

Advanced course in doctoral supervision

This is an unofficial translation of the most important parts of the Vice-Chancellor's decision from 17 May 2023. The full decision document is available in Swedish at the Swedish version of this webpage. More information about this course will come shortly in English. You are welcome to contact EPU if you have any questions about the course. EPU@slu.se.

Decision

The Vice-Chancellor decides

that participation in the "Advanced course in research supervision for experienced doctoral supervisors" is required for principal supervisors who start supervising a new doctoral student, if it has been more than five years since they have completed the advanced course (or "Course in doctoral supervision", previously called the "Docent Course"), and

that the corresponding course at a higher education institution other than SLU can be approved by the faculty committee after consultation with the head of the department within the joint operational support responsible for educational development.

Content:

Thematic content:

The course focuses, among other things, on rules and formalities concerning doctoral education at SLU, supervision methodology, scientific environment and communication.

Implementation:

The course uses different teaching methods to support the course participants' learning and discussions through:

- self-study in a digital course module in Canvas,
- participation in at least five supervisor seminars with subsequent submission of notes,

- selection, reading and written reflection on a scientific article in supervision pedagogy,
- writing a reflection summarizing the five supervisor seminars,
- presentation and discussion of the reflection on the scientific article and the summary of the five supervisor seminars.

Summary of the background information to the decision:

The quality of doctoral supervision has been a recurring theme for discussions in the Council for Doctoral Education (Fur), as well as in the quality assurance work for education ever since the current system was implemented as a pilot round in 2017. The doctoral surveys that are regularly carried out at SLU show that a clear majority of doctoral students are satisfied, or very satisfied, with the supervision they receive, but supervision is at the same time the theme most often mentioned in the free text comments in the surveys. Both the importance of support and commitment, and sometimes the lack of this, on the part of the principal supervisors is highlighted.

A number of different aspects of the subject have been raised in the discussions in the quality assurance work, the most important of which are listed below.

- There are deficiencies in supervisors' knowledge of current regulations and their own supervisory role.
- Lack of time and fragmented work prevent supervisors from supervising as much as they would like to.
- Unclear expectations from the supervisor and/or doctoral student on the content of the supervision assignment create stress for both parties.
- Supervisors have stated that some form of compulsory education could be a support for prioritizing further education in doctoral supervision.
- Head of departments need support (tools) to handle situations when problems arise in the supervisor/doctoral student relationship.

Reasons for the decision

An advanced course that is carried out at regular intervals by all principal supervisors will lead to all principal supervisors having good conditions to stay up-to-date both in terms of doctoral supervision pedagogy and regulations.

An important aspect of the course is that experienced supervisors get an opportunity to discuss and reflect on supervision together with other supervisors

with similar experiences. It is hoped that the course will create an exchange of experience and the opportunity to network with principal supervisors at other departments and faculties.

The scope of the advanced course is a total of one week of full-time studies spread over a period of no more than 2 years. The format of the course is flexible and enables the individual supervisor to tailor the content according to their individual areas of interest within the subject. The hope is that the course will lead to more knowledgeable and committed supervisors.

Translation