CONFLICTING ADVICE

Student Perspective 1

I’m part of a group dissertation project. One of the problems I’m facing in my dissertation is that the advice keeps changing. Our two supervisors have differing ideas. On occasion I would get different feedback on the same draft. It wasn’t a bad thing. It didn’t happen very often so I kind of combined their feedback and sort of do a bit of each and see what they said at the next draft. It wasn’t anything too dramatic. It wasn’t like something that would really impact the study or my write-up.

Our supervisors have been known to change their advice over time. There were a few times where we would discuss something and the supervisors said we couldn’t do that and then come second semester then they would say, “Yeah we can do that now.” But it was sort of like we could’ve prepared for that a lot earlier. When things change that’s when it becomes really difficult because then we start getting like a mindset we’re going to do this way, we’re working towards that method and then when it changes it’s like okay now we have to do that process all over again and we’ve lost time.

More problematic is that other students in my group get different feedback from me. So, say, for example, on one dissertation they say “Oh, this is not needed,” but in another it’ll be like, “Oh, this is good,” you know. I’m very, very thankful that the other students in my group, they’re very generous with sharing whatever they have. That’s how we found out that our feedback is very inconsistent. Now whenever we get feedback, we just share it as much as we can. But until we started sharing, we were all quite confused because we have a limited level of knowledge of research, so we need to rely on someone who has more experience to guide us.
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Student Perspective 2

I had an issue with getting different feedback from different sources. I got different feedback from the dissertation coordinator and stats adviser than from my supervisor. My supervisor told me just to ignore them, but I’m concerned that she might not be that familiar with the requirements for honours dissertations in this school. I felt torn. It was all well and good for my supervisor to say that, but she wasn’t the one submitting the honours dissertation for marking. So, yeah, it caused me a significant amount of stress, I guess, as to how to satisfy them all. You know, I wanted to satisfy the requirements of the dissertation and do the by-the-book approach with my statistics, but I didn’t wanna offend my supervisor. It kind of felt, in a way, like I imagine maybe a broken family to be, like your supervisor is a parent but then you’ve some government regulatory body that controls how the dissertation is done. And then you’ve got sort of maybe — I don’t know, the uncle or something who’s the sort of stats consultant, and you feel like their opinions kind of clash and you’re not sure really where your loyalties lie because you sort of respect the stats consultant’s opinions or views and things like that, but you also feel quite attached to your supervisors’ way of doing things. Sometimes I’d ask students who had other supervisors what advice they had got, because, you know, as students we all ask each other, “Oh what do you think about this and that?” “Well my supervisor said this and well mine said that.” And it’s like “Eergh! Now what do I do?”