SUPERVISING DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

Surviving and Thriving in Academia provides short, accessible books for navigating the many challenges, responsibilities and opportunities of academic careers. This series is particularly dedicated to supporting the professional journeys of early- and mid-career academics and doctoral students, but will present books of use to scholars at all stages in their careers. Books within this series draw on real-life examples from international scholars, offering practical advice and a supportive and encouraging tone throughout.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Chris Rolph
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This book has been written by 22 authors from 11 countries on 5 continents. It is deliberately and necessarily eclectic, seeking neither to generalise from specific examples nor to normalise to a meaningless average. Instead, it presents glimpses of the richness that abounds in doctoral supervision around the globe. Despite the diversity and difference, there are common threads – one being the notion of the journey made by doctoral candidates and the guiding nature of supervisors who walk alongside their protégés every step of the way. Almost every chapter picks up this recurring motif, along with the implications of stamina and struggle, dark valleys, monotonous plains and joyous mountaintop moments. The contents are arranged in an approximation of this journey, noting key milestones along the way.

Given the range of contexts and disciplines from which contributors speak there are diverse institutional regulations which apply to doctoral study, and consequently variations in the language that is used. Authors speak from personal experience but have generally avoided discussing location-specific structures and practices, and stuck to UK conventions for labelling: thesis (rather than dissertation) for the written work,

and academic colleagues rather than faculty. We often use the generic term *doctoral candidates* in recognition of the variety of doctorates and types of student; the ambition is to be inclusive of full- and part-time studies, professional and distance doctorates, as well as the more traditional PhD. It will be for readers to decide if and how much the examples in these chapters can be applied to their own particular situations.

We hope that our readers will include early career academics: those colleagues who are finding their feet in the academic world and, in all likelihood, have only recently been awarded their own doctorate. A longstanding but unwritten assumption of the academy has been that the experience of being supervised through a doctorate is both necessary and sufficient for someone to take on doctoral candidates and become a supervisor themselves. In recent years universities have begun to pay more attention to the quality of teaching and learning, and the support their students are given, provoked to some degree by neoliberal quality metrics – but this has mainly revolved around the huge undergraduate population. The experiences of doctoral candidates, and the skills and qualities that are needed in their supervisors, have received much less attention, though the moral imperative is no less.

Even for skilled and experienced lecturers, the pedagogy of 1:1 (or 2:1) supervision may present new challenges, as they will need to be guide, mentor, expert, critic, coach and more as the doctoral study progresses. Our hope is that the chapters that follow will help academic colleagues to approach supervision with a recognition of the breadth of practice that exists, along with examples and suggestions that may promote and provoke their own professional development. This is not a handbook or definitive guide, but a collection of insights that are intended to be illustrative and supportive. The doctorate may be the highest accredited qualification one can achieve,

but it does not represent an end to the learning process. On the contrary, taking the next step and supervising doctoral students can itself present a steep learning curve, and we hope this book will provide some support to those taking on that challenge.