

File 20110826.1304: I sent the following email to Dr Martin afterwards:

Dear Dr Martin,

Thanks for your time this morning. Further to my strategy for the confirmation viva, my goal is to convince the assessors that I am on track and powerfully making progress towards finishing, a little behind schedule but understandably so, and it is in their best interest to confirm my status and keep moving forward. It gets me off their plate, moves in the direction of another successful finish, doesn't waste anybody's time, and allows them to extract a solemn promise from me.

My arguments: (1) I followed their advice from last time faithfully; (2) I have made real progress in the new direction; (3) the research question is an important one and needs answering; (4) there is no funding body imposing a deadline; (5) [irrelevant but true] I want to finish more than anything in the world.

Counter-arguments I might expect: (A) the University cares about time-to-finish and completion rates because others evaluate it on those statistics; (B) I might be taking up one of a limited number of slots for new graduate students each year; (C) the department is evaluated on its time-to-finish statistics also; (D) part of the education is learning to deliver results on time; (E) extra supervision time takes time away from my supervisor's own research.

Counter-counter arguments: I know that some students, handed a clearly defined project at the outset, finish earlier; I am working on a topic that is more obscure. I understand, from working in industry, the need to deliver results on time, but science cannot always be held to a schedule. Am I taking up scarce resources? I hope not, but it would be a sunk-cost fallacy to cut me off this close to finishing successfully.

-Joe

References