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Creating teaching portfolios from the start of a PhD

In the latest PhD alumni survey from Karlstad University, 1 in 6 stated that the PhD programme does not provide sufficient career planning or information about the acquisition of qualifications and employability in and outside of academia. The alumni have suggested a course in career planning, as well as a more formalized approach to informing new doctoral students about different possible career paths. Several respondents expressed that departmental duties can have a negative impact when teaching assignments lack coherence, and doctoral students are expected to do many, but smaller, contributions, in a large variety of courses (Bergman & Eriksson 2024).

While the PhD traditionally has been used as a way of preparing graduates for a career in academia, a lack of positions in academia combined with doctoral students wanting to have a career in other fields, implies that the way we think about the PhD and its expected outcome needs to adapt (Sharmini & Spronken-Smith 2020). Recent studies show that less than half of PhD graduates across the world are employed in higher education (Haynes, Metcalfe & Videler 2009; Guthrie & Bryant 2015).

A small step in the direction of the expressed wishes of the alumni could be to help doctoral students develop formative portfolios. A formative portfolio could allow doctoral students to engage in and document their personal professional development, and could start with setting goals for what the portfolio should contain after PhD graduation, such as necessary teaching skills and competencies, research grant application experiences, project management skills, etc. (Sharmini & Spronken-Smith 2020).

An interview study with study directors at Karlstad University will be conducted and presented

at CoPhS, 2024. The study aims to discuss opportunities and challenges with mapping out paths for PhD candidates at an early stage, to create a teaching portfolio that can make them eligible to apply for senior lecturer positions after a completed PhD, from the point of view of study directors.

References:

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