

Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision

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Helping doctoral student write offers a new approach to doctoral writing. By treating research as writing and writing as research, the authors offer pedagogical strategies for doctoral supervisors that will assist the production of well argued and lively dissertations.

It is clear that many doctoral candidates find research writing complicated and difficult, but the advice they receive often glosses over the complexities of writing and /or locates the problem in the writer. Rejecting the DIY websites and manuals that promote a privatized, skills-based approach to writing research, Kamler and Thomson provide a new framework for scholarly work that is located in personal, institutional and cultural contexts. Their discussion of the complexities of forming a scholarly identity is illustrated by stories and writings of actual doctoral students.

The pedagogical approach developed in the book is based on the notion of writing as a social practice. This approach allows supervisors to think of doctoral writers as novices who need to learn new ways with words as they enter the discursive practices of scholarly communities. This involves learning sophisticated writing practices with specific sets of conventions and textual characteristics. The authors offer supervisors practical advice on helping with commonly encountered writing tasks such as the proposal, the journal abstract, the literature review and constructing the dissertation argument.

In conclusion, the present a persuasive argument that universities must move away from simply auditing supervision to supporting the development of scholarly research communities. Any doctoral supervisor keen to help their students develop as academics will find the new ideas presented in this book fascinating and insightful reading.

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