



## NEEDY STUDENTS

### Student Perspective

Going through my honours year, it was my first research project, so I wanted someone to hold my hand. We are students; we need to be shown. Although by this stage, we should have the skills and the knowledge to be able to articulate and put together a major piece of research, as we're doing, we still need to be taught the fundamentals of how to do it properly and what we really need to do and scrutinise every bit and all that kind of stuff. I think close supervision is definitely needed when you're doing your first dissertation project and you don't really know what you're doing. Or you might know what you're doing but you just, you don't have the confidence that you know what you're doing because it's all new and suddenly it's a year-long project that makes or breaks what you can do. Or it feels like it makes or breaks what you can do. I was a lot needier at the start of the year, I probably wasn't quite sure what I had got myself into. Now I'm a lot more confident in myself and a lot more relaxed.





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### New Supervisor Perspective

I supervise a group of undergraduate dissertation students. I've been surprised at how much hand-holding my students expect. I came from the place where in fourth year, I didn't get hand holding; I did fine. I didn't think students needed their hands held throughout the process. The dissertation coordinator's been giving me feedback on the needs of undergraduate dissertation students, letting me know they need a lot more hand holding than I was providing. After I spoke with the coordinator, there were things that clicked or at least I knew more of what groups needed. They're credit average students and they may or may not know how to do stuff. I was expecting that they would know their stuff and I forget that maybe they don't because they're not distinction students, or students that want to do research, so I think that kind of advice would have helped if I'd had it earlier.





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### Coordinator Perspective

Students may experience a range of personal problems during the dissertation project. I've had births, deaths, and marriages! Other students have problems with health. Health is a big, big thing. It's really hard to know when poor health has had a significant impact on their ability to progress. So, sometimes having a week off at one point of the year makes no difference to the outcome, but two days off at a critical point might put them a month behind. I have a joke that sometimes I feel like a Social Worker rather than an Honours coordinator. You know, they're young adults who are working out their lives and got lots going on. There are a lot of personal issues, where something awful has happened in their lives and they realise that they're not giving their dissertation the sort of attention it needs, and they're worried about failing, or not meeting deadlines, things like that. That's quite common. I've spent a lot time just sitting with students and helping them to find ways not to withdraw, just because their dissertation is becoming problematic, so things like taking leaves of absence, applying for deferrals on occasion, reducing their course work in order to stay with the dissertation, because once they take a leave of absence, it's very much more difficult for them to come back. It's almost as if they have to start from scratch again, so I really try and avoid that. I try and keep the continuity of the dissertation even if that means that it's gonna take them longer with their course work units overtime, so that's quite a big issue.

Then of course you have to deal with the supervisors as well because there are due dates for things especially the seminars. And so, you're trying and have to work around, "Okay, this student can have a two-week extension but they're gonna have to do this seminar on the same day as all the others." They can't just shift everything back a fortnight because we can't get everybody back again.

