UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Preparing your 1st year report– some tips and suggestions

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What it all about?

- First year PhD students are not initially registered for the PhD
- Your formal registration depend on successfully submitting and being “examined” on a first year report

- Why?
  - So that you don’t fail later on

It’s a checkpoint

Please refer to the email of 20th April 2017

Please discuss with your supervisor

What's the process?

- Prepare report and submit via Moodle
  - Deadline 7th July 2017
  - Need to submit "Declaration and Certificate of Submission" too
  - Max 12,000 words (best if >8,000)
- Two assessors arrange a viva
  - They explore your topic and progress with you
  - They submit a report
- Your supervisor makes a recommendation
- The Department and Degree Committee review these and then they make a recommendation:
  - If not successful, you normally get a second chance

What should the report contain?

- An introduction
- A statement of the research objective(s), placing these in context with previous work, and outlining the approach(es) to be taken
- A description of the elements of work that have been completed, and how they connect to the PhD research objective(s)
- An outline plan for the program of research in subsequent years, including a list of the tasks to be undertaken, an assessment of the resources needed: e.g. data, equipment, computing resources, and realistic estimates of timings and dates
- A bibliography

Why should it contain this stuff?

- To recommend continuation to the PhD program the assessors must address two questions:
  - Based on the evidence you have seen and heard, is the candidate likely to have the *aptitude for doctoral research*?
  - Is the *project* likely to yield a thesis of doctoral standard within the normal time-scale for a PhD (3-4 years of full-time research, including the probationary year)

Is there satisfactory evidence, **as provided by the written work and the oral** of:		Delete one
1	*The student's **ability** and **aptitude** is at a level appropriate for a doctoral candidate after one year*	**Yes/No**
2	*The student's **knowledge** of the field in general*	**Yes/No**
3	*The **project's** suitability for completion within the normal time-scale for a PhD (ie 4 years from commencement)*	**Yes/No**
4	*The student working effectively within this **research environment** (i.e. that in which the PhD would be carried out)* *If you wish to comment on supervisory arrangements, please write a separate **'Confidential'** note to the Degree Committee and submit it with your reports*	**Yes/No**

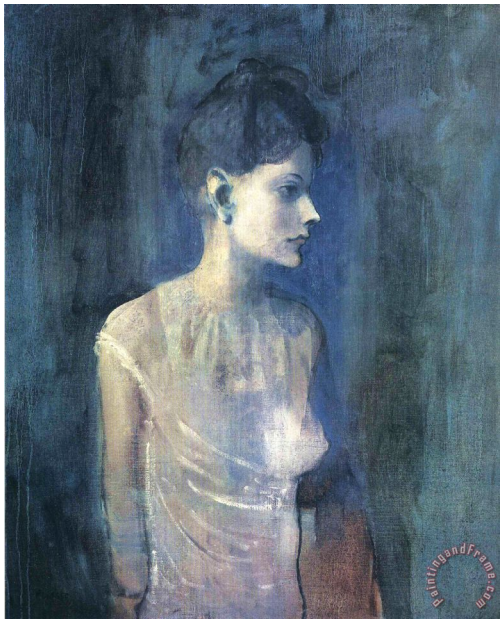
Implications

- Have you demonstrated you are “able” and have the “aptitude” for research?
- Have you demonstrated an appropriate extent of knowledge?
- Is your project feasible?
- Is your environment the right one?

- You don’t have to describe everything you have done
- You do have to make clear what your contributions have been

- It isn’t a draft/the first part of your thesis
- It doesn’t ”count” as part of your thesis

Typical shortcomings revealed in a Y1 report



- Written and oral presentation is weak

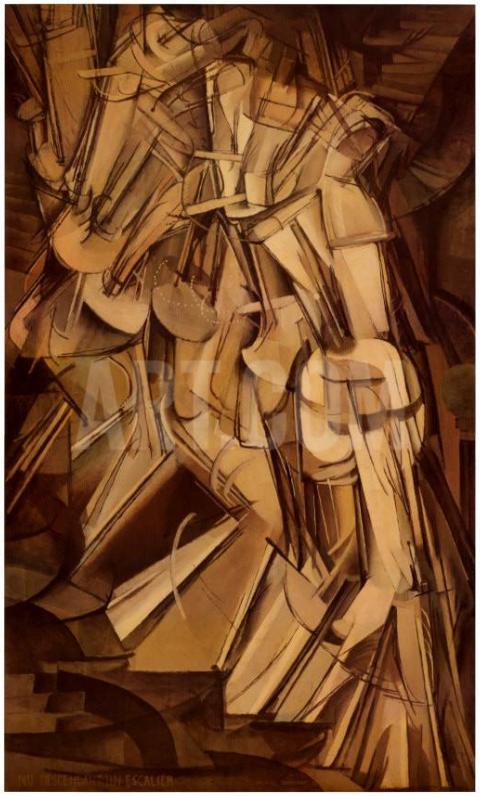
- Plans for subsequent work are too vague
- Dependencies have not been considered
- Contingency for writing has been ignored
- Contingency for iteration has been ignored

- Knowledge of landscape is poor
- Development of critical thinking has been limited

- Evolution of supervisor/student relationship has been less than expected

Other shortcomings revealed in the process

- Non-technical skills have been sidelined
  - Presentation/communication
  - Networking
  - Planning
  - Time management
- Co-operative skills have not been developed
- Independence has been slow to grow



So, what to do?

- Review what you have done
- Start now
- Don’t panic
- Discuss it all with your supervisor

- Any questions?