

## Book Review

### **Phillips, M. Estelle & Pugh, S. Derek (2015) *How to Get a PhD***

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'How to get a PhD' is the definitive and comprehensive guide to succeeding in the practical application of undertaking a course of PhD study. This book is written in language that is easy to understand and explains the myriad of relationships and changes that you might encounter as you progress through the stages of PhD study.

In the beginning, the book advises the prospective candidate to ponder the basic questions of why they wish to embark on this course of potential intellectual solitude. This part also illuminates the nature of doctoral education which is essential required understanding, in order to maximise successful navigation of the research landscape. Firm foundations that can be returned to, if and when the research becomes challenging.

The nature of the supervisory relationship is discussed in depth as are other relationships that may be encountered along the way. The transference of skills acquired during the PhD journey to other institutions outside Academia, notably referred to as 'The Roberts Agenda' is extremely relevant in today's evolutionary labour market and information about the qualification of a PhD and the professional skills required, coupled with the aims of Universities and Research Councils is included.

A specific chapter on 'How not to get a PhD' would be the go to Chapter for initial guidance, as it has lots of scenarios which explain fully the points that must be understood if one is not going to fall into the traps of time and expertise mismanagement. Research and how to do it, is a small part, so if you are completely unfamiliar with this aspect of Academia then possibly this book would not fulfil all of your requirements. However, in terms of structuring a PhD thesis (which is the culmination of the four elements of research; field, topic, methodology and contribution) this book has everything. It is detailed, well-structured and

has an 'Action Summary' which is outlined at the beginning of each Chapter. This is a very useful tool in aiding the correct understanding and digestion of all the information contained therein. The PhD process is explained fully and the psychological importance of organisation and revision are outlined as tools with which to keep the Research on track. One way of tackling PhD student isolation is the Doctoral Cohort System which, when flexibly adapted to meet the needs of students and department, can be creatively productive and this is one area which would benefit from a more in depth study (exploring possible scenarios) as part of the 'How to get a PhD' book.

The Chapter entitled 'some challenges you may encounter in the academic environment' is incredibly illuminating and reassuring with useful and practical ways of countering these challenges. Information concerning the 'Institutional responsibilities' of PhD programmes is outlined in one of the closing chapters, providing sound necessary knowledge.

One of the most significant overall aspects of this book is attention to the professionalism and standards required for the attainment of the PhD qualification. This book adheres to, promotes and maintains that at all times, even though it is written in everyday language.

In short, this book will be a constant companion to the PhD student, it is entirely interesting and relevant and lends itself to being read and re-read and used as an aide to helping the PhD student remain focussed.