Guidelines for principal supervisors

The PhD School at SCIENCE aims to provide the best possible supervision environment for its students and their supervisors. Principal supervisors are expected to assume the formal responsibilities described in the current Faculty Regulations and updates as they are published.

The University Act states the purpose of the PhD programme as:

“...aiming to train PhD students at an international level to undertake research, development and teaching assignments in the private and public sectors, for which a broad knowledge of research is required” (ref Danish PhD Order of 2013).

As these aims include more than just educating researchers for academia, the supervision and support provided to PhD students must, necessarily, be broader than research supervision. To assist supervisors in this respect the following guidelines have been derived from experience within our own Faculty and from other universities including Oxford (UK) and the Australian National University.

Principal supervision: Responsibilities and good practice

The principal supervisor is the main responsible for delivery of the PhD programme, and all nominated supervisors must know the Faculty of Science PhD regulations.

An appropriate study and research programme must be planned, in detail and in collaboration with the PhD student, and PhD coordinator, and formally submitted to the PhD School for approval at the start of the programme, no later than three months after enrolment.

The PhD plan

It is important to ensure that the following are included in PhD plan discussions:

- realistic scope and goals for the research
- time planning able to accommodate teaching, courses and change of environment
- a defined budget and plan for resource management
- integrity and responsible conduct of research including the “Danish Code of conduct for Research Integrity” and co-authorships
- intellectual property rights where appropriate
- alignment of expectations to include roles and responsibilities of the Principal supervisor, other supervisors and the PhD student
- frequency and style of supervision, and appropriate lines of communication
- guidance for international students with respect to the norms and expectations of the local academic culture, including supervision
Good practice during PhD studies

- encourage the student to participate in the Introduction Course for new PhD students - strongly recommended by the Faculty PhD School, but not mandatory
- discussion of career goals and opportunities, both inside and outside academia, to include planning appropriate competence development
- facilitate access to relevant scientific networks ranking from local to international level
- awareness of social responsibilities
- regular meetings with the PhD student, as required, to discuss, assess and guide the quality and progress of all aspects of the programme, including the supervisory process and expectations, with mutual feedback
- regular liaison with co-supervisors
- advice to the student on the scope and form of the thesis and publications, including literature review and coherency of the thesis
- support that co-author statements are duly filled and signed
- make clear, alternative arrangements should the principal supervisor be absent for significant periods
- if the progress or output of the programme is viewed as inadequate by the principal supervisor this should be discussed, in specific terms, with the student and a remedial plan devised.
- data handling – all data used and discovered during the study have to be stored in accordance with the procedure agreed upon by the Department and Faculty

Developing competences in supervision in any way

To help develop your skills and competences as a supervisor the PhD School of SCIENCE recommends these courses:

- Responsible Conduct of Research for supervisors (mandatory for principal supervisors by KU regulation)

- PhD Supervision (from the Department of Science Education and mandatory for new supervisors by KU regulation)

Links for further information

- PhD Regulations, Faculty of Science: http://www.science.ku.dk/english/research/phd/student/rules/

- Australia National University ANU: http://researchsuper.cedam.anu.edu.au/

- Oxford Learning Institute OLI: http://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/supervision/

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