

Mentoring@SLU

Towards Improving Research Education

Arne Pommerening

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Department of Forest Ecology & Management
Umeå, Sweden



Introduction
Definition
Experience so far

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Sink or Swim?

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A UK professor is rumoured to have said:

“This programme should not be offered. Obtaining a PhD is like swimming across a big lake. Some students cannot swim, so they’ll sink. That is the way the academic system selects those who will win. By providing students with a programme on how to swim, they will pass and ruin the system.”

~ Gosling & Noordam (2011), page viii.

→ We believe in a balanced view where mentoring is a crucial part of student welfare and research education.

Why a Mentoring Programme?

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General purpose of academic life: Make the world a better place through:

- ▶ Research,
- ▶ Education,
- ▶ Reach out.

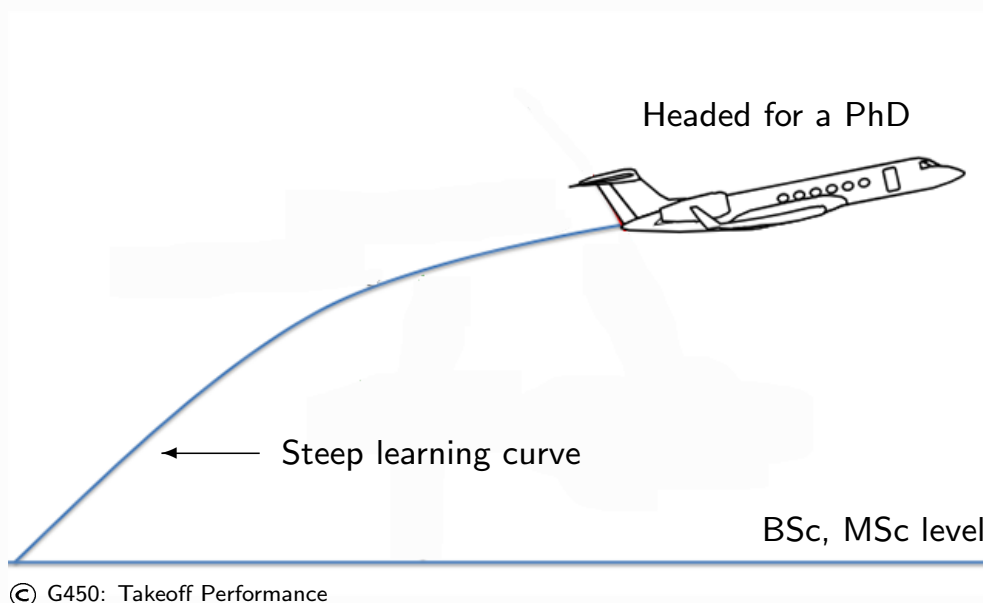
In terms of research education, provision so far includes:

- ▶ Supervisory committee,
- ▶ Study plan,
- ▶ Research courses,
- ▶ Requirement to attend conferences,
- ▶ Cumulative PhD theses based on publications,
- ▶ Counselling services.



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Creativity & Inspiration

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Creativity/inspiration is better thought of as a state of altered consciousness in which the researcher receives knowledge of matters beyond what can be routinely learned.

~ The Book of Taliesin, p. xxv.



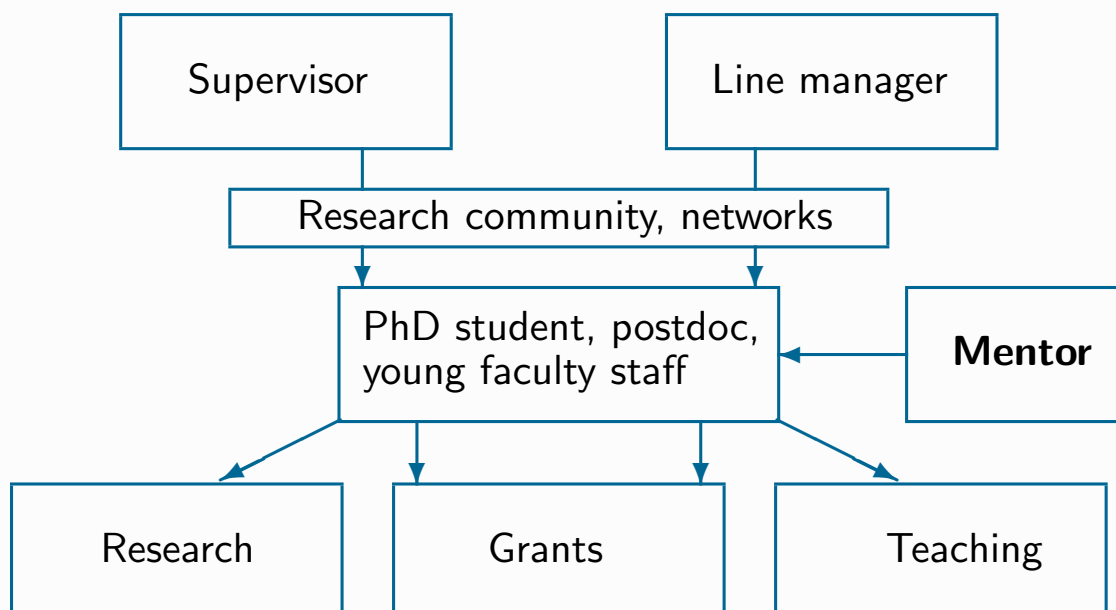
How Does the Mentor Fit in?

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Independent facilitator taking a professional interest in developing another person's career and well-being without personal agenda: Sharing guidance, experience and expertise.



How Did it Go So Far?

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Humble Guide for a Successful Career in Research at Universities

Draft Version

(www.pommerening.org)



Arne Pommerening

Umeå, September 2019

- ▶ Learning by doing,
- ▶ Formerly part of a re-
search school, now
independent,
- ▶ 10 mentees since 2017,
- ▶ MSc, PhD, researchers,
- ▶ Mixed nationalities,
- ▶ Mixed gender,
- ▶ Positive stories,
- ▶ Raising awareness
among senior SLU staff.



What Were the Meetings about?

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- ▶ Majority: Career development,
- ▶ Two cases of conflict management,
- ▶ Several meetings about the meaning of science and
research,
- ▶ One case about the general question, academic career
or working outside university,
- ▶ One case of proposal writing.



Other Mentoring Programmes (Sample)

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Experience so far

- ▶ Göttingen University: a) For female postdocs, b) for PhD students and postdocs interested in industry careers <http://www.uni-goettingen.de/de/444487.html>,
- ▶ Trinity College Dublin: a) Alumni-to-student career mentoring for students and graduates, b) staff (momentum) mentoring <https://www.tcd.ie/Careers/students/mentoring.php>,
- ▶ Jena University: Subject-specific mentoring for international students <https://www.uni-jena.de/en/academic+mentoring.html>,
- ▶ BBSRC best practice guide on <https://bbsrc.ukri.org>,
- ▶ Dundee University: Early-career ~ <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/opd/mentoring/>.