Handling of problematic issues in PhD education

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Three issues

• Cases when PhD students do not make sufficient progress

• Cases when there is serious disagreement between the PhD student and the supervisor

• PhD students and stress
Insufficient progress

- The **individual study plan** serves as a contract.

- Handle this kind of issue at **scheduled meetings**, not via e-mail.

- **All supervisors and the PhD student should meet at the same time**, to reduce the risk for misunderstanding.

Insufficient progress, cont.

**Important:**

- **written documentation of what was agreed** and that the PhD student confirms in writing

- a **clear action plan and monitoring of progress**

- be **supportive** and yet **clear**
Insufficient progress, cont.

In a worst case, the issue has to be brought to the Faculty level and ultimately to the Vice Chancellor. Then it is important to be able to provide documentation.

HF 6 kap 30 §

Disagreement

- **Meet** to try to resolve the issue

- **Document** what is agreed

- According to the Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen) the PhD student has unconditional right to change main supervisor

HF 6 kap 28 §
Guidelines

In September 2002, the Department Board decided about guidelines for how to handle the kinds of problems mentioned above: “Policy for handling problems in the graduate education”. Available on the department web: http://www.it.uu.se/grad/internal/handbook/crisis.pdf

Guidelines, cont.

Three levels of problem:
 a) Normal
 b) Extraordinary
 c) Crisis

Responsibility:
 Case a) and b): the main supervisor
 Case c): the Head of Division
 Ultimately: the Director of PhD Education and the Head of Department
PhD students and stress

Stress appears to be particularly common among PhD students

What can be done about this?

PhD students have suggested:
• Earlier information about teaching duties
• Better coordination between demands from Director of Study and demands from supervisors