

Guidelines for the competency development of PhD supervisors

Introduction and background

The University of Copenhagen is aiming to maintain - and preferably increase - the completion rate for PhD students (cf. point 8 in the Strategic Plan of Action). One of the steps towards achieving this goal is the further improvement of PhD supervision. One of the benchmarks in the strategic plan of action in 2009 is thus to improve the PhD supervision.

The quality of PhD supervision has great significance for the education of PhD students and their completion of the PhD programme, as concluded by a study entitled *Undersøgelse af frafald blandt ph.d.-studerende* (Investigation of drop-out patterns amongst PhD students) carried out by the Epinion Capacent for The Danish University and Property Agency in 2007. This perspective is also confirmed by a national study carried out in Sweden in 2008 amongst 6700 former PhD students, 60% of whom felt that poor supervision had delayed their completion of the programme. Almost 40% of those responding to the same survey felt that the supervision they received had been inadequate. One of the main conclusions at the KUFUR (Academic Board on PhD Education) PhD committee seminar in March 2009 was that good PhD supervision is one of the fundamental elements of a good PhD programme.

The guidelines for the development of the abilities of the PhD supervisors is aimed at improving the skills of the individual PhD supervisor in order to boost the quality of the PhD programme as well as maintaining - and if possible, increasing - the PhD completion rate.

The broad guidelines for the competency development of PhD supervisors at the University of Copenhagen establishes a framework within which the individual faculties can improve their PhD supervision.

Guidelines

- All new PhD supervisors are to undergo PhD supervisor competency development within a year of beginning as a PhD supervisor.
- All other University of Copenhagen PhD supervisors are offered PhD-supervisor competency development.
- The model and extent of the competency development is determined by the faculty.
- The faculty is obligated to ensure the systematic quality control of the competency development it offers to its PhD supervisors.
- The faculty ensures that PhD supervision is included in the assessment of the PhD programme completed by the PhD students.

On the background of the University of Copenhagen guidelines outlined above, the individual faculty determines its own guidelines for the competency development of its PhD supervisors. This is the required minimum. The individual faculties are free to apply higher requirements, such as making participation in competency development obligatory for all PhD supervisors.

KUFUR facilitates a systematic and ongoing exchange of experience between the faculties as well as providing opportunity for the respective bodies of faculty management and PhD supervisors to receive international inspiration and access to the most recent research pertaining to PhD supervision.

Competency development

The guidelines focuses on competency development, and the individual faculties - possibly in cooperation with one another - develop high quality opportunities that take the variation in the skills and experience of the respective PhD supervisors into account.

Model for competency development

It is up to the individual faculty - possibly in cooperation with other faculties, if they so choose, to determine which model(s) are most appropriate. The faculties are encouraged to work together to develop and provide opportunities across faculty borders on the basis of the belief that the individual PhD supervisors benefit from becoming acquainted with practices from other research environments. This will also ensure the increased exchange of expertise in the area.

It is recommended that the PhD supervisor competency development is tailored to the individual target groups. It is further recommended that supervisor groups be created in order to facilitate the open exchange of experience, which can contribute to creating a shift in the views on supervising - also among experienced PhD supervisors - as well as making PhD supervision more prominent. In order to boost the quality of PhD

supervision, it is important to focus on both the new and more experienced PhD supervisors alike.

Elements in competency development

The individual faculties, alone or in cooperation with other faculties, determine which elements they deem appropriate to include in the competency programme, depending on the form of the programme and the target audience. One of the objectives is to ensure that all PhD supervisors receive a general, context-based introduction to the rules applying to the PhD area. The increasing number of international PhD students also requires increased focus on intercultural understanding and communication.

Evaluation

The PhD supervision is to be evaluated as part of the evaluations to be carried out by the PhD students. These evaluations are to be used to further develop the PhD supervision and competency development of PhD supervisors. These evaluations can possibly be carried out as part of a final evaluation.

Evaluation of the guidelines

The guidelines and the initiatives carried out by the individual faculties are to be assessed at the end of 2012 in order to determine whether the guidelines are to be revised and in order to discuss whether the competency development of PhD supervisors ought to be made obligatory in the future.

Commencement

The guidelines are to be implemented by January 1, 2011.