

# The PhD Coordinator function in the Department of Business & Management, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences University of Southern Denmark

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The objective of the PhD School in the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark is to train and educate researchers of a high international quality in a supportive, inclusive setting. The PhD programme aims to fulfil current and future needs for highly qualified and skilled researchers in public and private organisations including academia.

The role and function of the PhD Coordinator appointed by every department in the Faculty is to support this objective. The primary role of the PhD Coordinator is to act as an “ombudsperson”, who provides general guidance to students as their research programme progresses. As such the PhD Coordinator initiates and supports activities which benefit the PhD students. However, it is not the responsibility of the PhD Coordinator to secure the progression of PhD projects or to intervene in the scientific or academic supervision. The function is independent and in general does not have budgetary or personnel responsibilities, although variations exist among departments attached to the Faculty.

The obligations and tasks of the PhD Coordinator differ across departments depending on the number of students and the organisation of the department. Within the Department of Business and Management (DBM) they are as follows:

1) Information gathering and dissemination in the Department

The PhD Coordinator communicates relevant information concerning the PhD programme not communicated through other channels. The PhD Coordinator keeps her/himself informed regarding central and general initiatives and programme developments (for example new regulations, admissions and PhD Summer Schools, but this does **not** include information on PhD courses).

2) Activities and meetings for PhD students & supervisors

The objective of activities and meetings for PhD students is to promote knowledge sharing as well as to inform and educate on selected topics (not to be compared to PhD courses). In DBM the PhD Coordinator arranges two annual seminars for students at which they present and discuss their research, thereby giving and receiving constructive feedback while also maintaining and developing an awareness of work being conducted in other Research Groups. The PhD Coordinator is also responsible for coordinating an annual workshop for supervisors to discuss best practice in supervision and share experience. Some activities can be facilitated by more senior PhD students across the Department, or in the context of the Research Groups, for example welcoming new students, mentor/buddy arrangements and social activities.

3) Contact with the PhD School

The PhD Coordinator is a key contact for the PhD School and supports the Department in maintaining and developing a high quality PhD programme. This may include providing information to the PhD School on departmental activities for PhD students, PhD courses etc. DBM believes that it is important for the PhD Coordinator to be formally independent of the PhD School in relation to their role as counsellor and mediator between student and supervisor. The PhD Coordinator meets regularly with DBM's representatives on the PhD Study Board and Course Committee to ensure appropriate sharing of information and experience.

4) Counselling

The relationship between the individual PhD student and her/his supervisor(s) is the key building block for a productive PhD process. It is the responsibility of the PhD student and the supervisor(s) to build a good working relationship. In cases of potential disagreement, conflict or other issues the PhD student can seek guidance and counselling from the PhD Coordinator (in addition to other senior researchers in their Research Group). In DBM, the PhD Coordinator holds two individual meetings a year with each student. Furthermore the PhD Coordinator may, where appropriate, act as a mediator in conflicts and assist in aligning expectations between the PhD student and Department leadership (i.e. the Head of Department, Research Group Leader etc).

5) Gender equality and diversity

DBM is working to create an environment of gender equality by ensuring that:

- all decisions, including those regarding selection, grading, allocation of resources, employment and promotion are made on appropriate, justifiable grounds and that inappropriate discrimination, conscious or unconscious, does not take place
- positive gender and diversity role models are promoted

The PhD Coordinator has best oversight of DBM doctoral studies and facilitates a supportive, non-judgemental context for PhD students while assisting the Head of Department, Research Group Leaders and supervisors in raising awareness, identifying issues and related decision-making. Identifying patterns of gendered behaviour associated with trajectory of motivation during the PhD-project, sense of entitlement, sponsorship, treatment and expectations, sense of belonging and community, self-promotion and communication of competences, extra-curricular contribution, balance of life and career decisions and coping with transitions are of particular relevance. The Department organises regular equality and diversity events with the participation of the PhD Coordinator, PhD students and supervisors.