualitative researcher (and my PhD uses qualitative research).

My first query is that he has now gone on sabbatical for 6 months and I have had no offer of an alternative supervisor whilst he has been away. He has been on the email a little, but it is not quite the same as being able to meet to discuss ideas. What do you think that I should do about this? My other supervisor has more knowledge around prisons, but not around addiction.

My other concern is that my PhD covers a number of disciplines such as health, criminology, psychology, rather than being solely Sociology. (Although I am trying to explore what makes people change or not change their drug/alcohol use behaviours when in prison). Do you think that it is a problem that I am registered through the Sociology Department? How much will I need to use Sociology and sociological theory in the final thesis? Importantly, does being registered with the Sociology Department mean that I will be examined by sociologists?

What would you advise Claire do about

- 1. supervision arrangements?**
- 2. her departmental location?**
- 3. her PhD examination?**

Please put your answers on the acetate provided

Epilogue

November 2006

John

I just thought that I would fill you in on the situation since you gave me the advice. I met with my Department today and sorted out a number of issues. It appears that as a p/t student I had been somewhat forgotten (typical!). I do not feature in the Dept PG handbook of students, so practically do not exist. My supervisor (the one who is still there) was particularly un-happy about all of this and has spoken to administrative and academic staff to sort it out.

I also opened up to him and discussed how I felt as a result of the lead supervisor going on sabbatical. Whilst he said he was particularly happy with my work and the progress I had made, he understood my concerns. As a result we have arranged to meet more regularly whilst the lead supervisor is away and place extra focus on the areas that the lead supervisor would've led on, so as not to neglect them. If I feel that I would like more input on it, we will seek another academic in the Dept who could attend the supervisory meetings whilst the lead supervisors is away, although I am going to wait to see how my supervisor and I manage first.

Further, he is going to raise it at the next Departmental meeting to check it would not be so poorly managed in the future. Following this, we also had a good discussion about the transfer report, which was again prompted by some of the things that come out of your training session that I attended a few weeks back.

I feel much brighter and happier about it all now – and even went to the student admin office afterwards to register for year 2!