**Dr Simone Dennis**

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**Synopsis**

Dr Simone Dennis came to the School of Archaeology and Anthropology in 2008. As a comprehensively and formally trained educator of Honours and HDR students, Simone quickly became involved in convening the School’s Honours program, and its PhD methods training course. Access to all anthropology HDR students, as well as those from other disciplinary backgrounds, allowed Simone to appreciate how important a collaborative, hands-on approach is to the success of HDR students. As a result Simone applies these principles to her supervisory practice. Her ‘learning by doing’ approach turns out beautifully and comprehensively trained graduates who are research-ready, teaching-ready and have a track record of publications in their area of expertise.

Simone’s approach to teaching and supporting student learning

My approach is mindful of the latest research into the pedagogy of good HDR student supervision, which finds that supervisors who take a ‘hands-on’ approach to their students tend to produce confident and well-rounded candidates who typically complete within time. Most new candidates do not possess all of the qualities associated with being a researcher and a member of a research community, and must be taught these early on in their candidature. Relatively interventionist approaches are more effective than leaving students to equip themselves to move into scholarly communities and find appropriate training methods to enable them to carry out research. This hands-on approach is one I have taken in every aspect of supervision, including insisting that students learn to do ethnographic interviews on real, live people; white-boarding a student’s thesis question, structure, argument and conclusion for the purposes of finding and fixing common problems; taking students to conferences and introducing them to networks of key scholars; and assisting them to make and carry out a publications plan as a key part of their candidature. Effective HDR supervision is also collaborative as it involves more than just ‘my supervisor’. The supervisor’s effectiveness is in no small part dependent on the skills of others: panel members, other anthropologists with particular expertise, librarians, technical staff, and the student’s own peers. Making contact with those with an interest in their topic or analytic area, or in some practical sense, can help students to take up the mantle of researcher and to see themselves as members of a research community.

Just as it is collaborative, my approach is also reciprocally genealogical. Just as I was once the recipient of supervisory wisdom, it now falls to me to pass on anthropological knowledge and skill to those who will become the next generation of scholars. I take this very seriously, not only because the scholarly aspirations of people under my care depend in part on my ability to train them up to a high standard, but because anthropological scholarship is in many respects a competitive individual pursuit. The moments that are available for fully investing in others are few.

The opportunity to supervise offers up these moments – to assist an up-and-coming person to publish for the first time, to introduce them to the kinds of ethical practices that will keep them, their research participants and their institutions safe, to equip them with the skills to one day become a colleague and the next generation of anthropological scholars.

“Simone is fantastic! She is very enthusiastic, and provides lots of information and further references.”

Student

“Simone is interesting and very knowledgeable. She has an engaging style and was very good at interacting with us and our planned projects.”

Student

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**SPECIAL COMMENDATION**

**Award for Excellence in Supervision**