

# ACTIVITY PLAN DN 2014/2015<sup>1</sup>

## MONITORING PHD EDUCATION

The doctoral board (doktorandnämnden) is a collaborative body for the faculty-level PhD student councils at Uppsala University. The doctoral board monitors PhD education issues locally and nationally, and deals with overarching topics affecting all doctoral students at the University.

### Organisation and PhD student influence

The doctoral board is made up of elected representatives from each of the faculty-level PhD student councils. Besides direct monitoring of issues affecting PhD students, central tasks for the board include supporting the faculty councils, transmitting strategic information concerning PhD education, and promoting good contacts between PhD students at the University across faculty- and departmental borders. In its work, the board also collaborates with unions and other strategically important organisations, such as SFS-DK and SDF, in relation to PhD issues at the national level.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- speak for the PhD students through participation by PhD student representatives in the University's various committees and boards, with a responsibility to transmit information to their peers via the doctoral board and the faculty councils.
- develop routines for reporting from PhD student representatives to the board.
- work to ensure that PhD student representatives are given support and a good introduction to positions of trust that they take up.
- offer a platform for communication among PhD students with the purpose of bringing up organizational issues, as well as arranging social activities to create networks among PhD students.
- distribute the bilingual edition of the doctoral board's "PhD handbook", including via the internet.

### Recruitment to the PhD programmes

A recruitment process characterized by transparency and legal certainty is a prerequisite for a broad recruitment to Uppsala University's PhD programmes. Structures that lead to recruitment bias should be highlighted and counteracted.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- counteract the existence of shadow PhD students (skuggdoktorander).
- work for clear career paths for well-merited doctoral graduates within all research fields.
- lobby for surplus funds at the university being used to PhD students' benefit.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a translated version of the official activity plan, which is written in Swedish. As such, the language may not always correspond to correct bureaucratic English. Meanwhile, Swedish translations of key terms is provided (in brackets) to facilitate relating the activity plan to debates and policies at the University.

## **Work conditions**

Uppsala University is a big workplace and different conditions may prevail at different divisions and departments. The fundamental working conditions of PhD students should be the same regardless of where within the University one is based. As one part of this agenda, the doctoral board has campaigned for the abolishment of study grants (utbildningsbidrag). In December 2012, the University board (konsistoriet) decided that study grants will be discontinued as a financing form for PhD students from 2015-01-01, but with the possibility of exemption in case of extraordinary reasons. The application of exemptions should be monitored closely by the doctoral board.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- work to ensure that information about the rules and conditions of the PhD education is readily available for all PhD students.
- work for PhD employment replacing scholarships as a financing form for PhD salaries. One useful avenue is to transform scholarships so that they are paid out as salaries, with the associated social benefits, via the University. When scholarships, despite being undesirable, are used, the PhD candidate should (through supplements) have the same salary development as employed PhD students; and the same social benefits as employed PhD students, concerning parental and sick leave etc.
- work to ensure that all departments, in accordance with existing agreements, execute a raise of PhD students' salaries at 24 and 38 months completed study time, corresponding to 50 % and 80 % of the PhD education.
- analyse the use of start-up months (igångsättningsmånader), i.e. prolongation following prolonged absence (regardless of the type of absence), and work for start-up months being introduced at all faculties.
- work for start-up months being offered also after long sick-leave (in addition to parental leave).
- work to ensure that prolongation in cases of care of sick child is effected in a manner characterized by transparency and legal certainty.
- elucidate the teaching conditions of PhD students at different faculties and work to ensure that these become more coherent among different parts of the University.
- work for transparency and legal certainty in the assignment of teaching responsibilities and of remuneration for teaching.
- actively and critically monitor the use of exemptions to the abolishment of study grants.
- work for the abolishment of the ordinance on study grants for PhD students (SFS 1995:938).

## **Pedagogic experience**

The goals of PhD education include enabling a future academic career. As an academic career usually entails not only research but also teaching, pedagogic education and experience is an important part of all PhD education.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- work to ensure that all PhD students that wish to gain pedagogic experience are able to do so, including being able to teach with adequate support and supervision, as part of the PhD education.

- highlight the question whether all PhD students who teach also undergo pedagogic training, and if the pedagogic training is credited in a satisfactory manner (as a course within the PhD program or as departmental service compensated through prolongation).
- work to ensure that all teaching PhD candidates are given an adequate introduction to, and supervision in, their teaching.

## **Supervision**

The relation between PhD candidate and supervisor is of critical importance for the doctoral education to work well. It is important that problematic supervision situations are quickly identified and rectified.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- work to ensure that all PhD candidates are given an opportunity for performance review (utvecklingsamtal) with someone other than the supervisor, and therein is given the opportunity to evaluate the individual study plan.
- work to ensure that PhD students who have received inadequate supervision shall have the right to prolongation, funded at the faculty level.
- work to ensure that the demands and expectations pertaining to supervisors are made explicit in the individual study plans, and that it is clear to PhD students how they can act to improve the situation if the supervisor does not meet these demands.
- work for relevant measures being taken quickly when supervision is not working.
- work for smooth processes for changing supervisors.
- work to ensure the possibility of PhD students to be assigned a third supervisor, if they so wish.

## **International PhD students**

Many international PhD students work at Uppsala University and face different problems specific to this group. Better routines are needed at the University and nationally to handle problems related to language, teaching and residence permits.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- work to ensure that information about PhD students' work conditions and rights is available in English. This should concern not only information directly related to PhD education, but also information about e.g. employment, insurances and social benefits.
- Work for visa extensions being handled quickly and smoothly, to avoid international PhD students being "trapped" in Sweden for long periods.
- Improve the possibilities for international PhD students to take part as elected representatives within the PhD education monitoring, mainly by increasing the use of English as a working language in boards and committees.
- Work to translate information about the doctoral board to English, and at doctoral board meetings provide summaries in English of Swedish-language documents if complete translation is not possible or practical.

- Work to ensure that all PhD candidates who so wish are given an active support to learn Swedish.

### **Work environment and legal certainty**

A necessary condition for the PhD education to be carried out successfully, is good conditions, a good psychosocial work environment and physical health.

Uppsala's student unions through the doctoral board shall 2014/2015:

- push for an active work with work environment issues at the different levels of the University, and for responsible bodies to intervene quickly when problems related to work environment are identified.
- work to ensure that structural problems within PhD education, that result in psychological unhealth and sick leave, are highlighted and addressed by the faculty boards.
- spread information about resources available for PhD students who experience psychosocial or physical work-related problems.
- work for greater legal certainty through demanding that preparation of decisions to withhold PhD financing shall be made in collegial bodies.
- work to ensure that issues of ethical malpractice in research (oredlighet i forskningen) are investigated in independent bodies at an adequate distance from the complainant and defendant.
- work to ensure that all PhD students at the University have good access to research libraries.