

Training doctoral supervisors – practical exercises designed to enhance supervision skills

Purpose and outcomes

The purpose of this workshop is to show how we, in our two-week course for doctoral supervisors, combine more theoretical presentations with different hands-on experiences of supervision. Our course is inspired by the learning outcomes for supervisors identified by Pearson & Brew (2002).

Content and scholarly basis

This workshop explores how practical exercises can be used in doctoral supervisor's courses to illustrate important aspects of doctoral supervision. Most of our course participants are junior faculty and relatively new to doctoral supervision and a pedagogical challenge on the course is therefore to create opportunities for practical, hands-on learning about doctoral supervision. According to Lee (2007) the purpose of doctoral supervisor training should be to uncover the conceptions that the supervisors hold and to examine these through peer learning, action learning and mentoring. The purpose of this workshop is to show how we meet this challenge and combine more theoretical presentations with different hands-on experiences of supervision within the course. The practical exercises that will be introduced in the workshop have been used on our courses for many years and have proven very useful and thought-provoking for the course participants (Winka & Grysell, 2011). This has become obvious also in the course evaluations where course participants point to these exercises as especially valuable elements of the course.

We will start by presenting the outline and content our doctoral supervisor's course and discuss why we have chosen to organize it this way for about 30 minutes. We will then introduce two of the practical exercises we use in the course. First, we will introduce the workshop participants to a three-part supervision exercise designed to illustrate the importance of active listening and careful question-asking. After the coffee break, we will do a role-play designed to illustrate different conflict management strategies. The workshop concludes with a discussion on the potential value, pros and cons of practical exercises like these when training doctoral supervisors.

Design

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References

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Pearson, M. & Brew, A. (2002). Research Training and Supervision Development. Studies in Higher Education, Vol 27, pp. 135-150.

Winka, K. & Grysell, T. (2011). Communal roleplay: using drama to improve supervision. In: Nygaard, C., Courtney, N. & Holtham, C. Beyond transmission – innovations in university teaching. The learning in higher education series, Libri Publishing, Faringdon, pp. 235-252.

Advertising text

This workshop explores how practical exercises can be used in doctoral supervisor's courses to illustrate important aspects of doctoral supervision. We start by giving a presentation of our two-week supervisor's course. After that we will do two of the practical exercises we use in the course and discuss the potential value, pros and cons of practical exercises like these when training doctoral supervisors.

Lena Berggren
The Center for Teaching and Learning
Umeå University
Sweden
[lena.berggren@umu.se](mailto:lana.berggren@umu.se)

Katarina Winka
The Center for Teaching and Learning
Umeå University
Sweden
katarina.winka@umu.se