

Linda letters

Dear John,

How are you? I'm still in Sidmouth. My mother finally passed away -- peacefully -- last Sunday after a week or two of excruciating pain, so it was very much a relief. Should be back at Barchester by the middle of next week -- seemingly not too soon since the building work in department STILL isn't sorted!

But I'm writing to you for advice -- and for your interest! -- about a PhD viva about to go spectacularly wrong! Worse: I'm liable to be held accountable myself on three counts: as temporary supervisor, as PG Director in Cultural Studies and now as HOD!!

It is a Guru story. The student in question was signed up to do the PhD with our media celebrity Professor Roger Harrison (bought in for the last RAE if you recall). His is certainly an expert in the field of the PhD -- media broadcasting -- but, as someone has since pointed out, his own work in this area is more cultural journalism than academic scholarship.

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period in which I looked after him my main concern was to encourage him enough to hang in. I really only saw bits of the preliminary chapters, the problem being that he apparently never went beyond them!

From your point of view this is a wonderful warning story of how EVERY supervisor must be given proper training for the job in hand; and it is also a warning about a thesis shifting disciplines since myself and others in Cultural Studies wouldn't necessarily spot the weaknesses of this one in historical terms.

My faint hope here is that the examiners will be kind enough to allow a resubmission and that the student will agree to do this. I guess the Cultural Studies Dept will have to accept liability, but damage limitation is the name of the game?

In abstract terms, an interesting guru story though -- is it not?!! What do you suggest?

Best wishes
Linda

Team task

Prepare a response to Linda's letter and write the main points on the acetate provided.

