

## **INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS AGREEING TO BE INTERVIEWED**

### **Doctoral Examiners' Perceptions and Experiences of Problematic Examining Situations**

#### ***The Research – focus and genesis***

Research looking at the doctoral examination process has tended to focus on the perceptions and experiences of students, the practicalities of the viva situation, or on the ways in which examiners read doctoral theses and come to decisions about what recommendation to make. This project, however, concentrates on the perceptions and experiences of examiners faced with what they consider to be difficult and/or problematic situations that may arise at any stage of the examination process, from the initial approach to be an examiner, through to signing off the thesis and beyond.

The idea for the research arose when I had 3 consecutive differently difficult examining experiences. Having shared these experiences with colleagues who reciprocated with their own tales, I decided to undertake a relatively small scale, unfunded study with a view to developing a proposal for a larger future project.

Doctoral examining is a significant aspect of academic work. Making assessments about the quality of theses can be, in itself, a difficult task involving, *inter alia*, academic, intellectual and ethical judgements. The actual process of examining can be emotionally stressful given the sorts of investments students typically have made in getting to the viva stage. Conscientious examiners put a lot of time, effort and energy into the examining process. When problems and difficulties arise examiners can feel inadequately prepared and/or equipped to deal with them. Greater knowledge and awareness about the nature of difficulties and how people have resolved them could make a valuable contribution to academic professional development.

#### ***Your involvement***

You have volunteered to tell me about your experiences as a doctoral examiner. This is likely to take around an hour or however long you need in order to tell your story to your satisfaction. With your permission I will record our conversation but the recording will only be for my own use. I may, however, quote from what you have to say in publications that may ensue, although any attribution will be to a pseudonym. I acknowledge that some difficult experiences may need to be disguised to minimise risk of identification and where necessary this will be done.

You can, of course, decide to withdraw at any stage.

The research has been reviewed under the ethics review protocol of the University of Sheffield.

**Contact details**

You can contact me via email at [p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:p.j.sikes@sheffield.ac.uk) or on 0114 2228158. If you have any complaints or concerns about this project that you do not feel able to share with me, please contact the Head of the School of Education, Professor Jackie Marsh at [j.a.marsh@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.marsh@sheffield.ac.uk) or on 0114 2228166.