

Evaluation of The Seven Secrets of Highly Successful PhD Students– 2007

On 3 April 07, Hugh Kearns from Flinders University, ran a seminar, The Seven Secrets of Highly Successful PhD Students, at La Trobe University. The seminar ran from 2:00pm to 4:00pm and about 110 PhD students at various stages of candidature attended. At the end of the program the participants completed an evaluation form. The following pages summarise the participant's responses. The average rating for the seminar was 9.15 (on scale of 0-10 where 0 is of no use and 10 is excellent).

Total of 67 evaluations returned

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

I need to write something everyday

Move on with it! I have been stuck at 48,000 words for 12 months.

Saying no to others and set a schedule and stick to it

Say no to distractions more often. Set boundaries with my supervisor.

Tackle ethics application. Write chapter.

I will change the title to reduce the scope so it's a realistic proposition

Stop getting distracted. And dedicate the time I have put aside for my PhD.

Start writing anything!

Finish some draft papers, send something to my supervisors, ask for help with data analysis.

Follow all 7-secrets and practice them along my studies

Re-examine priorities – commit to most important priorities

Treat thesis like a job and set aside work time

Relax by not working 12 hours a day, take holidays without feeling guilty

Dedicate time to write; hand in drafts regularly

Meet with supervisor. Be brave.

I will begin writing a literature review rather than just reading everything. I will also set myself a finish date for this and inform my supervisor of this. This will make it harder to weasel my way out of it or put it off.

Strategies to combat perfectionism.

2. What specifically have you learned from this program?

That everyone feels lost or overwhelmed at some point, but there are ways to deal/cope with it.

Commonality of PhD depression; practical advice on overcoming obstacles; realised that the writing assists the thinking processes; awareness of common traps and errors.

I can get help!

Persistence; avoid distractions; stop procrastinations

Be realistic and say no to distractions

I am training to be a good researcher, not changing the field

Structured steps to completing the PhD

I am now really aware of what I have been doing to shut myself down

Keep putting one foot in front of the other; not to worry about the quality of my writing

To have more confidence in myself

I need to be consistent and will eventually reach my goal!

I'm not unique in my feelings of phoniness and concerns with the value of my work.

That I'm not alone; this (PhD) is a lesson not a finality

It's a manageable process

A lot about where I am going wrong and that it probably isn't that bad after all

Thesis is written work. I should balance between reading and writing.

To be realistic and know that many other students feel the same way as I do (eg. distraction, high standard, and feeling bad).

To be realistic about what I can achieve, set achievable goals

Effective steps to progress completion

Reinforcing things I sort of know; need to write, write, write.

3. What personal insights or awareness have you gained?

Perfectionism – how it impedes the work – getting it into perspective helps you combat the obstacles perfectionism puts up

Awareness of my perfectionism and procrastination

A PhD is a job I have to do; need to be realistic how far I need to go with my programme

I need to change my mindset

It is important that everyday writing is useful for a step up

A PhD is 90% persistence and 10% intelligence, and isn't a Nobel prize

I'm not alone

I have to get over the impostor syndrome and enjoy the process of becoming a better researcher

Practical advice and action to do now

I want things to be perfect. I must write even if I feel unready.

I am a theorist – I've been theorising for nearly 8 years

My experience is not an isolated one

I'm going to finish this thesis

My belief and efficiency will get me through

PhD is always in my top 3 priorities

PhD is hard work. But what is important is how you manage it

How valuable we are as PhD students

Where I get distracted and strategies I can use to address these

I can do it, I just have to!

Things I avoid and maybe why I avoid them!

That I actually want to finish this thing!

My capacity for distraction is one of my greatest talents. Completing the PhD means focusing.

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

Yes – 66

No – 0

No answer - 1

Definitely, thank you very much for the opportunity!

Highly – extremely useful

Yes, of course

I'd like to strongly recommend this course

If they are struggling and feeling isolated yes.

Absolutely – without doubt

Definitely – a real wake-up call and eye opener

Yes, was very useful in terms of alleviating anxiety about having to create a perfect piece of work.

Yes, definitely a great idea!

Yes +++

Absolutely. I wish that I had heard this a couple of years ago.

Yes, very much.

Strongly recommended

Yes. It is useful for PhD students.

Absolutely, should be early in candidature

5. How would you rate this workshop?

Mean score: 9.15 (on scale of 0-10 where 0 is of no use and 10 is excellent)