

PhD supervision policy

At the Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management, University of Southern Denmark

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Purpose

In order for the PhD programme to be a success, it is crucial that the PhD student and the supervisors establish a productive co-operation from the very beginning. The supervision builds on dialogue, i.e. that the PhD student and the supervisors discuss and adjust their expectations to each other on a regular basis.

The purpose of this supervision policy is to create a frame work for progress and quality of the individual PhD project. The co-operation between supervisors and the PhD student forms the basis of the PhD student's ability to grow into an independent researcher. Thus, the spirit and the attitude of the department is that supervision to a large extent should match the individual needs and programme of the PhD student in a continuous dialogue with the supervisors. Thus, the fundamental basis of this policy is that it is tentative and directional rather than controlling. The supervisors must act as inspirators and sparring partners to the PhD student and the principal supervisor has the general responsibility of guiding the process and ensuring that the PhD student is ready. Thus, the supervision is a means of enabling the PhD student to make choices based on solid information from the supervisors in order for the PhD student to be the driving force of his or her own project and take responsibility for it.

The supervision policy of the department is a supplement to the rules of the ministerial order and the provisions of the university and the faculty which regulate the relationship between the PhD student and the supervisor.

The supervision policy contains a series of recommendations and suggestions for the way in which the supervisor and the PhD student should make agreements concerning their co-operation and for the elements that would be advantageous to adopt in the various phases of the PhD programme.

At the Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management a principal supervisor and an assistant supervisor is attached to every PhD programme. The principal supervisor and the PhD student have the general responsibility of ensuring a constructive supervision. The principal supervisor has the task of agreeing with the assistant supervisor on the distribution of normative hours and roles in every PhD project and of informing the PhD student of the agreement. The principal supervisor is a permanently employed associate professor or a professor at the department. As a general rule the same applies to the assistant supervisor. The aim is to have one annual internal meeting for the existing and potential PhD supervisors of the department.

An attractive environment

A successful PhD programme requires an open environment in which the PhD student is integrated in the professional competence of the department. The objective of the PhD coordinator function at the

Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management is to contribute to activities that can form the basis of an open, socially and professionally inspiring PhD environment in which constructive insight can be obtained across the projects. Thus, both current and potential supervisors are invited to the two annual PhD days of the department. Furthermore, the PhD coordinator convenes the participants of the annual supervision meeting and functions as the contact person of both the PhD student and the supervisors – as a co-ordination link for messages and potential sparring in for example conflicts, if any.

Supervision start

The supervisor should ensure that the PhD student receives a tour of the work place when he or she is enrolled in the programme and is introduced to colleagues and other collaborators (secretariat, library, study board, etc.).

It is the task of the principal supervisor to summon the PhD student and the supervisors to a meeting at the beginning of the project, at which the purpose is to adjust mutual expectations and demands. The supervisor should pay special attention to the expectations and wishes of the PhD student in order for the supervision not to reflect only the experiences and usual praxis of the supervisor but also to meet the individual needs.

The dialogue should comprise:

- Settlement of the extent and frequency of the supervision and mutual demands and expectations for the preparation and procedures for the initiation of supervision meetings.
- Discussion of research proposal and PhD plan and considerations on how the PhD student should begin the project including possible deviations in the PhD plan.
- Discussion of the need for supervision in the various phases of the PhD project including advice as to the form/type of dissertation, relevant journals, net works and conferences, the possibility of writing articles with others and possible contacts for study periods abroad.
- Discussion of department related tasks co-ordinated with the head of department or an external party if the student is an industrial PhD student.

Continuous supervision

During the entire programme the supervision must be adjusted so that the progress of the PhD project is ensured and so that the PhD student can make his or her choices or changes based on solid information from the supervisors. The supervisors should continuously be in close rapport with the PhD student and form the basis of a continuous adjustment of the expectations of the extent and content of the supervision. Meetings in connection with only evaluations and status reports are not sufficient. Through the supervision it is to be ensured that the PhD student remains the driving force of the project.

The continuous supervision may concern many different issues. Naturally, the continuous dialogue between the PhD student and the supervisors should be centred on the progress of the PhD project – also in relation to the PhD plan. Furthermore, the dialogue should concern issues in connection with the process and the co-operation between the PhD student and the supervisors in order to adjust the mutual

expectations. Thus, the department encourages the supervisors and the PhD student to discuss difficult issues as for example motivation, research talent and work load.

The PhD student is continuously encouraged to seek sparring with other PhD students at the department and with the PhD coordinator for example by making status reports, evaluations, applying for funding for study periods abroad or additional funding for specific data collections that the ordinary budget of the project is not able to cover.

Generally, the PhD seminar in connection with the first-year evaluation is open to all colleagues at the Department of Entrepreneurship and Relationship Management. Upon agreement with the supervisors and the PhD coordinator the PhD student should initiate the invitation to the seminar.

Supervision finish

During the entire PhD programme, but especially towards the end of the programme, it is crucial that the PhD student and the supervisors are in continuous dialogue on delays in the project, if any. It may result in considerable social and financial costs for the PhD student if he or she is very far from completing the project at the end of the enrolment period. In any case, to the best of their abilities and as soon as possible the supervisors should draw the attention to the fact that there may be problems in keeping the schedule.

Four months before the end of the enrolment period at the latest, the PhD student and the supervisors should have a meeting to discuss the specific date on which the project should be handed in and name the persons of the assessment committee. After this, it is the task of the head of department to contact the potential participants of the assessment committee and make the necessary agreements.

In connection with the completion of the PhD project the supervisor has an obligation in addition to the ordinary supervision. The PhD student has a reasonable expectation that the principal supervisor has sufficient perspective of the extent, strengths and weaknesses of the dissertation in the concluding phase to be able to give a total evaluation of the quality of the dissertation. According to the best of his or her abilities and from a professional estimation, the principal supervisor should evaluate whether the dissertation as a whole meets the quality demands of the department, the faculty and the ministerial order. Naturally, this will only be an estimation as the assessment committee has the final decision on whether the dissertation should be accepted or not.

After handing in the dissertation and before the defence the PhD student should initiate the invitations to his or her fellow students and/or other colleagues at the department to participate in a mini defence at which the guests have the possibility of making constructive suggestions in order to improve the final defence.

Problems and conflict in supervision

Supervision requires a trusting relationship between supervisors and PhD students. Many of the large or small problems that may arise can be solved through an open dialogue and thorough discussions between the supervisors and the PhD student.

Problems with the supervision may arise both in the relation between the supervisors and the PhD student, between the supervisors and/or in the relations with other external parties (this is especially relevant in fully or partly externally financed PhD projects).

If there are problems and disagreements that are hard to solve, these issues may be brought to the attention of the head of department who will help find a possible solution to the problems. The PhD student may also contact the PhD coordinator or the head of the faculty PhD school. Ultimately, the outcome may be that a new supervisor is appointed. This will be decided in consultation with the head of department, based on each case, whereafter appointment of a new supervisor is requested to the head of the faculty PhD school and on recommendation of the head of department – according to the faculty and ministerial order (section 5.4).