UNIVERSITY OF EMBU

WORKSHOP

ON

POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION, EXAMINATION AND MENTORSHIP

Held on
13th December 2016
University of Embu, Charter Hall

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST

WORKSHOP ON POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION, EXAMINATION AND MENTORSHIP

Date: 13th December 2016

Venue: University of Embu, Charter Hall

Organized by: **The Board of Postgraduate Studies**

Rapporteur: Mr. Jesse Mutugi

**Compiled and Edited
by
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Workshop on Postgraduate Supervision for academic members of staff of the University of Embu (UoEm) was held on 13th December, 2016. The workshop aimed to enhance efficiency in supervision of postgraduate students, ensure objective postgraduate examination and mentorship of postgraduate students. It was facilitated by Professor Christopher Allan Shisanya, Professor of Climatology and Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kenyatta University. The postgraduate agenda at UoEm is to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in tuition, supervision and transfer of knowledge. Potential supervisors therefore need to have; confidence to supervise in an area, appropriate skills, knowledge in the area, determine if adequate resources are available and evaluate the student's past record. Once one has decided to supervise, they need to develop the supervisory relationship. By exploring one's own past experiences, one may consider how they might emulate, add to or avoid certain practices. Postgraduate students want a supervisor who is effective and can guide them through a smooth learning experience that leads to attainment of their degree. A good supervisor is one who encourages autonomy and independence, flexible, friendly, has expertise in the research, makes regular contact, provides constructive and timely feedback and is and supportive. Reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate degrees arise from a mismatched relationship, such as a personality conflict and external personal factors such as finances and family commitments. A romantic or sexual relationship between supervisor and student is extreme and is never acceptable. The academic profession considers this unethical and the practice is forbidden. The responsibility of the mentor is to support students in their challenges as well as their successes. Postgraduate students should be guided towards becoming independent creators of knowledge or users of research. During the thesis examination process, confidentiality must be maintained by all parties. Those who involved in the student's research, have co-authored any part of the work, have a past or current close personal relationship with the student or supervisor, have substantial contact with the student or supervisor, been a research student of the supervisor within the last ten years or have supervised the student at any time should not examine the thesis. The thesis must be the student's own work, embody the results of the work undertaken by the student during candidature and form a substantially original contribution to the area of knowledge concerned. The thesis should include a substantial amount of material that is suitable for publication and satisfactorily demonstrate that the student can identify, access, organize, and communicate new and established knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Embu in recognition of the importance of effective postgraduate supervision in higher education held a Workshop on Postgraduate supervision on 13TH December, 2016. The workshop was organized by the Directorate of the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS). The theme of the one day workshop was *"Effective Supervision, Objective Examination and Mentorship of Postgraduate Studies"*. The workshop started at 9.00 a.m. with a word of prayer from the Dean, School of Agriculture. The Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) introduced the academic members of staff of the University of Embu (UoEm) followed by participants from other institutions. The Director further requested the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academics, Research and Extension (DVC-ARE) to make his remarks, deliver the Vice Chancellor's address and officially open the Workshop.

DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ARE) REMARKS

The DVC (ARE), Prof. Kiplagat Kotut, noted that the purpose of the workshop was to address issues affecting postgraduate supervision. He emphasized that the outcome of the workshop should be a paradigm shift in on the role of supervision, mentoring and guiding postgraduate students among the academic community of the UoEm. The DVC (ARE) added that all Universities the world over aspire to reach world class status. To achieve this, the University needs to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in tuition, supervision and transfer of knowledge especially at postgraduate level. Prof. Kotut reiterated that the UoEm is committed to quality teaching and supervision at all levels of study.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS

The Vice-chancellor's remarks were made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (ARE). The Vice-Chancellor due to other engagements would the join the workshop later in the day. In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor noted that to progress and achieve world class status, Universities need to emphasize on research. Most of the research in Universities is done by postgraduate students, thus the training and research contributed by postgraduate students is of great importance. Most innovations and publications worldwide are mostly from the work of supervisors and their students. The Vice Chancellor further observed that the ranking of the University will only improve when we improve the quality of our postgraduate students and subsequent research out. Progressively, the UoEm will work to increase the postgraduate and undergraduate ratio as opposed to focusing on undergraduate students only. He further noted that the

current number of postgraduate students at UoEm is very low according to world-class standards.

Although there has however been a rapid increase in the numbers of undergraduate students in Kenyan universities, the number of postgraduate students remains low. In turn, the number of qualified academic staff remains low. The current Commission for University Education (CUE) statistics indicate only 5604 PhD academic staff hold PhD and 8693 hold Masters degrees. This indicates there is a possible deficit of possible deficit of postgraduate degree holders in other sectors like research. There has been rapid expansion in university education over the last 10 years to address the gap in postgraduate training. However only about 34% and 15% of academic programmes in Kenya are masters and PhD respectively. The current concern is to improve the quality of postgraduate training and restore the glory of university postgraduate studies as we expand.

The Vice Chancellor noted that poorly supervised postgraduate students in turn make poor supervisors. Good supervision is required to produce high quality postgraduates who will in turn make good supervisors. To break the vicious cycle of poor supervision, the University of Embu has put in place a series of intervention measures. This workshop is the first of such measures to ensure there is high quality and efficient postgraduate training. Others measures will follow in due course.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (ARE) on behalf of the Vice Chancellor declared the workshop officially opened at 9: 31 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Director, BPS communicated informed the participants:

That all information about the University of Embu was available at the University website www.embuni.ac.ke. Information regarding postgraduate studies/studentship at the University of Embu is available at:

   a. The office of the Directorate of Post Graduate studies of the University of Embu.
   b. Board of Postgraduate Studies platform on the University website http://bps.embuni.ac.ke. Downloads are also available at the same platform.

That there are answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) regarding postgraduate studies/studentship at the Univeristy of Embu on the Board of Postgraduate Studies website.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FACILITATOR

The Director, Board of Postgraduate Studies introduced the facilitator, Prof. Christopher Allan Shisanya, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities at Kenyatta University. Prof. Shisanya is a trained agroclimatologist, having earned his PhD in 1996 from the university of Trier, Germany. His current areas of research interest include: climate change and adaptation, climate change and human development, climate change and security, integrated soil fertility management, integrated watershed management and systems analysis. Prof. Shisanya, has to date supervised to completion 15 PhDs and 70 MSc & MA students. He is a prolific researcher having won over 45 national and international research grant awards in the last twenty years. He has over 70 peer-reviewed Journal publications and 10 book titles to his credit. He serves on the Editorial Boards of more than 10 Academic Scientific Journals. Prof. Shisanya is a Fellow of the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) and a member of ten professional academic associations.

The workshop was structured into three thematic sessions

  i.   Postgraduate supervision
  ii. Postgraduate Examination
  iii. Mentoring Postgraduate students

SESSION ONE: POSTGRADUATE SUPERVISION

An overview of postgraduate supervision
The facilitator started the session by emphasizing that the relationship between a graduate student and an academic supervisor is critical to the success of the learning experience, development of a sense of satisfaction for both, development of research skills and shaping of successful career trajectories of both the students and the supervisor. However, he noted that supervision is a major challenge to faculty staff due to; little training of the faculty members, mismatched expectations and few resources to support success

*S*upervision in the academic context was defined as a process of facilitating the student to become an independent professional researcher and scholar in their field, capable of adapting to various research arenas, whether university or industry based. To ensure efficient postgraduate supervision, it was agreed that there should be clear cut policy on the appointment of post graduate supervisors. Timelines should be emphasized i.e. two (2) years for masters programmes and three (3) years for Ph.D. programmes. If these timelines are exceeded the supervisory role needs to be questioned.

The role of the supervisor

Supervision should have two aspects; mentoring and supervision. Mentoring goes beyond supervision and involves engaging the student for a longer period. The role of the supervisor should therefore include two aspects. To provide a high-quality research and learning environment for the graduate student. The supervisor ensures that the organizationally determined educational goals are executed. The other aspect is mentorship which focusses on the personal growth of postgraduate students. Several issues were addressed. Through mentoring and advising, the supervisor develops a professional interpersonal relationship with a graduate student that is conducive to scholarly activities, intellectual enhancement and promotes the student's professional career.

There are key questions that supervisors need to ask themselves before taking up graduate supervision. These would enable one to determine how efficient they will be in the supervisory exercise. Such questions include:

i. Areas one has confidence to supervise
ii. Does your research project need postgraduates? If yes for how many students are there topics with enough scope within the time available?
iii. What is the supervisor's philosophy towards higher degree studies?
iv. What is the student's past record? Do they have signs of undue dependency? Do they have the ability to work independently? How prepared is the supervisor to address such challenges?
v. Does the supervisor have the appropriate research skills and knowledge to supervise in the area? If not is he/she able to provide the skills?
vi. Are the supervisors own research skills broad and up-to-date enough to supervise effectively?
vii. Are adequate resources available for the project?

The checklist for things one needs to know as a supervisor include:

i. Exactly what are the requirements for admission to a graduate program? Is there any flexibility?
ii. What are the administrative procedures for admitting candidates?
iii. Is there a required induction programme for candidates?
iv. Is there an induction programme for inexperienced graduate advisers?
v. When does a candidate select a topic?
vi. When and how is an adviser appointed?
vii. Who are the people responsible for postgraduate research, postgraduates – both academics and administrators, the Dean of Graduate Studies? Who is responsible at the Faculty/School or department level?
viii. Is there a legal officer to help with intellectual property questions and the like?
ix. What published documents exist including rules, charters, and guidelines? Where are they – the Internet/University website, calendar, postgraduate office?

x. What documents is the candidate given and when?

xi. What reporting requirements exist for the candidate's progress including confirmation of candidature, formal proposal review, annual reports, examination, presentation among others?

xii. What provisions exist for interdisciplinary supervision? What provisions exist for collaboration with advisers outside the University?

xiii. Can the thesis be a collection of publications?

xiv. What provisions are there for non-traditional thesis presentation including media other than print?

xv. What support services exist for candidates including thesis writing, statistics, overseas candidates' relocation, library, information technology, counseling, and assistance for candidates from non-English speaking backgrounds?

xvi. How are examiners appointed? What is their role? Are any criteria for appointment specified?

xvii. How is the examination process handled? What are the processes for administrative procedures, reviewing reports, and deciding the outcome?

xviii. Is an oral examination possible, encouraged, or required? How is it organized?

xix. What appeals or conflict resolution procedures are available to candidates at different stages in case difficulties arise?

xx. What institutional support is available to the supervisor including staff development programs, postgraduate liaison officers, support for attending conferences on postgraduate issues?

xxi. Are there extra listed workloads expectations for supervision in which stipulate maximum number of concurrent candidates and/or a number of hours per year allocated to supervision?

xxii. What are the best resources for students in your discipline including books and websites on research methods, thesis writing, and coping with MA/MSc/Ph.D. study?

xxiii. Is there a process for the supervisor and the candidate to collect feedback on the advising process?

xxiv. If either you or the candidate believes that the supervision relationship is in difficulty with whom do you discuss alternatives?

Research supervision versus clinical supervision

It was noted that many professional programmes have both research and clinical/practice supervisors. Research supervision is focused on development of research skills while clinical supervision focuses on clinical skills. Both aspects must however attend to ethical issues and the development of the student as a professional practitioner.

The rules of engagement may be different for each supervisor since they may be accountable to different institutions. A clinical supervisor has the additional responsibility

of protecting the client/patient from professional incompetence and ineptitude on the part of the student and the principle of "first do no harm" must supersede student learning needs. While students conducting research certainly can harm research subjects, the external regulation of research by systems such as ethics boards reduces the risk in the research enterprise.

The practice of postgraduate supervision

The facilitator emphasized that the practice of postgraduate supervision requires a high-quality research and learning environment for both the graduate student and supervisor. The education of a graduate student is greatly affected by the nature of the supervision and the quality of communication between graduate student and supervisor.

Responsibilities of the supervisor

Once a supervisor has taken up the supervisory role, they have responsibilities towards the University, the student and themselves. These responsibilities were stated as:

i. Assist your student with the selection and planning of a suitable and manageable research topic

ii. Be sufficiently familiar with the field of research to provide guidance and/or have a willingness to gain that familiarity before agreeing to act as a supervisor

iii. Be accessible to your student for consultation and discussion of academic progress and research (the frequency of meetings will vary according to the discipline, stage of work, nature of the project, independence of the student, full- or part-time status, etc.)

iv. Establish (with input from your student and colleagues where appropriate) a supervisory committee, and convene at least a monthly meeting, to evaluate student progress

v. Respond in a timely and thorough manner to written work submitted by your student, with constructive suggestions for improvement and continuation (good practice suggests that turnaround time for comments on written work should not exceed three weeks)

vi. Make arrangements to ensure continuity of supervision if you will be absent for extended periods, (e.g. a month or longer)

vii. Assist your student, when necessary, in gaining access to facilities or research materials

viii. Ensure that the research environment is safe, healthy and free from harassment, discrimination and conflict

ix. Work to achieve consensus and resolve differences when there is a conflict in advice or when there are different expectations on the part of co-supervisors or members of the supervisory committee

x. Assist your student in being aware of current graduate program requirements, deadlines, sources of funding, etc.

xi. Encourage your student to make presentations of research results within the University and to outside scholarly or professional bodies as appropriate

xii. Encourage your student to finish up when it is not in the student's best interest to extend the program

xiii. Support and acknowledge your student's contributions and successes in writing, presentations, and published material

xiv. Ensure that recommendations for external examiners of doctoral dissertations are made to the graduate program advisor and forwarded to the Faculty/School of Graduate Studies in a timely manner

xv. Assist your student to comply with any changes that need to be made to the thesis after the thesis or dissertation defense; and

xvi. Adhere to the university's policy regarding ownership of intellectual property

Graduate student responsibilities

The graduate student also is bound to adhere to responsibilities expected of them including:

i. Work with your supervisor to select and plan a suitable and manageable research topic

ii. Make a commitment and show dedicated efforts to gain the background knowledge and skills needed to pursue your research project successfully

iii. Develop a plan and timetable for completion of all stages of your research project in conjunction with your supervisor

iv. Adhere to a schedule and meet appropriate deadlines

v. Meet with your supervisor when requested and at mutually agreed upon times and report fully and regularly on progress and results

vi. Seriously consider the advice and criticisms received from your supervisor and other members of your supervisory committee

vii. Be thoughtful and reasonable in using resources provided by your supervisor and the University, and assist in obtaining additional resources for your research or for other group members where applicable

viii. Conform to university, faculty and graduate program requirements, including those related to deadlines, dissertation or thesis style, conflict of interest

ix. Review the literature regularly and keep your literature survey up-to-date

x. Maintain exemplary records of your experimental/theoretical work (so that others can replicate your results)

xi. Keep in regular touch with your supervisor who should be reasonably available for consultation

xii. Follow the university's policy regarding ownership of intellectual property

The Supervisory relationship

Once one has decided to supervise the next step is to develop the supervisory relationship. A key influence in developing your vision of effective supervision is your

own experience as a doctoral or master student. Exploring your experiences from a practical perspective can inform your own view of supervision. From there one may consider how they might emulate, add to or avoid certain practices based on the questions below:

  i. What kind of supervision did I receive?
  ii. What did I find helpful and unhelpful about the supervision I received?
  iii. How well would the supervision I received apply to today's graduate students?
  iv. How did my supervisor support my progress developmentally through my graduate program?
  v. How did my supervisor prepare me for my career?

Characteristics of a good supervisor

Graduate students want a supervisor who is effective and can guide them through a smooth learning experience that leads to attainment of their degree. A good supervisor is one who:

  i. Encourages autonomy and independence
  ii. Is flexible
  iii. Friendly
  iv. Has expertise in the research
  v. Makes regular contact
  vi. Provides constructive and timely feedback
  vii. Is personable and supportive

Developing the Supervisory relationship

The relationship between supervisor and graduate student is a multi-faceted one. The direction of the research is a very important part of the supervisor's role. However, it is by no means the sole aspect of effective supervision. As with any working relationship, it is vital to establish clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each member early in the process. This contributes to the successful completion of the graduate program. As a supervisor, spending some time at the beginning to consider how the relationship will work is valuable in terms of developing a long-term, mutually effective relationship. The supervisory relationship has two aspects, that is, the academic relationship and the personal relationship. A good match between student and supervisor, both academically and personally, is a key catalyst for the development of a successful relationship and progress of a graduate student.

The Academic Relationship

The academic relationship between supervisor and graduate student is unique. It requires the assessing of a student's needs in the early stages. Many supervisors do this intuitively. However, a more systematic approach can be very useful. As a supervisor you need to know:

  a) Knowledge and skills your student brings to the project.

b) The areas the student needs support.
c) How the student is likely to approach the research.

To the supervisor, student self-assessment is an effective way to initially begin to assess where the student is starting from and to develop an action plan.

The Personal Relationship

It is not only important to establish an academic relationship, but it is also necessary to establish some level of a personal relationship. Personalities feature prominently in graduate supervision. The progress of a student is greatly impacted by the nature of the supervisor-student relationship. Investigations into reasons for non-completion of a postgraduate degrees suggest two major issues:

a) A mismatched relationship, such as a personality conflict
b) External personal factors such as finances and family commitments.

A relationship on a personal level may however result in complications, hurt feelings and can be destructive to the academic relationship. It is suggested that the relationship can still be cordial, personal, enjoyable, and fun (Ramani, Gruppen & Kachur, 2006). A supervisor is required to understand the student as a whole person, taking an interest in a range of non-academic activities involving family, friends, work and community as these demands may weigh on the student's academic work (James & Baldwin, 1999).

Supervisors and students spend many hours together working towards a common goal. Given the intensity of this relationship, there is potential for the relationship to become too personal. At its extreme, a romantic or sexual relationship between supervisor and student is never acceptable. The academic profession considers this unethical, and the policy within all universities is that sexual relationships between faculty and students, is prohibited, an abuse of power and must be avoided at all cost.

To develop a healthy supervisor/student relationship the following guidelines were suggested for supervisors:

i. Be cognizant of the line between the personal and the academic.
ii. If an issue arises, try to determine if it is a personal problem that is affecting the students work.
iii. If you are interested and approachable, let your student know early on that you are available to listen sympathetically if they want to discuss a personal issue.
iv. Be supportive and a sympathetic listener but maintain appropriate detachment.
v. Be flexible in your requirements of a student in times of personal stress. (This requires you to determine whether it is a pseudo-crisis to evade their work or a genuine personal crisis)
vi. Consider what your limits are and recognize what you think you can and should do.
vii. If there is a serious problem that requires an expert, know where to refer your student.

It was agreed that good communication creates a solid basis for navigating both the interpersonal aspects as well as the academic aspects of the relationship.

Approaches to Learning

Postgraduate education is much more complex and demanding level of learning and to be successful it requires development of new and different learning strategies. Another important element of the supervisory process is to understand what your graduate student's preferred learning strategies and approaches are in relation to the specific learning demands of graduate education.

Approaches to learning are the mixture of approaches that a learner utilizes in order to learn. Students' learning is broadly based on two main approaches:

a) **Surface approach**. This orientation is towards reproduction of information. Its characteristics include; the intention is to simply reproduce parts of the content, ideas and information is accepted passively. It concentrates only on what is required for assessment, not reflecting on purpose or strategies, memorizing facts and procedures routinely while failing to distinguish guiding principles or patterns.

b) **Deep Approach**. This orientation is towards transforming knowledge. Its characteristics include; relating one's previous knowledge and experience, discovering and using organizing principles to integrate ideas, relating evidence to conclusions and examining the logic of arguments.

Supervisory approaches

Four approaches to postgraduate supervision were discussed.

i. **Laissez-faire approach.** does not involve high levels of personal interaction and the supervisor may appear to be uncaring or uninvolved (Gatfield, 2005). It's common in the early stages of a supervisory relationship where the student has limited focus and will begin with a broad literature review in search of a thesis topic.

ii. **Directorial approach.** The supervisor provides a great deal of guidance and direction in a more regular, interactive relationship with the student. The supervisor's role may shift to a contractual approach or consultant approach, offering suggestions and options for solving research problems.

i. **Pastoral approach.** This approach may be utilized towards the end of the candidacy, as the student becomes comfortable with the research and the writing up. There may be a need for the supervisor to provide considerable personal care and support which serves to boost confidence, motivation and empower the student to move from a novice to a professional.

Approaches to postgraduate work

While deciding on the approaches to postgraduate work between the supervisor and the student, issues that may be important to discuss include:

i. The best time of day to meet. For instance, when do you both work best?
ii. Scheduling meetings. Consider how often? who will do the scheduling? how will meetings be scheduled? What is the process to confirm, reschedule or cancel?
iii. The agenda. Who will decide the agenda? When will it be set?
iv. Keeping in touch. How often should your student check in?
v. Draft material. How often do you expect to review written material?
vi. Written feedback. When can your student expect to have material read and returned with comments?

Co-Supervision

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to work with a co-supervisor or a supervisory panel. Benefits accruing to this include:

i. The graduate student will benefit from different perspectives and expertise
ii. The supervisors benefit from sharing the responsibility, particularly if problems ever arise
iii. There will always be a support for the graduate student if for some reason one co-supervisor becomes unavailable
iv. Junior academics can be initiated into good practice by experienced supervisors

Plenary Discussion

Participants had a chance to interact with the facilitator at the end of session one by asking questions, giving comments and seeking clarification. The following are some of the key issues:

Question

1. When a supervisor and a student are publishing, who should be the lead author?

Answer:

The student to be the lead author/first author. However, for young students, the supervisor is the corresponding author.

It was noted that guidelines regarding student/supervisor authorship are guided by traditions that aren't written down and informed by global practice. It's hard to prescribe the rules and there are rarely little documents stipulating the rule.

Question

2. What is the admission criterion to masters programmes?

Answer:

a) At least a second class honours upper division.
b) For those with lower division, they are required to have at least two years of research experience. It was noted that this requirement may have watered down postgraduate research since most students are not well grounded in research due to long breaks from academia.

Question

3. Are there different formats for different schools/departments/disciplines?

Answer:

Yes: The different formats are available and can be downloaded from the Board of Post graduate Studies platform on the University website

Question

4. What happens when there is conflict in the supervisor's project and proposals of students they bring on board.

Answer:

This can be resolved when deciding the criterion for hiring students for the project.

Question

5. What can be done to avoid unqualified professionals as supervisors or politically imposed supervisors?

Answer

This can be resolved when deciding criterion for appointing supervisors. Students should also be at liberty to select supervisors if they meet the criterion.

Question

6. At what point does a supervisor become a mentor?

Answer

One may start as a supervisor at the initial stages and later progress to mentorship.

Question

7. There are situations where masters graduates or those who are freshly graduated to Ph.D. progammes have supervised Ph.Ds. Is it allowed?

Answer

No. Ph.D. supervisors must have Ph.D. with research experience and publications. The standards for supervision of Ph.D students is are prescribed by Commission for University Education (CUE) and are downloadable from the CUE website.

Question

8. During interdisciplinary supervision where difference in objectives from the supervisors arise, what should the supervisors do?

Answer

Ideally, hybridization of the disciplines should help. As an issue of conflict resolution, the supervisors should help the student address a problem and not push their individual agenda.

Question

9. What is the gauge for mentorship?

Answer

There is no stipulated gauge. Supervisors should take mentorship as a transformative element in the lives of students. The rewards are more of psychological in terms of recognition. They should however take caution to avoid conflict of interest. Mentorship could be achieved for example through accompanying students to conferences, scouting for conferences and partnerships, going through their presentations/dry runs and enabling them acquire soft skills for presentations.

Question

10. In the instance a supervisor experiences challenges in supervision, what should they do?

Answer

A Supervisor isn't a know it all. Consultation is allowed especially in up-to-date methods or equipment.

Question

11. How does one deal with students who are unable to cope with technology?

Answer

There is no way out in the current world. Students should be encouraged to learn.

Question

12. How should supervisors deal with plagiarism amongst their students

Answer

Students work should be monitored from concept development to proposal writing and progression thereon. Supervisors should help Universities fight the vice.

Question

13. How should supervisors deal with students who "bring goods to the market" Suggestive inappropriate overtones?

Answer

There should be clear demarcated roles of the supervisor. Professional boundaries should be clearly communicated and practiced. Challenges reported by the   students should be evidence based.

SESSION TWO: MENTORING POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

The second thematic session of the workshop dwelt on mentoring of postgraduate students. The session was addressed the following:

  i.   What is a mentor?
  ii.   Why be a mentor?
  iii. What does a mentor do?
  iv.   General guidelines for mentors
  v.   During the initial meetings
  vi.   How departments can encourage mentoring

Who is a mentor?
Mentorship is an important aspect of postgraduate supervision. A mentor was defined as one who takes an interest in developing another person's career and well-being; has an interpersonal as well as a professional relationship with those whom they mentor; advances the person's academic and professional goals in directions most desired by the individual and practices tailor mentoring styles and content to the individual, including adjustments due to differences in culture, ethnicity, gender and so on.

Mentorship has attributes which must be respected by both the mentor and the mentee if the outcome is to be positive. These include:

i. Respect and value for students as individuals and not simply a tool to accomplish a supervisor's end.
ii. Respect for students' demographic uniqueness and their preferred mode of learning.
iii. A mentor never compromises the student's dignity and are committed to excellence in their student's research.
iv. Mentors take on graduate scholarship as being as important as their own peer-reviewed endeavors.
v. Mentors are committed to the necessary administrative processes such deadlines that ensure their students' safe passage through the complex university bureaucracy.
vi. Mentors demand of quality and seek to push the student to reach their academic potential—to demand less is to fail the student.
vii. Availability-Mentors are (within reason) at the disposal of students. However, a student can potentially abuse this availability and certain boundaries need to be set early in the relationship to avoid difficulties down the road.
viii. Encouraging: Success in a graduate programme is often less about intelligence than it is about stubbornness and motivation. The mentor is a motivator through behaviour, optimistic outlook, and explicit encouragement to reinforce graduate scholarship as a noble path to pursue.
ix. Ethical- The mentor is a role model and it is imperative that the mentor's behavior is beyond reproach. This creates trust as the mentee is secure in the belief that he or she will be treated with dignity.
x. Philosophical- The mentor must have the "big picture" in mind when counseling students. He/she should be able to see beyond the degree and assist the mentee to prioritize his or her academic demands against the backdrop of life in general
xi. Openness- Mentors must be open to discovery, new ways of thinking and new possibilities. This makes learning a mutual discovery for mentor and mentee and thus becomes motivational, passionate, and fun for both.
xii. Respectful- Without respect for other's dignity, a relationship can and will deteriorate into mutual use and abuse in which the other is perceived simply as a means to an end.
xiii. Committed- The ideal mentee is committed not only to his or her course of study but also committed to an academic standard of excellence that exceeds the status quo.
xiv. Passionate- What distinguishes success from failure in a graduate programme is the students' stubbornness not to succumb to all of the challenges that graduate work will bring, as well, the extent to which the mentee is passionate about the

work itself. Without this, the graduate enterprise is far too difficult and far too long a journey to complete with any measure of happiness.

xv. A Philosophical openness to discovery- The mentee needs to wonder why, to take chances, and to be available to intellectual challenges to his or her perspective of how science, administration, politics, etc. work.

xvi. Ethical- The mentee must conduct themselves with the utmost concern for ethical scholarship/research as well as honest interaction with the mentor.

Why be a mentor?

Benefits of mentoring to postgraduate students:

i.   It supports their advancement in research activity, conference presentations, publication, pedagogical skill and grant-writing.

ii. Students are less likely to feel ambushed by potential bumps in the road, having been sensitized to them, and provided with resources for dealing with stressful or difficult periods in their graduate careers.

iii. The experiences and networks their mentors help them to accrue may improve the students' prospects of securing professional placement.

iv. The knowledge that someone is committed to their progress, someone who can give them solid advice and be their advocate, can help to lower stress and build confidence.

v.   Constructive interaction with a mentor and participation in collective activities he or she arranges promote engagement in the field.

Rewards for Mentors:

i.   Your students will keep you abreast of new knowledge and techniques and apprise you of promising avenues for research.

ii. A faculty member's reputation rests in part on the work of his or her former students; sending successful new scholars into the field increases your professional stature.

iii. Your networks are enriched. Helping students make the professional and personal connections they need to succeed will greatly extend your own circle of colleagues.

iv. Good students will be attracted to you. Word gets around about who the best mentors are, so they are usually the most likely to recruit – and retain – outstanding students.

v.   It's personally satisfying. Seeing your students succeed can be as rewarding as a major publication or significant grant.

What do mentors do?

The mentor's responsibilities extend well beyond helping students learn what's entailed in the research and writing components of graduate school. Their role includes:

a) First and foremost, mentors socialize students into the culture of the discipline, clarifying and reinforcing – principally by example – what's expected of a professional scholar.
b) Model professional responsibility. It is important that the mentor consciously act with integrity in every aspect of his or her work. Students must see that their mentors recognize and avoid conflicts of interest, collect and use data responsibly, fairly award authorship credit, cite source materials appropriately, use research funds ethically, and treat animal or human research subjects properly.
c) Demystify graduate school. Many aspects of graduate education are unwritten or vague, and the ability of new students to understand them is hampered by the fact that they frequently do not know what questions to ask or what certain terminologies mean.
d) Encourage the effective use of time. Effective supervisors help their students develop schedules and meet benchmarks. They share techniques and practices that have been useful for others but don't insist there is only one way. They help them blaze their own trail and devise a plan that keeps them on it.
e) They assist students find other mentors. One mentor can't provide all the guidance and support that every student needs. They therefore introduce students their students to faculty, emeriti, alumni, staff and other graduate students with complimentary interests.

General guidelines for mentors

To achieve effective mentorship, the following were suggested ideas that could guide mentors:

i. Be partial to the student but impartial about the student's work.
ii. Have clarity on the foundation upon which such a relationship is built.
iii. Be transparent about expectations concerning the form and function of the relationship, and about what's reasonable to expect of you and what isn't.
iv. Pay attention to boundaries, both personal and professional, and respect theirs just as you expect them to respect yours.
v. Have an open door but within mutually agreeable limits?
vi. Because your time is so valuable, it is often the most precious thing you can give.
vii. Give students your full attention when they are talking with you, and the time and encouragement to open up.
viii. Try to minimize interruptions. Consider scheduling an occasional meeting away from interruptions to help create more personalized time.
ix. Use concrete language to critique students' work. What the mentor communicates with the students must be timely, clear and above all, constructive.
x. Critical feedback is essential, but it's more likely to be effective if tempered with praise when reserved.

xi.   Remind students that you are holding them to high standards to help them improve.

xii.   Mentors keep track of their students' progress and achievements, setting milestones and acknowledging accomplishments.

xiii.   Let your students know from the start that you want them to succeed, and create opportunities for them to demonstrate their competencies.

xiv.   When you feel a student is prepared, suggest or nominate him or her for fellowships, projects, and teaching opportunities.

xv.   Encourage students to try new techniques, expand their skills, and discuss their ideas, even those they fear might seem naive or unworkable.

xvi.   Let students know that mistakes are productive because we learn from our failures.

xvii.   Provide support in times of discouragement as well as success, and be mindful of signs of emotional and physical distress.

xviii.   Don't assume that the only students who need help are those who ask for it. If a student is falling behind in his or her work, resist concluding that this shows a lack of commitment. Perhaps the student is exhausted, or unclear about what to do next, or is uncomfortable with some aspect of the project or research team.

xix.   Being open and approachable is particularly important when a student is shy or comes from a different cultural background.

xx.   Many new students suffer from the impostor syndrome – anxiety about whether they belong in graduate school – so it's important to reassure them of their skills and abilities to succeed.

xxi.   Share what you've learned as both a scholar and a member of a profession.You might think things are obvious to students that aren't. At the same time, tell your students what you learn from them. This will make them realize they are potential colleagues.

xxii.   Identify professional workshops and networking opportunities for students.

Initial Meetings

It was agreed that initial meetings are very essential at the beginning of the development of mentoring. During these initial meetings, as supervisor, consider the following:

    a) The student's previous educational experiences and why they decided to go to graduate school.

    b) What does the student hope to achieve in pursuing a graduate degree.

    c) Discuss your research projects and how they complement or diverge from the student's interests.

    d) Offer suggestions about courses the student should take, labs that might be appropriate, and other training experiences s/he should seek.

e) Refer the student to other people inside or outside the University whom s/he should meet to begin developing professional networks.

During the initial meetings, it is important that the mentor/supervisor have a discussion on issues that may affect the relationship including:

i.   **Goals-** Ask students to develop and share with you a work plan that includes short-term and long-term goals as well as the timeframe for reaching those goals. Make sure the student's work plan meets the program's requirements and is feasible.

ii. **Meetings -** Inform students how frequently you will be able to meet with them, and that it is their responsibility to arrange and take the lead in these meetings. Let them know if you have a busy travel schedule, are about to take a sabbatical, or will be assuming an administrative position.

iii. **Thresholds** - Be explicit about the kinds of issues you feel require a face-to-face meeting. Let them know if they may contact you at home, under what circumstances, and ask them their preferences as well.

iv. **Assessments -** Discuss how often you will give them an assessment of their general progress, and let them know what type of feedback they can expect. Tell them how long it generally takes you to provide a response to their work, and how they can best remind you if they do not hear from you within the specified time.

v.   **Drafts -** Discuss your expectations of what first drafts should look like before they are submitted to you. If you do not want students to hand in rough drafts, suggest they share their work first with a trusted peer or writing group.

vi. **Publishing and Presenting -** State your expectations regarding when and where you would like to see the student give research presentations. Explain the standards and norms for authorship credit in your field, and the extent to which you can assist them with preparing work for submission to journals and conferences.

vii. **Intellectual Property -** Before beginning work with students on a project, clarify who owns the data that is being collected, and whether others will have access to it. Also, discuss issues of copyright and patent agreements that might occur because of a project.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the key to a successful mentoring relationship is a shared understanding of expectations and responsibilities. These creates the framework for the relationship, and they are largely established in the early meetings with a student. A relatively modest investment in those meetings can yield great dividends.

Mentorship Audit

As a way of auditing the mentorship process, both the students and mentors/supervisors need to ask themselves various questions:

1) Why do I need a mentor and why do I need to be a mentor?
2) What do I look for in a mentor?
3) Who do I want and need to go through the journey successfully?
4) What do mentors usually look for in a potential mentee?

Conclusion

Effective mentoring is good for mentors, good for students and good for the discipline.

As a mentor your responsibility will be supporting your students in their challenges as well as their successes, assisting their navigation of the unfamiliar waters of a master/doctoral program as well as providing a model of commitment, productivity and professional responsibility. During the graduate experience, students are guided toward becoming independent creators of knowledge or users of research, prepared to be colleagues with their mentors as they complete the degree program and move on to the next phase of professional life

Plenary Discussion

The question of students who traded sexual favours came up again at this stage. There was a lot of debate on the same and the following were suggested:

1. That a supervisor should be clear and firm on the boundaries between the student supervisor relationships.
2. Supervisors should be explicit, forthright and mentor students without taking the route of sexual trading.
3. Overt approaches should be dealt with in a way not to break the relationship between mentor and mentee yet help the student graduate. Some students may retreat and withdraw if the situation isn't handled professionally.
4. Supervisors should use soft skills at the initial meetings and draw boundaries explaining approaches to the supervisory relationship.

SESSION THREE: POSTGRADUATE EXAMINATION

The third and last thematic session of the workshop tackled the practice of post graduate examination. This section was divided into the following sections:

a) The thesis
b) The Examination
c) Oral Examination
d) Thesis with publications
e) Form of thesis examination

The Thesis

It was agreed that the thesis must meet the following criteria:

i. A thesis must be the student's own work.
ii. Embody the results of the work undertaken by the student during candidature.
iii. Form a substantially original contribution to the area of knowledge concerned.
iv. Afford evidence of originality by the:
    a. Discovery of new knowledge
    b. Exercise of independent critical ability
v. Form a cohesive and unified whole to the required length in terms of number of words.
vi. Include a substantial amount of material that is suitable for publication.
vii. Satisfactorily demonstrate that the student can identify, access, organize, and communicate new and established knowledge.
viii. Be written to a standard generally acceptable to the discipline.
ix. be written in English except where permitted otherwise.

The thesis Examination

i. The thesis examination is an assessment of the total thesis presented. The examination process proceeds on the basis that:
ii. The thesis consists of advanced research which makes an original contribution to knowledge
iii. The awarded thesis will be lodged in the University library in electronic format
iv. The outcome of the examination is an academic decision by the relevant committee based on a body of evidence which includes:
- The thesis.
- The examiner's report as per university policy.
- A recommendation from the relevant chair of examination, which is based on the examiner's report.
- Where applicable, any reports of investigations.

Oral Examination:

In the thesis examination process, the purpose of the oral examination is to:

i. Reduce the potential length of the examination process.
ii. Fit the thesis to the convention of the discipline.
iii. Test the student's understanding of the knowledge described within the thesis.
iv. Clarify points of principle or detail within the thesis; or
v. Assess the contribution made by the student to the content and presentation of the thesis.

Thesis with Publication

Acceptable publications (including material already published, accepted for publication, or submitted for publication) include:

a) Papers in refereed journals
b) Book chapters
c) Conference papers

Form of Thesis for examination

i. A thesis in paper format may be accepted in addition to the electronic document, with the prior approval of the head of the administrative unit.
ii. If an examiner expresses a preference for examining a paper copy of the thesis, then this must be supplied by the administrative unit.
iii. The administrative unit must conduct the submission check, including applying similarity detecting software and making other appropriate checks to all theses submitted for examination.

The following information must appear on the title page:

i. The full title of the thesis
ii. The student's name
iii. The words "A thesis submitted in fulfillment [or "partial fulfillment", if determined by the degree resolutions] of the requirements for the degree of [degree name, e.g. Doctor of Philosophy]"
iv. The faculty in which the student is enrolled
v. The name of the University.

If a thesis includes an artistic or creative component such as an exhibition, performance, model, software or data, a documentary record of this component of sufficient quality for assessment must be included as part of the submitted thesis.

The thesis must be accompanied by an abstract in the format prescribed by the Academic Board. Some faculties may require the abstract in advance of submission of the thesis for examination.

Students must submit a statement with the thesis certifying their understanding that, if their candidature is successful, their thesis will be lodged with the Director of University Library and made available for immediate use.

The thesis must be accompanied by a statement from the supervisor stating whether, in the supervisor's opinion, the thesis:
a) Is sufficiently well presented to be examined
b) Does not exceed the prescribed word limit or any extended word limit for which prior approval has been granted.

If a thesis is submitted for examination without the supervisor's statement, the faculty committee will decide whether it will be accepted for examination. The faculty committee may decline to examine a thesis if:
i. The supervisor does not certify that it is ready for examination
ii. It exceeds the prescribed word limits without prior approval to do so
iii. Suitable examiners, as determined by the faculty committee, cannot be found
iv. The student requests withdrawal from the examination and the faculty committee determines there is good reason to do so
v. The student has not successfully completed required research training activities, including any required units of study
vi. There is a finding of inappropriate academic practice, research misconduct or a breach of the university examination policy

Notice of intention to submit
In many universities, the student must provide written notice of their intention to submit a thesis for examination prior to the final submission date. Notice should be given at least **three months** prior to the intended submission date to allow sufficient time for:
a) The appointment of the chair of examination
b) The appointment of examiners; and
c) The organization of other examination requirements such as oral examinations, exhibitions or performances.

Qualifications of Examiners
Nominated examiners must be approved by the Senate. Examiners should be active in research or scholarship. A research active examiner is understood to be someone who pursues research on an ongoing basis, as a major focus of their academic activity. Examiners should have experience of, or be familiar with, the supervision and examination of research theses for the University. The University should take all reasonable steps to ensure that examiners are:
a) Free from bias for or against the student or the supervisor
b) Free from actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interests

A person must not be an examiner if they
a) Have been involved in the student's research.
b) Are a co-author on any part of the work.
c) Have a past or current close personal relationship with the student or supervisor.
d) Have had substantial contact with the student or supervisor in any other circumstances which might jeopardize the independence, or the perceived independence, of the examination.
e) Have been a research student of the supervisor within the last ten years; or
f) Have supervised the student at any time.

Approving examiners

The chair of examination must make recommendations regarding the appointment of examiners, as follows:
a) For a doctorate by research, a minimum of three examiners; and
b) For a master's degrees by research, a minimum of two examiners.
The supervisor should ensure that examiners are nominated at least four weeks before the submission of the thesis.

Communication during the examination process
Between Examiners:
a) The names of examiners must not be disclosed to other examiners until a determination has been made about the awarding of the degree, except if required:
  i. During an oral examination; or
  ii. During the examination of a creative or artistic component of a thesis.

Outcome of the examination

The outcome of the examination must be one of the following:
a) **Award without qualification**: the degree can be awarded without any further action by the student.
b) **Award with corrections**: the degree can be awarded once all required corrections to the thesis have been addressed by the student to the satisfaction of the chair of examination.
c) **Non-award - revision and reexamination**: the degree is not awarded; and the option is provided for the student to revise and resubmit the thesis for a new examination subject to the following:
  i. revision and re-examination process
  ii. no further opportunity to revise and resubmit the whole thesis

Plenary Discussion

Question
1. What informs a pass/Fail?

Answer:
 i. Guidelines for marking in disciplines with clear structures on what and where to award.
 ii. Reports from examiners will guide the examining board.

Question
2. What are the acceptable plagiarism levels?

Answer:
At the University of Embu, the acceptable level is 30 %. However, this varies varies in different universities for example the University of Nairobi is 15%, at Kenyatta University it is 25%.

Question
3. How does one handle colleagues and elderly students who are often lazy and seek favours during supervision and examination?

Answer
Quality should be compromised. As a supervisor, you may decline supervision based on conflict of interest. Even if you assist the student, the process will catch up with you and the student during oral examination. Poor oral defenses and well done paper work is a sign of either plagiarism or assisted work.

Question
4. What is he recommended number of students that a lecturer on full load take for supervision?

Answer
One should be careful not to overload themselves for the sake of quality.

Question
5. Can external supervisors examine thesis from areas they are do not have expertise.

Answer
It is advisable to seek professionals in the field for the sake of quality.

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