

Evaluation of Seven Secrets of Highly Successful PhD Students
Seminar
Macquarie University July 2007

1. What specific steps will you now take towards completing your PhD as a result of this program?

- Writing as I read; specific work hours; showing something to supervisor
- Reduce to 2hrs/day for 3 years
- Talk to supervisor
- I need to start to write more regularly; I need to sit down with my supervisor and discuss my progress and set up some plans for the next few months
- Schedule specific tasks at regular times (in the morning!)
- Avoid distractions while working; regular work schedule
- Reduce distractions, especially in the morning
- Reduce my email checking and chatting! Write – instead of translating and analysing, as that is procrastination. Be more realistic; get more help.
- Organise time with no interruptions; make more interviews with supervisor
- Meet my supervisor more. Set more regular periods for work on the PhD. Avoid distractions.
- Set up a routine to make time to work on PhD. Start writing.
- I will arrange a meeting with my supervisor
- Be realistic to see my PhD as a learning process. Turn off internet and don't read email in the mornings. Doing PhD is not alone, rather collective endeavour. I can get help from others.
- Ban email in the mornings!
- Establish a routine – of regular meetings and specific times for work
- Monitor email addiction; use the first hour of each day to write! Have and stick to a routine.
- Devise a work program; regular meetings
- Set regular working hours, get some feedback from other academics
- Clean desk by bed; first 2 hours after waking up devoted to PhD in quiet of bedroom
- In the morning write something first
- Organise fortnightly meeting with supervisor. Start writing SPIE paper

- Meet with supervisor next week; write drafts methodology chapter; learn quanti methods; work 9-6 weekdays or work 4-5 hours weekend; find a statistician to help with the quantitative aspects
- Arrange a regular time for meetings with my supervisors
- 2 week meeting with supervisor; no email until 10am
- Setting regular hours; learning to live without reading emails!
- Be more disciplined, realistic. Make more of time.
- Monthly milestones for draft documents presented to supervisor. Formatting thesis into chapters and referencing each chapter
- Setting aside a regular time for writing each week and regularly send drafts to supervisor
- Make a day plan to write first thing in the morning – no emails and no phone calls, 2hrs 9-11am
- Make a routine so that it doesn't occupy all of my time and first the 'work' hours
- Write in the morning 2hrs (no emails); locations for field sites; organise statistics ask help not manual
- Don't check email until lunchtime; don't waste time chatting in office
- Put more consideration into taking on new subjects to teach
- All
- Get stuck into it!
- Meet more regularly with supervisors; establish more effective work routines; take time off without feeling guilty for not 'working'; say no to distractions; write and submit work to supervisors
- I will sort out my relationship with my supervisor. I will also start to network more and use the resources available to me at university
- Request help from experts, on certain aspects of my thesis
- Send written work that hasn't seen light of day as 'draft'
- Set a regular meeting time with my supervisor (monthly). Make sure I write small bits, rather than saving up to write chunks at a time
- Organise my day better; say no to distractions

2. What specifically have you learned from this program?

- Good specific advice re: writing and work hours
- People
- Rollercoaster ride; that I have self-esteem

- I have learned where my weaknesses are
- Kinds of different types of people as mentioned in model of 'doers' and 'thinkers'
- That we are all doing the same thing wrong!
- That every other PhD student goes through the same periods of confidence and lack of confidence
- I need to write more
- PhD doesn't need to be perfect; start writing as early as possible
- It's difficult to answer this question since I have learned a lot from this workshop
- Encouraging to stick to the end of my PhD. Persistence is important.
- Steps to avoid procrastination
- To focus
- 'Care and maintenance of supervisor' – importance of this and being aggressive
- Everybody else is experiencing what I am – although I already knew it, now I know it
- Crap writing is better than none
- Everyone has common problems
- How (the ways) I procrastinate
- Getting help is ok even with data entry and statistics
- That you need to get in and do things – just write no matter what!
- Huge amount – too much; too much to specify
- The kinds of people – and myself as being a theorist! The success rate of submitted theses is 100%!
- I am not alone, I can do it. Sounds like a Nike ad.
- Organisation and clarifying expectations
- Need to be proactive in letting supervisor know what you want from them and what specific feedback you need
- To fit my teaching in around my thesis instead of vice versa
- I don't think there is new information, however it is good to hear these things again and in a very well presented workshop
- Write don't procrastinate, as this is a job. Don't feel guilty.
- Guilt is not my friend, stop procrastinating and allocate time for specific job and do it
- Everyone is having same issues; regular hours
- Tricks of the trade – how to go about the process – how to manage all the areas – supervisor, my writing, my distractions, etc

- To take positive steps for completion
- That my situation is not unique!
- That PhD is about persistence, and that help should be used. If I stay organised and committed, use help, I will get my PhD.
- PhD is a process of writing your ideas. Writing is an important part of a thesis
- That my problems are 'common'
- Importance of supervisor; importance of the writing process itself for forming the thesis

3. What personal insights or awareness have you gained?

- Doesn't have to be perfect; set deadlines
- That my thesis won't change the world!
- About the reality of the PhD – the level expected
- To be more realistic
- Much of what I was feeling and thinking is what others feel and think too – not alone
- You can get help from others without compromising your work
- Well, I will just write and write. Don't be a perfectionist. And doing a PhD isn't as difficult as I thought
- Getting help from people around me. PhD is not to get a Nobel prize, rather a learning process
- Realised how much time is wasted doing nothing and I have to rearrange day
- How slack I have been in my routine
- How much of my life is dedicated to procrastination
- Not regular enough
- That it can be done, just need to keep plugging away
- Self awareness of my unrealistic expectations about my written work
- Building regular routine is key to success
- Standards too high, persistence too low
- I thought I was doing a lot of working at the PhD but I don't do enough 'real' work
- I'm definitely forced to be honest with myself about where I'm currently at
- Need for regular meetings with supervisor
- I'm not alone!
- I discovered my weak points such as writing a draft and sending it
- My supervisor's type – theorist; my type – pragmatist

- The need to be realistic, to accept that it cannot be perfect and not become one's own worst enemy
- If I keep at it I will almost definitely get a PhD – be realistic
- It made me think of which of the areas I am failing at. I already knew (deep inside) but these 2 hours forced me into thinking about that.
- Writing crap leads to perfection and completion
- I procrastinate
- The distractions I didn't regard as such; to know that everyone is self-conscious and terrified of the thought of having their work critiqued.
- I have been guilty of all the stumbling blocks – especially excuses for not writing
- That my 'work' habits aren't very effective
- That everyone has low points, and that staying in touch with your supervisor is key
- I developed good confidence in my ability
- My feelings about this process have been affirmed in a helpful way
- I'm scared of writing – feel like I don't know enough, be accused of naivety. Main productivity hours (morning)
- My 'personality type' as a science researcher ('reflector')

4. Would you recommend this course to other PhD students?

Yes – 41

No – 0

- Yes
- Yes, it's entertaining
- Absolutely
- Most definitely
- Yes, helpful and amusing
- Yes. He is very good
- Very much!
- Yes, yes, yes! Definitely! I wish I could have got this course 2 years ago!
- Yes of course
- Yes, especially those at earlier stage of PhD

5. How would you rate this workshop?

Mean rating: **9.0** on a scale of 0-10 where 0 is of no use and 10 is excellent.