

DOCTORAL SUPERVISION: EXPERIENCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE

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THE UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE



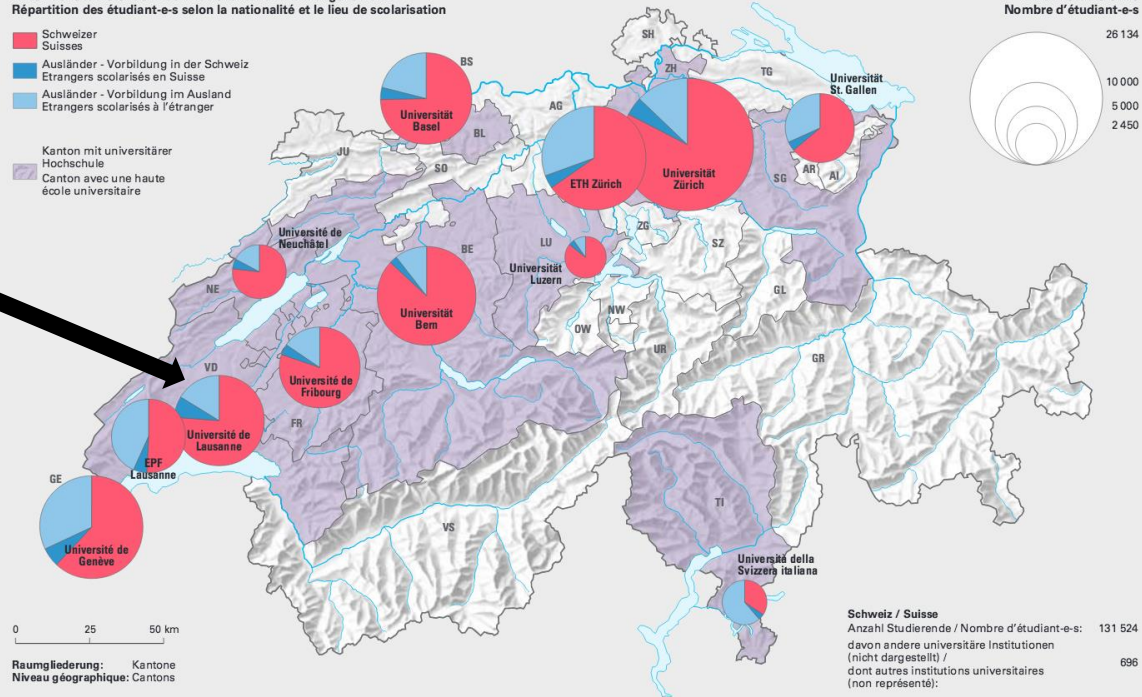
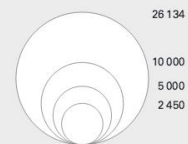
Lage und Grösse der Universitären Hochschulen in der Schweiz, 2010 Situation et taille des hautes écoles universitaires en Suisse, en 2010

Anteil der Studierenden nach Nationalität und Bildungsherkunft
 Répartition des étudiant-e-s selon la nationalité et le lieu de scolarisation

- Schweizer Suisses
- Ausländer - Vorbildung in der Schweiz
 Etrangers scolarisés en Suisse
- Ausländer - Vorbildung im Ausland
 Etrangers scolarisés à l'étranger

Kanton mit universitärer Hochschule
 Canton avec une haute école universitaire

Anzahl Studierende
 Nombre d'étudiant-e-s



0 25 50 km

Raumgliederung: Kantone
 Niveau géographique: Cantons

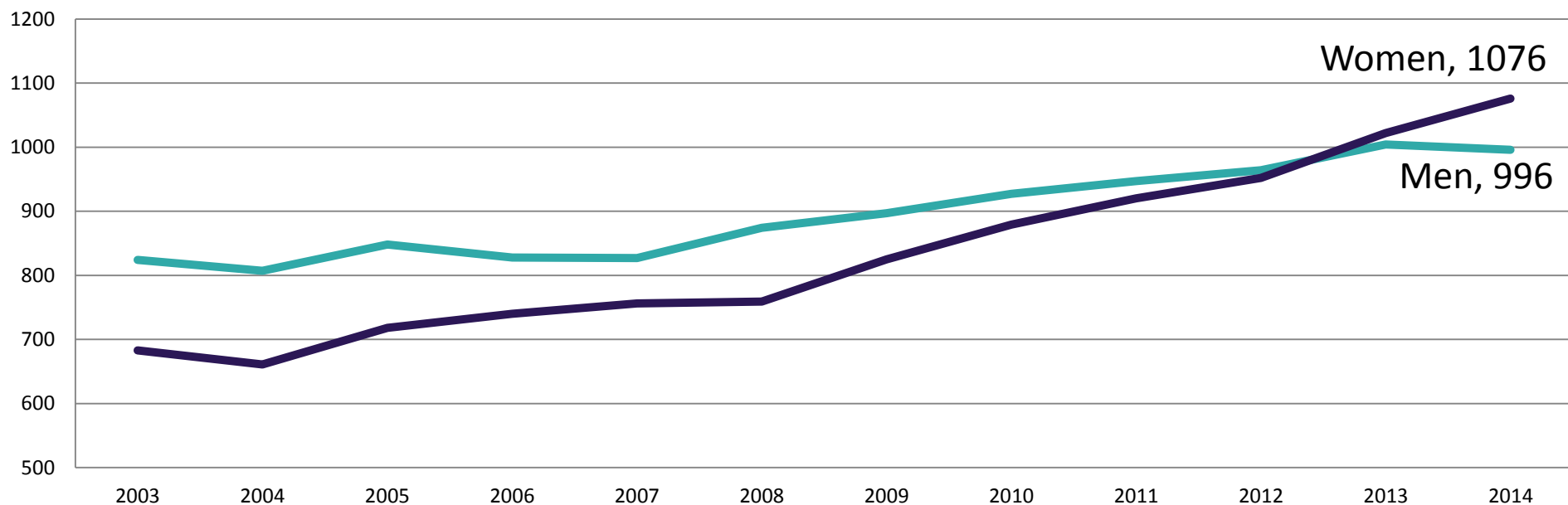
UNIL

- 7 faculties in three domains
 - Life sciences
 - Social sciences and humanities
 - Environmental sciences
- About 14'000 students
- About 330 professors (+ 150 clinicians)

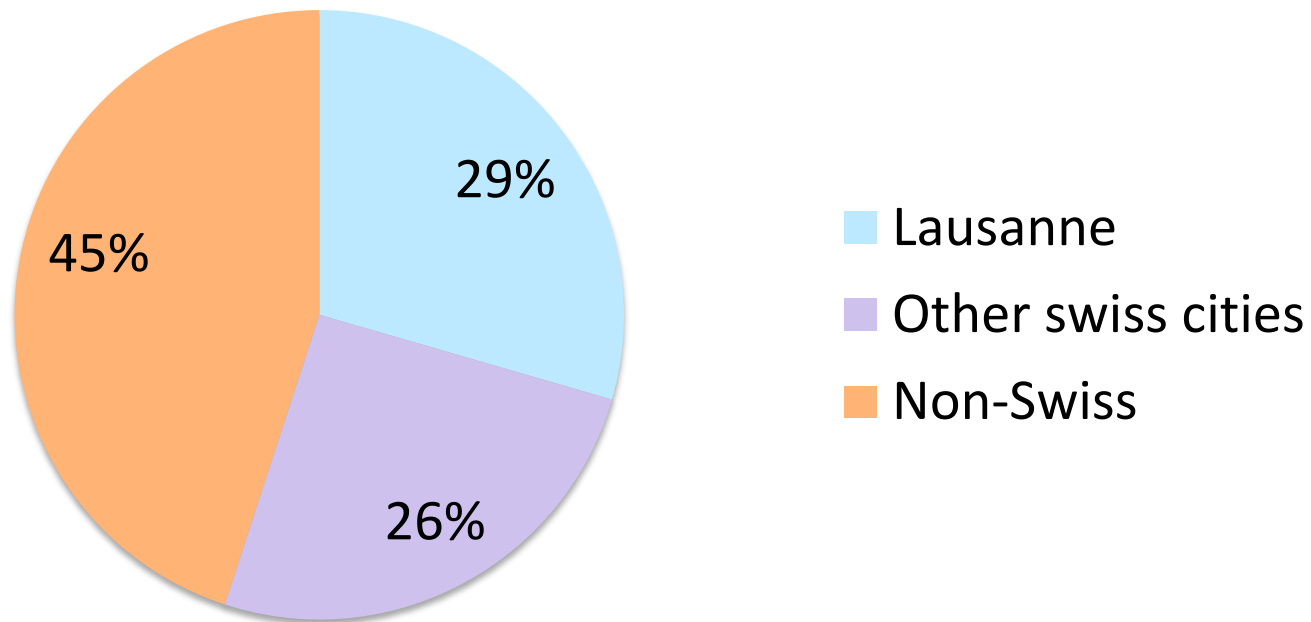
UNTENURED JUNIOR FACULTY AT UNIL

- About 2000 doctoral candidates
 - 50% are employed by UNIL or on grant money
 - Contracts for 4-5 years max
- About 400 postdocs
 - 50% are employed on grant money
- About 40 assistant professors on tenure track
 - Tenure decision after approx. 4 years; 75%

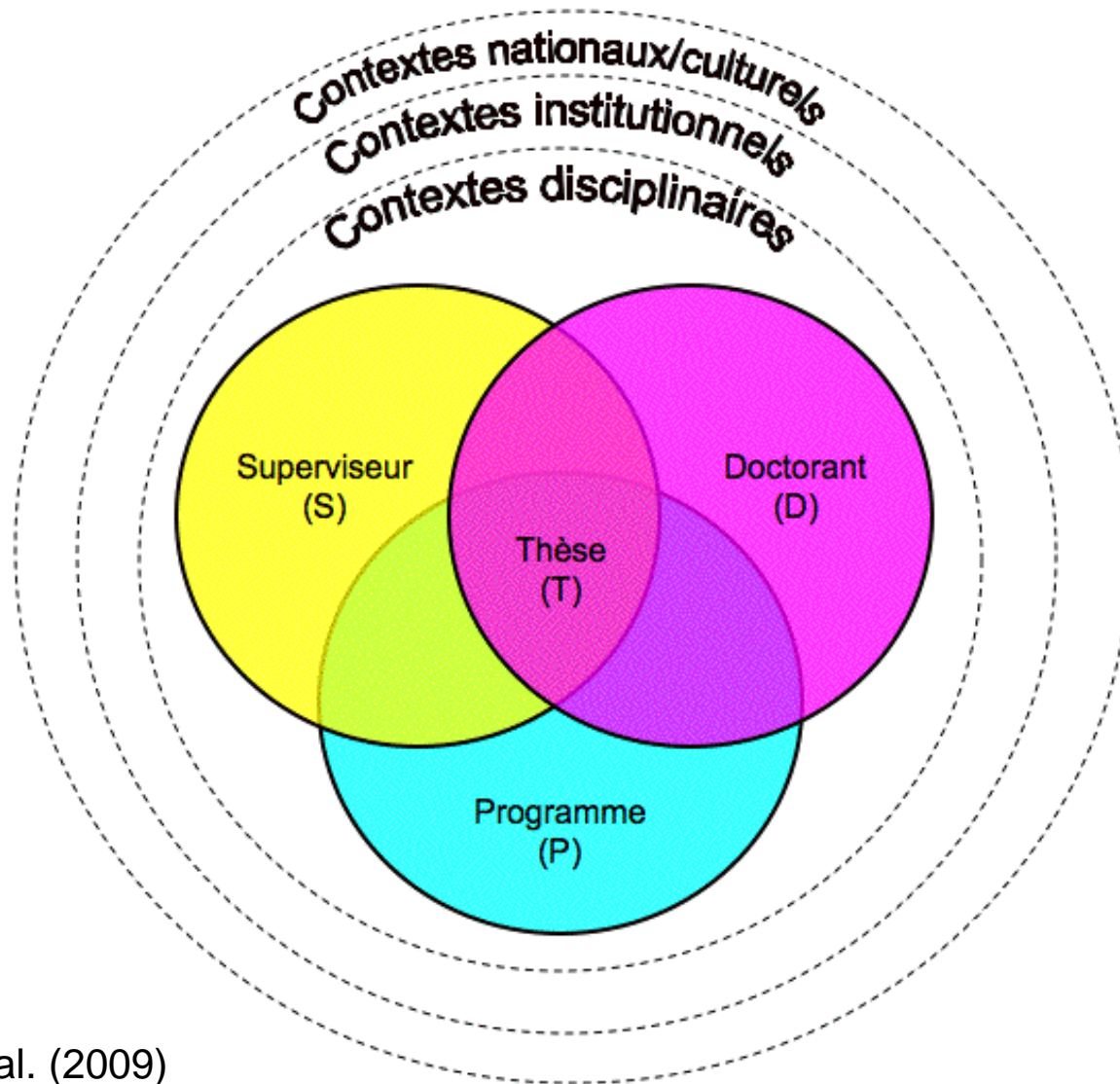
NUMBER OF DOCTORAL CANDIDATES 2003 - 2014



WHERE THEY COME FROM

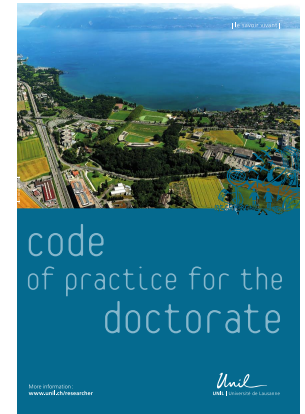


DOCTORAL SUPERVISION IN CONTEXT



CODE OF PRACTICE

- Goal: Define universal binding guidelines that still allow for individual differences in style of supervision or working mode
- Developed together with the commission
- Doctoral students and professors from all faculties involved
- Approved by the deans and the Direction
- *"This code of practice defines a certain number of values and principles that lie at the basis of the relationship between the thesis director and the doctoral candidate. It serves as a reference for the University of Lausanne. It highlights the active role of both parties and their shared responsibilities during the doctoral process."*



1. HOW TO USE THIS CODE

This code of practice defines a certain number of values and principles that lie at the basis of the relationship between the thesis director and the doctoral candidate. It serves as a reference for the University of Lausanne. It highlights the active role of both parties and their shared responsibilities during the doctoral process. The code is intended as an informative document that provides clear indications and points of reference, which should be taken into account by those concerned. It is not intended to replace current faculty regulations which concern the doctorate. Consequently, it can be applied differently by each faculty.

2. DEFINING THE DOCTORATE

The doctoral thesis is a high level, individual scientific work which follows standards of quality and whose subject is intended to be innovative. The doctoral candidate is generally part of a community of researchers and his/her research work is part of a more global training process.

The doctorate is a professional research experience that permits the development of a variety of skills (theoretical, methodological, social, organizational, etc.) that can be transferred to a wide range of domains. It is a first step in an academic career, but the acquired skills are also valued outside academia.

3. THESIS SUPERVISION

Prior to registration for the doctorate at UNIL, the doctoral candidate must have obtained the agreement of a person to supervise them. The role of the thesis director is to accompany and supervise the research work, without imposing the details of its development. The thesis director should feel competent with respect to the chosen theme and the methodology, and should show an interest in continuing the supervision of the doctoral candidate throughout the latter's doctoral training. He/she should also evaluate the motivations of the doctoral candidate and ensure that he/she has the necessary skills with which to successfully complete the project.

The thesis director should guarantee regular follow-up of each of their doctoral candidates.

Note that a teacher/faculty member may refuse to undertake supervision of a candidate. Furthermore, both parties may consider a co-direction arrangement.

4. ESTABLISHING A SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP

In order to establish the relationship on common grounds, several points should be discussed at the beginning and then throughout the relationship between the thesis director and the doctoral candidates. Both parties have the responsibility to bring these points up for discussion.

4.1 Both parties agree on the choice of the thesis topic.

4.2 Both parties clearly state their expectations with regard to the duration of the thesis. They develop together a schedule laying out the major stages of the work. This schedule should also include the other activities linked to the profession of a researcher, such as attending conferences, writing scientific publications, teaching, fieldwork, and doctoral training courses. This schedule is a work plan that is discussed regularly and revised when necessary.

4.3 The doctoral candidate's professional project and their motivations in undertaking a doctoral thesis should be discussed. The thesis director explains the requirements of an academic career and introduces the doctoral candidate to the profession of a researcher. It is important to keep in mind that the majority of doctorate holders do not continue into an academic career and that various professional trajectories can be envisaged. The acquisition and the development of transferable skills are thus essential.

4.4 The thesis director should inform the doctoral candidate of the existence of doctoral training courses in the domain (e.g. doctoral programmes) and encourage him/her to participate. They discuss together any other training needs (linguistic, scientific, methodological, or transferable skills). The doctoral candidate commits to following the training programme he/she has developed together with the thesis director.

4.5 The thesis director should ensure that the doctoral candidate is informed of current ethical codes and regulations (concerning, for example, plagiarism, data collection, the presence and order of authors in joint publications, intellectual property).

4.6 The thesis director is transparent about the possibility of funding or employment in his/her team, institute or department. Funding solutions for the duration of the thesis should be envisaged prior to beginning the project.

4.7 The doctoral candidate should join a research community with the support of the thesis director. The latter encourages participation in team meetings, in training courses for doctoral candidates, and in conferences, and provides a learning

environment conducive to learning about the profession of researcher. The doctoral candidate participates in activities proposed by their thesis director.

5. SUPERVISING THE DOCTORAL CANDIDATE

5.1 The thesis director should introduce the doctoral candidate to the research culture by helping him/her to develop critical thinking and to become an independent scientist. The doctoral candidate shows initiative throughout their doctoral thesis work.

5.2 The thesis director commits to regularly overseeing the doctoral candidate's work. Respective expectations regarding the frequency of meetings and supervision style (deadlines, written work, ways of making contact, etc.) are discussed together. The doctoral candidate commits to providing regular progress updates.

5.3 The thesis director commits to providing constructive feedback to the doctoral candidate. He/she does so by underlining the positive aspects of the work as well as suggesting areas of improvement. He/she informs the doctoral candidate whenever progress is not as expected, or if the latter's work is below standard. The doctoral candidate requests clarifications whenever he/she is unclear about the feedback he/she has received, and informs the thesis director promptly of any problems in advancing the thesis.

5.4 Important decisions regarding the development of the thesis should be taken together, after discussion and common agreement. Furthermore, it can sometimes be important to discuss whether it is appropriate to continue the thesis project.

5.5 Each party keeps the other informed with regard to extended absences. In the case of an extended absence of the thesis director (for example, for sabbatical leave), he/she clearly communicates the ways in which he/she can be contacted or, if he/she cannot be reached, then agrees with the doctoral candidate on a third person who will stand in as a temporary supervisor.

5.6 Both parties make sure that they establish ways of communication that are effective and respectful of each person's values. They are strongly encouraged to keep a written record of all important decisions.

6. IN CASE OF PROBLEMS

In the majority of cases, the relationship between doctoral candidate and thesis director is positive. When this is not the case, it is advisable to react quickly. The first step is to clarify the problem and try to find concrete solutions. If communication is difficult, the intervention of a third person can be helpful (a colleague, the "corps intermédiaire" association, the director of the doctoral school). It is also possible to turn to the faculty dean's office, the mediation service or Human Resources. Whoever intervenes is expected to respect confidentiality strictly.

In cases of difficulty, or when the thesis subject changes, the doctoral candidate or the thesis director may propose a change of thesis director. The organisational and financial aspects linked to a specific project should be taken into account when considering the feasibility of the reorientation. If necessary, the doctoral school, the institute or the faculty dean's office may propose a solution.

CODE OF PRACTICE: A TOOTHLESS TIGER?

- How make sure the code is actually used? How apply it in concrete situations?
- ✓ Disseminate it largely and repeatedly!
- ✓ Link it with other documents!
- ✓ Be open to pressure from the Commission and PhD associations ... and from (junior) professors!
- ✓ Organize workshops for doctoral students and for thesis supervisors!

WORKSHOP ON DOCTORAL SUPERVISION

- 2 workshops: one for doctoral candidates and one for thesis supervisors
- Since 2013, 14 workshops in total, for
 - 41 doctoral candidates
 - 103 thesis supervisors
- For both, participation is optional
- Both are based on the code of practice; so the content is the same: Transparency!
- Animation: Prof Franciska Krings and Dr Mélanie Bosson
- Approaches are different

WORKSHOP FOR DOCTORAL CANDIDATES

- 4 hours, 5 to 10 participants
- A lot of discussion and exchange of experiences
- Content
 1. Code of practice
 2. Case study (group discussions)
 3. Differences in style (individual exercise)
 4. Stats & facts (presentation)

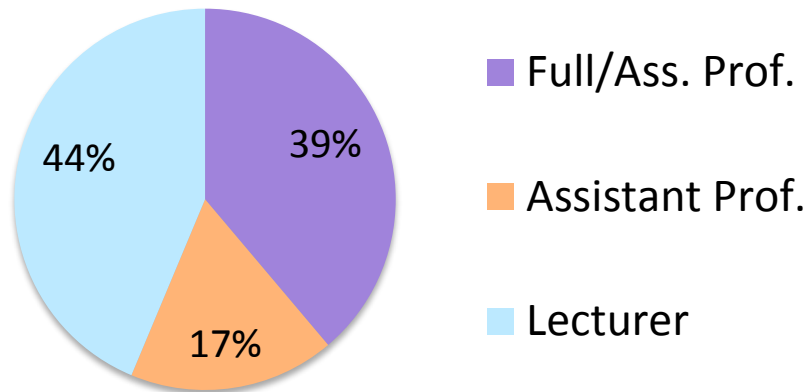
WORKSHOP FOR THESIS SUPERVISORS

- 4 hours, about 15 participants
- Content
 1. Code of practice
 2. Case study and own cases (group discussions): 2.5 hours
 3. Differences in style (individual exercise)
 4. Stats & facts (presentation)

WHO ATTENDS THE WORKSHOP

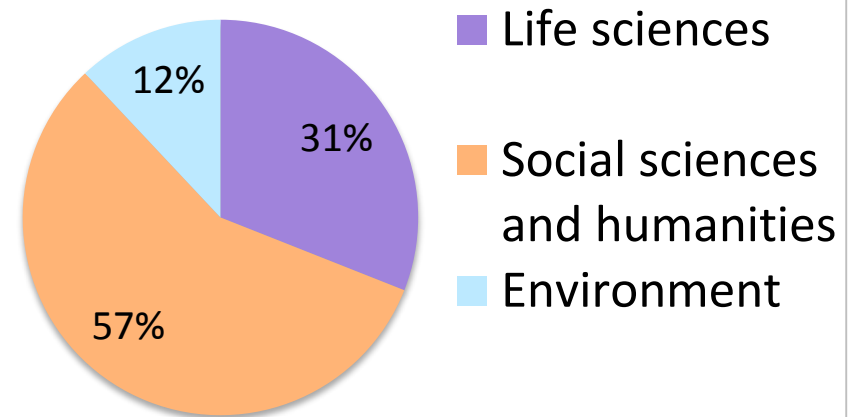
Function

(N=103)



Faculties

(N= 100)








45 % Women

55 % Men

CONTENT 2: THE CASES

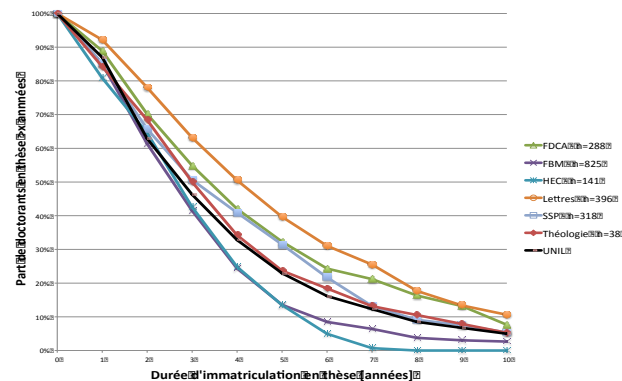
- **Case study:** PhD candidate who has not made progress during the past two years; various efforts of the supervisor to improve the situation
- **Own case:** In groups of 6 or more, each member describes a situation where s/he would appreciate some advice on; the group chooses one, discusses it and develops suggestions on how to proceed (in a highly structured manner)

CONTENT 3: INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN STYLE Lee (2008)

A framework for concepts of research supervision					
					
	<i>Functional</i>	<i>Enculturation</i>	<i>Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Emancipation</i>	<i>Relationship Development</i>
Supervisors Activity	Rational progression through tasks Negotiated order	Gatekeeping Master to apprentice	Evaluation Challenge	Mentoring, supporting constructivism	Supervising by experience, developing a relationship
Supervisor's knowledge & skills	Directing, Project management	Diagnosis of deficiencies, coaching	Argument, analysis	Facilitation, Reflection	Managing conflict Emotional intelligence
Possible student reaction	Organised Obedience Negotiation skills	Role modelling, Apprentice-ship	Constant inquiry, fight or flight	Personal growth, reframing	A good team member. Emotional intelligence

CONTENT 4: STATS & FACTS

- Empirical facts from research about problems of doctoral students
- Observations from the workshop with doctoral students at UNIL
- Stats about untenured junior faculty at UNIL
 - Demographics
 - Thesis duration



STRENGTHS OF THE WORKSHOP

- Professors appreciate
 - open discussions of difficult cases that they encounter
 - hearing about how things go in other faculties
 - getting some numbers
 - receiving institutional guidance
- Participants see UNIL and not only their department/institute
- The teachers are « credible » :
 - MB through her experience in coaching & teaching doctoral candidates
 - FK through her experience as a thesis supervisor and her role as vice-rector for junior faculty

CONCLUSIONS: LESSONS LEARNED OR HOW TO MAKE IT WORK (1/4)

- Need for legitimate reasons for engaging professors in courses on supervisions
 - Code of practice is a soft but strong measure
 - Institutional frame
- Cooperation with the Commission, deans, and associations is absolutely essential
 - Spreading the news
 - Pressure

CONCLUSIONS 2/4

- Newcomers are grateful for guidance and can help spread the news
 - New and / or less experienced professors are often eager to learn because they don't have much experience yet or they do not know UNIL yet
- Having assistant professors on tenure-track helps
 - Quality of thesis supervision is part of the tenure evaluation criteria

CONCLUSIONS 3/4

- Workshop content must be adequate
 - Enough time for exchange: Many participants have concrete questions
 - Provide statistics / numbers and know them well
 - Be ready to provide institutional guidance on critical issues
- Have a similar workshop for doctoral students; it signals: Both parties are responsible!

CURRENT CHALLENGES (4/4)

- Follow-up courses
- Supervision of MDs

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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The logo of the University of Lausanne (Unil), featuring the word "Unil" in a stylized, cursive blue font.

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