Sink or Swim?

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.”


We believe in a balanced view where mentoring is a crucial part of student welfare and research education.
**Why a Mentoring Programme?**

**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

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?

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?

- Learning by doing,
- Formerly part of a research 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?

- 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)

- 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/.