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Arguing for PhD Coursework

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Abstract

The lone-scholar reputation of the traditional UK style PhD program is the result or a misunderstanding by some course designers. Getting a PhD is as much about making friends, forming a collegiate group, as it is about writing a book. The loneliness should be about being an independent thinker, not to being physically lonely. An increasing number of researchers are now reasserting Aristotle's calls for informed public argument to advance inquiry. Research is an argumentative process, requiring claims and a universal audience of independent thinkers to constructively question those claims. This paper argues for the establishment of semi-structured programs for PhD students, but importantly, one that undergrirds any program with an appreciation that research is an argumentative process, trying to develop knowledgeable audiences, and thus a social activity.

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