

Book of Abstracts

CoPhS 2026

Nordic Conference on PhD Supervision

28–30 September 2026

— UPPSALA, SWEDEN —

Arranged by
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Uppsala University



Swedish University
of Agricultural Sciences



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LETTER OF WELCOME

Dear Colleagues,

A very warm welcome to Uppsala and to the **Nordic Conference on PhD Supervision 2026**.

We are delighted to bring together researchers studying doctoral education and supervision, doctoral supervisors, educational developers, academic leaders, doctoral candidates, and other stakeholders engaged in doctoral education. The conference provides a valuable meeting place between research and practice: a space where empirical and theoretical perspectives on doctoral supervision can meet the experiences, challenges and questions that arise in everyday supervisory work.

Uppsala is a particularly fitting place for these conversations. As one of Sweden's historic centres of scholarship, the city has been home to generations of researchers, teachers and students. Scholars such as Carl Linnaeus, whose work was closely connected to both Uppsala University and what is today SLU's academic heritage, not only advanced their disciplines but also guided, mentored and inspired new generations of scholars. In many ways, this relationship between established researchers and those entering academic life remains at the heart of doctoral education today.

Doctoral supervision has changed considerably since those early academic environments. Contemporary doctoral education is increasingly collaborative, international and interdisciplinary. Supervisors work in teams, doctoral candidates move between institutions and countries, and expectations concerning supervision encompass research quality as well as learning, professional development, inclusion and sustainable academic environments. These developments make it increasingly important to examine how supervision is organised, experienced and developed.

This conference therefore offers an opportunity to explore doctoral supervision from different perspectives and across disciplinary, institutional and national contexts. We hope that the presentations, workshops and discussions will encourage us to question established practices, share experiences, learn from current research and develop new ideas together. Equally important, we hope the conference will create opportunities for conversations and collaborations that continue well beyond our days together in Uppsala.

The conference is jointly organised by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) and Uppsala University, reflecting our shared commitment to strengthening doctoral education and creating environments in which supervisors and doctoral researchers can develop and thrive.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to making the conference possible: our keynote speakers, presenters, reviewers, session chairs, organising colleagues and, not least, all of you who have chosen to participate and contribute your knowledge and experience. We also hope that you will find the coming days stimulating, thought-provoking and rewarding, and that you will also find time to enjoy Uppsala and the conversations that emerge between sessions.

We also acknowledge the sponsorship of SWEDNET – the Swedish Network for Educational Development in Higher Education. We would like to thank the students Agnes and Julia for their valuable assistance in preparing the Conference Programme and the Book of Abstracts.

We look forward to a rewarding conference together!

Warmest regards,

On behalf of the Organisation Committee,

Dr *Cecilia Almlöv*, Head of Unit for Educational Development, SLU

Professor *Susanne Mirbt*, Head of Unit for Academic Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University

About CoPhS

Across the Nordic countries, there is strong engagement in doctoral supervision among researchers, supervisors, educational developers and others involved in doctoral education. CoPhS was created to bring these communities together and to provide a forum for exchanging experiences, sharing research and developing knowledge about doctoral supervision in a Nordic context.

The first **Conference on PhD Supervision (CoPhS)** was held at Karlstad University in 2024 and was organised jointly by Karlstad University, the University of Gothenburg and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU). The conference attracted considerable interest and helped establish a growing community of engaged researchers, doctoral supervisors and educational developers. This year, SLU and Uppsala University are organising the conference together, with the aim of carrying forward the welcoming spirit and collegial atmosphere established in Karlstad.

Looking ahead, our ambition is for CoPhS to continue to develop as a meeting place and to circulate among the Nordic countries, strengthening collaboration and knowledge exchange across institutions and national borders. At the same time, we warmly welcome participants from beyond the Nordic region, with the aim of building a broader international network around research, practice and development in doctoral supervision.

The Aim of the Conference

The aim is to:

- highlight and share experiences regarding the current development of PhD supervision.
- present and discuss new research on PhD supervision.
- jointly analyse background, present situation and the future of PhD supervision, in order to promote and strengthen postgraduate education.
- intercept and spread the ongoing conversation within PhD supervision.

Target Groups

- PhD supervisors with different experiences of supervision,
- Trainers of PhD supervision
- Researchers who are conducting or would like to conduct research that contributes to improving PhD supervision in the Nordic region,
- Research leaders with extensive experience in doctoral supervision,
- Decision makers / policy makers / operational managers / educational leaders (directors of studies, faculty management, research education committee) for research education.

Nordic Academic Board

Chair for CoPhS2026

Professor (Dr) Susanne Mirbt, Head of Unit, Academic Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University

Members

Denmark:

Professor Gitte Wichmann-Hansen, University of Agder, Norway

Dr Dorina Gnaur, Senior Consultant, Aarhus University, Denmark

Finland:

Professor Erika Löfström, University of Helsinki, Finland

Professor Kirsi Pyhälto, University of Helsinki, Finland

Norway:

Professor Rune Johan Krumsvik, University of Bergen, Norway

Professor Rob Bongaardt, University of South-Eastern Norway, Norway

Sweden:

Dr Cecilia Almlöv, Head of the Educational Development Unit, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Associate Professor Eva Brodin, Lund University, Sweden

CoPhS 2026

Conference Hosts

Dr Cecilia Almlöv, Head of the Educational Development Unit, SLU

Professor (Dr) Susanne Mirbt, Head of Unit, Academic Teaching and Learning, Uppsala University

Organising Committee

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

Dr Cecilia Almlöv, Head of the Educational Development Unit

Associate Professor (Dr) Ann Grubbström, Educational Developer

Associate Professor (Dr) Henrik Viberg, Educational Developer

Dr. Tomas Grysell, Educational Developer

Uppsala University

Professor (Dr) Susanne Mirbt, Head of Unit, Academic Teaching and Learning

Associate Professor (Dr) Maja Elmgren, Senior Lecturer and Educational Developer

Dr Helena Lindqvist, Educational Developer, Academic Teaching and Learning

Dr Anette Månsson, Educational Developer, Academic Teaching and Learning

Dr Cesar Pay Gómez, Educational Developer, Academic Teaching and Learning

Conference Chair

Professor Åsa Berggren, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Opening and Closing Ceremony

The conference will be officially opened by representatives from the two organising universities: Pro Vice-Chancellor *Ylva Hillbur*, representing the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), and Deputy Vice-Chancellor *Coco Norén*, representing Uppsala University.

The conference will be officially closed by *Linda Vidlund*, Chief University Librarian at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) together with PhD representatives.

Conference Networking Events

Welcome Reception

Join fellow delegates for an evening reception in the magnificent Hall of State (Rikssalen) at Uppsala Castle. This informal gathering offers an opportunity to meet other conference participants, reconnect with colleagues and make new contacts in one of Uppsala's most historic settings.

Light refreshments and wine will be served while we mingle and enjoy the surroundings.

Time & Date: 28 September | 18:00–20:00

Location: Hall of State (Rikssalen) in Uppsala Castle, (Address: Drottning Christinas väg 1, Uppsala)

Refreshments: Light snacks and wine

We look forward to welcoming you for a relaxed and memorable start to the conference.

Conference Dinner

The Conference Dinner will take place at Norrlands Nation, one of Uppsala's historic student nations and part of the city's distinctive academic tradition. The evening provides an opportunity to continue conversations from the conference and enjoy dinner together in a setting closely connected to student and university life in Uppsala.

Time & Date: 29 September, mingle at 18:30 and dinner at 19:00 (after dinner the bar will be open until 23.00).

Location: Norrlands Nation, (Address: Västra Ågatan 14, Uppsala)

Evening programme: Dinner, coffee and musical entertainment by singers from the famous choir Orphei Drängar (OD). A well-known historical figure will also visit us.

We hope you will join us for an evening of good food, music, conversation and a touch of Uppsala history.

Networking Spaces

Throughout the conference, several dedicated rooms have been reserved for networking and informal meetings (room Skinnskatteberg for Day 2, and room Skara for Day 3) both on the second floor above Service Centre in Ulls Hus). These spaces are available for delegates who would like to sit down for a conversation, arrange a meeting with another participant, discuss ideas arising from the sessions, or explore possibilities for future collaboration.

How the Conference Programme is Organised

In this **Book of Abstracts**, the conference is presented for each session (morning or afternoon) one day at a time.

Between the keynote sessions, the conference programme offers several parallel sessions (morning or afternoon). Each session includes a mix of oral presentations, round-table sessions and workshops, grouped into different topic areas to help participants navigate the programme and identify sessions relevant to their interests.

Research-based contributions and presentations of best practice are deliberately mixed throughout the programme, encouraging exchange between research, experience and practice. The programme also includes designated time slots for the Poster Session and Stop & Share Session, both located in the area outside session rooms, where coffee and refreshments are served. The posters will remain on display throughout the conference, so you are very welcome to browse the exhibition at any time, including outside the scheduled poster presentation sessions.

Programme updates

Any changes or cancellations to scheduled presentations will be announced on the door of the relevant room and updated in the conference programme.

For the latest programme and other practical information about CoPhS 2026, please visit the conference website: <https://www.slu.se/en/collaboration/international-collaboration/cophs26/>

KEYNOTES

Kirsi Pyhältö:

“Landscape of PhD careers is transforming - How can research on PhD careers inform doctoral education practices?”

Tuesday 09.15-10.15, Loftet Lecture Hall



Kirsi Pyhältö, PhD, is full-Professor of Higher Education, in Center for University Teaching and Learning, the Faculty of Educational Sciences, at the University of Helsinki. She is also extraordinary professor at the Department of Curriculum Studies, at the University of Stellenbosch, South-Africa. Her research interests include doctoral education and researcher careers, school development, teacher's professional agency and occupational wellbeing, and student learning and wellbeing. She has over 280 publications (h-index: 66) [Pyhalto Publications](#) She is leading two research active groups, Doctoral Education and PhD Careers research group: [PhD Education and Careers](#), and Learning and Development in School -research group <http://www.learninginschool.fi>. She is a

founding co-convener of EARLI special interest group SIG24 Researcher Education and Careers [EARLI SIG24](#).

Abstract

PhD careers within and beyond the academia are transforming. The most prominent characteristic of the change has been that PhD graduates across the disciplines are increasingly working beyond academia. For example, in Europe, in the United States, and in Canada around 60-75% of the new PhDs can be assumed to be working beyond academia, and the trend is getting stronger.

Several factors have driven this change, including the massification of doctoral education, resulting in a limited number of career opportunities within academia; innovation policies increasing the demand for

research in various fields; the uncertainty and temporary nature of academic careers; the difficulty of obtaining research funding; and the emergence of new career opportunities outside the university

PhD programs have however tended to prepare graduates for traditional academic careers despite most graduates today working beyond the academy. In fact, the post-PhD career landscape is largely missing from PhD programs, as a result both PhD candidates and their supervisors often use anecdotal evidence in projecting the potential careers beyond (or within) the academy. To address this issue, this keynote will provide a synthesis of research evidence on contemporary post- PhD careers within and beyond and discuss how this evidence can inform doctoral education and supervisory practices.

Rune Johan Krumsvik:

” Artificial intelligence and doctoral education: epistemic, pedagogical, and supervisory implications.”

Tuesday 13.00-14.00, online in Loftet Lecture Hall



[Rune Johan Krumsvik](#) is a Professor (dr.philos.) of Education at the University of Bergen and a Professor II at Volda University College. Krumsvik served as Head of the Department of Education at the University of Bergen (2010–2017) and is the founder and research group leader of the [Digital Learning Communities research group](#) at the University of Bergen. He has been conducting research on artificial intelligence since 2015 and is the head of the consortium [Digital Learning Communities Artificial Intelligence Centre \(DLCAIC\)](#), where he has, among other things, developed a [PhD chatbot for academic writing](#), a [healthcare chatbot](#), and published several scientific articles on [artificial intelligence in the contexts of academic writing at the PhD level](#), Nurse education, [medicine](#), and [methodology](#).

Krumsvik is also the founder and academic director of the [Nordic Graduate School of Educational Research](#) (link), Editor-in-Chief of the [Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy](#), and Associate Editor of [Frontiers](#)

[in Pediatrics](#) (link) and [Frontiers of Public Health](#). Over the past fifteen years, he has supervised 17 PhD candidates in fields such as education, nursing education, and other health disciplines, collaborated and published with the dental education program at the University of Bergen, delivered numerous PhD courses for health-related doctoral candidates, and published scientific articles, professional papers, and op-eds in the fields of education and health (h-index 34, i10-index 77).

He received the [Teaching Award in 2012 from the Faculty of Psychology](#) at the University of Bergen and was in 2020 recognized as an [Excellent Teaching Practitioner by the Faculty of Psychology](#) at the University of Bergen.

Keynote abstract

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping the conditions for knowledge production, raising fundamental questions for doctoral education. This keynote, Artificial intelligence and doctoral education: epistemic, pedagogical, and supervisory implications, explores how advanced AI systems—particularly large language models—signal more than technological change: they represent a potential epistemic shift in how research, expertise, and scholarly development are understood.

At the epistemic level, AI challenges established assumptions about authorship, originality, cognitive mastery, and the boundaries between human and machine-supported reasoning. If analytical synthesis, drafting, coding, and literature mapping can be partially delegated to AI systems, what constitutes doctoral-level competence? How should we understand expertise when cognitive offloading becomes structurally embedded in research practice?

At the pedagogical level, doctoral training may need to move beyond a sole emphasis on individual cognitive accumulation toward models that integrate critical AI literacy, methodological transparency, and reflexive use of AI-supported inquiry. This raises questions about assessment, progression, and even the temporal structure of doctoral programmes.

At the supervisory level, AI introduces new dynamics in guidance, trust, ethics, responsibility, and quality assurance. Supervisors must navigate between uncritical adoption and defensive resistance, developing informed frameworks for responsible experimentation, risk assessment, and scholarly integrity.

Rather than framing AI as either threat or solution, this keynote argues for epistemic clarity, empirical grounding, and institutional courage. Doctoral education stands at a crossroads: the task is not merely to adapt to new tools, but to reconsider foundational assumptions about knowledge, supervision, and the formation of future researchers in an AI-augmented research landscape.

Karen Clegg:

‘Two’s company, three’s a crowd’: the case for team supervision”

Wednesday 09.00-10.00, Loftet Lecture Hall



Karen Clegg is Co-Director/Principal Investigator of the [Next Generation Research SuperVision Project \(RSVP\)](#) and [Reader in Doctoral Education and Practice, School for Arts and Creative Technologies, University of York.](#)

This keynote will explore the role that team supervision plays in professionalising PhD supervision practice. Drawing on focus groups with supervisors, Doctoral Deans and Directors, industry stakeholders, doctoral researchers and empirical evidence from the [UK Research Supervision Survey 2024](#) we'll explore the contribution that different change agents make to the PhD experience.

Together (in pairs and triads), we'll consider how traditional academic supervisors are increasingly complemented by Assistant Supervisors, typically early career

researchers, and the role that non HEI industry-based supervisors can play in and how they fit into the team. We'll look at how supervisors at all levels can be supported in developing their practice through initial and continued professional development, looking particularly at how peer observation of supervision provides an opportunity for sharing of practice and experience across disciplines. In conclusion, Karen will offer some tentative recommendations about the pedagogic, practice and policy related implications for team supervision.

PLENUM DEBATE: ‘AI Policy in Research Education’

Tuesday 14., 05-14.45, Loftet Lecture Hall

Panelists:

Rune Johan Krumsvik,

Professor, Department of Education, University of Bergen and at Volda University College

Gabriella Andersson,

Professor, Department of Physics and Astronomy, Uppsala University

Simon Marti,

Head of EUA Council for Doctoral Education

Ohrwascun Adedeji,

PhD Candidate, SLU

Chair:

Dr, Maja Elmgren, Uppsala University

TUESDAY MORNING SESSION

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1A. Supervisor Competence and Professional Development

Room: X | Time: 10:45 -11:05

1A-1: Learning Needs Assessment in Doctoral Supervisor Training

Presenter: Dorina Gnaur, Aarhus University, Denmark

Abstract

Learning Needs Assessment (LNA) provides an empirical basis for designing professional development in higher education, ensuring that training activities target actual capabilities, contextual challenges, and developmental priorities of higher education staff. If we want to design effective doctoral supervision training, we need to understand the learning needs of our audience. To assess both perceived and true learning needs, we need several sources of evidence and reflective processes to foster professional growth. Puzzled by evaluations rating high on achievement of learning objectives, yet moderate on perceived learning, relevance and motivation, we, i.e. doctoral supervision trainers at the, set out to investigate ways to curb this trend. Inspired by the workplace learning literature and andragogy, we performed LNA prior to the course, to move beyond the scholarly determined learning objectives for doctoral supervision training, and into the messy landscape of practice. We did so on two parallel courses within the same research environment on two different AU locations. The two LNA's had both similarities and differences in learning needs, suggesting that these are indeed individual and situated in their respective socio-cultural contexts.

We designed and implemented three empirical sources for the LNA: Pre-screen survey to identify previous experience, demands and expectations, strengths and motivation, challenges and pressing issues as supervisors, and perceived learning needs; Online activities prior to the course to appreciate existing skills and attitudes as supervisors; Interviews with senior supervisors from participants' research environments. Subsequently, we applied the three stages framed by Thampy (2013) on the two audiences: 1. *Identifying the gap* (difference between current and desired performance); 2. *Understanding underlying causes* (knowledge, skills, attitudes, environment); 3. *Defining actionable learning needs* (targets for development). The identified gaps corresponded to the topics most often addressed in literature, e.g.: *need for advanced communication, structured feedback tools, and expectation alignment methods; mentoring-style approach in supervision; frameworks for scaffolding independence; time and supervision workload management, project planning methods; skills in recognizing early warning signs, empathetic communication, boundaries, and referral pathways*. We then organized course content and activities to match the knowledge, skills, attitudes and context requirements revealed by gaps and online activities, which we translated into recognizable supervision cases that participants worked with during the course.

Encouraged by role model proxies, e.g. the interviewed senior supervisors, and contributions by the heads of graduate schools, the participants discussed emerging identities and future developmental trajectories.

In the writing moment we do not yet have the course evaluations, but we are looking forward to studying them. The two teachers involved agree, however, that this was in many ways a refreshing and purposeful experience. Firstly, we experienced the course as 'pull', rather than 'push' onto the participants. Secondly, as educational developers, we are highly motivated by making a difference not only to our participants, i.e. PhD-supervisors, but also the PhD-students, who are the next generation of researchers and future supervisors. Hopefully, they will promote a culture of genuine and mutual learning to serve human endeavors. We feel that we are taking one modest step in that direction.

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Karin Brown, Sara Petchey, Katarina Mårtensson & Kai Niebert (07 Sep 2025): Self-identified learning needs of university teachers: recommendations for generic and role-based professional development, *International Journal for Academic Development*, DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2025.2553193

Julie Hauer and Timothy Quill. "Educational needs assessment, development of learning objectives, and choosing a teaching approach." *Journal of palliative medicine* 14.4 (2011): 503-508, DOI: 10.1089/jpm.2010.0232

Keywords: Learning needs assessment, gaps, teaching design

Contact: dg@au.dk

Room: X | Time: 11:10 - 11:30

1A-2: The Metamorphosis of Doctoral Supervision: From a Traditional Practice to Professional Precision – From Master to Avatar!?

Presenters: Tomas Grysell, & Margareta Jernås, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

Swedish doctoral education has undergone profound reforms over recent decades, evolving from a master–apprentice model into a more collegial, regulated, and quality-assured system. Doctoral students were previously positioned as individual “research talents” closely tied to a professor’s environment. This model has been challenged through policy reforms, notably SOU 2004:27, which introduced co-supervision to strengthen quality and broaden support. Today, co- and team supervision are established norms shaping supervisory practices and their pedagogical, organisational, and communicative dimensions. The introduction of national requirements for supervisor training in 2001, made mandatory in 2007, marked a shift towards more professionalised supervision. Research indicates that between 2000 and 2020, the focus moved from supervision and doctoral learning towards collaboration, career pathways, and research quality¹. This shift has influenced how supervisor training is conceptualised, with greater emphasis on strategic and quality-assuring functions. As educators in doctoral supervisor training since 2003 and 2017 respectively, we have followed developments in policy and collegial dialogue. The supervisory role has become more collaborative and project-oriented, but also more administrative due to demands for documentation and follow-up.

The Swedish Higher Education Authority’s 2023 review² highlights the need to strengthen individual study plans, develop digital formats, and ensure equitable conditions. Digitalisation is a transformative force in higher education. Digital tools, distance formats, and generative AI are reshaping doctoral education, creating both pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges. Chatbots are already used by doctoral students to support academic writing³. This contribution discusses how supervisor training can support critical and responsible integration of AI and digital tools without compromising pedagogical quality or research integrity. It asks how supervision can balance tradition and innovation, and how relational and pedagogical encounters can be preserved in an increasingly digitalised research environment. Interviews with senior supervisors from participants’ research environments. Subsequently, we applied the three stages framed by Thampy (2013) on the two audiences: 1. Identifying the gap (difference between current and desired performance); 2. Understanding underlying causes (knowledge, skills, attitudes, environment); 3. Defining actionable learning needs (targets for development). The identified gaps corresponded to the topics most often addressed in literature, e.g.: need for advanced communication, structured feedback tools, and expectation alignment methods; mentoring-style approach in supervision; frameworks for scaffolding independence; time and supervision workload management, project planning methods; skills in recognizing early warning signs, empathetic communication, boundaries, and referral pathways. We

then organized course content and activities to match the knowledge, skills, attitudes and context requirements revealed by gaps and online activities, which we translated into recognizable supervision cases that participants worked with during the course.

Encouraged by role model proxies, e.g. the interviewed senior supervisors, and contributions by the heads of graduate schools, the participants discussed emerging identities and future developmental trajectories. In the writing moment we do not yet have the course evaluations, but we are looking forward to studying them. The two teachers involved agree, however, that this was in many ways a refreshing and purposeful experience. Firstly, we experienced the course as ‘pull’, rather than ‘push’ onto the participants. Secondly, as educational developers, we are highly motivated by making a difference not only to our participants, i.e. PhD-supervisors, but also the PhD-students, who are the next generation of researchers and future supervisors. Hopefully, they will promote a culture of genuine and mutual learning to serve human endeavours. We feel that we are taking one modest step in that direction.

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Keywords: Doctoral education, Supervisor training for doctoral education, Professionalised

Contacts: Tomas.Grysell@gu.se; Margareta.Jernas@gu.se

Room: X | Time: 11:35 - 11:55

1A-3: Building Doctoral Supervisory Capacity in Bolivia: A Collaborative and Context-Adapted Training of Trainers (ToT) Model for Doctoral Supervision

Presenters: Natalie Jellinek, Karolinska Institute, Sweden & Henrik Viberg, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Co-authors: Ledo, P., & Avilés, D.B., Universidad Mayor de San Simón, UMSS, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Abstract

This session presents the development and implementation of a Training of Trainers (TOT) model for doctoral supervision within the fifth phase of the Sida Research Cooperation Programme (2021–2025) between the Universidad Mayor de San Simón, UMSS (Cochabamba, Bolivia), and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU (Uppsala, Sweden).

Historically, doctoral supervision in Bolivia—as in much of the Global South—has relied almost entirely on individual experience. Formal training opportunities are largely absent, and institutional policies and shared frameworks for supervision are limited or non-existent. This results in uneven supervisory practices and constrains the emergence of a cohesive research culture. In response to these structural gaps, the Sida–UMSS cooperation established a TOT initiative as a strategy for sustainable capacity building in doctoral supervision. Within this partnership, a national team of trainers was formed, delivered two courses on doctoral supervision for fellow researchers across disciplines, and is currently preparing the first national level course on doctoral supervision in Bolivia. The TOT and subsequent courses were co-designed and adapted to the Bolivian context, rather than transferred from the Swedish context. The pedagogical approach combined the following: critical reflection on supervisory practices; peer learning and exchange of experiences; collaborative analysis of real supervisory challenges; discussion of international scholarship on doctoral education; creation of a safe, horizontal learning environment; and the progressive development of local facilitation skills.

For its implementation, the programme followed an iterative cycle of planning, action, and reflection, allowing continuous and significant progress based on participant feedback and contextual needs. The initiative generated outcomes at multiple levels. Individually, participants reported increased confidence, adoption of new supervisory strategies, and a shift toward more reflective and intentional supervision practices. Notably, a recurrent shift from initial scepticism to active engagement was observed. Collectively, the courses provided one of the first structured spaces for discussion and peer exchange on supervision in Bolivia, strengthening networks within the local scientific community. Institutionally, a trained and increasingly autonomous facilitator team has emerged, progressively gaining ownership of course design and delivery. The model has also attracted national attention, with several universities expressing interest in replication. In addition, the initiative has also stimulated new research lines in doctoral education and has created an active platform of discussion for doctoral programs.

This case demonstrates how context-sensitive, collaborative, and iterative approaches—grounded in critical reflection, peer learning and capacity building— can create sustainable structures for doctoral supervision, even in resource-constrained settings where institutional frameworks and supervisory cultures are limited or absent. It aligns with global efforts to promote equitable research partnerships and to strengthen doctoral education systems.

Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Capacity building, Training of Trainers (TOT), Global North-Global South partnerships, Co-design, Context-sensitive approaches.

Contact: natalie.jellinek@ki.se

2A. Relationships, Communication, and Supervisory Practice



Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

Room: T | Time: 10:45 - 11:05

2A-1: PhD Supervision: Caring, Creating, and Crafting Scholarship

Presenters: Beverly Fitzpatrick, & Cecile Badenhorst, Memorial University, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

Abstract

Doctoral supervision often focuses on developing the research and academic skills students require to succeed in their programs. We have found that we cannot separate well-being from academic learning and we ask: How can an arts-based pedagogy teach doctoral students creative and critical thinking, and address doctoral well-being? We are PhD supervisors and teachers of an advanced research methods to first-year doctoral students. We embrace a pedagogical approach that is founded in an ethics of care (Noddings, 2013), caring about student well-being and student learning. In this proposal, we provide rationales for our emphasis on caring and examples of some of our supervision and mentoring practices.

Our classes consist of multiple discussions and activities. Noddings (1986) noted that the “purpose of dialogue is to come into contact with ideas and to understand, to meet the other and to care” (p. 186). We begin each weekly class with a “check-in”, where we and the students talk about our week, our joys, and any issues. Students choose what and how much to share. Inevitably, individual sharing becomes discussion-based with students responding to each other about personal and academic concerns. Much learning occurs during the check-in. Although we come to class with prepared lesson plans, oftentimes a topic we might want to introduce comes up naturally through the check-in in an informal, caring manner.

After the check-in, we read a children’s literature book that is meant to convey some aspect of scholarship through words and illustrations. For example, we used the book *The Knowing* by Ani de Franco (2023) to inspire students to think, write, and draw in learning journals (see FitzPatrick et al., in press) throughout their two-semester research methods course. We use the journals for many activities. In the first class, all of us create self-images in the form of paper dolls (along with brief writing) to identify who we are as people and researchers. We paste these dolls in our journals and return to them at the end of the semester (see FitzPatrick et al., 2024).

This class is the only course the students take as a cohort, so it serves as an orientation course to the PhD program. Students bring questions to us that are not a formal part of research methodology, but matter to the students’ progress throughout the program, and just as importantly, the students’ emotional well-being. We build a relationship of trust through this course that keeps students coming to us throughout their programs for advice or simply to chat, whether or not we are their supervisors.

We publish with our students as part of this process (see Badenhorst and FitzPatrick, 2024). We use a scaffolding approach of “relational mentoring” which gives the students authorship and takes them through the publication process. Publications include writing as PhD students, reading as PhD students, feedback, comprehensive exams, learning about research methodology, visual learning, the

philosophical foundations of research, plagiarism, learning through play, and nurturing through trust. Coupled with the publications is presenting at seminars and conferences on their publications and other topics, where we provide guidance, but students take the leadership. Our belief is that caring crafts and enhances scholarship.

Keywords: caring, creative thinking, critical thinking, arts-based pedagogy, well-being

Contacts: bfitzpatrick@mun.ca; cbadenhorst@mun.ca

Room: T | Time: 11:10 - 11:30

2A-2: Building communities through impactful conversations: enhancing supervisory practice and collaborative problem solving through coaching-informed supervisor peer mentoring circles

Presenters: Roisin Astell & Julia Rayner, University of York, UK

Abstract

This paper introduces a structured professional development model for research supervisors developed through the Next Generation Research Supervision Project (RSVP). The model integrates coaching-informed skills into a peer mentoring circle programme, equipping supervisors with a shared set of conversational tools (e.g., active listening and structured questioning) that they then apply in ongoing, trust-based peer dialogue about supervision.

The paper discusses the model and findings from trials at the University of York, where eight cross-disciplinary mentoring circles were piloted (alongside pilots across partner institutions). Supervisors met regularly in small groups to reflect on their practice, with the design intentionally bringing together different disciplines and experience levels to encourage diverse perspectives.

In the early stages, participants attended a coaching-informed workshop introducing tools such as active listening and Socratic questioning. We determined whether structured opportunities for discussion, enhanced by coaching-informed practices, contribute to increased reflective practice, collective problem solving and ultimately, cultural change in supervision. Introducing coaching approaches also equips supervisors with strategies for more dialogic, developmental interactions with doctoral researchers, fostering confidence, independence and self-efficacy.

The model responds to a supervision challenge-rising expectations to support candidates' personal development and well-being as well as their research (Taylor, 2012). Findings from RSVP focus groups (2024, 2025) and the UK Council for Graduate Education's surveys (2021, 2025) indicate that discussing supervisory practices with colleagues is perceived as a highly impactful way of enhancing research supervision.

Pilot findings show increased supervisor confidence and a stronger sense of community, as common challenges are normalized. Supervisors also feel encouraged to promote dialogic, developmental supervision cultures within their own departments.

This paper presents key findings and highlights transferable design principles for scalable, coaching-informed supervisor development through peer learning. We propose that the impact of this model extends beyond individual supervisor candidate relationships to shaping the transformation of supervision culture.

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Taylor, S. (2012) Changes in doctoral education: Implications for supervisors in developing early career researchers. *International Journal of Researcher Development*, 3(2), pp. 118–38.

Keywords: Doctoral supervision; Coaching; Peer mentoring; Peer learning; Communities

Contacts: roisin.astell@york.ac.uk; julia.rayner@york.ac.uk

Room: T | Time: 11:35 - 11:55

2A-3: 'My supervisor is trying to tell me something, but I just don't get it': rethinking transcultural doctoral supervision

Presenter: Bing Lu, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Co-author: Khan, B., & Smith McGloin, R. Nottingham Trent University, UK

Abstract

Doctoral supervision plays a critical role in shaping doctoral success, yet it is deeply embedded within sociocultural and structural dynamics that remain underexplored, particularly for racially and culturally minoritised candidates (Mthombeni, 2024; Winchester-Seeto et al., 2014). Effective supervision requires moving beyond assimilation to embrace the unique histories, geographies, and diverse ways of knowing that students bring to their research. Existing research on doctoral education in England has paid limited attention to transcultural supervisory relationships and how they are experienced by marginalised groups (Arday, 2021; Garrett, 2024; Hopwood & Paulson, 2012).

This paper examines how racially minoritised doctoral candidates experience and navigate transcultural supervision in UK institutions. Drawing on the Equity in Doctoral Education through Partnership and Innovation (EDEPI) project (2022–2026), the study is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 13 NHS staff undertaking doctoral study in England, all of whom self-identify as racially minoritised. Data were analysed using a thematic approach to explore patterns of meaning in supervisory interactions.

The findings reveal that transcultural supervision is characterised by constant negotiation across epistemic, cultural, and communicative boundaries. Participants frequently highlighted the importance of cultural sensitivity to enhance the supervisory relationship, which reflect implicit expectations embedded in dominant academic norms. Rather than passive recipients, candidates actively exercise agency to interpret, adapt to, and sometimes resist these norms. This process of 'cultural play' between racially minoritised doctoral candidates and White supervisors significantly affected the doctoral experience. Data demonstrated how supervisory relationships are shaped by unequal epistemic positioning, requiring candidates to navigate unwritten institutional codes (Schultz et al., 2021; Beddoe, 2015; Singh, 2016).

The study advances conceptual understanding of transcultural doctoral supervision as a site of epistemic negotiation rather than mere cultural difference. It underscores the need to move beyond deficit framings and calls for more explicit, reflexive, and culturally responsive supervisory practices. The findings have direct implications for supervisor development, particularly in embedding cultural diversity training that recognises power, communication, and knowledge hierarchies in doctoral education.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Transcultural supervision, Racially minoritised doctoral candidates, Epistemic inequality

Contacts: Bing.Lu@ntu.ac.uk, bamba.khan2021@my.ntu.ac.uk, rebekah.smithmcgloin@ntu.ac.uk



Photo: Jenny Svernås-Gillner, SLU

3A. Culture, Inclusion, and Norms

Room: S | Time: 10:45 - 11:05

3A-1: Transforming PhD Supervision Culture: A Nordic case study

Presenters: Gitte Wichmann-Hansen, University of Agder, Norway, & Miriam Godskesen, Aalborg University, Denmark

Co-authors: Gish, L., Nordic Writing Academy, Denmark, Dabelsteen, M., & Buhl, R. University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract

While the Nordic countries are often described as frontrunners in supervisor development (Taylor et al., 2020), there is still limited empirical knowledge about how systematic institutional strategies can support long-term cultural change (Huet & Casanova, 2022). Our study is therefore guided by the research question: Which factors contribute to the transformation of doctoral supervision culture at the institutional level, beyond changes in individual supervisory practices?

We conducted an in-depth case study of one of the largest graduate schools in health sciences in the Nordic region. The case was purposively selected as a “best practice case” (Yin, 2018) for its strategic and long-term work with supervisor development and PhD education structures. The empirical material includes institutional documents, evaluation and observation data from development activities aimed at supervisors and PhD students, respectively, and interviews with key actors at the management level. The analysis was informed by Bronfenbrenner (1979)’s ecological systems theory that provides a useful framework for understanding doctoral supervision practice as embedded within multiple interacting systems, including interpersonal, institutional, and broader structural contexts. This theoretical lens allows for analytic generalisation beyond the single case.

Five key themes emerged from the analysis as central to understanding how supervision development becomes embedded and sustained over time: (1) alignment across courses, tools, and institutional communication from the administration, (2) large-scale development activities rather than symbolic or isolated initiatives, (3) inclusion of all relevant actors involved in PhD supervision, also PhD students, (4) initiatives aimed at not only principal supervisors, but also co-supervisors and highly experienced supervisors as culture carriers, (5) leadership agency.

Together, these themes illustrate how supervision development moves from time-limited initiatives to embedded cultural practices when activities become aligned, institutionalised, and reproduced over time.

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Keywords: Supervision, Continuous Professional Development, Culture, Case study

Contacts: gitte.wichmann-hansen@uia.no; mirjam@ikk.aau.dk; liv@nordicwritingacademy.dk)

Room: S | Time: 11:10 - 11:30

3A-2: Embedding inclusion into the doctoral supervision lifecycle from recruitment to examination: insights from a UK doctoral training programme

Presenter: Rachel Handforth, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Co-author: Clarence, S., Nottingham Trent University, UK

Abstract

This paper draws on current practice from our work with research supervisors based within both universities and organisations outside higher education, as part of an innovative pilot doctoral training programme (DTP) in the UK, funded by Research England. The Collaboratory Research Hub DTP1 offers a new model for doctoral education (Handforth, 2023), representing a partnership between five regional universities and a range of local civic and community organisations, funded to develop and deliver collaborative place-based PhD and shorter-form research projects. Collaboratory aims to diversify doctoral graduate populations through inclusive recruitment practices which enable those without a proven academic track record to apply for these co-created PhD projects, as well as aiming to enable civic and community-based organisations to shape university research agendas, and to contribute to increased research capacity in the region.

In this paper, we present the challenges of working across multiple higher education institutions as a pilot programme which pushes the boundaries of accepted practices in UK doctoral education. Historically, the PhD has been an elite qualification (Pasztor and Wakeling, 2018) with admissions and recruitment processes which are not transparent (Burford et al., 2023; Smith-McGloin et al., 2024). Reflecting on our ongoing work with Collaboratory supervisors, we consider how far inclusion has been able to be embedded within the doctoral supervision lifecycle, from recruitment to examination. For example, academic supervisors are encouraged to challenge traditional admissions practices, working with civic partners to undertake recruitment within an alternative assessment framework that elevates applicants' professional skills and competencies, and research potential above existing academic qualifications. Drawing on Manathunga's (2014) work on transcultural supervision pedagogy, we share the various challenges and opportunities experienced by students, supervisors and practitioners in approaching doctoral supervision within this model, particularly in relation to involving civic and community stakeholders in traditionally closed UK university processes, such as PhD progression milestones and examinations. Drawing on literature relating to modes of knowledge production (Liyanage et al., 2022; Peris-Ortiz 2016), we conclude by considering the extent to which different types of knowledge are included, understood, and valued within Collaboratory supervisory teams. Specifically, we examine how a quadruple helix view of knowledge production (Caryannis and Campbell, 2009), can be used to frame whose perspectives are legitimised within PhD supervision, and how this connects

with wider work which considers doctoral education in relation to its potential for public good (Clarence, Handforth and Smith-McGloin, forthcoming; Deem, 2020). 1 <https://ufncollaboratory.ac.uk/>

Keywords: inclusion, doctoral supervision, doctoral admissions and recruitment, Doctoral training, research culture

Contacts: rachel.handforth@ntu.ac.uk; sherran.clarence@ntu.ac.uk

Room: S | Time: 11:35 - 11:55

3A-3: Single sex supervisor groups at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

Presenter: Carl-Gustaf Thulin, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Co-authors: Ramin, M., Sjunnesson, Y., Örn, S., & Eriksson, S., Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Abstract

Equality and representation of both sexes in supervisor groups and evaluation committees have long been objectives in the research community and are often regulated in university guidelines. At the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, the guidelines stipulate that *'both sexes must be represented in the supervisors' group.'* and that *'the faculty board may waive this requirement if there are particular reasons for doing so'.*

The doctoral education committee at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science handles matters related to research education and holds regular meetings approximately once a month during the semesters. Since 2022, the committee has adopted a more liberal policy regarding sex representation in the supervisors' groups than the previous committee, making use of the waiver opportunity when a relevant justification is provided. The main reason has been that qualifications should carry greater weight than sex under academic conditions. In addition, the sex ratio among faculty researchers is unbalanced, which can make it challenging to ensure representation of two sexes. The aim of this study is to investigate the outcome, in terms of supervisory group sex distributions, and potential implications of this policy change.

Here, we present the results of this policy change following four years of waivers, from January 2022 until December 2025. In addition to a numerical quantification of the number of appointed supervisors and their sex distribution, divided into subcategories such as internal and external affiliation, we compare these numbers to the sex distribution among faculty members that holds a PhD. We also provide the number of single sex supervisor groups appointed during the period in relation to the total number of supervisor groups.

The results will increase our understanding of the implications of this policy change and guide future decisions on the topic. We believe they may be relevant to other academic environments with unbalanced sex distribution. Furthermore, it may be valuable to consider the representation of characteristics identified in the Swedish Discrimination Act, beyond sex, within supervisor groups.

Keywords: sex, bias, equality, supervisor, representation

Contact: carl-gustaf.thulin@slu.se

4A. Organisation, Leadership, and Institutional Contexts

Room: U | Time: 10:45 - 11:05

4A-1: On diversification and local (mal)adaption of doctoral supervision among and within universities in Sweden

Presenter: Anders Forsman, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Abstract

Until fifteen years ago, the governance of higher education institutions in Sweden was strongly regulated, including the organization and management of doctoral training. However, the Autonomy Reform of 2011 paved the way for the implementation of alternative management ideals, shifts in decision-making powers, and the evolution of local adaptations at different universities [1-2]. This study focuses on the resulting diversification regarding the governance, organization, and design of doctoral training in Ecology and Political Science across twelve universities in Sweden. Previous studies have examined the committee involved in thesis examination. However, systematic investigations and comparisons of the appointment, authorities, responsibilities, and requirements of PhD-examiners remain scarce.

I analysed the Higher Education Ordinance (HEO), alongside local regulations, steering documents, and delegation rules of authority acquired from registrars and university websites. The results revealed extensive variations and local adaptation in regulations and terminology related to doctoral training and supervision across universities and subject areas. In some cases, different organizational units, collegial bodies, line managers, and delegees were assigned identical responsibilities and decision-making authority, even within the same documents. The diversification also concerned the existence, role, and mandate of PhD-examiners. Qualification requirements ranged from unspecified, to “a lecturer employed at the university”, to “a professor with considerable experience”. Some delegation rules of authority appeared to deviate from the HEO. Together, this may contribute to confusion, mixed messages, and uncertainty regarding responsibility and accountability. Analysis of General and Individual Syllabi further demonstrated considerable variation in curriculum and course requirements, including the total number of ECTS course credits (range 30 – 75) and the distribution of mandatory (range 0-60) and optional credits (0-75). This variability was evident both within and between disciplines and universities.

The results raise concerns regarding quality, equality of opportunity, and the provision of individually adapted education. They call for consideration in training programs aimed at postgraduate supervisors and are relevant for decision makers, operational managers, and educational leaders. Ultimately, the findings can inform efforts to improve the quality of future PhD education and supervision [3].

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<https://doi.org/10.21125/inted.2024.0796>

Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Doctoral education governance, PhD-examiner, Policy

Contact: Anders.Forsman@lnu.se

Room: U | Time: 11:10 - 11:30

4A-2: Supervisors' competences from doctoral students' perspectives – a systematic review

Presenter: Mona Holmqvist, Lund University, Sweden

Co-author: Haley, A., & Johansson, K., Sweden

Abstract

Doctoral supervision is widely recognised as a key factor influencing doctoral students' progression, completion, and professional development. At the same time, doctoral education has undergone substantial transformation over recent decades, with increased emphasis on structured programmes, employability, and diversified student populations. Against this background, there is a need for a comprehensive synthesis of research that foregrounds doctoral students' own perspectives on supervisors' competences. This paper presents a systematic review of peer-reviewed research focusing on doctoral students' perspectives of supervision, with the aim of identifying competence areas of importance for supervisors' professional development and mapping characteristics of the existing research field. The review is guided by a framework encompassing five aspects of supervisors' competences: domain knowledge, research methodology, pedagogical competence, relational competence, and functional aspects. Searches were conducted in the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Education Research Complete (ERC) databases, identifying 1,193 articles published between 1998 and 2019. Following a rigorous screening and quality assessment process aligned with PRISMA guidelines, 96 articles were included for synthesis. The findings show that most existing research concentrates on relational and pedagogical aspects of supervision, particularly students' experiences of supervisory relationships, feedback, and support. In contrast, supervisors' domain-specific expertise and methodological competences are rarely examined from students' perspectives, despite being identified as important for doctoral success. The review also highlights significant geographical and methodological imbalances in literature, with limited representation from non-Western contexts and few studies employing observational or intervention-based designs. The paper concludes by discussing implications for future research and supervisory practice. It argues for a more balanced research agenda that includes supervisors' disciplinary and methodological competences, as well as enhanced professional development opportunities to support supervisors working with diverse doctoral student populations.

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Haley, A., Holmqvist, M., & Johansson, K. (2025). Supervisors' competences from doctoral students' perspectives—a systematic review. *Educational Review*, 77(6), 1971-1990.

Keywords: doctoral supervision, supervisor competences, doctoral education, student perspectives, systematic review

Contact: mona.holmqvist@uvel.lu.se

Room: U | Time: 11:35 - 11:55

4A-3: Doctoral Education as an Organisational Ecosystem: Leadership, Communication and Supervisory Conceptions in Swedish Doctoral Programmes

Presenters: Tonje Grahn, & Erik Persson, Karlstad University, Sweden

Abstract

Doctoral education is increasingly understood as a complex organisational endeavour rather than a primarily dyadic relationship between supervisor and doctoral student. In the Swedish context, doctoral education constitutes a hybrid organisational form, simultaneously an educational programme, a research process, and an employment relationship, which is embedded within an already complex academic organisation. Multiple formal roles (e.g. supervisors, examiners, directors of doctoral studies, heads of department, administrators) and informal actors (e.g. senior researchers, project leaders, external funders) interact around the doctoral student, often with partially overlapping responsibilities. While intended to ensure quality and robustness, this organisational complexity may also generate ambiguity, fragmented communication, and unintended burdens for doctoral students.

This study examines how organisational structures, leadership practices, and communication patterns shape the conditions for a successful doctoral education. Rather than focusing on individual shortcomings, the study adopts a systemic and leadership-oriented perspective. Conceptually, it builds on Lee's (2008) framework of doctoral supervision, consisting of functional, enculturation, critical thinking, emancipation, and relationship development, and its elaboration by Kreber and Wealer (2023), extending these concepts from individual supervisory practice to the organisational level.

The study addresses three research questions:

- (1) How do different organisational actors conceptualise responsibility and leadership in relation to doctoral education?
- (2) How are expectations regarding supervision, doctoral progress, and institutional duties communicated and coordinated across organisational roles?
- (3) How do organisational practices enable or constrain different supervisory concepts?

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed methods design. A survey is administered to all actors involved in the organisational ecosystem around doctoral students, including doctoral candidates, supervisors, directors of doctoral studies, heads of department, and administrative staff, across three doctoral programmes at Karlstad university. The survey is complemented by in-depth interviews with a smaller number of strategically selected participants at each organisational level, constituting focused organisational case studies. Document analysis of policy documents, general study plans, and Individual Study Plans (ISPs) provides additional insight into the relationship between formal structures and enacted practices.

References:

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Keywords: Doctoral education; academic leadership; organisational communication

Contacts: tonje.grahn@kau.se, erik.persson.pavlovic@kau.se



Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

ROUND TABLES 1–3

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 10:45 - 11:05

RT1: Clarifying Roles in Doctoral Supervisory Teams: A Pilot Study on Expectation Alignment at Karlstad University

Presenter: Fredrik Hjärthag, & Roger Renström, Karlstad University, Sweden

Abstract

The use of supervisor teams around doctoral students have developed rapidly in recent years, both in Sweden and internationally. Almlöv (2024) describes in her thesis, that role expectations for an assistant supervisor can be perceived as unclear. This is important for all supervisors when they work as a team.

Given this background, a pilot study is being carried out at Karlstad University to test a structured way of working that will clarify roles and expectations in supervisory teams for newly admitted doctoral students. The working method is based on an alignment tool by Wichmann-Hansen and Godskesen (2024), which has been modified and adapted to the local context.

A number of supervisory teams participate in the pilot study, where issues of for instance responsibility, writing, communication and conflict management are discussed. The aim is to help the main supervisor, assistant supervisor and possible external mentors to adjust the expectations of each other from the start of the doctoral project. In the pilot study, individual interviews are also conducted which are analysed thematically according to Braun and Clarke (2006) about the experience of the working method. The results are expected to contribute to knowledge about how structured conversations can strengthen supervision and develop postgraduate education. If the pilot study proves successful, this structured way of working is to be used broader.

We will share preliminary insights from our pilot study and open a dialogue on how universities can further develop supportive supervisory environments. The session welcomes supervisors at all experience levels, educational developers, and academic leaders interested in enhancing doctoral supervision.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Supervisory teams, Role Expectation, Assistant Supervisor

Contact: fredrik.hjarthag@kau.se, roger.renstrom@kau.se

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 11:10 – 11:30

RT2: Professional development for supervisors – what do experienced supervisors need at your university?

Presenters: Ann Grubbström, Klara Fischer, & Henrik Viberg, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Abstract

The quality of supervision (Raffing et al., 2017) and the research environment (Bastalich, 2017) are vital for the success of doctoral projects. In this context, experienced supervisors play a key role in shaping and developing the supervisory culture within departments. Yet there is sometimes an assumption that, for such an experienced group, there is little left to learn. Wichmann Hansen et al. (2020), however, argue that experience is not synonymous with quality. This highlights the need for continuous professional development that enables supervisors to identify and critically reflect on dilemmas, assumptions, and expectations (Fosslund, 2023). We invite you to a discussion on how we can strengthen the professional development of experienced supervisors and share experiences and reflections on how initiatives to support experienced supervisors can be adapted to different university contexts (Huet and Casanova, 2022).

The discussion will begin with a presentation of experiences from an online course for experienced supervisors at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Participants are required to attend seminars focusing on supervision methodology, the research environment, and communication. The course design is flexible and emphasises interaction with invited experts, and exchange of experiences among participants. Key questions for the discussion could include how we can create safe and reflective spaces for experienced supervisors to share their experiences in relation to research-based supervision pedagogy. Furthermore, how can professional development for experienced supervisors be understood as important not only for the supervisors themselves, but also for the department and the university as a whole?

References:

- Bastalich, W. (2017). Content and context in knowledge production: A critical review of doctoral supervision literature. *Studies in Higher education*, 42(7), 1145-1157.
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Keywords: experienced supervisors, reflection, courses, university context

Contact: ann.grubbstrom@slu.se; henrik.viberg@slu.se; klara.fischer@slu.se

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 11:35 – 11:55

RT3: The boundaries of the kappa – shaping the contours of the STEM doctorate

Presenter: Lene Nordrum, Lund University, Sweden

Co-author: Cimbritz, M., & Andersson, Ö., Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

A genre largely overlooked in doctoral supervision research (Solli & Nygaard, 2023) is the *kappa*, the framing text in a compilation thesis. Particularly for doctoral students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, the *kappa* often represents a new writing context. It may be the first time they are the sole author of a publication, and the format and audience of the *kappa* differ from the research article. To explore what matters for supervision, we have considered observations from three iterations of a *kappa* writing course (63 doctoral students in total), three focus groups – one with experienced doctoral supervisors (four participants) and two with newly appointed PhDs (seven participants in total) – and a large survey distributed to examination committee members and faculty opponents in all the doctoral defences at Lund university's faculty of engineering, LTH, during 2025 (311 respondents in total).

Our analysis points to a missed learning opportunity in the *kappa* writing process linked to uncertainty about the *kappa*'s purpose and place in the STEM doctorate. In the focus groups, many doctoral students described struggling to find their footing in a slippery genre while trying to meet perceived expectations, while the supervisors often sought signs of independence, resulting in a hands-off supervision approach. The survey respondents likewise had difficulty articulating the purpose of the *kappa* and distinguishing between its definition as a *summary* or a *synthesis* and reported that the *kappa* was only discussed in half of the closed assessment meetings. To us, this suggests that the value of the *kappa* needs closer definition in STEM. To address this situation, we call for a discussion of the role of the *kappa* in the STEM doctorate: its purpose and its value, as well as a definition of what it is and what it can be. We argue that such boundary work (Lee, 2007; Elmgren et al, 2024) can strengthen the *kappa* as an academic genre and support the development of effective supervision strategies that promote students' identities as writers and as scholars. Our discussion will be guided by three questions: what is the purpose and value of the *kappa* in the STEM doctorate? And who is its audience?

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2110575>

Keywords: kappa, Thesis by Publication, compilation thesis, doctoral supervision, doctoral writing

Contact: lene.nordrum@englund.lu.se

WORKSHOP 1

WORKSHOP | Room: Z | Time: 10:45 - 11:30

WS1: Researcher independence in a changing landscape of PhD supervision? Pedagogic dilemmas in the palimpsestic university

Presenters: Marie Ryberg & Signe Skov, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract

This research-based workshop examines tensions around doctoral independence in contemporary PhD education and its implications for supervisors. Independence is a delicate issue in doctoral supervision (Wichmann-Hansen & Schmidt Nielsen, 2023). Historically, independence was associated with scholarly solitude and individual genius (Clark 2006:446), yet from the 1970s has been challenged by emphases on interdependence and collective knowledge production (Elliot et al., 2023).

Today, PhD supervisors face increasing tensions between different expectations of supervising for independence – related to ideals of encouraging originality, individual performance in competitive research environments (Grant & Elizabeth, 2015), and educating skilled knowledge workers with demonstrable impact (Skov & Bengtsen, 2024). In this way, PhD supervision for researcher independence reflects the *palimpsestic university* where supervisors must ‘maintain life in a number of different systems simultaneously, trying to uphold the values and practices of an older regime at same time.’ (Barcan, 2013, p. 91). Drawing on interviews with PhD students and supervisors across disciplines in a Danish research-intensive university, we explore the role of doctoral supervision in fostering researcher independence amidst these competing pressures. We unfold and discuss the tensions surrounding the ideal of researcher independence today: if the role of PhD supervisor involves participating in and orchestrating competitive research environments, what pedagogical strategies remain viable for supporting researcher independence? Does supervising for researcher independence involve protecting PhD students from external pressures or preparing them as strategic, entrepreneurial researchers or professionals for a labour market?

The workshop engages participants in examining these questions by discussing participants’ experience as well as empirical cases illustrating how supervisors across different disciplinary and institutional contexts describe and tackle the tensions surrounding researcher independence and the supervisor role. The aim is to consider independence as contextually defined and pedagogically supported in contemporary doctoral education, recognizing competing pressures and new possibilities.

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Contact: mlr@ind.ku.dk, sis@adm.ku.dk

Keywords: Independence, doctoral supervision, autonomy, pedagogy, higher education

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Outside Room V | Time: 11:35-11:55

POSTER PRESENTATION

Exploring doctoral supervision in law education: Perspectives in teaching and pedagogy

Presenter: Tasnim Ahmed, Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Abstract

The aim of this discussion is to explore findings of the paper published by the author namely: Tasnim Ahmed (2025). Exploring doctoral supervision in law education: Perspectives in teaching and pedagogy. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 22(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.32890/mjli2025.22.1.1>. The abstract is as follows:

Purpose - This paper explores the pedagogical practices employed in supervising law PhD students within law schools. The study adopts an auto-ethnographic approach to investigate the beliefs of both supervisors and students regarding teaching, learning, research and supervision.

Methodology - An overarching auto-ethnographic method was used to examine the perspectives of students and supervisors on teaching, learning, research and supervision. Data collection spanned eight months and followed a multi-step process. The first set of data was obtained through a focus group comprising five supervisors from the Business and Law Faculty. The second set of data involved naturalistic observations of three supervisory meetings per supervisor and their respective students. The final set of data was collected through the observation of five student annual progression panel proceedings, focusing on the same five students whose supervisory sessions were previously observed.

Findings - The observations revealed five distinct pedagogical approaches to teaching within the supervisory context. Additionally, participants' beliefs were found to be interconnected, allowing for the identification of orientations. Participants aligned with a particular orientation exhibited a unique set of beliefs. It was noted that a supervisor's choice of orientation influences the overall pedagogical approach adopted during supervision. Each orientation incorporated an element of teaching, highlighting the integral role of teaching within supervisory practices.

Significance - The findings have significant implications for faculty professional development, particularly for staff involved in doctoral supervision. They provide insights into the dynamics of student learning during interactions between staff and students throughout the doctoral journey. These insights can inform future supervision training programmes, offering valuable guidance to novice supervisors and enhancing the overall doctoral supervision experience.

Keywords: Pedagogy, PhD supervision, auto-ethnographic study, law doctoral supervision.

POSTER PRESENTATION

My supervision plan – a reflective document within doctoral supervision training

Presenter: Gabrielle Paulsson-Berne, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden

Co-authors: Heverin, M., Rundlöf, A-K., Nieminen, J., Karolinska Institute, Sweden

Abstract

Background:

Introductory Doctoral Supervision Course is mandatory for all who wish to be registered as a principal doctoral supervisor at Karolinska Institute. The aim of the course is to prepare participants for the role of supervisor and to provide insight into the responsibilities that it entails. One central part of the course is for each participant to formulate “*My Supervision Plan*”.

Summary of work:

The individual supervisor plan is thought of as a tool to assist newly appointed supervisors in the preparation and management of supervision of doctoral students. The main intention of the document is for the participant to reflect on their personal supervision goals and how to accomplish a good and constructive supervisor - student relationship. A template has been constructed for the plan including seven main areas, eg managing the process, meetings, conflicts. Each area includes a number of related questions that the course participants write an individual answer to. During the two last days of the doctoral supervisor course there is time to compose a first draft of the supervisor plan answering some of the questions. The draft is then shared in groups of three for peer feedback and discussion.

Summary of Results:

The peer feedback part has been used since three semesters back. We see that the engagement of the participants increased during these discussions and that the participants really appreciated having the opportunity to reflect and discuss several challenges with being a doctoral supervisor with peers in a safe environment.

Keywords: collaborative learning, psychological safety, supervision planning

Contacts: gabrielle.berne@ki.se; maura.heverin@ki.se; anna-klara.rundlof@ki.se; juha.nieminen@ki.se

POSTER PRESENTATION

Onboarding new PhD students: Designing an introductory course that aligns expectations, builds agency, and fosters community

Presenter: Liv Gish, Nordic Writing Academy, Denmark

Co-authors: Buhl, R., & Dabelsteen, M., University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Abstract

PhD students often begin their doctoral journey with limited clarity about expectations, roles, and how to navigate supervisory relationships and institutional structures. While formal requirements of PhD programmes are typically well defined, the informal practices, norms, and relational dynamics that shape progress are often less visible. This can lead to early uncertainty, misalignment, and unnecessary friction.

This poster presents the design and implementation of a 3-day PhD introductory course developed at the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen (KU SUND). The course was piloted in 2024 and made mandatory for all incoming PhD students in 2025. It is recommended within the first 1–2 months of enrolment and must be completed within six months. Across 2024–2025, the course has been delivered 22 times, providing a strong basis for iterative development and evaluation. In 2026, it is planned to run 17 times.

A key design principle is alignment between the PhD introductory course and the faculty's supervisor training programme. By introducing shared concepts and language around supervision, expectation alignment, roles, and feedback, the course supports more productive and transparent supervisory relationships from the outset.

The course is structured around three core domains: 1) navigating the PhD journey and taking ownership of the process, 2) collaborating with supervisors and stakeholders while engaging in feedback and communication practices, and 3) developing sustainable work habits and initiating academic writing. Participants are encouraged to see themselves as active agents in their doctoral journey, capable of co-managing supervision and making informed decisions.

Pedagogically, the course combines short instructor inputs with structured group discussions and reflection exercises. Emphasis is placed on creating a psychologically safe environment where participants can share concerns, normalise challenges, and learn from peers. A recurring outcome in evaluations is the experience of not being alone, with many recognising that their concerns are widely shared. The course has been iteratively developed in response to participant feedback, including shorter course days, adjustments to exercises, and the removal of a continuous reflection diary.

The poster offers a practice-based model for designing PhD onboarding that integrates pedagogy, institutional alignment, and relational considerations. It aims to inspire others in doctoral education to

rethink introductory courses as a critical intervention point for strengthening supervision, supporting student agency, and fostering a sense of community from the very beginning of the PhD journey.

Keywords: PhD onboarding, doctoral education, supervision, expectation alignment, student agency

Contact: liv@nordicwritingacademy.dk

POSTER PRESENTATION

Integrating Strategic Career Planning into Doctoral Education and Supervision: Experiences from a Multi-Level Initiative

Presenter: Stina Jansson, Umeå University, Sweden

Co-author: Breidenstein, A., Umeå University, Sweden

Abstract

In recent years, increasing attention has been directed towards the role of doctoral education in preparing candidates for diverse career paths within and beyond academia. At the same time, studies highlight both the importance of supervisory support for doctoral career development and the challenges supervisors face in addressing non-academic career trajectories (Mathur et al., 2023). Despite this, structured support for strategic career planning remains unevenly integrated into doctoral training and supervision.

This contribution presents experiences from developing and implementing career planning support for doctoral candidates and supervisors at the Faculty of Science and Technology at Umeå University. The initiative originated in 2018 as a departmental workshop for doctoral students and postdocs, and was subsequently developed into an elective doctoral course, offered since 2020. The course supports doctoral candidates in reflecting on competencies, career values, possible trajectories, and in developing actionable career strategies.

Over time, it became clear that sustainable impact requires not only targeting doctoral candidates but also equipping supervisors with tools and perspectives to engage in career-related discussions. This aligns with work emphasising the central role of supervision in shaping doctoral experiences and outcomes (Roach et al., 2019). In response, a career planning component was introduced in 2025 into the university-wide compulsory course on doctoral supervision, aiming to strengthen supervisors' ability to integrate career guidance into their practice and support more structured and inclusive career conversations.

In this poster, we reflect on lessons learned from this multi-level approach, including implementation challenges, participant responses, and perceived outcomes. We highlight practical strategies, tools, and formats that have proven valuable, and aim to stimulate reflection and dialogue on how career planning can be meaningfully embedded in doctoral supervision.

References:

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Keywords: doctoral supervision, course, career planning, non-academic careers

Contact: stina.jansson@umu.se

POSTER PRESENTATION

The possibilities of Graduate School in ensuring high-quality doctoral supervision

Presenter: Elise Pinta, University of Turku, Finland

Co-authors: Järvi, S., & Heinonen, M., University of Turku, Finland

Abstract

In recent years, greater attention has been paid to the organization of doctoral education, and particularly to its management. Many universities have established university-wide graduate schools that are responsible for the strategic leadership of doctoral education across the entire university. At the same time, data collected from doctoral candidates indicate that, in addition to the candidate's own motivation and interest in the dissertation topic, effective supervision plays a critical role in the success of doctoral education and, in particular, the dissertation research. What can a graduate school or university, as an organization, do to ensure high-quality supervision?

In this poster, we describe the various critical issues that have been identified at the University of Turku and the measures the University of Turku Graduate School has taken—in addition to providing supervisor training—to ensure the quality of supervision. These include, among other things, a definition of the responsibilities of the supervisor and the doctoral candidate, a template for career and development discussions, guidelines for resolving supervision conflicts, and recommendations regarding the topics to be addressed during supervision meetings held at various stages of the doctoral research. We will also explain how our doctoral education's feedback system works and what doctoral candidates hope to receive from their supervision based on the annual reports doctoral candidates submitted earlier this year.

We hope our findings will activate lively discussions with other participants of the congress. Possible reflections: Is some important missing? What kinds of experiences have others had, and what best practices could they share?

Keywords: graduate school, conflicts, responsibilities, feedback

Contact: elise.pinta@utu.fi

POSTER PRESENTATION

Becoming better supervisors: How an online course meets the needs of new doctoral supervisors

Presenter: Henna Vilppu, University of Turku, Finland

Co-author: Salmento, H., University of Turku, Finland

Abstract

Recent policy initiatives in Finland have increased the number of doctoral positions, leading to a rapid growth in doctoral researchers and a parallel need to recruit new supervisors. As in university teaching, many academics become doctoral supervisors without deliberate preparation (Murtonen & Vilppu, 2020). Although supervision as a theme is included in university pedagogy training, these studies are typically voluntary. Consequently, supervisors without such training often rely solely on their own supervision experiences. While they possess strong disciplinary expertise and understanding of the research process, they may lack other key supervisory competences (Haley et al., 2025), particularly pedagogical skills.

To support especially new doctoral supervisors at our university, we developed an open online course comprising interviews with experienced supervisors, video lectures, readings, and a gamified self-test. Instead of having to apply to formal university pedagogy studies, the course was designed as a flexible and low-threshold 'first-aid kit' for new supervisors. The aim of this best practice poster contribution is to describe the course and supervisor experiences of it, which were collected via focus group interviews. The data were analysed through thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), using self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017) as a primary conceptual framework.

Preliminary findings show that the course participants (N = 10) rated positively the flexibility, freedom of choice, and interactive aspects of the course. Although the game was widely perceived as enjoyable, participants' views on its educational value varied. Data analyses are currently underway, and the results will be presented in greater detail at the conference.

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Keywords: doctoral supervision, university pedagogy, online course, focus group interviews

Contact: henna.vilppu@utu.fi

POSTER PRESENTATION

HandUm – A Collegial Development Programme for Doctoral Supervisors at Umeå University

Presenters: Eva Svedmark, Åse Tieva, & Stina Jansson, Umeå University, Sweden

Co-author: Winka, K., Umeå University, Sweden

Abstract

PhD supervisors operate in a complex and rapidly changing educational environment where demands for quality, adherence to organisational rules and sustainable working conditions are continuously increasing (Bengtson & McAlpine, 2022; Löfström et.al., 2024; Whittington & Barnes, 2021). HandUm is Umeå University's long-term development programme for doctoral supervisors, offering a structured arena for collegial learning, professional development and the exchange of experiences (UPL, no year).

The programme includes the course Doctoral Supervision in Practice as well as a recurring seminar series in which supervisors from different faculties meet to discuss current themes and challenges related to the supervisory role. Short expert inputs are followed by collegial discussions, enabling supervisors from all faculties to share experiences and explore practical strategies. The short seminars, often at lunch time and in Zoom, are easily integrated into everyday academic life. The thematic breadth ensures relevance for both new and experienced supervisors. The HandUm programme strengthens supervisory identity, promotes consistent supervision practices across faculties, and fosters a culture of shared responsibility for doctoral education.

In this poster we present HandUm as a model for continuous collegial competence development in doctoral supervision. The programme's structure and financial model will be highlighted, as well as recurrent themes in the course and seminars. By analysing course participant experiences and previous seminar themes, we demonstrate how HandUm supports the professionalisation of supervisors, fosters cross-faculty collaboration and promotes high-quality doctoral education. The programme is scalable and transferable to other higher education institutions seeking to develop their supervisory support.

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UPL (no year). <https://www.umu.se/en/upl/education/seminars/handum/>

Keywords: development program, supervision, course, seminars

Contact: Katarina.winka@umu.se



Photo: Julio Gonzalez, SLU

TUESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1A. Supervisor Competence and Professional Development (continuation from the morning)

Room: S | Time: 15.15 – 15.35

1A-4: Doctoral Supervisors' Ways to Regulate their Supervision Practices

Presenter: Heidi Salmento, University of Turku, Finland

Co-authors: Murtonen, M. & Greene, A. University of Turku, Finland

Abstract

The role of doctoral supervisors is crucial for successful doctoral education. Each doctoral research process is unique and there is variation in what kind of support doctoral researchers need from their supervisors. When supervising the doctoral research process, supervisors regulate their doctoral students' learning and thinking activities. However, there are different ways to do it. Some supervisors regulate their students' learning very strongly, for example by giving strict instructions what to do and how to do it. On the other hand, some supervisors are regulating their students learning loosely by giving the responsibility mostly to the student.

There is also variation in students' skills to regulate their own learning and thinking. Some of the students are taking more responsibility on their own learning and actions while other need more support from teachers and supervisors. What is important from the viewpoint of supervision is that different regulative practices work in different supervision situations and with different doctoral students. An interesting question is how aware supervisors are of their regulatory practices and how consciously they change their practices in different supervision situations and with different doctoral students. Another important, but not so often asked question is how doctoral supervisors regulate their own work as supervisors.

To increase understanding of doctoral supervisors' ways of regulating their supervision practices, we conducted interviews with doctoral supervisors (N=17) representing different fields of science at a Finnish university. The results indicate variation in supervisors' regulatory practices as well as in their conceptions of "qualified" doctoral supervision. In addition to supervisors' own ways of regulating their supervision work, there are other types of regulatory factors related to it, for example those associated with co-supervision and "external" influences, such as rules and recommendations set by the university, faculty, or doctoral programme. This presentation aims to provide insights into doctoral supervisors' regulatory practices based on the interview data and to stimulate discussion on the topic.

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Keywords: doctoral supervision, doctoral education, supervision practices regulation skills, university pedagogy

Contact: heirpo@utu.fi

Room: S | Time: 15:40 – 16:00

1A-5: Towards learning-centric Supervision: the role of Pedagogical Course in Developing Supervisory Competences

Presenter: Anna Livia Vilhunen, Aalto University, Finland

Co-authors: Parpala, A., University of Helsinki, Finland, Varis, O., Aalto University, Finland & Taka, M., Aalto University, Finland

Abstract

The doctoral supervision practices strongly rely on the shoulders of supervisors, who mainly develop their supervisory competencies through experience with limited – often non-compulsory – formal training contributing to their development. We studied 1) the development needs of supervisors, and 2) their learning in an elective Doctoral Supervision course in Aalto University, Finland, years 2022–2025, especially from the perspective of learning-centricity and inclusivity of supervision. The participants' (N=72; 36% assistant/associate professors, 47% postdocs) development and learning goals were analyzed from their pre-course essays, and their self-reported learning from their final essays.

Participants represented a range of experience of both previous (N=0–5, average 0.3), and current supervisees (N=0–8, average 1.1). We utilized a comprehensive inductive (pre-essays) and abductive (final essays) reflexive thematic analysis approach. We identified 362 learning goals across 26 themes that were clustered into three main clusters based on statistical significance: I. Key competencies and research process support, II. Supervisee's wellbeing and learning support, and III. Supervisor's professional development and collaboration. Post-doctoral researchers reported most of the goals (N=162), followed by the professors (N=156). Predominant goals highlighted self-management (e.g., boundary-setting, time/prioritization), calibrating the control-autonomy in supervision, and adopting pedagogical approaches.

Finally, diversity-related goals were both direct (explicitly on supervision of diverse individuals) and indirect (embedded in pedagogical learning-support). The reported learning from final essays were grouped into 35 competence groups, which aggregated into four main themes: 1) knowledge (n=503, i.e. 47% of all learning), 2) skills and practices (33%), 3) equ(al)ity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) (11%), and 4) attitudes and values (8%). The key competencies focused on pedagogical approaches (14%), learning support strategies (e.g. feedback and goal setting 8%), and fostering diversity (7%). The primary ways to support supervisors' learning focused on research/course materials (55%), peer learning (27%), and keynotes (14%).

The course's leverage derived from two design features: 1) facilitated, structured peer learning that surfaced practice-based knowledge across disciplines and career stages; and 2) sharing curated research literature and conceptual frameworks translating into supervisory tools. Our work underlines the need for systematic supervisory support to sustain high-quality, student-centric and inclusive doctoral education.

Keywords: doctoral supervision, supervisory training, supervisory competencies, inclusive supervision, learning centrality

Contact: anna.vilhunen@aalto.fi & maiya.taka@aalto.fi

Room: S | Time: 16:10 - 16:30

1A-6: Starting Strong: From induction to onboarding - evaluating a cohort-based onboarding programme for new research supervisors

Presenters: Roisin Astell, University of York, UK & Julia Rayner, University of York, UK

Abstract

Across many higher education contexts, research supervisors are expected to undertake induction and continuing professional development (CPD). Yet, data collected by the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) and Taylor (2026) show that many institutions rely on one-off induction sessions that focus primarily on internal processes and policies. While these sessions may help supervisors understand procedures, we argue that they do little to support the more relational and collaborative aspects of supervisory practice.

This presentation introduces Starting Strong: A Programme for New Research Supervisors, a structured, cohort-based onboarding programme developed through RSVP. The programme is designed for supervisors in the early stages of doctoral supervision and aims to move beyond procedural induction by focusing on supervisory practice, reflection, and peer exchange. The programme consists of four weekly two-hour online sessions. These focus on: (1) the purpose and scope of supervision; (2) supervisory identity and working within supervisory teams; (3) building candidate confidence through coaching-informed and dialogic conversations; and (4) supporting candidate progress and independence. Throughout, the programme emphasises peer learning and cross-disciplinary discussion as ways of building shared language and a sense of community. We ask whether a scaffolded cohort model can improve early-stage supervisors' confidence, strengthen their supervisory identity, and support their intentions to change practice beyond what is typically offered through conventional induction.

The pilot of this programme involves new and early-career supervisors from diverse institutional contexts, including Russell Group, redbrick, and post-1992 universities. Participants are located across the UK and Europe, as well as in South Africa and Australia. The cross-institutional design is not intended as a long-term delivery model. Rather, it allows us to test whether peer learning and cohort continuity remain meaningful across diverse institutional cultures, supervisory norms, and national settings. We are evaluating the pilot through a mixed-methods approach, combining anonymised session feedback, pre- and post-programme survey data on usefulness, supervisory confidence, and peer connection, as well as a follow-up survey 4-8 weeks later exploring reported changes in practice. Pre-pilot feedback suggests that participants value cohort continuity and the opportunity to share experiences across disciplines, particularly in normalising supervisory uncertainty.

We will present findings from the pilot involving around 90 early-career supervisors and consider what these findings mean for the design of scalable onboarding models and for the role of professional learning communities in supervisor development. We argue that supervisor confidence is more likely to

grow through scaffolded peer dialogue and reflection on practice than through compliance-heavy induction alone.

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Taylor, S. (2025). Research Supervisor Support, Reward and Recognition: A Survey of UK Institutions. RSVP/UKCGE February 2026

Keywords: doctoral supervision; supervisor development; onboarding; peer learning; communities of practice

Contact: roisin.astell@york.ac.uk; julia.rayner@york.ac.uk

Room: S | Time: 16:40 - 17:00

1A-7: When Supervision Breaks Down: Supervisor Change and Institutional Responsibility in PhD Education

Presenters: Johan Kristian Andreassen, & Gitte Wichmann-Hansen, University of Agder, Norway

Abstract

When supervisory relationships break down, changing supervisor may be one of the few available mechanisms to protect PhD candidates. However, such changes often remain socially and institutionally fraught, affected by norms of loyalty and fear of repercussions (Wisker & Robinson, 2013; Schmidt & Hansson, 2022). Empirical knowledge is still limited regarding how supervisory relationships deteriorate, how supervisor change is handled in institutional practice, and what consequences follow. This study addresses these gaps by asking: (1) what problems lead candidates to initiate supervisor change, (2) how candidates experience the institutional process of changing supervisor(s), (3) what consequences they report for health, progress and subsequent career intentions, and (4) how they experience their situation after the change.

The study draws on 106 semi-structured interviews with PhD candidates in Norway who had initiated a supervisor change due to difficulties in the supervisory relationship. Participants represented 25 universities and university colleges; 32% were international candidates, and the sample included current candidates (73%), recent completers (24%), and candidates who had discontinued (3%). Recruitment was conducted through an open national invitation circulated by the Norwegian Association of Researchers (Forskerforbundet), supplemented by snowball sampling. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed using a secure AI tool, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun et al., 2023).

The results showed that supervisor change was rarely triggered by a single incident. Candidates described accumulated problems including lack of supervision, academic mismatch, authoritarian or controlling practices, harassment or unethical behaviour, and conflict within supervisory teams. Second, institutional procedures were experienced as opaque and uneven. Many candidates carried the main burden of navigating the process themselves. This involved repeatedly retelling their story across organisational levels and experiencing that institutional responses were shaped by seniority, project dependencies, and local hierarchies. Third, candidates reported far reaching consequences, including psychological and physical strain, fear and reduced confidence, disrupted work, sick leave and delays, and in some cases the loss of data access or authorship opportunities. Fourth, most described the change as a turning point that restored agency and progress, yet many also reported lasting caution, reduced trust, and continued silence due to ongoing dependence on academic networks and references.

The study provides a large, multi-institutional qualitative evidence base on supervisor change as both a safeguard and a source of new vulnerability. It argues that supervision breakdown should be treated as an issue of institutional quality assurance and safety rather than a private interpersonal matter. Key implications include transparent procedures, protection from retaliation, independent support mechanisms, and governance indicators that increase the visibility of supervision problems.

Keywords: PhD supervision, supervisor change, PhD education, candidate well-being

Contacts: joan.k.andreasen@uia.no; gitte.wichmann-hansen@uia.no

2A. Relationships, Communication, and Supervisory Practice (continuation from the morning)



Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

Room: T | Time: 15.15 – 15.35

2A-4 Trust in doctoral supervision: Navigating academic culture

Presenters: Sylvi Vigmo & Linda Bradley, Gothenburg University, Sweden

Abstract

This research examines how diverse doctoral supervision practices contribute to doctoral students' academic development. Drawing on experiences of supervision of international doctoral students, we examine how supervisors and students together navigate linguistic, cultural, and academic boundaries in contexts where students may have limited proficiency in the local language and culture. Doctoral supervision is understood as a relational process (Aspelin, 2011) grounded in trust (Robertson, 2017).

The study is based on semi-structured interviews with ten international PhD students in education, representing different stages of their doctoral trajectories. Through practice-based examples, the analysis highlights students' perspectives on becoming members of a scientific community and how supervision practices support learning and a sense of belonging to contribute to a more inclusive academic culture (Elliot & Kobayashi, 2019).

Preliminary findings illuminate how students perceive and manage challenges, how trust is negotiated, and how supervisory relationships take shape. Further, the analysis shows how engagement in the research field supports becoming a member in academic cultures and how co-constructed supervisory practices can facilitate equitable and internationally responsive academic communities. This study also addresses how institutional structures, students' expectations and prior educational trajectories shape the practice around supervision. Particular emphasis is on the role of language and participation in research networks as key dimensions of doctoral socialisation. The study contributes with insights into how supervision can be adapted to support diverse doctoral pathways. It offers implications for developing more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to international doctoral supervision.

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1325853>

Keywords: supervision, trust, relationship, doctoral student, internationalisation

Contact: sylvi.vigmo@ped.gu.se, linda.bradley@gu.se

Room: T | Time: 15:40 – 16:00

2A-5: Co supervisor relationships in doctoral education: A conceptual review from an interpersonal communication perspective

Presenter: Ira Virtanen, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Abstract

Co-supervision has become an increasingly prominent model in doctoral education, and research on the topic has grown accordingly. This expanding body of work draws primarily from the fields of education, guidance, leadership, and organizational studies. While these literatures frequently acknowledge interaction and collaboration between co-supervisors, the relationship itself has rarely been examined through a discipline-specific interpersonal communication lens. Consequently, the communicative assumptions that underpin prevailing conceptualizations remain largely implicit and under-systematized.

This conference paper presents a conceptual and theoretical review of existing literature on co-supervisor relationships. My aim is to map how these relationships are described and understood, and how communication is positioned within current research. The review is guided by an interpersonal communication perspective and addresses three questions: (1) how co-supervisor relationships are conceptualized in existing literature; (2) which interpersonal communication concepts and theoretical perspectives are explicitly referenced or implicitly implied; and (3) what gaps in the literature suggest the need for a discipline-specific interpersonal communication framework.

The analysis indicates that co-supervisor relationships are most often conceptualized in functional and structural terms. The studies emphasize the role distribution, coordination, and supervisory effectiveness. Communication is more frequently treated as an instrumental means of information exchange or task coordination than as a relational process through which collaboration and shared meaning are constituted. Interpersonal communication concepts appear intermittently but are seldom anchored explicitly in interpersonal communication theory; communication tends to occupy a supportive role, rather than serving as a central analytical lens. As a result, relational dynamics between co-supervisors, including communicative negotiations and relational tensions, remain under-theorized.

By synthesizing these patterns, I argue for the relevance of a discipline-specific interpersonal communication perspective in future research on doctoral co-supervision. The review provides a foundation for subsequent theory development and qualitative synthesis, which proposes interpersonal communication theory as a valuable resource for advancing understanding of co-supervisor relationships in doctoral education.

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Keywords: communication theory, co-supervision, doctoral education, interpersonal communication, interpersonal relationships

Contact: ira.virtanen@uef.fi

Room: T | Time: 16:10 - 16:30

2A-6: Group supervision as a method to support doctoral students. A scoping review

Presenter: Marica Håkansson-Lindqvist, Mid Sweden University, Sweden

Abstract

Doctoral students are active in complex working environments, many times involving conflicting roles as employees, students and teachers simultaneously (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2023). Many doctoral students do not complete their studies due to this complexity (Haven, 2023; Polkinghorne et al. 2023; Burman, 2018). Research points toward group supervision as a frequent method in practice in doctoral supervision, although literature on the implementation in practice is scarce (Kálmán et al., 2022). The aim this study is to explore and analyse group supervision in the recent literature. To this aim the research questions posed are 1) How is group supervision for doctoral students described in recent literature and 2) How can challenges and possibilities regarding group supervision for doctoral students be understood as a method to support doctoral students in their doctoral journey? The preliminary results of this scoping review of recent literature exploring group supervision to support doctoral students show that group supervision provides both possibilities and challenges related to having several supervisors, unclear roles among supervisors, and work distribution. Practical implications will be discussed as well as future research. The research contribution is of interest for doctoral students and supervisors, as well as institutions who support doctoral students nationally and internationally the intention of promoting and sustaining well-being for doctoral students throughout their journey towards a completed dissertation project.

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Keywords: Co-supervision, Doctoral student support, Doctoral student wellbeing, PhD students, Team supervision

Contact: marcia.hakanssonlindqvist@miun.se

Room: Z | Time: 16:40 - 17:00

2A-7: Supervisor learning as norm negotiation: migrant academics navigating doctoral supervision across contexts*

Presenter: Bing Lu, Nottingham Trent University, UK

Abstract

As doctoral education becomes increasingly internationalised, supervisors are more likely to work across multiple higher education systems. Yet, limited research has examined how mobile academics learn to supervise within new institutional contexts. This paper addresses this gap by investigating how migrant supervisors, academics who obtained their doctorates overseas and now supervise in UK universities, develop their supervisory practices through engagement with institutional supervisor development initiatives.

Drawing on qualitative narrative interviews with eight migrant supervisors across three UK institutions, the study adopts an iterative thematic analysis to examine how supervisors interpret and respond to differing expectations of doctoral supervision. Building on scholarship on supervisor development (Turner, 2015; Amundsen & McAlpine, 2011; Halse, 2011) and academic mobility (Pustelnikovaite & Chillas, 2023; Hosein & Rao, 2020), the analysis identifies three interconnected findings. First, supervisors' learning needs are shaped by prior academic traditions, particularly in relation to research expectations and supervisory roles. Second, encounters with local practices generate normative dissonance, as supervisors confront implicit and often taken-for-granted institutional norms. Third, supervisors engage in ongoing negotiation of supervisory practice, selectively adapting and combining prior experiences with local expectations.

Conceptually, the paper advances an innovative framing of supervisor learning as norm negotiation. Moving beyond models that position supervisor development as skills acquisition or formal training, the study demonstrates how learning to supervise is an ongoing process of sense-making, alignment, and adaptation across contexts. It further shows how academic mobility intensifies this process, requiring supervisors to reconcile competing institutional, disciplinary, and cultural expectations.

The findings contribute to research on doctoral supervision by foregrounding the experiences of mobile academics and rethinking supervisor development in internationalised higher education. The study suggests that development initiatives should move beyond transmitting institutional norms to creating dialogic spaces that make expectations explicit and recognise diverse supervisory trajectories.

*This project is funded by Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), UK.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Supervisor development, Academic mobility, Migrant academics, Norm negotiation

Contact: Bing.lu@ntu.ac.uk, Nottingham Trent University, UK

3B. AI and Digitalisation in Supervision

Room: X | Time: 15:15 - 15:35

3B-1: Rethinking supervision as GenAI reshapes relationships, trust, empowerment, and integrity in higher education

Presenters: Inger-Helen Sekse Hilleren, & Trine Medby Fosslund, UiT, Norges Arktiske Universitet, Norway

Abstract

The growing presence of generative AI (GenAI) in academic supervision is reshaping how knowledge is developed, shared, and assessed, with far-reaching implications for empowerment, power dynamics, academic integrity, and professional growth for both students and supervisors. Supervision, as a core pedagogical practice, is particularly sensitive to these shifts, as GenAI challenges long-standing assumptions about roles, responsibilities and authority. This study asks: How do supervisors perceive and navigate the changing dynamics of supervision in a GenAI-influenced landscape, and with what implications for trust, integrity, empowerment, and learning?

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 master's supervisors across disciplines at three Norwegian universities. Data was analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), with ethical approval from SIKT (ref. 212898).

Supervisors describe GenAI as both a productive tool and a dialogic partner that scaffolds feedback, stimulate reflections and enhance students' writing by improving clarity, coherence, and structure. However, it also amplifies challenges such as trust dilemmas (Who authored what? What counts as learning?), blurred role boundaries, and uncertainty around institutional policy and ethical practice. Supervisors report tensions between supporting students' agency and critical thinking through responsible AI use and the risk of shortcuts that undermine deeper understanding. Some experiments with supervision designs that make AI use explicit, yet underscore that empowerment and trust remain contested and must be co-constructed.

By centring supervisors' perspectives, the article contributes practice-informed insights on how to align GenAI use with pedagogical purpose, academic integrity, and mutual growth. We propose principles for supervision that leverage GenAI to strengthen formative dialogue and transparency while safeguarding authenticity, trust, and integrity in an evolving academic ecology.

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Keywords: GenAI, academic integrity, academic development, critical thinking, empowerment

Contact: inger.h.hilleren@uit.no; trine.fossland@uit.no

Room: X | Time: 15:40 - 16:00

3B-2: Governing GenAI in Swedish doctoral education

Presenters: Mona Lundin & Annika Lantz-Andersson, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

This policy study critically scrutinizes the regulations and guidelines for generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in Swedish doctoral education, responding to the call for clearer policies on data protection, ethical and academic integrity. Swedish higher education institutions have begun to regulate GenAI across educational levels, including doctoral studies, although the implementation remains uneven and fragmented, with limited formal guidelines and a strong emphasis on academic integrity and transparency (Erhardt et al., 2015). These developments are shaped by European and national policy frameworks (European Union, 2024; Higher Education Ordinance, 1993:100; Ministry of Finance, 2026). The EU AI Act introduces stricter requirements for high-risk systems and personal data, while Sweden's national AI strategy highlights the need for AI competencies in e.g., doctoral education. Against this background, we ask: How is GenAI constructed in institutional guidelines for Swedish doctoral education, and what governance logics are articulated regarding academic and ethical integrity, data protection, supervisory responsibility and competence development in current policies? Drawing on Fairclough's (2013) critical discourse analysis, we examine current AI guidelines in Swedish doctoral education, with particular attention to the comprehensive summary thesis (in Swedish: kappa) and academic integrity. Only a limited number of policies are tailored to doctoral education as most institutions rely on general frameworks. The analysis shows that guidelines seek to balance innovation with the protection of academic standards and personal data, while emphasizing responsible use under supervisory oversight while also assigning responsibility for AI competence development ambiguously between individuals and institutions. A dominant risk discourse frames GenAI as a threat to academic integrity through obscured authorship and automated text generation. At the same time, variation in governance, from verification-oriented and supervisor-led control to more flexible ethics-based approaches, reveals significant inconsistencies and gaps, reinforcing calls for clearer national direction in doctoral education policy.

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Keywords: AI policy and governance, doctoral education, critical discourse analysis

Contact: mona.lundin@ped.gu.se, annika.lantz.andersson@ped.gu.se)

4A. Organisation, Leadership, and Institutional Contexts

(continuation from the morning)

Room: U | Time: 15:15 – 15:35

4A-4: Supporting strategic leadership in doctoral education: enhancing reflective practice and structural understanding

Presenters: Maja Elmgren, Felix Ho, & Nicusor Timneanu, Uppsala University, Sweden

Abstract

A strategic approach to leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the quality, culture and long-term development of doctoral education. However, many of the leadership positions are often ill-defined. While the holders of such positions have formal responsibilities within regulatory frameworks, their everyday leadership is equally shaped by implicit expectations, local academic cultures, and negotiations to balance autonomy and authority. Despite this complexity, support for leadership development for this group remains limited.

In response to this, we developed a structured course in strategic leadership for directors of doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science and Technology at Uppsala University. The course was designed to support these leaders in critically interpreting their roles, encouraging deeper reflections and exchange of ideas, increasing their sense of agency and their ability to engage more effectively with colleagues, supervisors, and doctoral students.

The course approached doctoral education as both a regulated and relational practice, emphasising the interplay between formal governance frameworks and the everyday dynamics of supervision. Participants worked with faculty guidelines and role descriptions, examining them not merely as administrative boundaries but also as tools for clarifying responsibilities, negotiating expectations, and improving supervisory processes. A key focus was cultivating reflective leadership: participants explored how autonomy, competence, and relatedness – core dimensions of motivation and self-determination – shape the experiences of all those involved in the research education process. This reflective lens helped illuminate how leadership can promote academic rigour, collegiality and personal well-being.

Another focus of the course was relational and communicative aspects of leadership. Through structured discussions, case-based activities and role-play, participants were introduced to approaches for addressing conflict, giving constructive feedback, and navigating complex interpersonal situations.

Finally, the course encouraged a strategic perspective on doctoral education. Participants examined how evaluation practices, ethical considerations, and responses to emerging challenges can help to guide long-term, evidence-informed approaches to quality enhancement.

Overall, the course contributed to strengthening the community of practice among directors of doctoral studies, providing additional tools for nurturing a well-functioning supervisory environment. The course provides an example of targeted leadership development to empower those who occupy crucial but often under-supported positions in doctoral education.

Keywords: strategic leadership, professional development, directors of doctoral studies, doctoral supervision

Contact: Maja.Elmgren@kemi.uu.se; Felix.Ho@kemi.uu.se, Nicusor.Timneanu@physics.uu.se,

Room: U | Time: 15:40 - 16:00

4A-5: Behind closed doors: an inside look at doctoral education

Presenter: Öivind Andersson, Lund University, Sweden

Co-authors: Ahlberg, A., Cimbritz, M., & Nordrum., L., Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

The scrutiny of a candidate's thesis before and during a doctoral defence assesses the outcome of a research program. In Sweden, this assessment is carried out by the examination committee and faculty opponent and discussed in a closed meeting after the public defence. A closed meeting promotes critical discussion and provides opportunity for formative feedback to the research environment (Elmgren *et al.*, 2024) but also means that assessment details are never documented. To gain insight into the process, we carried out two large surveys that were distributed to examination committees and faculty opponents after their serving in doctoral defences at Lund university's faculty of engineering (LTH). To avoid pressures of expressing a positive opinion, the surveys were anonymous and distributed at end of semester, well after each defence. The responses covered all defences during the spring of 2014 and both semesters of 2025, allowing a longitudinal analysis.

The results indicate that LTH is a favourable environment for doctoral studies. The quality was assessed as good to excellent, both in terms of thesis quality and candidate independence, with a notable increase in the quality between the two survey years. Information gathered on the thesis frame (the document that discusses the research articles appended in a compilation thesis) showed that most respondents both expect and find the frame to be a *synthesis* rather than merely a *summary* of the articles. This tendency was enhanced in 2025. However, free text answers revealed that the respondents had difficulties defining the two terms. Surprisingly, we also found that the frame was not discussed in half of the closed meetings.

The quality improvement between the years is not explained by decreased throughput, which was steady over the period. It can more likely be related to several developments at LTH, such as new milestones in the doctoral education, regular evaluations, and an increased number of forums for reflection on the doctoral education. We conjecture that these have raised awareness of important aspects of the doctoral education and improved the quality of supervision. Overall, the results indicate that the Swedish system of doctoral examination works well and that doctoral education at LTH produces research of high quality. However, since the thesis frame may be the only publication written by the candidate as sole author, its limited role in the closed meeting raises questions about how independence is assessed and supervised, echoing concerns that 'projectification' of doctoral education may erode independent, critical thinking (Ylijoki 2016). To address such concerns, we believe a discussion of supervision towards independence is of value.

References:

- Elmgren M, Lindberg-Sand Å, Sonesson A. Evaluation practices of doctoral examination committees: boundary-work under pressure. *Minerva* 62:427–456 (2024).
- Ylijoki O-H. Projectification and conflicting temporalities in academic knowledge production. *Theory of Science* 38(1): 7–26 (2016).

Keywords: research quality, doctoral education, doctoral defence, independence

Contact: oivind.andersson@energy.lth.se

4B. Learning, and Educational Design

Room: U | Time: 16:10 - 16:30

4B-1: Making theory explicit in a research school

Presenter: Iben Maj Christiansen, Mälardalen University, Sweden

Abstract

As the initiator and leader of a research school, I have deliberated issues of organization, content, supervision, and the development of supervisory capacities. In this presentation, I share a few of the decisions I have made and reflect on their outcomes.

In the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100), the outcomes for doctoral education are listed. The words “theory” and “concept” do not appear once in these outcomes, yet conceptual and theoretical engagement is often considered an important quality criterion in evaluations of doctoral dissertations (e.g., Trafford & Leshem, 2009). Post-graduate courses that explicitly engage available theories are not widespread in Sweden. Further, there appears to be hardly any literature on assisting doctoral students in creating theoretical perspectives, operationalizing existing theories, or contributing to theory. When VR (the Swedish national research council) decided to fund the research school REMATH, I contemplated whether it was time to change this.

REMATH is a research school with the research object “mathematics teacher education”. This constitutes a relatively young sub-field and theorizing in the area is scarce. At the same time, the current practice is to leave the choice of theoretical orientation up to each doctoral candidate, and many doctoral students are not exposed to the range of theories in the field. I deviated from this and organized a course which introduced the cohort to theories specific to mathematics education. While this course helped doctoral students to choose and begin to operationalize theory, it did not help them in developing theory. Halfway through REMATH's life span, a theorizing course was therefore developed.

While the students appreciated these courses, although they found them demanding, some felt pushed to choose a theory too soon. Further, it often led to difficulties in supervision, where appointed supervisors were not sufficiently familiar with the doctoral student's chosen theory. With these moves to lift and inform the theoretical work of the doctoral students also came a need to develop more shared discourses around theories and operationalization of theory in the supervision college. To motivate this, we further had to engage quality criteria for doctoral work. In the presentation, I will address how we did this, drawing on – amongst others – Trafford and Leshem's concept of “doctorateness” and Maton and Chen's (2016) attempt to describe the process of operationalizing theory.

References:

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Trafford, V., & Leshem, S. (2009). Doctorateness as a threshold concept. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 46(3), 305–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290903069027>

Keywords: Research school, theory, theorizing, quality criteria, operationalization

Contact: iben.christiansen@mdu.se

Room: U | Time: 16:40 – 17:00

4B-2: How to do work integrated learning in PhD education courses?

Presenter: Anna Karin Olsson, University West, Sweden

Co-authors: Febring, L., & Areskoug Josefsson, K., University West, Sweden

Abstract

PhD graduate employability is gaining global interest, due to precarious employment, financial cuts, and increased competition for research funding¹. There is a critique against PhD graduates not being prepared for the workplace². Skills needed include transferable skills, useful both in academia and other workplaces³. PhD education must adapt to those challenges, addressing both PhD students' and societal needs. Work-integrated learning (WIL) can support meeting those challenges, based on authentic learning experiences integrating theory and practice⁴. WIL is an under-utilised resource in PhD education⁵, thus further exploration is needed. Since connection to practice often occurs only in industrial PhD projects, opportunities to develop transferable skills are limited. At University West, Sweden, PhD course development has been deliberately focused on including WIL to promote transferable skills. The objective of this project is to present reflections on the inclusion of WIL in PhD courses.

The reflections are based on both teacher and participant perspectives from two new courses 2024-2026 (in total 41 enrolled PhD students from 9 universities and 6 countries), on career planning and academic writing. In WIL research, the insider position is seen as positive, due to the unique opportunity to capture in-depth understanding and interpretation and to improve and influence practice⁶. Through analysis of course evaluations, feedback, and related research, the reflections provide guidance on how to and the value of implementing WIL in PhD courses.

References:

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Massyn, L., Olsson, A. K., & Areskoug Josefsson, K. (2025). Career crafting using work-integrated learning: a missing part of the PhD journey? *Journal of Education and Work*, 1-19

Fleming, J. (2018). Recognizing and Resolving the Challenges of Being an Insider Researcher in Work-Integrated Learning. *International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning*, 19(3), 311-320

Keywords: employability, PhD education, transferable skills, work-integrated learning

Contact: anna-karin.olsson@hv.se *, linda.febring@hv.se , kristina.areskoug-josefsson@hv.se

ROUND TABLE 4–7



Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 15:15 - 15:35

RT4: Supporting supervisors at every stage: Adapting competence development for doctoral supervision

Presenter: Maria Weurlander, Stockholm University, Sweden

Abstract

For many years, offering courses to doctoral supervisors has been a key component of the professional development framework for academics in Sweden. These courses equip supervisors with knowledge of regulatory frameworks, doctoral student learning and development, good supervisory practices, diversity and equity in doctoral education, and the ethical aspects of supervision (Karampelias, et al., 2025). They also provide opportunities for participants to discuss their own experiences and learn from their peers.

At Stockholm University, supervisors usually attend our four-day course early in their supervisory careers. In recent years, however, we have noticed a shift in the participant profile: an increasing number of attendees now have no prior supervision experience. This change has presented challenges, particularly in course activities designed to build on participants' existing experiences. Additionally, we previously offered a follow-up course for experienced supervisors, but it was discontinued due to low participation. These developments have led us to reflect on how we might adapt our courses and other activities to better support supervisors at all stages of their supervisory careers.

We have designed a short introductory course specifically for academics who have no prior experience of doctoral supervision. The course has been delivered twice so far, with promising results. Engaging experienced supervisors in professional development courses is a known challenge (Wichmann-Hansen, et al., 2020). To address this, we have, in recent years, offered targeted 3-hour workshops and themed sessions on specific topics, such as ensuring quality in doctoral education, promoting doctoral students' wellbeing, and supporting doctoral students' writing. These workshops are open to supervisors at all career stages. Attendance records indicate that we are successfully reaching senior academics and directors of doctoral education, which is encouraging. While participation in these activities is neither mandatory nor tied to specific roles, we have carefully selected topics that are timely and relevant to the needs of experienced supervisors.

This roundtable session aims to explore strategies for supporting doctoral supervisors at all stages of their careers. After an initial short introduction of the strategies adopted by Stockholm University, participants will have the opportunity to share experiences of both successful approaches and those that have proven less effective.

References:

Karampelias, C., Stigmar, M., & Auer, N. (2025). Behind the scenes of doctoral success: a mixed methods approach to exploring PhD supervision courses in Swedish higher education institutions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 50(6), 1138-1150.

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Keywords: strategies in supporting supervisors, new and experienced supervisors (up to five keywords)

Contact: maria.weurlander@edu.su.se

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 15:40 - 16:00

RT5: Guided reflection on role modelling in PhD supervision

Presenters: Virginia Grande, & Helena Lindqvist, Uppsala University, Sweden

Abstract

Socialization, learning the ways of being and participating in the discipline, is highlighted by education scholars such as Biesta (2020) as an integral part of education. Doctoral students may observe researchers around them, including those who form their supervisory team, and aim to emulate them in various ways. Thus, their seniors' role modelling becomes a component of doctoral students' socialization.

In this workshop, we will reflect together on how supervisors and others in the supervisory team can be role models for their doctoral students, and various ways in which one can frame this responsibility. These reflections will be guided by Grande's (2023) framework for role modeling and other educational research on the role of supervisors. Participants are encouraged to contribute with their own reflection questions. While we as a group will engage in discussing these points, individual reflection is also welcome if preferred.

References:

- Biesta, G. (2020). Risking ourselves in education: Qualification, socialization, and subjectification revisited. *Educational theory*, 70(1), 89-104.
- Grande, V. (2023). *That's How We Role! A Framework for Role Modeling in Computing and Engineering Education: A Focus on the Who, What, How, and Why* (Doctoral dissertation, Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis)

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 16:10 - 16:30

RT6: Fostering Doctoral Candidates' Mental Health: Strengthening Supervisors' Capacity for Support

Presenters: Cecilia Almlöv, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden, Solveig Cornér, University of Helsinki, Finland, Marie Magnell, & Kristina Edström, Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden

Co-authors: Ingvarsson, S., Karolinska Institute, Sweden. & Bongaardt, R., University South-East, Norway & Low, M., Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Abstract

This roundtable aims to explore how doctoral supervisors can understand and support doctoral candidates experiencing poor mental health. Being a doctoral supervisor is often described as both meaningful and rewarding, yet it is also marked by significant challenges (Tikkanen et al., 2025; UK Council for Graduate Education. 2021). One such challenge is supporting doctoral candidates who experience poor mental health (Hazell et al., 2021; 2025). Research indicates that up to half of all doctoral candidates report issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and in some cases suicidal ideation (Levecque et al., 2017). The roundtable is a forum for discussing how supervisors can support their candidates without getting overwhelmed, drawing on both supervisors' lived experiences and research on doctoral supervision. The session is organised as an interactive roundtable in which participants are actively invited to share experiences, actions, and reflections from their own supervisory practices, from research, or from involvement in supervisory training. It begins with a very brief presentation of current research on doctoral candidates' mental health including the ways in which supervisory relationships and practices can affect this. This is followed by a facilitated discussion in smaller groups. This roundtable raises key questions, such as: Which approaches are effective in strengthening supervisors' capacity to support doctoral candidates' mental health while maintaining their own sustainability?

References:

- Hazell, C.M., Berry, C., Niven, J.E. and Mackenzie, J.-M. (2021), "Understanding suicidality and reasons for living amongst doctoral researchers: a thematic analysis of qualitative U-DOC survey data", *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 757-767, doi: 10.1002/capr.12437.
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UK Council for Graduate Education. 2021. UK Research Supervision Survey 2021 Report.

Keywords: doctoral supervision, PhD candidates' wellbeing, supervisors' capacity

Contact: Cecilia.almlov@slu.se

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 16:40 - 17:00

RT7: North–South Supervisory Partnerships for Advancing Global Citizenship Education

Presenter: Liezel Frick, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Co-authors: Morini, L., Coventry University, UK, Nieminen, J. Karolinska Institute, Sweden, Dang, Q. A. Coventry University, UK

Abstract

Doctoral supervision is situated in an increasingly interconnected academic landscape that is shaped by complex collaborations spanning geopolitical, institutional, and epistemic boundaries. This roundtable explores North–South supervisory partnerships, with an emphasis on how such collaborations can be leveraged to advance Global Citizenship Education (GCE) within doctoral education. As universities seek to internationalize their research agendas, co-supervision arrangements across geographical boundaries have become more common, but also risk reproducing asymmetries in power, knowledge production, and resource distribution. This session invites critical reflection on how supervision can move beyond extractive or hierarchical models towards reciprocal, ethical, and transformative engagements.

The roundtable foregrounds the experiences of supervisors engaged in cross-regional doctoral partnerships, drawing on diverse disciplinary and institutional contexts. Panellists will examine how differing academic cultures, expectations of doctoral outcomes, infrastructural constraints, and national policies and politics shape the supervisory relationship across geographical boundaries. The focus will be on how these factors influence the integration of GCE principles—such as critical global awareness, ethical responsibility, sustainability and social impact orientation, and respect for diverse knowledge systems—into doctoral education. By situating doctoral supervision within the broader framework of GCE, the session highlights the potential for supervision to act as a site of pedagogical innovation and social transformation.

North–South collaborations often bring together distinct epistemologies, methodologies, and research priorities. While this diversity can enrich doctoral research, it also raises questions about whose knowledge is legitimized and how intellectual contributions are recognized. The roundtable will explore strategies for fostering equitable knowledge exchange, including dialogical supervision practices, co-authorship models, and the intentional inclusion of local and indigenous perspectives. These approaches are framed as essential to cultivating doctoral graduates who are not only disciplinary experts, but also critically engaged global citizens. The session will also address structural challenges that shape North–South supervision, including disparities in funding, access to research infrastructure, and administrative support. Such challenges can place disproportionate burdens on Global South partners and candidates, undermining the collaborative ethos of co-supervision. Panellists will consider practical interventions, such as institutional agreements, capacity-building initiatives, and the use of digital technologies to support sustained communication and mentorship.

The roundtable adopts an interactive format, encouraging attendees to collegially share their own experiences and identify best practices for ethical and effective North–South supervision. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the session aims to generate actionable insights that can inform policy and practice in doctoral education. This roundtable positions North–South doctoral supervision as a critical site for advancing GCE. By reimagining supervisory relationships as spaces of mutual learning, reflexivity, and shared responsibility, the session contributes to ongoing efforts to decolonize knowledge production and foster more just and inclusive academic collaborations.

Keywords: North-South collaboration, doctoral education, supervision

Contact: blf@sun.ac.za; ac2009@coventry.ac.uk; juha.nieminen@ki.se; queanh.dang@coventry.ac.uk

WORKSHOP 2–3



Photo: Jenny Svernnås-Gillner, SLU

WORKSHOP | Room: Z | Time: 15:15 – 16:00

WS2: Understanding Doctoral Attrition – Insights for Supervision and Future Research Design

Presenter: Martin Stigmar, Malmö University, Sweden

Abstract

Why do some doctoral students discontinue their studies – and what does this mean for supervision practices? This workshop builds on a qualitative study that explored reasons for non-completion among Swedish doctoral students, identifying ten key factors such as problematic supervisor–student relationships, unclear requirements, lack of work-life balance, and organizational deficiencies (Stigmar, 2024).

The study exclusively reports on doctoral students' reasons for non-completion. Therefore, future research should also explore supervisors' perspectives on this issue. Conducting interviews with non-completers and their supervisors from various universities would provide a broader basis for understanding the causes of non-completion. The insights gained from the six interviews can serve as a foundation for designing interviews and/or survey questions for supervisors. Additionally, the findings indicate that cultural outsiders may require specialized guidance in their doctoral studies, suggesting that targeted support could be highly beneficial.

Workshop focus:

- Discuss the main contribution and insights of the current study
- Reflect on its relevance and originality for doctoral supervision
- Explore how these findings can inform supervision practices
- Develop ideas for a future study capturing supervisors' perspectives:
 - What questions should be asked?
 - Which methodological approach would be most effective?
 - How can we ensure the study stimulates reflection and development?

The workshop includes a short presentation of the current study, followed by interactive discussions aimed at shaping a research design that addresses supervisors' viewpoints and practical strategies for reducing attrition.

References:

Stigmar, M. (2024). Insights Shared by PhD Students Who Did Not Complete Their Doctoral Studies. *Journal of International Doctoral Research*, 11(1).

Keywords: attrition, motivation, multi-factorial, organization, relationship

Contact: martin.stigmar@mau.se

WORKSHOP | Room: Z | Time: 16:10 – 17:00

WS3: Collegial Intervision for PhD Supervisors: A Method to Foster Trust, Care and Critical Reflection

Presenter: Sidsel Winther, Roskilde University, Denmark

Abstract

PhD supervisors often seek a way to reflect together on concrete dilemmas in a setting that balances confidentiality, caring critique, and professional community. Collegial intervision offers such a structure and is a core element in our development programme “Masterclass for PhD Supervisors” at Roskilde University.

This workshop introduces Collegial intervision—a structured, peer mentoring method where supervisors examine real supervisory dilemmas through attentive listening and reflective questions. The session outlines how the approach is organised and why supervisors have found it helpful for clarifying assumptions and turning insights into concrete supervisory practices.

The session follows two strands: (1) a brief introduction to the rationale, roles, steps, and shared norms of intervision—confidentiality, attentive listening, and care-ful critique; and (2) a guided micro-cycle in triads, where one person per triad is invited to bring a short example from current practice. This enables participants to understand the procedure and to feel how a structured invitation to reflection can inform immediate next steps in their own contexts.

The approach is grounded in the idea that care-centred collaboration builds the trust and sense of community needed for openness, small-risk experimentation, and professional growth. Intervision offers practical scaffolding for such dialogue and supports supervision development as an ongoing, inquiry-oriented practice rather than a search for quick fixes.

Session outline (55 minutes): 1) Context (5 min); 2) Method overview (10 min); 3) Triad micro-cycle—one case giver (25 min); 4) Concluding reflections and Q&A (10 min).

What participants may gain: first-hand experience of how an intervision conversation unfolds in a short format; a portable protocol with a clear structure for collegial intervision that enables trust, care, and community, thereby supporting peer conversations that are both supportive and thoughtfully critical.

References (APA)

- Iqbal, I., & Vigna, J. (2021). Care in collaborations: Opening up conversations about teaching. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 26(3), 383–387. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2021.1937183>
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Wilcox, S. (2009). Transformative educational development scholarship: Beginning with ourselves. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 14(2), 123–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13601440902970007>

Keywords: critical reflection; collegial intervention; trust; care; community

Contact: sidwin@ruc.dk

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATIONS

Outside Room W | Time: 16:10 – 17:00

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Who knows about doctoral supervision? Anecdotal evidence vs research-led pedagogy

Presenter: Cally Guerin, La Trobe University, Australia

Abstract

Graduate research supervisors in Australia face increasing workloads and shifting institutional expectations. This “Stop & Share” outlines how one Supervisor Development Program has responded to meet the needs of both new and experienced supervisors. It shares the rationale for the program redesign, describes its structure and pedagogical underpinnings, and considers how these developments contribute to strengthening supervisory capability and thus enhancing the doctoral experience at La Trobe University.

Changes were informed by a desire to better foster peer connection, collaborative problem-solving and the sharing of supervision expertise across disciplines (Guerin & Green, 2014; Little & Green 2021). Equally importantly, we wanted to ensure that supervisors are familiar with current research into doctoral supervision, rather than relying only on anecdotal evidence from individual experience. However, having noticed that supervisors seem more inclined to be persuaded by the lived experience of their peers rather than research-based evidence, we decided to redesign the Supervisor Development Program to maximise the affordances of community engagement and peer learning alongside evidence-based practice (Green, 2026; Horey et al., 2025).

The revised program includes:

- a mandatory self-paced online module, *Graduate Research Supervision at La Trobe*
- a two-hour *Welcome to Graduate Research Supervision at LTU* orientation webinar
- the *Enhancing Supervision Series* of eight one-hour lunchtime sessions
- semesterly *Supervision Forums* for collective reflection on emerging research
- *Managing Graduate Research Progress* addresses the ongoing challenge of supporting candidates through critical milestones.

Conference participants are invited to offer comments, advice and comparisons with the supervisor development provided in their own institutions.

References

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2020.1871325>.

Keywords: collaborative learning; interdisciplinary supervisor development; collective reflection; online modules; synchronous interactions

Contact: C.Guerin@latrobe.edu.au

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

From Supervisory Systems to Funding Systems: Understanding Doctoral Education as an Interconnected Structure

Presenter: Mayra Artilles, The Ohio State University, United States

Co-author: Kajfez, R., & Matusovich, H.M., Virginia Tech, United States

Abstract

Doctoral education is often approached through the supervisor–student relationship. However, this relationship is situated within broader institutional and disciplinary contexts that shape how supervision is understood and enacted. This study explores how engineering faculty articulate doctoral supervision practices using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, with attention to the multiple, interconnected environments in which supervision takes place.

Using a teacher action research–informed case study of chemical engineering faculty, we examine how participants describe supervision across different levels of their academic environments. Faculty accounts extend beyond individual interactions to include research groups, departmental structures, and disciplinary communities. At the individual level, supervision is described as a process of aligning expectations and supporting doctoral development. At the group level, faculty reflect on managing research teams and shared learning environments. At broader levels, institutional practices and disciplinary norms shape how supervision is organized and experienced.

These findings suggest that supervision can be understood as a systemic practice, embedded within layered organizational and cultural contexts. Rather than viewing supervision as solely an interpersonal process, this perspective highlights how it is influenced by structures such as research organization, institutional arrangements, and disciplinary expectations.

Building on this work, we are beginning a new line of inquiry that examines how doctoral funding structures interact with and shape these supervisory systems. Funding models may influence not only resource allocation, but also the organization of research groups, the distribution of responsibilities, and the nature of supervisory relationships.

This ‘stop and share’ presentation is intended as an invitation to dialogue. We are particularly interested in engaging with Nordic colleagues to better understand how different doctoral funding arrangements—such as employment-based models or centrally coordinated systems—relate to supervision practices and doctoral experiences. Through these conversations, we aim to explore how diverse institutional contexts shape doctoral education and to identify shared questions for future collaborative research.

Keywords: doctoral supervision, doctoral funding, engineering, comparative doctoral education

Contact: martiles@osu.edu

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Navigating the Complexity of Giving Feedback in PhD Supervision: Early-Career Ph.D. Supervisors' Experiences

Presenters: Cato Bjørndal, & Trine Medby Fossland, UiT The Arctic university of Norway, Norway

Abstract

Doctoral supervision is a core practice in doctoral education in which feedback is crucial for candidates' learning, research development, and writing; studies show that supervisory feedback shapes doctoral candidates' academic writing, disciplinary socialisation, and influences progression and completion (Silva & Marcuccio, 2019; Wei et al., 2019). At the same time, feedback is complex marked by tensions between critique and support, authority and dialogue, and mismatched expectations between supervisors and candidates (Jackson et al., 2021; Bastola & Hu, 2023). Research is growing, but remains fragmented across studies of writing feedback, uptake/use and doctoral socialization, often foregrounding candidates' perspectives or general supervisory qualities; fewer studies examine supervisors' experiences of giving feedback - a gap salient for early-career supervisors, who must exercise evaluative judgement and authority in high-stakes contexts despite limited experience and often without systematic preparation – so empirical knowledge remains limited on how they experience and navigate feedback challenges in doctoral supervision (Almlöv et al., 2024; Bearman et al., 2024).

This qualitative study responds to this gap by asking (RQ): How do early-career doctoral supervisors experience the challenges of providing feedback to doctoral candidates? Data comprise 45 anonymous reflective texts from supervisors in a one-year professional development programme at the University of Tromsø. Participants described challenging in giving feedback to their candidates; the sample spans multiple disciplines, with 45 of 58 participants consenting to research use.

Using inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), we constructed five (preliminary) themes: (1) negotiating feedback authority under conditions of limited experience; (2) calibrating feedback between critique, support, and overload; (3) struggling to move beyond transmission-oriented feedback practices; (4) experiencing breakdowns in feedback uptake and shared understanding; and (5) navigating feedback within complex supervisory and institutional contexts. Across themes, feedback emerges as a relational and epistemic practice shaped by uncertainty, identity work, and structural constraints.

The study advances doctoral education research by providing empirically grounded insight into early-career supervisors' feedback practices and conceptualising feedback as a situated judgement rather than a technical skill. The findings highlight the need to move beyond skills-based approaches in supervisor development towards pedagogies that explicitly address uncertainty, relational complexity, and the development of evaluative judgement in doctoral supervision.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision; novice supervisors; supervisor development

Contact: cato.bjorndal@uit.no, trine.fossland@uit.no

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Pracademic PhD candidates: Implications for supervisory practices in a Nordic context

Presenter: Leila Ferguson, University of Oslo, Norway

Co-author: Fosslund, T., UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

Abstract

Across the Nordic region, mergers and revised accreditation regimes have expanded the number of “new” and prospective universities and intensified the demand for staff with PhDs (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2026; Skauge, 2018). Concurrently, doctoral cohorts are diversifying to include non-traditional candidates including pracademics—professionals who straddle professional settings and academia (Hunter & Carr, 2023; Posner, 2009). These candidates often carry heavy teaching loads, have limited research experience, and, without a PhD, may struggle for recognition from research-focused colleagues (Ferguson et al., 2026). Young universities may have limited research infrastructure and fewer supervisors experienced in supporting non-traditional trajectories and practice-based inquiry. Accumulatively, such conditions can impede progress, contribute to fragmented academic identities and impostor syndrome, and reduced well-being in pracademic doctoral candidates.

This stop and share presentation *invites discussions about how institutions and supervisors can better support non-traditional Ph.D. candidates*. Drawing on empirical examples based on narratives from Norway and inviting further Nordic perspectives, we will briefly map challenges and share promising practices, including supervisory teams that bridge practice and research; co-supervision across institutions and industry; recognition and assessment of professional knowledge within doctoral work; cohort-based supports and writing groups; and workload models that protect research time. We will situate these within holistic and relational supervisory approaches (Manathunga, 2005). The aim of the session is for participants to co-create actionable guidelines for supervisors of pracademic PhD candidates that may translate to feasible institutional goals transferrable across Nordic contexts.

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Contact: leila.ferguson@iped.uio.no, trine.fossland@uit.no

Keywords: Pracademics; Non-traditional candidates, PhD supervisory approaches, Academic identity; Practice-based doctorates

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Ethical Challenges and Strategies in Doctoral Supervision: A Multi-Level Perspective

Presenter: Tove Godskesen, Uppsala University, Sweden & Nord University, Norway

Co-authors: Grandahl, M., Uppsala University, Nilsen Hagen, A., Uppsala University, & Eriksson, S. Nord University, Norway

Abstract

Doctoral supervision in nursing and health sciences is an inherently ethical practice shaped by power relations, responsibility, and professional integrity. This Stop & Share presentation draws on a systematic mixed-method review of ethical challenges in doctoral supervision. The review followed PRISMA guidelines and included eleven studies across diverse global contexts.

Ethical challenges were identified at three levels: *individual* (e.g., communication gaps, unclear expectations), *institutional* (e.g., limited resources, high supervisor workload), and *cultural* (e.g., norms around authority and autonomy). The findings also highlight psychosocial and relational challenges, including isolation, power imbalances, and difficulties adapting to academic culture. These challenges often resulted in stress, dissatisfaction, and hindered academic progress among doctoral students.

While much of the literature focuses on students' experiences, the findings also indicate that supervisors face ethical tensions related to workload, competing responsibilities, and the challenge of providing fair and individualised support.

Key strategies to address these challenges include establishing clear supervision agreements, improving communication through regular feedback, implementing supervisor training programs, and strengthening institutional support structures. At a narrower clinical level, better doctoral supervision may strengthen the development of nurse researchers who are more prepared to translate research into ethical, reflective, and evidence-based clinical practice.

Future research is needed to examine how ethical challenges in supervision differ across contexts and how specific support strategies influence both doctoral outcomes and clinical research capacity.

Where the challenge shows up	What it can look like	What may help
In the relationship	Student and supervisor want different things, feedback feels unclear, or conversations are too rare	Agree early on about expectations, meeting frequency, and feedback style
In the organisation	Too little time, too many students per supervisor, weak support systems	Better training for supervisors, clearer routines, and stronger mentoring structures
In the academic culture	Pressure to publish, hierarchy, and different views on independence or authority	More open discussion, ethical awareness, and culturally sensitive supervision

References:

Godskesen, T., Grandahl, M., Hagen, A. N., & Eriksson, S. (2025). Ethical Challenges and Strategies in Nursing Doctoral Supervision: A Systematic Mixed-Method Review. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 10.1111/jan.70298. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.70298>

Keywords: Doctoral education; Ethical challenges, Strategies, Nursing & Health Sciences, Systematic Review

Contact: tove.godskesen@uu.se

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Looking beyond the finish line: empowering PhD supervisors to help their students plan for work and life after graduation

Presenter: Toby Erik Wikström, University of Iceland, Iceland

Co-author: Cornwall, A. L., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, United States of America & Rende, C. J. Harvard University, United States of America

Abstract

Helping PhD students with career exploration is a daunting task for many supervisors. While experts in their academic fields, PhD supervisors ordinarily – and quite understandably – lack in-depth knowledge of professional development practices and labor market trends. Accordingly, they often do not have a clear idea of what pathways their students may choose or have to follow outside their narrow research discipline after graduation, even as careers outside academia have become at least as prevalent as academic employment for PhDs globally (Skakni et al, 2025). As a result, topics vital for doctoral students, such as the landscape of opportunities that might inform their choice of a post-graduation career, may remain undiscussed. Further, certain unspoken expectations, either emanating from PhD supervisors or echoed among the research trainees themselves, may remain unaddressed. Emerging researchers may remain silent about their career goals, fearing that they will "betray" their supervisors if they bring up the prospect of taking a non-academic position. Unarticulated anxieties about their post-graduation future may even impact PhD students' progress to degree. While many universities have career offices which can guide PhD students in their career and life exploration, many students do not utilize these services, and career counselors, as excellent as they are, cannot match the influence that PhD supervisors have over their candidates. A significant consequence of this constellation of factors is a climate in which graduates who follow career paths outside of academia, however prestigious or rewarding, are viewed as having achieved a less impressive and desirable outcome, and their achievements may be discounted.

This Stop & Share session will suggest practical methods for empowering PhD supervisors to avoid the above difficulties and help PhD students plan for their post-graduation lives. Recognizing the enormous time pressures that PhD supervisors face, we will focus on efficient ways for the co-exploration of PhD student career possibilities. Based on our concrete experience of supporting PhD student professional development and/or PhD supervision at three different universities, we will suggest ways for supervisors to articulate, and help their students articulate, silent expectations about intersector and geographic mobility after graduation. Concurrently, PhD supervisors will understand the realities that candidates face on the job market, and be better prepared to normalize and approve of alternate routes to meaningful, PhD-appropriate employment.

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Keywords: PhD career exploration, PhD professional development, hidden curriculum, career beyond academia, non-academic careers

Contact: tew@hi.is, acorn5@mit.edu, cjrende@fas.harvard.edu



STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Cultivating Trust and Reflexivity through Team-Based Learning and Peer Feedback in Doctoral Supervision

Presenter: Trine Medby Fossland, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Co-authors: Bjørndal, C. The Arctic University of Norway & Järvi, S., Pinta, E., & Heinonen, M., University of Turku

Abstract

This study maps the transformative “loops” through which peer feedback within cross-disciplinary teams reshapes research supervisors’ practices and identities over time. We ask: How does team-based peer feedback in a large-scale, eight-month development program catalyze professional learning, trust, and feedback literacy among doctoral supervisors, and under what conditions are these transformations sustained?

Method. We conducted a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of a multi-cohort supervisory development program. Data comprise: (a) surveys collected at multiple points, (b) supervisors’ written accounts produced before/after collegial observation of live supervision sessions and in the end-of-program assessment, and (c) follow-up semi-structured interviews. Using iterative content and reflexive thematic analysis, informed by frameworks of team-based learning, feedback literacy, and single-/double-loop learning, we traced individual and team trajectories across data waves to identify recurrent “transformative loops.” Data triangulation and peer debriefing supported analytic rigor.

Findings We identify a patterned sequence—distancing, discovery, debriefing, redesign, and dissemination—marking movement from technique-focused adjustments to deeper epistemic and relational shifts in supervision. Working across disciplinary boundaries operated as an “anthropological lens,” surfacing tacit feedback norms and enabling defamiliarization that fostered reflection without local political risk. Supervisors reported it was easier to build trust and disclose dilemmas with non-proximal colleagues, reframing authority from expert-to-expert to co-inquirer. Written accounts show growth in feedback literacy (e.g., calibrating criteria, eliciting student sense-making) and intentional design of supervision conversations. Enablers included structured observation protocols, role clarity, rotating roles, and explicit debrief routines; constraints included time pressure and limited transfer opportunities in home departments. The final dissemination phase—a synthesis presentation followed by targeted peer feedback—served as a meta-loop that solidified supervisors’ capacity for constructive critique.

Contribution The study offers an empirically grounded mapping of transformative feedback loops in supervisors’ team-based learning and articulates design principles for scaling supervisor development: purposeful cross-boundary pairing, transparency-by-design in feedback processes, and cyclical collegial observation. By linking team structures to double-loop learning and feedback literacy, the work contributes a transferable model for cultivating trust, reflexivity, and pedagogical intentionality in doctoral supervision.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision, team-based learning, peer feedback, collegial observation, cross-disciplinary learning, double-loop learning, feedback literacy, psychological safety.

Contact: trine.fossland@uit.no; cato.bjorndal@uit.no

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Results from 15 Years with the Finish on Time Method

Presenter: Åsa Burman, independent consultant, Sweden

Abstract

Completing a PhD is often associated with high stress and delayed completion rates. To address this, the Finish on Time-method was developed in Sweden 15 years ago. The method supports PhD students in completing their academic work on time and feel good along the way, while also equipping supervisors with tools to support their students.

Developed by Åsa Burman (Docent, Stockholm University), the method adapts tools from UC Berkeley, cognitive behavioral theory (CBT), and corporate project management to the Swedish academic setting. It consists of three pillars: core mindsets, hands-on tools, and research-based stress management techniques. This study evaluates the method's efficacy by comparing survey and completion data between participating PhD students and a control group, as well as participants' feedback. The method is presented in *The Doctoral Student Handbook: Master effectiveness, reduce stress and finish on time*.

Initial results show that participants develop a higher awareness of their working methods through meta-reflection and identify stress indicators earlier. They set clearer boundaries between work and personal life, report feeling less isolated, and actively utilize peer groups for support.

Contact: asa.burman@finishontime.org

STOP & SHARE PRESENTATION

Co4PhD, A Flexible Model for a Professional Learning Community of Doctoral Students and Supervisors: A Self-Study of Collaborative Group Supervision

Presenters: Svanborg Jónsdóttir, & Hafdis Guðjónsdóttir, University of Iceland, Iceland

Abstract

Doctoral studies play a major role in preparing for academic work, and in the process, certain factors can be crucial to the study's success, such as participation in a learning community. The purpose of this study was to address the challenges and loneliness that many PhD students express and to investigate how a professional learning community (PLC) can serve as scaffolding for their learning. The aim was to map key aspects of a PhD student PLC. The research question was: What characterizes the process of creating and developing a collaborative supervision community for a group of PhD students?

Doctoral students face various challenges in their studies and have reported that their experience is poor when the structure or professionalism of supervision is weak. A learning community approach affords interactions among diverse knowledge and skills, fosters collaboration, and influences the development of academic identities.

We, two PhD supervisors in education, applied the methodology of self-study of educational practices. The data collection included recordings from PLC meetings, TOCs (Tickets Out of Class), end-of-year surveys, and our critical reflection. Data analysis was ongoing as we prepared our interpretation that influenced planning for each meeting.

In response to the lack of structure in doctoral supervision at our university, we organized a learning community in 2021. The PLC meetings occurred once a month online. The process of developing the PLC has been an adaptable and creative journey, as we have adjusted and responded to what participants share in TOCS. Benefits of working in the PhD learning community have emerged, including doctoral students from different nationalities and cultures, focusing on diverse topics, applying varied research approaches, and enriching understanding of issues in education.

Through our analysis, a flexible model for supporting doctoral students emerged, offering a promising way to improve the quality of doctoral supervision. We call the model Co4Phd based on four core elements we identified (co: collaboration; co: community of supervisors; co: community of supervisors and students; co: co-construction – for: 4, PhD students/supervision).

Keywords: Group supervision, Collaborative supervision of PhD students, professional learning community, co-construction, self-study of practice

Contact: svanjons@hi.is & hafdgud@hi.is

WEDNESDAY MORNING SESSION

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1B. Ethics, Integrity, and Responsibility



Photo: Niklas Storm / SLU

Room: V | Time: 10:30 - 10:50

1B-1: Supervision for a culture of integrity

Presenter: Erika Löfström, University of Helsinki, Finland

Co-author: Tammeleth, A., University of Helsinki, Finland

Abstract

Supervision serves the development of the research community through the socialisation of new generations of academics. Doctoral candidates observe how ethical standards are manifested in the behaviours and practices of research community (Gray & Jordan, 2012). The role of supervision is pivotal for a culture of integrity, yet, the premises of doing research are dynamic (e.g., recently the advent of generative AI, increased focus on compliance and research security, and the overall geopolitical circumstances challenging freedom and autonomy of research). It is timely to ask: *How do senior academics conceptualise supervision, and what functions does it serve in the construction of culture of integrity?* We hoped to shed light on the role of supervision in a time when boundaries of ethics and integrity are pushed, challenged and renegotiated. ‘Culture of integrity’ (Bertram Gallant & Drinan, 2011) provided the theoretical lens for exploring the question.

The research drew on focus group interviews with senior academics with extensive exposure to research ethics and integrity. Three focus groups involved seven academics. Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. The interviews focused on the state of research ethics and integrity in academia and changes observed. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. Five main themes conceptualise supervision and its functions: 1) Supervisors as role models and norm-setters, 2) Supervisors as cultural architects, 3) Supervisors as gatekeepers of authorship and fairness, 4) Supervision deficit as a threat to research ethics/integrity, and 5) Supervisory responsibility. The first theme involved shaping “the ethical spine” of research communities by being explicit about ethical/moral standards in a time of societal change. The second theme involved ethics/integrity beyond mere compliance despite a compliance-centred tendency; it alone cannot instil a culture of integrity, which requires a constant embodiment in research practices. Supervision involved prevention of ethical failures. This was manifested through authorship (Theme 3) which was perceived to be a typical source of ethical failure. The fourth and the fifth theme involved recognitions of the vulnerability of supervision to lack of appropriate competencies, and of prerequisites for fully living out the expectation of responsibility.

Several observations manifest the role of supervision for building a culture of integrity. Supervision was described as a core mechanism through which ethics and integrity become practice, and supervisors were seen as the actors who can either institutionalize integrity or silently undermine it. While the role of supervision for ethics and integrity has been recognised before, the research suggests key mechanisms through which it contributes to culture of integrity in a more institutional and collective way.

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Keywords: Supervision, research ethics, integrity, culture of integrity, research community

Contact: erika.lofstrom@helsinki.fi

Room: V | Time: 11:00 - 11:20

1B-2: Between Tools and Reflection: Dilemmas in Doctoral Supervision Training

Presenter: Margareta Jernäs, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Co-author: Vigmo, S., University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

At most Swedish universities, doctoral supervision training has become mandatory for researchers supervising PhD students. While course participants often anticipate practical advice and concrete strategies that can be implemented in their supervision practice, current training tend to have a stronger focus on socialisation in academia, power relations, ethics and how doctoral positions are regulated (Haley et al, 2025). Our study departs from the tension between the future supervisors' expectations of more practical tools and resources and the meta-perspective taken in the course that puts more emphasis on the complexities that doctoral supervision may entail.

The aim of this study was to investigate how future doctoral supervisors relate to a mandatory doctoral supervision course, how they connect the meta-perspective taken in the course to their own learning path and their development of supervision practice. Based on 66 written reflections produced as a final assignment in a doctoral supervision course at the University of Gothenburg, we applied reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to explore the participants' expectations, their interpretations and meaning-making processes in relation to the course content. Three key themes were identified, in which the participants formulated a strong demand for concrete tools, more specifically strategies for giving feedback, conflict management and how to support the student's dissertation progress. Secondly, supervision was reconfigured as an object of analysis rather than supervision techniques, foregrounding its relational, institutional, and disciplinary dimensions, in line with perspectives that frame supervision as a complex academic practice (Lee, 2008). This reorientation was frequently perceived as misaligned with the participants' initial expectations. Thirdly, the participants' learning unfolded as a non-linear process, distinguished by delayed understanding (Scheja, 2006) in which abstract concepts became meaningful through reflection and experience. This resonates with Schön's (1983) notion of reflective practice and Bourdieu's (1990) account of the gradual development of dispositions within a field.

The study contributes to continued discussion of dilemmas in supervision training and research in the temporal dimension and reflection as a cognitive resource. Based on our results we suggest and discuss some ways forward to address some dilemmas in doctoral course participants' expectations.

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Keywords: Doctoral supervision training; Meta-perspective; Reflective practice

Contact: margareta.jernas@gu.se; sylvigmo@ped.gu.se

Room: V | Time: 11:25 - 11:45

1B-3: Dealing with failure in student supervision: Insights from an autoethnographic study

Presenters: Anastasios Kapodistrias, & John Airey, Stockholm University, Sweden

Co-author: Bortolini, G., Stockholm University, Sweden

Abstract

Student experiences of failure during doctoral studies have generally been understood as something that should be avoided as much as possible. Failure is generally seen as leading to undesirable outcomes such as feelings of dissatisfaction, self-doubt, slow completion and even drop-out. From a supervision perspective, it has been suggested that student failure is often associated with a lack of timely or structured guidance to students (Gruzdev et al., 2020). In this context, various versions of the notion of *scaffolding and fading* have been proposed as an efficient way to structure student-supervisor interactions (Lee, 2018). Put simply, the general consensus is to provide explicit guidance in the early stages of a research project and gradually reduce this input later as students become increasingly self-sufficient (Gurr, 2001). Through this approach, it is assumed that failure can be avoided, since supervisory support can make up for the students' lack of knowledge and skills in the early stages of the research process. However, work in the field of problem-solving has explored a very different approach to mentoring that focuses on allowing students face complex tasks directly, only receiving guidance once they run into problems (Kapur, 2008). Although this productive failure approach has been shown to be beneficial for student learning in problem-solving settings, such approaches have not been explored to any great extent in the research supervision literature.

In this study, we explore student failure in supervised research and its potential for being productive for learning. By conducting an autoethnographic study of research supervision between two doctoral students in astronomy and education, we examined how failure is experienced from both the supervisor and supervisee perspectives. Our analysis indicates that while experiences of failure come with associated risks, they can also facilitate positive learning outcomes if adequate, timely supervisory intervention is present. A synthesis of our findings results in a suggested framework of productive failure in research supervision, grounded in our empirical, autoethnographic data.

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Keywords: supervisory styles, productive failure, doctoral education, autoethnography

Contacts: anastasios.kapodistrias@su.se, john.airey@su.se,; giacomo.bortolini@astro.su.se

Room: V | Time: 11:55 – 12.15

1B-4: What counts as institutional quality in research supervision: A cross-institutional case-study of practices, cultures, and professional responsibilities in higher education

Presenter: Trine Medby Fossland, UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Co-author: Ferguson, L. E., University of Oslo, Norway

Abstract

What constitutes institutional quality in research supervision varies—over time, across disciplines, and across institutional cultures? Building on established quality frameworks and conceptions of quality, this ongoing multilevel, cross-institutional case study examines how institutional culture, structures, and professional responsibilities translate into concrete supervisory practices and development. We adopted a multilevel, multi-method case design including institutional policy mapping, cross-faculty group interviews, and supervisor/candidate surveys; analyses used thematic coding, cross-case comparison, and triangulation to generate robust, transferable insights.

The study three preliminary integrative contributions. Conceptually, it proposes a typology of supervisor professionalism (roles, responsibilities, ethical standards) and an ecosystem model of supervisory quality linking culture, structure, and practice. Empirically, it offers comparative, in-depth evidence of how professional responsibilities in research supervision—duty of care, role boundaries, ethics, and quality assurance and enhancement are embedded—and operationalised across contexts, and how specific supervisory practices relate to institutional responsibilities and to sometimes conflicting drivers for progression, quality work, and outcomes. Practically, the paper introduces an implementable framework for research supervision, including institutional and local indicators that support quality enhancement and supervisor development.

We tentatively propose strategies for leaders, supervisors, and academic developer communities seeking to align institutional cultures and incentives with effective, ethical, and inclusive research supervision over time.

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Keywords: Research supervision; Institutional quality; Professional responsibilities; Research integrity; Quality enhancement

Contact: trine.fossland@uit.no; leila.ferguson@uio.no

2B. Internationalisation and Global Perspectives

Room: T | Time: 10:30 - 10:50

2B-1: Strengthening Global Research Capacity Through Sandwich PhD Programs: Opportunities and Challenges in PhD Supervision

Presenter: Syed Moshfiqur Rahman, Uppsala University, Sweden

Co-author: Redwanul, M., Uppsala University, Sweden, Karolinska Institute, Sweden

Abstract

Introduction: Collaboration between academic environments in Global South and North has the potential to improve the scope and depth of PhD education and supervision. Sandwich PhD programs—combining training at home institutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) with academic periods of stay at partner universities in high-income countries—are typically embedded in broader capacity development frameworks with the core assumption being individual training translates into institutional strengthening in the Global South. At Uppsala University's Department of Women's and Children's Health (KBH), sandwich PhD training is increasingly integral to doctoral education; however, its implications for supervision practices and sustainable research capacity remain underexplored.

Aim: This study critically examines sandwich PhD supervision, focusing on how co-supervision practices, institutional arrangements, and funding structures shape current developments in PhD supervision.

Method: The paper is based on a reflective and theoretically informed analysis of sandwich PhD supervision within collaborations between Swedish universities and LMIC institutions. It draws on concepts of co-supervision and distributed supervision, alongside research capacity development frameworks, and is informed by documented experiences related to planning, mobility, and supervisory coordination.

Results / Discussion: Annual sandwich PhD admissions at KBH increased from 10 in 2021 to 16 in 2025 (+60%), averaging 13 students per year. Its share of total intake rose from 20.4% to 28.1%, contributing 6 of 8 additional PhD positions, underscoring strategic importance. These programs reflect a shift toward distributed, collaborative supervision across institutions, offering access to diverse academic environments and global networks. However, they also introduce challenges, including fragmented supervision due to differing institutional expectations, cultures, and administrative systems. Structural asymmetries and power imbalances between Global North and South partners further complicate supervision. Despite strengthening individual research capacity, scaling up sandwich programs does not automatically ensure sustainable institutional capacity or long-term impact.

Conclusion: Sandwich PhD programs offer opportunities for internationalization and capacity building, but also expose structural supervision challenges—underscoring the need for structured co-supervision, clarity of responsibilities, and holistic integration of doctoral training into collaborative research arrangements.

Keywords: Sandwich PhD program, PhD supervision, Research capacity

Room: T | Time: 11:00 - 11:20

2B-2: Internationalising doctoral supervision: Insights from a Sweden–South Africa Virtual Exchange Programme

Presenter: Nina Christenson, Karlstad University, Sweden

Co-authors: Rocksén, M., Svensson, M., University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

Contemporary sustainability challenges call on universities to make Global Citizenship Education (GCED) an integral part of their programmes, including at doctoral level. Integrating global perspectives into doctoral education is important for equipping scholars to address contemporary challenges and contribute to sustainable development (Doyle, 2013). This imperative is particularly significant in field such as science and technology education for sustainable development (STESD), where sustainability challenges inherently require transnational collaboration (Rocksén et al., 2022).

This paper presents findings from a Sweden–South Africa virtual exchange involving doctoral students and senior researchers from universities in both countries. The initiative was designed as a structured series of online seminars combined with reciprocal physical visits. The overarching aim was to create an intellectual space in which early-career researchers could critically discuss their projects in science and technology education for sustainable development, all while engaging with diverse academic traditions and supervisory cultures. Five senior researchers, eight doctoral students and one postdoctoral scholar participated. Rather than replicating traditional supervision, the exchange functioned as a multi-supervisory environment in which feedback and mentoring were distributed across institutions. An evaluative study was conducted at the programme's conclusion. Cross-national pairs of doctoral students reflected on learning processes, collaboration and supervision; the written responses were analysed thematically. The written reflections were analysed thematically. Seven interrelated themes were identified: (1) collaboration and academic networking; (2) encountering diverse epistemic and cultural perspectives; (3) development of communication and presentation skills; (4) feedback practices and critical dialogue; (5) social connectedness and academic belonging; (6) global awareness and personal growth; and (7) expanded understanding of different higher education systems.

The findings suggest that virtual exchange can serve as a complementary supervisory arena beyond the traditional dyadic model, fostering reflexivity and engagement with diverse academic norms. The study contributes to discussions about internationalisation in doctoral supervision by illustrating how structured virtual exchange may foster global engagement and highlight the potential in taking part of a diversity of ideas and perspectives by engaging with the knowledge and academic values from other cultures.

References:

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Rocksén, M., Vhurumuku, E., Svensson M., Mushayikwa E., & Msimanga, A. (Eds.). (2022). *Science and technology teacher education in the anthropocene: Addressing challenges in the North and South*. Routledge.

Keywords: Doctoral education, Internationalisation, Virtual Exchange

Contacts: nina.christenson@kau.se; miranda.rocksen@gu.se; maria.svensson@ped.gu.se

Room: T | Time: 11:25 - 11:45

2B-3: Accelerated Learning and Temporal Imagination in International Cotutelle Doctoral Supervision

Presenter: Que Anh Dang, Coventry University, UK

Co-author: Tshuma, N., Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Abstract

Over the past two decades, policy debates and institutional reforms have increasingly focused on the duration, timing, and pacing of doctoral training (Balaban, 2020). Internationalisation, interdisciplinary research, and intersectoral collaborations are also reshaping doctoral education, stretching traditional models of supervision (Söderqvist et al., 2024). In this context, time and its economic accounting have become key tools for measuring knowledge production and ensuring institutional accountability. Consequently, doctoral researchers and supervisors face increasing pressure to complete doctorates within specific timeframes.

These challenges are particularly pronounced in international cotutelle doctoral programmes which involve doctoral researchers being formally enrolled at two degree-awarding universities - typically in different countries - and co-supervised by academics from both institutions while fulfilling the academic requirements of each (Grant et al., 2022). Such arrangements introduce additional temporal complexities related to cross-institutional coordination, mobility requirements, and multi-site research.

Using the concept of *temporal imagination*, this study examines how time and time-related policies shape supervision practices and accelerate learning within cotutelle programmes. Temporal imagination refers to the capacity of individuals or groups to critically reflect on different conceptions of time - past, present, and future - and to envision alternative temporal frameworks that shape action, knowledge production, and social practices (Warren, 2025). Recent scholarship emphasises that time is socially constructed rather than merely chronological (Facer, 2024). This perspective builds on Barbara Adam's (2010) concept of *timescapes*, which highlights the multiple rhythms, tempos, and temporalities that shape social practices. In cotutelle programmes, timescapes emerge through the interaction of multiple institutional timelines, funding structures, co-supervisory practices, cross-border research processes, technological infrastructures, the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI), and the personal life trajectories of doctoral researchers.

However, the temporal dynamics of cotutelle programmes remain largely underexplored in the literature. This study, therefore, investigates:

(1) How do doctoral researchers and supervisors imagine, negotiate, and experience time within international cotutelle doctoral programmes?

(2) How do the timescapes of cotutelle programmes shape supervision practices, knowledge production, and doctoral researcher identity formation?

The study draws on document analysis, 12 audio diary entries from doctoral candidates, and six interviews with supervisors from two cotutelle programmes between universities in Asia, Africa, and the United Kingdom. The analysis explores implications of temporal imagination and doctoral timescapes for supervision pedagogy, knowledge production, lived experiences, research quality, and cotutelle programme management.

Keywords: Accelerated learning, cotutelle doctoral supervision, temporal imagination, timescape, AI (Artificial Intelligence)

Contacts: queanh.dang@coventry.ac.uk; ntshuma@sun.ac.za

Room: T | Time: 11:55 - 12:15

2B-4: Scenario training in Doctoral Supervision

Presenter: Anna-Carin Bredmar, Linnaeus University, Sweden

Abstract

Supervisors in doctoral education hold extensive and complex teaching responsibilities, which places significant demands on the content and format of supervisor training (AbuSa'aleek, 2026; Brodin et al., 2020). An essential task is to offer opportunities for practice-based reflection and learning (McAlpine & Amundsen, 2009). Despite this, professional learning in doctoral education remains a relatively underexplored research area (AbuSa'aleek, 2026). Accessing authentic supervisory within the framework of supervisor training is both challenging and controversial (Brodin et al., 2020; Lu & Henderson, 2024). Alternative training formats that offer authenticity, support the development of practical competence, and provide insight into future supervisory practice are necessary. Scenario training represents one such promising pedagogical approach. While simulation-based learning is increasingly used in higher education (Bredmar et al., 2025), existing models tend to treat simulation and reflection as separate activities. This article examines a case in which practical scenario training is enacted in doctoral supervisor training. The study aims to generate knowledge about the didactic considerations necessary when designing scenario training. How can practical supervisory competence be developed within supervisor training? What learning processes can be intentionally designed through scenario training? To address these questions, a mixed-methods case study was conducted (Denscombe, 2014; Lu & Henderson, 2024). Empirical material includes observations, a focus group interview, and five semi-structured interviews with university teachers and professional actors. By synthesizing theories of professional learning, supervisory practice, and scenario simulation, the analysis explores how mechanisms central to practical learning—such as reflection, relational responsiveness, and professional judgment—can be cultivated through the didactic design of simulation practices. Preliminary findings indicate that scenario training offers valuable opportunities for navigating relational complexity, integrating experiential knowledge, creating pedagogical space through targeted interventions, and collectively stabilising understandings of supervisory practice. The results contribute new analytical tools and develop the concept of *reflection-responsive simulation* in supervisor training. Moreover, the findings point toward future research on the micro-processes of professional learning in simulated environments, with potential implications for quality enhancement in doctoral supervisor training. The study's outcomes will also inform evidence-based recommendations for best practices in the design of supervisor education.

References

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Keywords: didactic design, reflective practice, scenario simulation-based learning,
supervisory training

Contact: Anna-Carin.Bredmar@lnu.se

3C. Doctoral Student Perspectives and Experiences



Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

Room: X | Time: 10:30 – 10:50

3C-1: Potential threshold concepts in PhD candidate progression in the civil engineering sector

Presenters: Rasmus Rempling, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden, NTNU, Norway, Lohne, J, NTNU, Norway., & Magnus Gustafsson, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

Abstract

Progression towards Doctorateness (Yashani, 2018) in PhD education is an elusive concept, but even more challenging is isolating what challenges an individual PhD student in their journey towards the degree. Challenges reported vary from the conceptual and the methodological as well as so called generic skills. An added complexity in the mix is the relational aspects of the process, and the potentially different core values and expectations on a PhD degree learning process (Lee, 2018). In this study, we are exploring the threshold concepts that indicate progression or might give rise to developmental and progression blocks as experienced by supervisors and PhD candidates, respectively.

The study is inspired by a previous study by Kiley and Wisker (2009) in which they too wanted to isolate obstacles in PhD education and arrived at a series of threshold concepts. Their study involved a survey across three institutions and follow up interviews with a considerably smaller cohort. Our study adopts a similar design. We have designed a free text answer survey for both supervisors and PhD candidates piloted with nine (9) supervisors and nine (9) candidates. We also expect to interview six (6) of the supervisors and three (3) of the candidates as per agreement in the survey. While we focus our study on the construction and transport sectors, the sampling in the pilot stage is challenging. We suspect the results are affected by the degree of supervisors' experience or how far into the PhD process respondents are (Turner, 2015); but our sampling for the pilot was convenience-oriented and informed by our respective networks and course contexts.

Findings suggest that most obstacles to progress tend to be of systemic character where multiple aspects converge during a problematic stage. Any combination of discordant supervisor feedback, model development and application challenges, lacking research field positioning, writing for publication challenges, time-management, relative poorly articulated expectations, and quantitative evaluation criteria can combine to generate stressful stages for candidates which they might not manage to negotiate well. Solutions mentioned, if mentioned, refer to returning to reading, re-assessing theory or methodology, stepping back, or focusing elsewhere, or finding a minimal next step to get going.

Taken together, the findings show that doctoral progression in supervision is understood as movement from dependence to ownership. Candidates described learning to read the field, argued for their choices, accepted uncertainty, and work with increasing autonomy. Supervisors described looking for initiative, judgement, and the ability to turn broad problems into focused and communicable research. Across both Norway and Sweden, progression was therefore not merely a matter of accumulating outputs, but of becoming able to think, choose, delimit, and defend as an independent researcher.

We have limited the scope of the study to the civil engineering field and construction engineering specifically. Two universities are involved in the pilot stage with one in Sweden and one in Norway. Getting an insight into two different PhD education systems offers an avenue of also exploring systemic or cultural dimensions of the challenges of PhD progression. Getting to share this study and the findings from the pilot stage at CoPhS26 offers the added possibility of getting colleagues to join the study and add sites or disciplines.

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Keywords: Candidate progression, threshold concepts, requirements, milestones, supervision approaches

Contacts: rasmus.rempling@chalmers.se; jardar.lohne@ntnu.no; magusta@chalmers.se

Room: X | Time: 11:00 – 11:20

3C-2: Supervisory approaches valued at different stages of the doctoral journey: Perspectives from students in education

Presenters: Aimee Haley, University of Gothenburg, Sweden & Mona Holmqvist, Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

Doctoral education has typically been associated with preparing students to become independent researchers in their fields, and supervision is an important part of this process (Barnard & Shultz, 2020). In doctoral education lacking structured curricula and qualifying examinations, supervisors carry much of the educational responsibility, as the doctoral thesis is a central requirement in earning the degree (Hansen, 2025). Sweden is one such example where the doctoral thesis is central. Although research on supervision is extensive, limited attention has been given to how supervision in these contexts supports doctoral students' development toward independence across different stages of the doctoral journey. To address this gap, we explore doctoral students' experiences of supervision by investigating two questions: (1) *What supervision approaches are valued by doctoral students in the field of education?* and (2) *What approaches are valued at the beginning, middle, and end of the doctoral journey?*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 students enrolled at two Swedish universities in the education field. The participants were selected to represent different phases of the doctoral journey. Six were beginners in their doctoral programmes (i.e., within their first year of study), four were in the middle (i.e., more than one year into their education but not planning the defence), and five were at the end (i.e., the defence was planned or was recently completed). By applying Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, their perspectives on six areas of supervision, which have earlier been found to be important, were analysed: 1) functional guidance, 2) domain knowledge, 3) research methodology, 4) pedagogical component, 5) relationships, and 6) contextual competence.

The results show that beginner doctoral students are initially impressed by their supervisors' domain knowledge and uncertain about their methodological knowledge. In the middle phase, they have developed their own knowledge and value approaches to the supervisory relationship more neutrally. By the end, they recognise their supervisors' knowledge gaps and limitations and value independence and autonomy. We argue that an understanding of these matters has important implications for supervision practices and for developing future independent researchers.

References:

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Keywords: education science, transformative learning, autonomy, research training

Contacts: Aimee.Haley@gu.se, University of Gothenburg, Sweden; Mona.Holmqvist@uvt.lu.se, Lund University, Sweden

Room: X | Time: 11:25 – 11:45

3C-3: Changes in Early Career Researchers Doctoral Study Experiences during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic

Presenter: Solveig Cornér, Faculty of Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki, Finland

Co-authors: Tikkanen, L., Rönkkönen, S., Virtanen, V., Sundström, L., Häme University of Applied Sciences, Finland & Pyhältö, Kirsi, University of Helsinki, Finland

Abstract

Based on recent research on the immediate effects of the pandemic on Early Career Researchers (ECRs), the results indicate that the effects have been primarily negative (Lokthkina et al. 2022). This quantitative study examines changes in ECRs' experiences during and after the pandemic and explores whether perceived pandemic impacts and supervisory support experiences differ by discipline clusters, study status, research group status or gender. The study draws on two survey datasets collected at a Finnish research-intensive university in spring 2021 (during the pandemic; n=768) and spring 2025 (after the pandemic; n=1130). In total 1898 ECRs answered the surveys with the same questions/variables. The collected data included measures of supervisory support, researcher community support, and perceived COVID-19 impact on doctoral study progress and study-related well-being. Our research questions were:

- RQ 1. How do ECRs experience supervision and research community support during and after the pandemic?
- RQ 2. How do ECRs perceive the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their doctoral study progress and study wellbeing during and after the pandemic?
- RQ 3. Are there differences in ECRs perceived impact of COVID-19 and their experiences of supervisory and community support across (a) disciplinary clusters, (b) study status, (c) mode of working (participation in research groups vs. mainly working independently), and (d) gender?

Our findings indicate that the negative impact of pandemic was more evident during the pandemic than after it. Our results also showed that the pandemic had not only negative but unequal impact on ECRs. Also, disciplinary differences as well as differences between those working alone vs in research groups were detected. Nonetheless, the results indicate that the negative impacts of the pandemic on ECRs doctoral studies diminished over time.

This study contributes to the research literature on the importance of doctoral supervisors' acknowledgement of community support for their supervisees. It also provides targeted insights for doctoral supervisors, since the study underlines the justifications for equality of ECRs in the supervisory relationship in the post pandemic era.

References:

Lokhtina, I. A., Castelló, M., Lambrechts, A. A., Löfström, E., McGinn, M. K., Skakni, I., & van der Weijden, I. (2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early career researcher activity, development, career, and well-being: the state of the art. *Studies in Graduate and Postdoctoral Education*, 13(3), 245-265. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SGPE-10-2021-0076>

Keywords: Early Career Researchers, Covid-19 impact, supervisory support, researcher community support, wellbeing

Contact: solveig.corner@helsinki.fi

Room: X | Time: 11:55 – 12:15

3C-4: Formal Roles and Hidden Authority: Using Corporate Law Concepts to Rethink Responsibility in Doctoral Supervision

Presenter: Cecilia Almlöv, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden

Abstract

In many organisational contexts, formal roles do not fully correspond to the functions performed in practice. This study aims to illuminate responsibility in doctoral supervision (Wilkin et al., 2023), and is guided by a central question: How can legal concepts of formal and informal responsibility shed light on different subjects of responsibility in doctoral supervision?

The interpretation is informed by Gary Alan Fine's concept of social expertise (Fine, 1987), highlighting how authority in organisations often emerges through recognised competence rather than formal position. Further, the study uses the role theory to identity the distinction between role expectations and role performance (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

The research adopts a comparative analogical methodology (Vaughan, 2014), using corporate law concepts as analytical tools to interpret empirical material consisting of 35 in-depth interviews with doctoral co-supervisors from two Swedish universities across several disciplines. In doing so, it highlights how authority, guidance, and accountability may be distributed across both formally nominated and unnominated actors within doctoral supervision. Drawing on concepts from English corporate law (Companies Act 2006 s.251) – *rubber-stamp directors*, *de facto directors*, and *shadow directors* – the presentation introduces a novel analytical framework for understanding how responsibility, authority, and influence are distributed within doctoral supervision, a collective responsibility (McAlpine, 2013).

The findings suggest that responsibilities in doctoral supervision are sometimes unclear and that significant supervisory contributions may remain invisible within institutional structures. By making these roles analytically visible, the study contributes a new conceptual vocabulary for analysing supervisory responsibility. The presentation argues that recognising the relationship between formal roles and hidden authority may support greater transparency for PhD candidates and novice supervisors.

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Keywords: doctoral supervision, analogical analysis, doctoral supervisory roles

Contact: cecilia.almlov@slu.se

4C. Quality, Policy, and Assessment

Room: U | Time: 10:30 - 10:50

4C-1: In defence of the defence: Why more weight ought to be given to the defence in the assessment of doctoral candidates

Presenters: Maja Elmgren, Uppsala University, Sweden & Anders Sonesson, Lund University, Sweden

Abstract

In this presentation we argue for the importance of the defence for the assessment of doctoral candidates. We build on results from a large study on the evaluations practices of Swedish doctoral examination committees (Elmgren *et al.* 2024) and show how the defence is indispensable for elucidating the candidate's competence and contribution to the thesis and research. Furthermore, we raise several changing circumstances for research, doctoral education and the academy at large that further accentuates the importance of elucidating these aspects, including educational formalisation, research projectification, co-authoring and the rise of generative AI. We conclude that more emphasis should be placed on the defence in the assessment of doctoral students and that its historical importance for the verdict ought to be, at least partly, reestablished.

The public defence has a long history in the examination of doctoral candidates, dating back to the medieval university and remaining central for the assessment of doctoral competence also after the introduction of the modern-day thesis in the mid nineteenth century. Today it is still featured in many countries, but its relative importance for the assessment of candidates has decreased and the main emphasis has instead been placed on the research as presented in the thesis. In many countries the defence is separated from the assessment of the thesis and only allowed to take place when the latter has been passed, pointing more towards a ceremonial function of the defence than as a means to evaluate research and competence. Sweden is among the exceptions as the defence here still *should be included* in the assessment, and in our study on Swedish doctoral examination committees we could show how important the defence indeed was for the evaluation of both the quality of the thesis and the competence of the candidate. More specifically, we described how the defence and the dialogue between the opponent and the candidate was key to: position and contextualise the thesis in its academic field; evaluate the thesis and candidate's competence in relation to disciplinary expectations; observe the candidate's defence and how they carried themselves in a public academic discussion; disentangle the contributions to the thesis; relativise the candidate's contribution to the thesis in light of the actual circumstances of its making. These inputs from the defence were important also for when the committees included in their evaluation the supervision and the local context for doctoral education and research, something we denoted as the committees' "expanded boundary work". Hence, the defence was important not only to assess the thesis and the candidate but also to uphold, and potential change, norms in research fields, educational contexts, and the academy at large.

In this presentation we will elaborate on these findings to stress the importance of the defence for the assessment of doctoral candidates. By positioning our results against a backdrop of an accelerating

educational formalisation, the growing research projectification and concomitant increase of compilation theses based on coauthored articles, the narrowing and fragmentation of ideals for competence that have accompanied the neoliberal reconceptualization of the academy, and the rise of Generative AI, we argue that the importance of the defence, and to learn from its rich history, has grown.

References:

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Keywords: Doctoral Examination, Doctoral Defence, Doctoral Examination Committees

Contacts: maja.elmgren@uu.se; anders.sonesson@ahu.lu.se

Room: U | Time: 11:00 - 11:20

4C-2: Supervisory Lighthouses: A Preliminary Study of Drivers of Rescue Supervision at a UK HE Institution

Presenter: Lindsay Randall, University of Edinburgh, UK

Abstract

In the 2024 United Kingdom Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) nationwide survey on research supervision, 57% of respondents answered that during their tenure as supervisors they took on at least one doctoral candidate who had previously been supervised by another supervisor(s) (UKCGE 2024). Increasingly termed “rescue supervision” (Biggs 2005; UKCGE 2004: 9), many research supervisors have at one point taken over the supervision of a doctoral candidate with whom they were not previously working. During the 2025-2026 academic year, an anonymous questionnaire-based pilot study was conducted amongst 75 academic research supervisors at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, United Kingdom.

This presentation will discuss the findings of this initial pilot study, which is being drafted for publication. The initial findings demonstrate that rescue supervision occurs widely amongst the pilot sample (91%) and that there are three predominant drivers of rescue supervision within this sample: 1) supervisors exiting the university, 2) misalignment of project scope or expertise, and 3) relational issues. Of these three drivers, relational issues represented both the majority of cases (53.6%,) and the most complex responses. Within my discussion of results, I will broadly argue that while this pilot study necessitates further research, it initially highlights the need for more awareness of and support for relational supervision as a supervisory praxis and pedagogy (cf. Garvis and Pendergast 2012; Massyn et al. 2024).

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<https://ukcge.ac.uk/assets/resources/UK-Research-Supervision-Survey-2024-UK-Council-for-Graduate-Education.pdf>

Keywords: rescue supervision, relational supervision, research supervision, pedagogy, praxis

ROUND TABLES 8–10

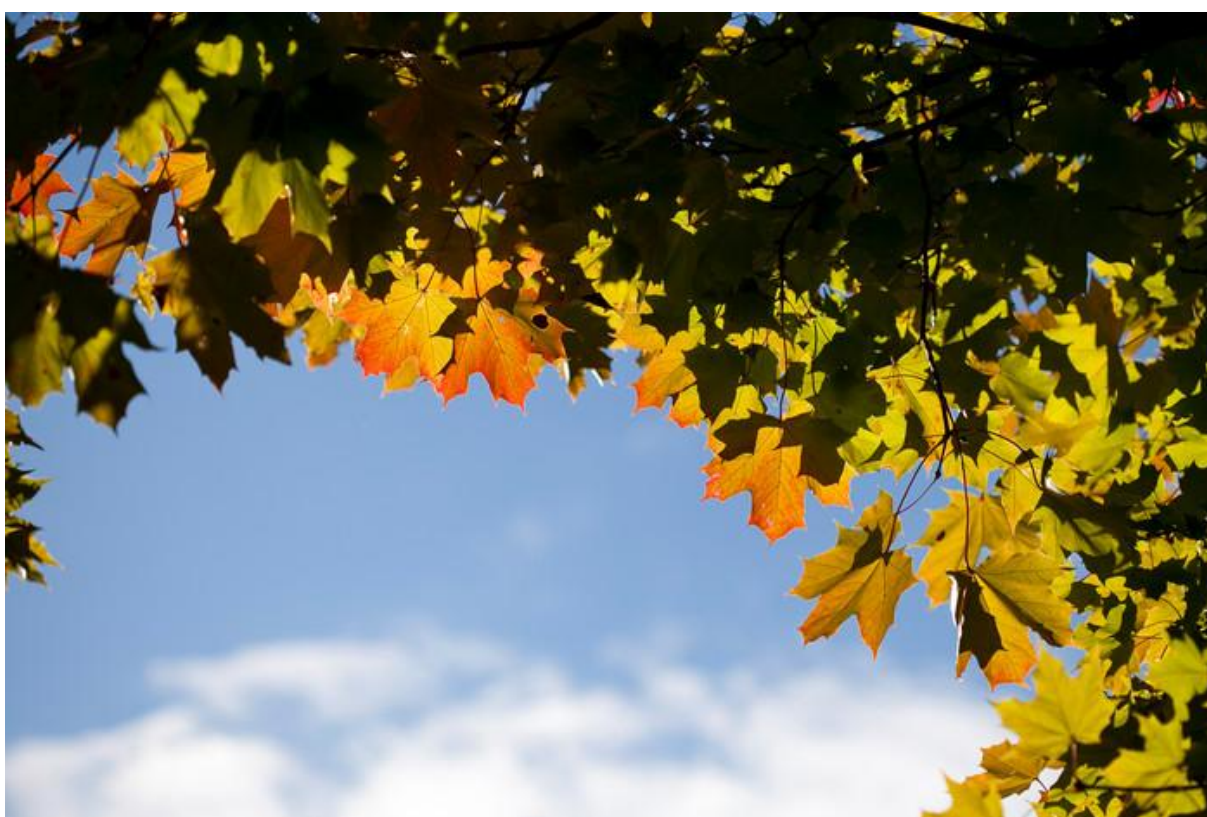


Photo: Jenny Svénnås-Gillner, SLU

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 10:30 - 10:50

RT8: Interdisciplinary supervision: a discussion on benefits and challenges

Presenter: Ulrika Jepson Wigg, Mälardalen University

Co-authors: Chruzander, C., Edlund, P., & von Heideken Wägert, P., Mälardalen University

Abstract

In this roundtable, we will focus the discussion on the benefits and challenges of supervising in interdisciplinary teams, stemming from our work within an interdisciplinary arena called the Centre for Welfare Change at Mälardalen University, Sweden. Through interdisciplinary supervision, doctoral candidates are encouraged to develop research questions that move beyond established disciplinary boundaries and to cultivate a research identity where the richness of perspectives becomes an asset in analysis and problem-solving. This model of supervision aims not only to broaden the candidates' theoretical and methodological toolkits but also to enhance the societal relevance and applicability of the research conducted.

At the same time, interdisciplinary supervision brings several challenges. Deepening one's expertise within a primary discipline is a necessary basis to meaningfully navigate and draw on other scientific traditions. Supervisors therefore carry the responsibility of balancing disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth in ways that support the candidate's development toward scientific competence. Moreover, scientific discussions often become more time-consuming when multiple perspectives must be integrated, placing additional demands on supervisors to ensure that sufficient time and space are allocated for reflection, theoretical grounding, and critical dialogue.

The Centre for Welfare Change is an interdisciplinary collaborative arena dedicated to developing new knowledge about the complex challenges facing welfare systems. By bringing together researchers and societal actors from different scientific traditions and sectors. A key and deliberate initiative within the Centre is the interdisciplinary supervision of its doctoral students. The purpose is to strengthen the doctoral candidates' ability to understand, analyze, and contribute to solutions addressing the multidimensional issues that characterize today's and tomorrow's welfare systems. The experiences from this arena suggest that interdisciplinary supervision is a powerful method for preparing future researchers to contribute to more holistic and innovative solutions to the complex challenges of the welfare state. At the same time, this model requires intentional structure, adequate time, and active engagement from supervisors to create a productive balance between disciplinary grounding and interdisciplinary renewal.

In the roundtable discussion, we therefore invite participants to explore interdisciplinary supervision from the supervisor's perspective, to collectively advance our understanding of effective interdisciplinary supervision. Three main themes will provide a framework for the discussion; demands

on communication within interdisciplinary supervision themes, challenges in supporting doctoral candidates in moving between different research environments, and the issue of balancing disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth.

Keywords: interdisciplinary, supervision, collaboration

Contact: ulrika.jepson.wigg@mdu.se

ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 11:00 - 11:20

RT9: Work environment and power relations in the supervision process

Presenters: Helena Lindqvist, & Karin S Lindelöf

Abstract

Doctoral candidates' working environment and the relationships that shape it—not least their relationships with supervisors, but also with other people in the research environment—have been shown to have a major impact on doctoral candidates' learning processes (Clegg, 2024). When doctoral candidates feel secure in their relationship with their supervisor(s) and within the doctoral education environment, the conditions for successfully completing the programme are considerably strengthened (cf. Grysell, 2016; Boisselier, 2026).

This round-table discussion takes as its point of departure an in-depth analysis of findings from a survey of doctoral candidates and supervisors at Uppsala University (Björnermark et al., 2023). The survey was completed by 916 doctoral candidates and 871 supervisors, evenly distributed across all disciplinary domains. The results show that the factor contributing most strongly to doctoral candidates' satisfaction with their doctoral education is the quality of supervision and the relationship with their supervisor. The broader doctoral education environment is also shown to be highly significant. In this respect, doctoral candidates identify as a particular strength research environments and supervisory relationships characterised by openness and a climate in which different perspectives can be expressed freely.

Many doctoral candidates are satisfied with their supervision and overall doctoral education experience. However, approximately one third of respondents identify shortcomings in the working environment and psychosocial climate. They describe high levels of stress and workload, as well as poor working conditions and organisational problems, sometimes characterised by internal conflicts (Björnermark et al., 2023, p. 53). Supervisors likewise identify scope for improvement in relation to responsibility, leadership and governance within departmental environments, where they perceive that doctoral candidates may at times find themselves caught between competing demands and interests.

Drawing on these issues, the round-table discussion will explore power relations between supervisors and doctoral candidates, within research groups and research environments, at departmental level and beyond, and how such relations affect doctoral candidates' working environment, learning and capacity to complete their doctoral education (see, for example, Lindén, 2020). We invite participants to reflect on possible ways of avoiding, preventing and managing situations that may hinder doctoral candidates' development. The discussion will also provide an opportunity to begin identifying examples of good practice that can contribute to strengthening doctoral education and improving doctoral candidates' working conditions and overall experience.

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ROUND TABLE | Room: Y | Time: 11:25 – 11:45

RT10: The PhD administration as First Responder: Navigating tensions, trust, and institutional boundaries

Presenter: Liv Gish, Nordic Writing Academy, Denmark

Abstract

Most universities have a PhD administration unit, some centralized and large, others small and embedded within departments. While their formal responsibilities typically concern handling a wide range of coordinating and administrative tasks that ensure PhD students complete their programs in accordance with regulations and timelines, their informal role is often far more complex, undefined, and unexplored in literature.

In practice, PhD administrators frequently become the first point of contact when problems arise in the doctoral journey. They may be approached when the supervisory relationship becomes strained, when progress stalls, or personal crises occur. Positioned at the intersection of institutional policy, academic hierarchies, and individual vulnerability, PhD administrators operate in spaces that are relational, emotionally charged, and politically sensitive.

This roundtable proposes the notion of PhD administration as “first responders” to doctoral tensions and disruptions. Drawing on insights from practice, including a workshop and ongoing exploratory interviews with PhD administrators, the session positions this role as a critical yet underexplored component of doctoral education.

Rather than presenting finalized findings, the session challenges participants to examine whether this framing as “first responders” captures an essential, yet insufficiently articulated, dimension of PhD administrators’ work. Through a facilitated discussion, participants will explore:

- Where and when PhD administrators act as first responders
- How they navigate tensions between neutrality, support, and institutional authority
- What competencies are required to manage situations that are relational, ambiguous, and high-stakes
- What risks emerge when this role remains informal or unsupported

By foregrounding this often invisible layer of academic work, the roundtable aims to surface shared dilemmas, identify patterns across contexts, and contribute to a more explicit understanding of the responsibilities and support structures surrounding doctoral supervision.

It also invites reflection on how this “first responder” role relates to the work of supervisors: Where do responsibilities align, overlap, or diverge? How is the involvement of administrative staff perceived, negotiated, or contested? And what does this imply for collaboration, role clarity, and support across the doctoral ecosystem?

Contact: liv@nordicwritingacademy.dk, Nordic Writing Academy, Denmark

Keywords: PhD administration, informal role, first responder, doctoral education, supervisors

WORKSHOP 4–5

WORKSHOP | Room: Z | Time: 10:30 - 11:15

WS4: Managing expectations in doctoral supervision: practices, tools, and challenges

Presenters: Alakärppä, Emmi, Kärhö, Marjukka, & Ruotsalainen, Heli both, University of Oulu, Finland

Abstract

Doctoral supervision relies on a shared understanding of expectations between doctoral researchers and supervisors. At the same time, these expectations are shaped by multiple roles, responsibilities and institutional structures. When expectations are misaligned, the roles and responsibilities of both doctoral researchers and supervisors may remain ambiguous. Such misalignments are widely recognised as a recurring source of tension in supervisory relationships and may affect doctoral progress and completion, doctoral researcher's well being, and the development of research competencies. Developing ways to manage expectations is therefore an important aspect of supporting sustainable doctoral supervision practices.

This contribution explores how expectations in doctoral supervision can be articulated, negotiated, and recalibrated throughout the doctoral journey. The discussion is grounded in experiences from doctoral education administration and supervisor development activities, where expectation management frequently emerges as a recurring challenge. Particular attention is given to practical instruments that aim to make expectations more visible and discussable, such as supervisory plans and expectation scales. The supervisory plan is presented as an instrument which is intended to clarify responsibilities, goals and working practices, but which in practice often remains a formal document whose role in everyday supervision is unclear. This raises questions of how expectations between supervisors and doctoral researchers are actually discussed, how responsibilities are made visible, and what kinds of tools or practices might support these conversations.

The workshop invites participants to reflect on expectation management in doctoral supervision from their own perspectives and roles. Participants will be encouraged to share experiences of practices that have supported – or complicated – the alignment of expectations in supervision relationships. While particular attention will be given to the supervisory plan as a potential tool for structuring discussions on expectations, other examples are invited from institutions where different instruments have been made to function effectively.

By bringing together perspectives from supervisors, researchers, supervisor trainers and administrative staff, the session aims to identify practical approaches for making expectations more explicit and negotiable throughout the doctoral journey. The discussion seeks to generate shared insights and concrete examples that can support the development of more transparent and sustainable supervision practices

Keywords: Doctoral supervision, Expectation management, Supervisory relationships, Supervisory plans

Contact: emmi.alakarppa@oulu.fi, marjukka.karho@oulu.fi, ²University of Oulu, Finland
(heli.ruotsalainen@oulu.fi)

WORKSHOP | Room: Z | Time: 11:25 - 12:10

WS5: The role of the PhD supervisor in strategic career planning using principles of work integrated learning

Presenters: Kristina Areskoug Josefsson, University West, Sweden

Co-authors: Olsson, A.K, University West, Sweden., & Massyn, L, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abstract

PhD graduate landscape is transforming and expectations of supervisors 's support of PhD students' future careers need to change. Research education is criticized for not delivering PhD graduates with necessary skills and prepared for the workplace¹. PhD graduates must have skills for work inside and outside of academia, including transferable skills². Today, PhD graduates have more precarious employment conditions, fewer are being employed in academia³. The demands of PhD supervisors increase, and expectations of supporting employability competencies adds strain on supervisors⁴. This potentially harmful situation for both supervisors and PhD students requires exploration of supportive actions in career preparation. Work-integrated learning (WIL) can be utilized to support development of employability skills through integration of theoretical knowledge in work practice contexts. WIL is an untapped resource in PhD education⁵. University West has held courses in Strategic career planning via WIL for PhD students since 2024. Previous research and workshops with PhD students regarding their future career plans and actions underpinned the courses⁶. Findings show that PhD students need to start strategic career planning early and need support from supervisors. The proposed workshop aims to provide an arena for sharing experiences of how PhD supervisors can support the development of employability competencies via the principles of WIL. PhD supervisors will have the opportunity to discuss and inspire each other on how to proactively promote PhD students' strategic career planning for future employment, both within and beyond academia. The workshop is designed as an interactive, collaborative learning activity, including a short presentation of current research in the field.

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Keywords: Career crafting, Career planning, Life-long learning, PhD supervision, Work-integrated learning

Contact: kristina.areskoug-josefsson@hv.se; anna-karin.olsson@hv.se; massynl@ufs.ac.za)



Photo: Jenny Svernnås-Gillner, SLU

Thank you so much for your contribution!