

## Implementation of Supervision Theory

### Abstract

This autumn SLU will offer a four-week course for those supervisors that have passed the so-called "Docentkursen" which focuses on the supervision of PhD-students. This new course, called "Från ord till handledning", intends to help the participants develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogical process involved in supervision. Analyses of their own practical experiences will form a foundation from which a deeper theoretical understanding may develop.

In the first part of the course the participants will have a dialogue with a pedagogical expert about their own pedagogical situation and experiences. In the second part the participants will develop a supervision policy to be practised at the department. In this work they must involve all persons working with the PhD-education at the department, i.e., the PhD-students must be urged to take part in this work.

In connection to the work at the departments, seminars about ethics, leadership, how to handle conflicts, aspects of cultural differences will be arranged on co-operation with Uppsala University.

This course is a pilot project to test the form and content described above. During two years six different departments are invited to take part in the course. We will start with two departments during the winter 2001/2002 and then continue with two during the spring 2002 and finally the last two will start their course during the autumn 2002.

The course will result in supervision policies to be practised at the departments and each department is also asked to report their policies, and to evaluate the course, to the participants of each years new "Docentkurs". The whole project will be evaluated after the first two years.

# Developing IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPERVISION THEORY Graduate Supervisor Training

**Case study for institution** **SLU (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences)**  
**project 011**

<i>Budget:</i>	Council funding:	200,000 SEK
	Other:	-
<i>Staffing:</i>		0.25 FTE
<i>Audience:</i>	The course is designed for supervisors that already have some basic knowledge about teaching, the supervision process, and professional relationships and communication in the graduate education context.	

## **Project Overview:**

This project strived to create a structures and routines, as well as a culture of acceptance within the various departments at SLU where is ok to discuss "how to supervise" with your colleagues.

## **Goals**

To develop a deeper understanding of the learning processes involved in supervision. Analyses of the supervisor's own practical experience will form a foundation from which a deeper theoretical understanding may develop.

## **Objectives**

The programme's participants will work to develop an open and supporting supervision culture at their departments.

## **Format/Length**

The course consists of three parts:

1. The main supervisors have an individual meeting with a pedagogical expert discussing the following issues:
  - a. Have you tried to implement any innovations in your supervision practice? With what result?
  - b. What are your main goals as supervisor?
  - c. How do you do when you supervise?
  - d. What kind of supervision culture do you have at your department?
  - e. Do you have any suggestions of how to improve the supervision at your department?
2. All persons involved in the postgraduate education work with a policy for the supervision of postgraduate students at the department.
3. A series of seminars concerning
  - a. Ethics
  - b. Conflict
  - c. Cultural differences
  - d. The rights and duties of graduate students, as well as supporting them to take personal responsibility and work in partnership.

The seminars run parallel with the departmental policy development. The seminars are co-arranged with Uppsala university enabling discussions between supervisors from different disciplines and with different traditions.

## **Partners:**

*Internal:* Six different departments at SLU have run the course.

*External:* Uppsala University

*Faculty:* The SLU Educational Development Unit and various invited international education specialists who have contributed to the seminars.

## **What makes this program effective?**

*Program:* The participants both get the chance to develop a deeper understanding and gain the ability to communicate their intentions with the supervision through individual metasupervision. Moreover, they develop and articulate their departmental policies together with other supervisors and PhD students

*Participants:*

## **Assessment:**

*Measures used:* Written evaluations from project leaders at the departments.

*Results/Impact:* The involved departments now have official policies for supervision as well as a

well structured descriptions of the rules, forms, procedures etc for their graduate programs.

An indirect but obvious indication that the objectives stated above have been reached is that all graduate students at the departments involved in the project have now updated their individual study plans. On the other hand, only 60 – 70 % of the PhD students at other departments have updated their individual study plans.

*Next Steps in Assessment:*

### **Lessons learned:**

A dedicated project leader at the department is a necessity. The university must acknowledge the time and work that the supervisors put into the project. For example, by offering the department some financial compensation.

### **The future**

- We hope to involve more departments in the future.
- We expect to see less stress among the supervisors since they get support from colleagues and, consequently, the graduate benefit from improved supervision.

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## Final report for project nr 011/H01

To the Council for the Renewal of Higher Education

### Implementation of Supervision Theory (Från ord till handledning)

– an education for supervisors that already have knowledge about basics in pedagogic, the supervision process and the professional relationship and communication between the doctoral student and the supervisor.

#### **Objectives:**

- to develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogical process involved in supervision. Analyses of their own practical experiences will form a foundation from which a deeper theoretical understanding may develop.
- to develop an open and supporting supervision culture at the department

#### **The course consists of three parts:**

1. The main supervisors have an individual meeting with a pedagogical expert discussing the following issues:
  - a. Have you tried to implement pedagogical ideas in your supervision?  
With what result?
  - b. What are your main goals as supervisor?
  - c. How do you do when you supervise?
  - d. What kind of supervision culture do you have at your department?
  - e. Do you have any suggestions of how to improve the supervision at your department?
2. All persons involved in the postgraduate education work with a policy for the supervision of postgraduate students at the department
3. A series of seminars concerning
  - a. Ethics
  - b. Conflicts
  - c. Cultural differences
  - d. The PhD students rights, duties and possibility to take responsibility and co-operate

The seminars run in parallel with the work with the departmental policy. The seminars are co-arranged with Uppsala university enabling discussions between supervisors from different disciplines and with different traditions.

#### **Result**

So far, four departments have taken part in the education and each one has produced a policy for supervision together with guidelines for the PhD education. The guidelines/hand books present rules and regulations both from the government, university and department concerning the education.

These policies are presented on the following homepage <http://www-ubyr.adm.slu.se/postgradstud/index.html> ; just click on “Supervision”.

Additional two departments have started the education and will complete it during 2003.

### **Evaluation**

The project leaders at the departments were asked to make a self-evaluation. They concluded that:

- "Vi har varit eniga om att det är positivt att ha ett samlat dokument som beskriver institutionens forskarutbildning. Det kommer att vara speciellt värdefullt för nya doktorander och handledare genom att klargöra förväntningar och rättigheter i stort och smått. Vi tror dessutom att det på sikt stärker sammanhållningen på institutionen att ha klara, gemensamma formuleringar av målsättningar, arbetsätt mm.

"Målet är hela vägen hopprullad" skrev en klok man en gång. Det stämmer väl med detta projekt, som blivit en viktig del av institutionens kvalitetsarbete. **Det breda engagemanget i diskussionerna och i arbetet med att formulera dokumentet har skapat en gemenskap och ett ökat intresse för forskarutbildningen på institutionen, vilket kanske är det viktigaste resultatet** av projektet. Dessutom har vi nu en anledning att med jämna mellanrum diskutera frågorna igen – vi måste ju uppdatera vår policy!"

- "Engagemanget bland handledarna var glädjande.".... En återkommande synpunkt var att dokumentet är långt - för långt - , men att innehållet är bra. En del nyheter finns med. Exempel: begränsning av antalet doktorander per huvudhandledare, öppen annonsering av doktorandtjänster, förordande av doktorandtjänst under forskarutbildningen, krav på antal handledningsmöten, uppsats + seminarium första året, doktorandfaddrar. En del övriga företeelser som möjligen suttit i väggarna tidigare har formulerats i ord. **Eftersom alla aktörer i forskarutbildningen har fått lämna synpunkter och dessa i de flesta fall har beaktats bör vi kunna anta att samförstånd råder om det som tas upp i policyn, och att policyn därmed kan betraktas som en minsta gemensam nämnare.**"

When we advertised the education the first time 10 department were very interested in starting the project. We chose these departments since they have directors of PhD studies at the departments that are all very ambitious and efficient. Their dedicated work is the main key to the success of the project.

An indirect but obvious indication that the objectives stated above have been reached is that all PhD students at the departments involved in the project have up dated individual study plans. Whereas, unfortunately only 60 – 70 % of the PhD students at other departments have up dated individual study plans.

SLU is now reorganizing and eventually, when new departments are formed there will be an increased need, and above all interest for developing policies for supervision, with the new colleagues.

Effects on supervision education:

- The education that already existed since many years now have a context that makes it even more relevant
- Participants in the obligatory pedagogical education can start "Från ord till handledning-projects" at their departments as a special course task.

