

The Post-Humboldtian Doctorate: implications for supervisory practice

Dr Stan Taylor

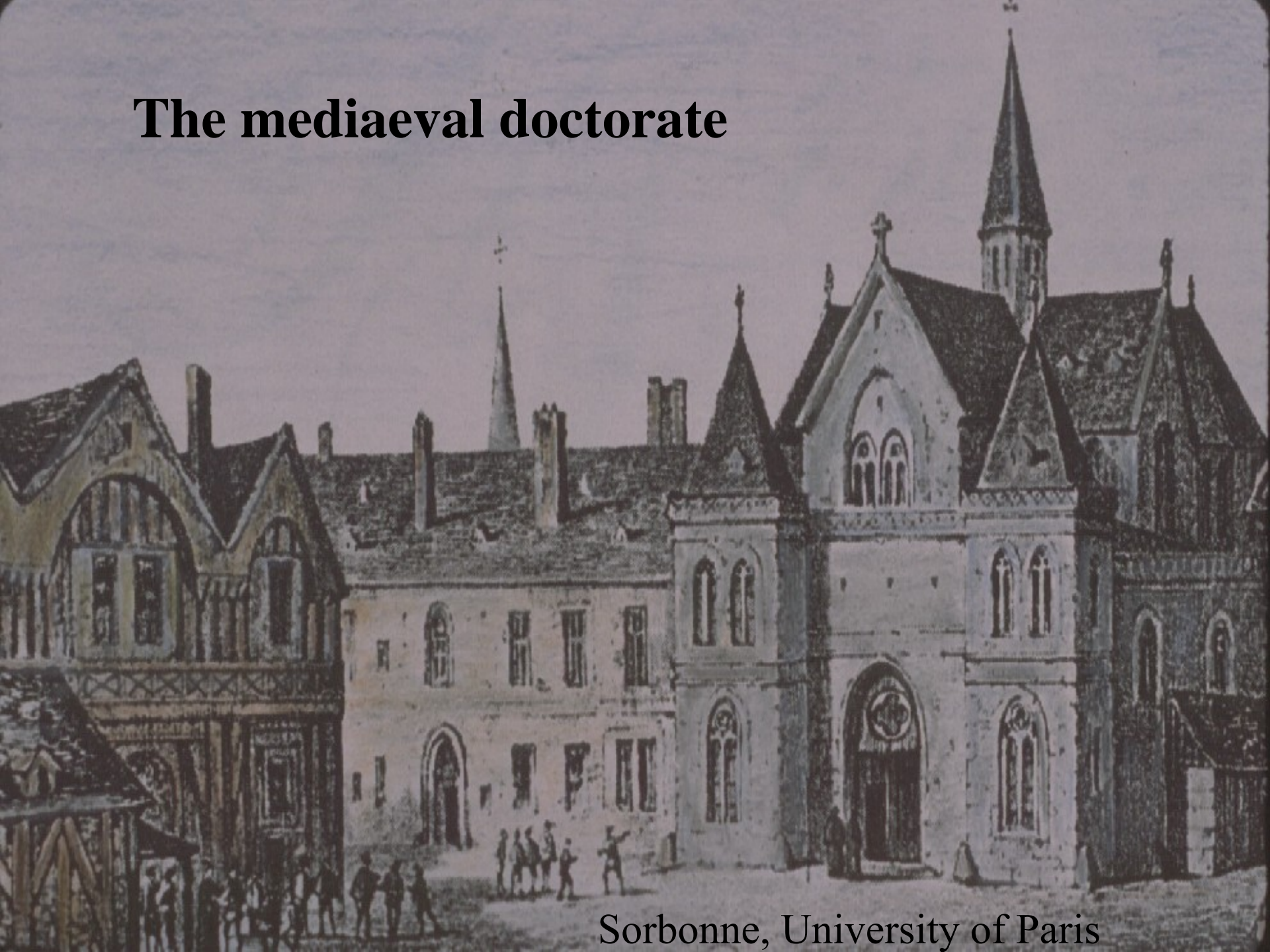
Objectives

- **to briefly outline the Humboldtian model;**
- **to look at recent developments in doctoral education;**
- **to look at the post-Humboldtian doctorate;**
- **to consider the implications for supervisory practice;**

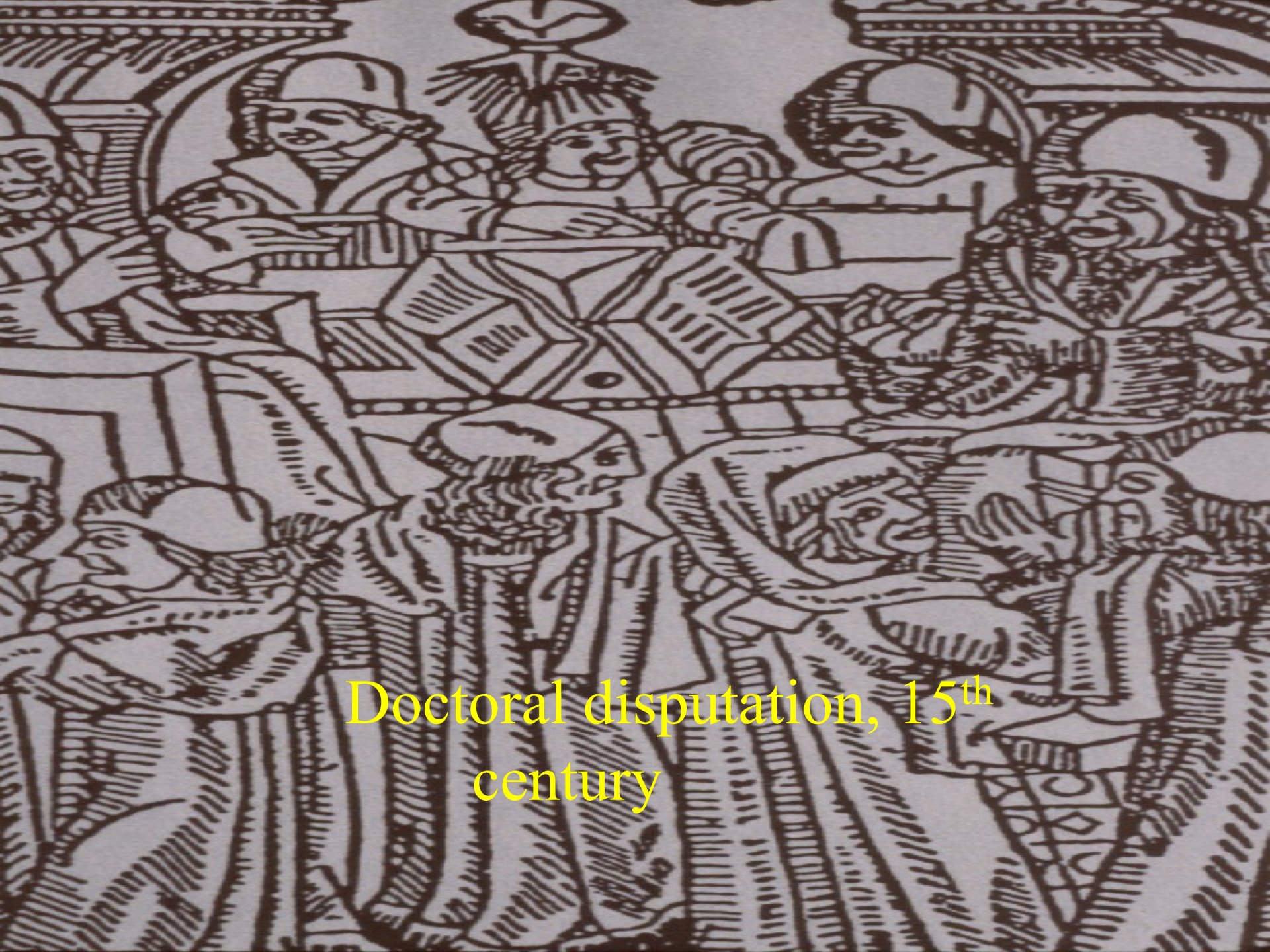
Programme

- 1.30 The changing landscape of doctoral education**
- 2.00 Discussion**
- 2.30 Break**
- 3.00 The implications for supervisory practice**
- 3.20 Discussion**
- 3.55 Plenary**
- 4.00 Close**

The mediaeval doctrate



Sorbonne, University of Paris



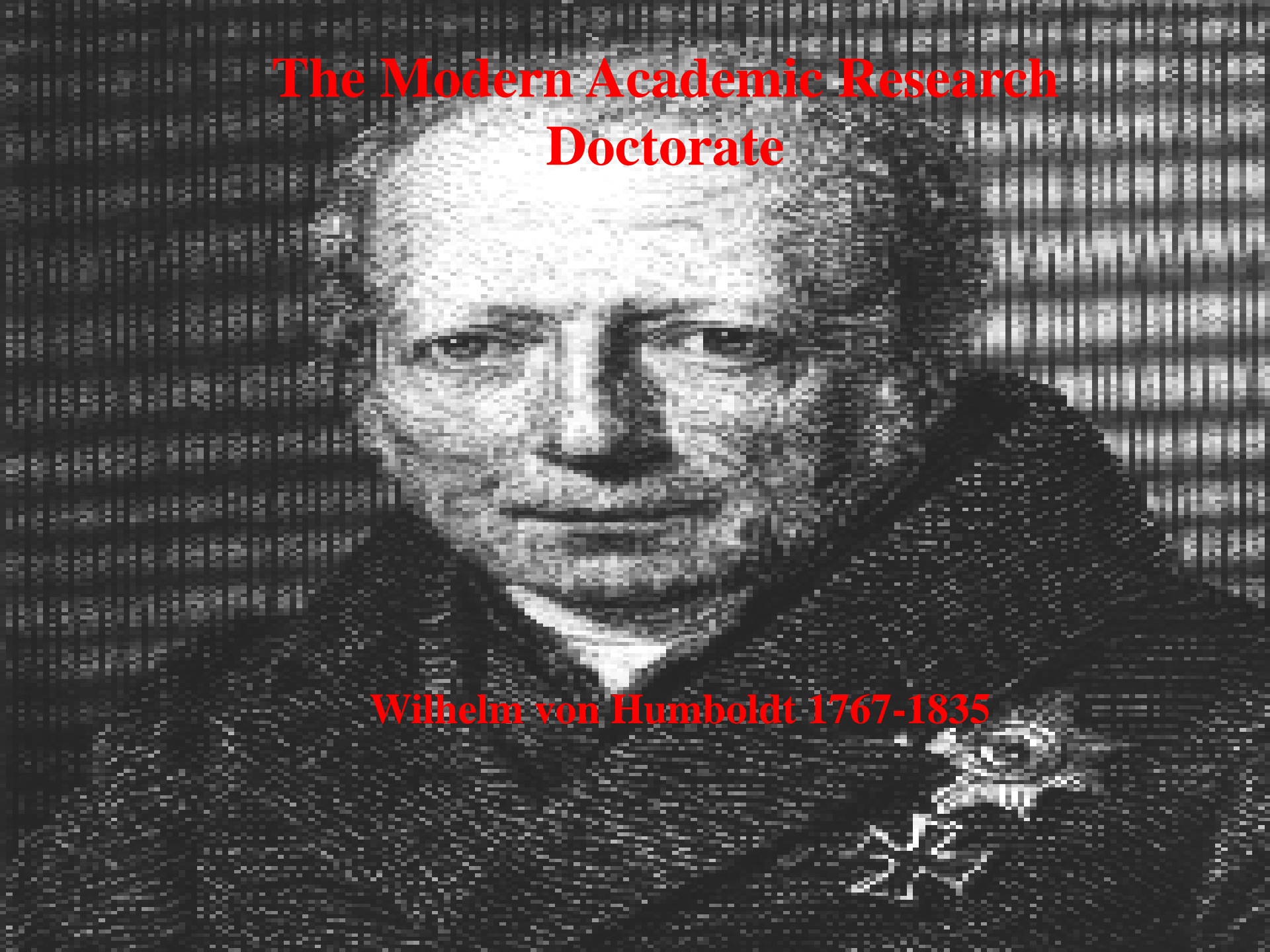
Doctoral disputation, 15th
century



D.D. Esq^r Bedell. M^oS D. D.D. Nobleman. D.D. L.L.D. M.D.
 In Surplice. " " In Congregaⁿ Robe. State Robe. Scarlet Robe. Congregation Robe.

The Modern Academic Research Doctorate

Wilhelm von Humboldt 1767-1835



The origins of the research doctorate

- **started with the new model of the research-based university advanced by Von Humboldt;**
- **proposed a new type of doctorate, one to be awarded for making an original contribution to knowledge and understanding in science;**
- **as science in those days was called natural philosophy, the new award was named ‘Doctor of Philosophy’, DPhil or PhD.**

To qualify for PhD, candidates had:

- to find themselves a Doctorvater (supervisor);
- complete a research project;
- write it up in the form of a thesis and
- borrowing from the older form of the doctorate, defend it at an oral examination.

The spread of the research doctorate

- **little interest in rest of Europe;**
- **main interest came from the US where first PhD was awarded by Yale in 1861 and quickly followed by others at Harvard, Michigan, and Pennsylvania**

The spread of the research doctorate (cont.)

- **at turn of 20th century, Germany and US were the biggest players in the global graduate student market;**
- **when the First World War demonstrated Germany's strength in science, UK government pressured the universities to adopt it and first PhD (DPhil) awarded by Oxford in 1920.**

The spread of the research doctorate (cont.)

- **in post-World War 2 era, research rises to the top of the agenda as the key to both economic growth and successful defence in a nuclear age;**
- **PhD adopted across the whole of Western Europe, with Italy the last to do so in 1988;**
- **in the 1990s, following the ‘velvet revolutions’ many countries in east-central Europe adopt the PhD as the standard.**

Recent developments in doctoral education

- **Massification;**
- **Internationalisation;**
- **Diversification;**
- **Commodification;**
- **McDonaldisation;**
- **Regulation;**
- **Capitalisation;**
- **Proliferation.**

Massification



Massification

- **Historically, ‘very few people, mostly of high attainment and motivation, undertook research degrees...’ (Joyner 2003: 124)**
- **Recent rapid expansion of numbers virtually all over globe;**
- **Now, many more research students to supervise.**

Internationalisation



Internationalisation

- 'Push' factors;

- Knowledge economy
- Expansion of undergraduate education

- Capacity constraints

- Reputation

% foreign

– UK	41
– France	25
– S Africa	23
– Canada	21
– Australia	20
– USA	14

Powell and Green (2007)

Diversification



Diversification

‘...Many supervisees barely socialised into the demands and rigours of an academic scholarly and research culture. [Such a culture] is especially inadequate to the needs of many PhD aspirants who, by historic cultural positioning, have not been invited to imagine themselves as subjects of genius.

Diversification (cont.)

These include all of who have been marginalised by the academic scholarly culture; women and men and women from the non-dominant class, ethnic or race positions.'

(Yeatman, cited Johnson et al (2000: 137).

Diversification (cont.)

- **Historically, most students went on to do research straight after an undergraduate degree.**
- **Still pattern in the sciences, but in other disciplines, a combination of debt and lack of research grants has led to delaying entry to research degree programmes**

Diversification (cont.)

The traditional view of graduate students is of newly-minted Bachelor's degree recipients engaged in full-time study. However, the decided majority of students...are quite different. They are older...and have family and career responsibilities.

Syverson (1996:1)

Commodification



30 11:46

Traditionally...

‘....the sad experience that I went through in the 1980s when I undertook a part-time PhD..I had little contact with my supervisor, except when I sent him draft chapters and he gave me (limited) feedback on them...I got fed up with it after about four years, but was encouraged to continue – with the implication that it was OK. I completed and had a viva without any preparation or information about what to expect...I was awarded an MPhil without any feedback as to why – my supervisor never made any further contact with me (ever)...I didn’t know of any appeal procedure...’

Morley et al. (2002: 263)

Now

The report for 2009 of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIJ) in the UK gives the case of a research student whose thesis was referred. The student ('S') complained to the institution that she had received inadequate supervision, and claimed compensation. The institution investigated and refused to take the matter further, so she turned to the OIA. Her complaint was found to be justified on the grounds that:

▪

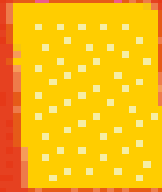
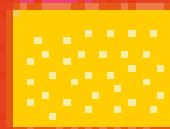
Now (cont.)

The University was unable to provide any records of supervision of S's research or minutes of meetings which took place to discuss S's dissatisfaction with the supervision. The supervisor had not completed any successful supervisions of the PhD...The OIA found that the University had failed to demonstrate that it complied with the normal levels of supervision and guidance routinely anticipated by students to ensure satisfactory progress in a research degree (31-32).

S was awarded compensation for the poor quality of supervision



McDonald's



TM

Key changes – McDonaldisation

**% target for submission % sanctions applied at:
within four years**

AHRC	70	Less than 70
BBSRC	70	Less than 70
EPSRC	80	None
ESRC	75	Less than 75
MRC	70	None

Qualification rates (% gaining doctorate in 7 years)

	2000-01	Rank	2001-2	Rank	2002-3	Rank
Lancaster	76	30	81	22	80	25
<i>Leeds</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>83</i>	<i>15</i>
Leicester	78	24	80	24	76	29
Liverpool	90	4	91	3	87	4
Loughborough	87	9	80	24	81	21
LSE	70	36	71	36	69	36
HEFCE (2010)						

Regulation



**The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**

Traditionally, research supervision has been seen as...



...in which student and supervisor engaged together as consenting adults, behind closed doors, away from the public gaze, and with little accountability to others. Supervisors were trusted not only to provide good academic guidance to their students, but also to nurture them as individuals and empower them as future professionals – usually with the tacit assumption that they will in turn become academics and pass on their wisdom to future generations of research students. Park (2008:2)

Now....

- **QAA Code of Practice;**
- **Requirement upon institutions to develop internal codes and to monitor implementation;**
- **Adherence checked at institutional audit with a published report.**



Capitalisation

Capitalisation

- **Traditional purpose was to train academic researchers;**
- **But from 1970s onwards fewer tenured academic posts and declining interest of doctoral graduates in staying in university employment;**
- **Issue then about purpose of doctorate;**
- **In 21st century, purpose re-defined in terms of producing human capital for the 'knowledge economies' .**

Capitalisation (cont.)

The traditional PhD was...aimed at producing researchers in the so-called Mode 1 of knowledge production, i.e. academic subject specialists who would conduct the search for knowledge for its own sake in line with the traditional academic values of truth, objectivity, and universality. But what was needed in the knowledge economies of the future was researchers trained in the so-called Mode 2 of knowledge production, i.e. researchers inside or outside academia who

Capitalisation (cont.)

were able to spot commercial opportunities for the application and exploitation of research, bring expertise to bear upon research problems, effectively manage research projects, and place and market the final product. In a nutshell, the traditional PhD was about producing academics, but the new knowledge economy required research entrepreneurs.

Taylor and Beasley (2005: 11-12)

Proliferation

- **Professional doctorates;**
- **Practice-based doctorates;**
- **Project-based doctorates.**

Humboldtian

Post-Humboldtian

Student population

Elite

Mass

Students composition

Homogenous

Diverse

Student-supervisor
relationships

Master-
apprentice

Producer-consumer

Duration of studies

As long as
it takes

Four years

External/institutional
involvement

Laisser-faire

Systems for monitoring
and quality assurance

Outcomes

Academic
reproduction

Production of human
capital for knowledge
economies

Awards

PhD thesis

New forms of PhD and
professional
doctorates.

Changes recognised by supervisors who...

...testified to the changes in their work. They described doctoral supervision between the 1970s and the 1990s as an intellectual and social enterprise, where personal boundaries were sometimes blurred but the roles of supervisors and students were clear: the supervisor provided oversight and guidance;

Over the past two decades or so (cont.)

the doctoral student was responsible for producing a seminal thesis that would secure his or her place as an authority within the field...*all* supervisors ... conceptualised their *current* work with doctoral students as significantly different from their former experiences.

Halse and Malfoy (2010: 80)

What are the implications for supervisory practice?

You should think about the potential implications for supervisory practice, and discuss these with colleagues in the group.

Increased student numbers

- **More students needing to be supervised;**
- **Broadening of range of research areas in which faculty are expected to supervise;**
- **Major impact on supervisory workloads;**
- **Pressure for increased time allowances;**
- **Pressure for novel solutions, e.g. group supervisions.**

Supporting international students

- **bring considerable benefits;**
- **Need support to overcome ‘study shock’ including:**
 - **different perceptions of academic roles;**
 - **different thinking and learning styles;**
 - **limited research experience and skills;**
 - **cultural and language issues in verbal and non-verbal communication;**
 - **producing academic writing;**
 - **and gaining access to departmental cultures.**

Supporting diverse home students - gender

Female doctoral candidates may variously:

- be given less time than men by male supervisors;
- relegated to marginal problems in the lab.;
- be physically isolated from the main research group;
- be given less critical feedback;
- be directly discriminated against;
- be subjected to sexual harassment;
- receive less encouragement from their supervisors to publish.

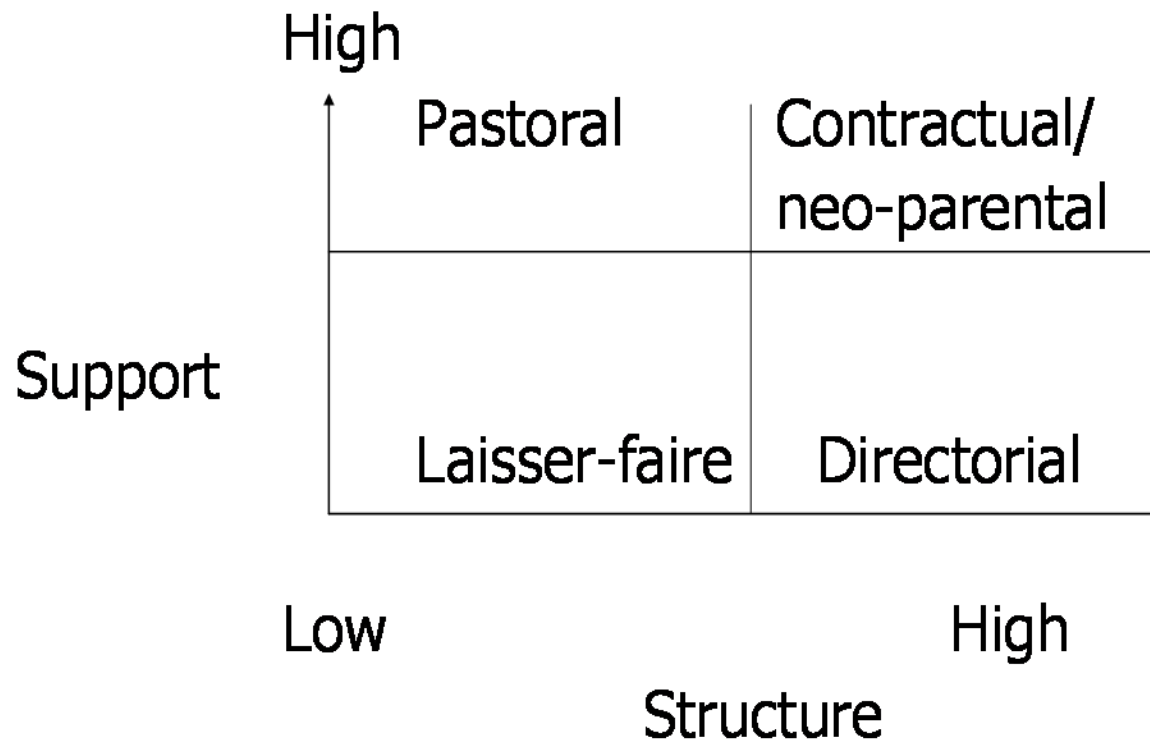
Meeting higher student expectations

- **Supervision traditionally regarded as an adjunct of research**
- **Now seen as a specialised branch of teaching, albeit ‘..the most complex and subtle form of teaching in which we engage’ (Brown and Atkins: 1988: 115)**
- **Extension of ‘teaching styles’ to ‘supervisory styles’**

Paradigms of supervisory styles

- structure – who is responsible for organising and managing the research project
- support – who is responsible for supporting the candidate through the slings and arrows of life as a researcher
- 'low' and 'high'

Gatfield's Paradigm of Supervisory Styles



Supervisory styles and student needs

- *laissez-faire* – assumes student capable of managing both project and themselves
- *pastoral* – assumes student capable of managing project but needs personal support

Supervisory styles and student needs (cont.)

- directorial – assumes student not capable of managing research project but can manage themselves
- neo-parental – assumes student needs high levels of both academic and pastoral support.

Congruence between preferred styles and student needs

In the beginning, I was not very confident of my scholarly abilities. However, I had years of life experience and was an established mature professional capable of taking control of my actions...I did not want a supervisor who directed, inspected or controlled my doctoral process...I wanted my supervisor to be a 'critical friend'...I deliberately chose my supervisor for this capacity...and found this both an effective and appropriate form of supervision' (Chapman 2002)

Possible discongruence between preferred styles and student needs

‘[Chinese] students’ expectations of the student/supervisory relationship were based on previous cultural and educational expectations and their perceptions of whether or not those expectations were fulfilled. Accustomed to undertaking joint research with their supervisors and developing very close emotional bonds, the majority of students felt unprepared for the expectations of supervisors that they undertake independent research’.

McClure (2007: 204)

Possible discongruence between preferred styles and student needs

I don't think my advisor knows how to deal with Asian students...Koreans believe teachers are equal to parents. Though, sometimes, they are strict and fearful, they are completely on student's side'

Kim (2007:183)

Preferred supervisory style

- You should complete the Brown and Atkins questionnaire. You should compare your scores with a neighbour, and discuss any differences.

Supporting students to complete and on time

Supervisors need:

- **to be able to detect the early signs of students falling behind;**
- **to know how to intervene.**

Early signs of non-completers and stallers

- constantly changing the topic or planned work
- avoiding communication with their supervisor(s)
- isolating themselves from peers
- avoiding submitting work for review

Mananthunga (2002)

Reasons – cognitive domain

- students lacking the knowledge and skills to effectively undertake their research projects
- afraid to admit it to supervisors, often for fear of losing face
- procrastinate with the result of delay or non-completion

Ahern and Manathunga (2005)

Reasons – affective domain

- unrealistic expectations of what is required for doctorate (perfectionism)
- performance anxieties when unable to achieve (diminished self-esteem)
- intellectual paralysis leading to delay or non-completion

Ahern and Manathunga (2005)

Reasons – social domain

- lack of academic integration into department
 - lack of social integration into department
 - isolation leading to non-completion or delay
- Ahern and Manathunga (2005)

Clutch-starting stalled students

- Cognitive – training needs analyses and attendance at relevant workshops
- Affective - re-planning the research project as a series of smaller bites
- Social – research groups, reading groups, postgraduate seminars

Administering university policies and procedures

The good supervisor is longer the thoughtful sage or mentor tucked away in a private office surrounded by sandstone and ivy. S/he is now part of a team, a dextrous and capable user of, and contributor to, the university's systems for monitoring throughput, and attentive to the changing needs of the students as they progress

Administering University policies and procedures (cont.)

through the programme. S/he understands the importance of timely completion, and the special needs of each milestone in terms of what is required administratively, not just pedagogically.

McWilliam (2004: 12)

Monitoring arrangements

Months

0 Start

6 Internal departmental review of progress;

9 Full progress review with panel including independent reviewers;

12 Annual Progress Report by supervisory team and student;

18 Internal departmental review of progress;

Formal arrangements (cont.)

Months

- 27** Annual Progress Report by supervisory team and student;
- 30** Internal departmental review of progress;
- 36** Annual Progress Report by supervisory team and student;
- 48** Annual Progress Report by supervisory team and student.

Supporting students to gain generic skills for employability

- **Often strong supervisor resistance to adopting this role;**
- **But many institutions insist that supervisors:**
 - conduct regular training needs analyses;
 - point students towards opportunities to meet needs;
 - and monitor their progress in meeting targets.

Supervising new types of doctorates

- **‘Universities offering professional doctorates need to be aware that the supervision role is complex and that it is not entirely the same as the supervision of a PhD’. (UKCGE 2002: 37);**
- **Practice-based outcomes;**
- **Non-academic supervisor;**
- **Potential for conflict.**

Conclusions

- **Until the 1980s, doctorate was recognisable as the one established by Von Humboldt;**
- **Doctoral education was a matter of ‘the precocious few [emulating] the master as scholar’ McWilliam and James (2002: 117);**
- **The only qualification necessary to supervise doctoral candidates was to be research-active because ‘if one can do research than one presumably can supervise it.’ (Rudd 1985: 79-80)**

Conclusions (cont.)

- **Dramatic changes in the doctorate over the past 30 years which have transformed doctoral education;**
- **Now, ‘to be an effective research supervisor, you need to be an effective researcher *and* [italics added] an effective supervisor’ (Atkins and Brown 1988: 115)**

Conclusions (cont.)

In a post-Humboldtian world, supervisors also need the knowledge and skills:

- **to supervise more students;**
- **to support international students;**
- **to support domestic students from non-traditional backgrounds;**
- **to meet student expectations;**
- **to support students to complete and on time;**
- **to administer university policies and procedures;**
- **to support employability;**
- **and supervise to new types of doctorates.**

Conclusions (cont.)

Doctoral supervision is now an important and highly complex area of activity which deserves to be classified in its own right.

Thank you

