



# Lunds Doktorandkår

## *Lunds Doctoral Student Union*

### **Verksamhetsplan 2013/2014**

Activityplan 2013/2014

**Lunds doktorandkår ska verka för en bättre forskarutbildning och ska under året verka som studentkår, i enlighet med 4 kap. 8-14 §§ Högskolelagen. Lunds doktorandkår ska bevaka och medverka i utvecklingen av forskarutbildningen och förutsättningarna för studier på forskarnivå vid Lunds universitet.**

#### **1. FOCUS QUESTIONS**

##### **Scholarships**

LDK's general view is that scholarships should not be used as sole means of financing for doctoral students. Our position is that a doctoral candidate at Lund University should be offered employment when admitted for research education.

LDK will continue to work for reform of doctoral student finance so that all doctoral students are also taken on as employees. This work will include:

- Collaboration with the faculty councils and the student representatives in the fakultetsstyrelser
- Information gathering and information sharing about general and specific conditions attached to scholarship financing
- Seeking to influence the relevant University and Faculty boards through our representatives;
- Monitoring of the amount of PhD students being admitted to the third cycle education (doctoral) at Lund University. It is of great important to map how many PhD students are financed with a scholarship since the amount of scholarships has increased.

##### Background

A doctoral student financed solely through scholarships, without specific social security agreements, finds him or herself in a very vulnerable situation. Without a proper employment contract, the student will have no rights to join a pension scheme or to be protected by unemployment insurance. Nor will such a student have the normal employment rights such as parental leave, sickness benefits or holiday entitlements – the student will be completely outside the social security system. In addition, a scholarship usually entails a much lower income than proper employment, even after taxes, which might result in the student not being able to support him or herself.

For these reasons, LDK considers that the abolition of scholarships as sole means of financing is both a quality question and an equality question. On the one hand, quality of research level education is affected, as talented, ambitious and highly qualified candidates might reject the option of research education after completing the masters, given that they would find themselves completely outside the social security system. On the other hand, it might also be an equality question, if we bear in mind that many potential candidates for research education are of an age where they would start a family, whereas students financed through scholarships might not be entitled to parental leave.

### **Internationalization**

Lund University has stated in its strategic plan that it will put greater emphasis on the internationalization process of the university in order to attract more international researchers as well as PhD students. LDK's is generally positive to this process. In our activity year we will focus on reducing the obstacles that face international PhD students. This includes:

- Enabling students to get help with visa applications from University

PhD students originating from non EU/EEA countries have to apply for Swedish visa at the Migrationsverket, students with a scholarship need to apply yearly. The application and issuing time of a visa is difficult to estimate and can take up to 4 months. Thus, the applicant is in the uncomfortable situation being not permitted to leave Sweden. In other words, the PhD student is not allowed to go to courses, conferences or personal reasons abroad. LDK understands that the University provides non EU/EEA guest researchers with support in their dealings with Migrationsverket, in order to accelerate their visa application process. LDK wants the same support to be available for PhD students.

- English translation of important University documents

Many of University, Faculty and Department documents which are of great relevance to PhD students are only written in Swedish. There is a need to have these documents translated to English. LDK wants to start a discussion of finding possibilities to tackle this problem at all University levels via PhD representatives in the respective boards and committees.

- Representation of international students at relevant organs

A proper representation of the international students on the university, faculty and department administration level. The respective organ should accept English as the working language. No PhD student should be excluded because of missing knowledge of Swedish language.

In questions of internationalization, LDK should lead by example. As LDK is representing an increasing number of non-Swedish speaking members, and in addition a number of LDK representatives are non-Swedish speaking, English should be assigned as the working language at LDK

## **2. MONITORING**

### **Rules for PhD students**

Rules, policy-documents and guidelines concerning PhD students are being discussed at the University and need to be compiled during the next academic year. LDK will ensure that the PhD students' interests will be involved and taken care of.

### **Board of Appeals**

To ensure the observance of the rights for PhD Students, and undergraduate students alike, the forming of a board of appeals is being discussed at the university. This is of a great importance for PhD students as the majority of rights given in the statute of higher education are not possible to appeal. It is of great interest for LDK to look after the creation of the board so that it will be formed and in an efficient manner.

### **Prolongation of Parental leave**

The prolongation of parental leave is calculated incorrectly by the administration of Lund University. This leads to a shortening of the employment of the PhD students and needs to be emphasized in the respective committee and other organs at the university. A possible cooperation with the relevant trade union needs to be implemented.

### **University foundation question (Stiftelsefrågan)**

The transformation of Lund University from an authority to a foundation has been discussed in the University board and in public. If the University is going to continue this question with actions, LDK will represent the interests of the PhD students concerning a change of Lund University's organization form. It is important to ensure the influence of PhD students in order to keep the quality and improve doctoral student education as well as the working conditions of PhD students.

### **Monitoring of Lund University's measures against harmful stress among doctoral students**

During the coming year LDK will, aided by the doctoral Studentombudsman, monitor the measures Lund University takes to solve the following known problems which lead to negative stress among doctoral students:

- Vague requirements and expectations due to inadequate individual study plans
- Arbitrariness and inequality in decision making at Lund University
- Failure to follow prescribed procedure and to provide the student with a fair hearing
- Unreasonable course criteria;
- An unreasonably strong structural academic and economic dependence of the doctoral student on the whims of the individual person who is appointed as the main supervisor;
- Study directors' and prefects' lack of knowledge about the rules which apply in higher education and how to deal with issues of negative stress and the socio-psychological factors that cause them.

### Background

Stress is defined by the Swedish Work Environment Authority (Arbetsmiljöverket [AV]) as the strain that a person feels when s/he is exposed to requirements and expectations which do not align with what s/he is able to perform. Unclear work expectations and unclear or arbitrary division of labour and authority are examples of socio-psychological factors in the working environment with a negative impact on health.

It has since long time been established that such factors are structurally established in the working environment of doctoral students both nationally and specifically at Lund University. Recently, two reports also confirmed that these factors impact the ability for doctoral students to finish their studies and the quality of the education. The Swedish Higher Education Authority (at that time, named Högskoleverket) has reported that those doctoral students who leave their studies before they graduate primarily state social reasons such as inadequate support from their supervisors and negative socio-psychological factors in the working environment as reasons for their decision to leave (Rapport 2012:1 R). The internal audit of the university (internrevisionen) reported problems with inter alia the individual study plans and the necessity to eliminate these problems in order to keep the level of education quality prescribed in the legislation (i.e. rapport 2011-12-19 Dnr IR 2011/23). The work environment survey that was done among employees at Lund University

showed that more than half of the employees reported stress related symptoms, more than 60 percent answered that their superiors do not listen to their ideas and suggestions, and more than 40 percent reported that they suspect that speaking up may lead to repercussions. Although doctoral students without employment at Lund University were not included in the survey, there are reasons to believe that they face an even harsher working environment.

There is an explicit legal obligation on the university to systematically work to eliminate these negative socio-psychological factors in the working environment of both students and employees (Chapter 3 section 2 and 2 a of the Swedish Working environment Act [AML] and the instructions of the Swedish Work Environment Authority, AFS 2001:01 - Systematiskt arbetsmiljöarbete). LDK will work to ensure that these obligations are complied with.

### **Monitoring of Lund university's quality assurance measures**

During the coming year LDK will:

- Monitor Lund University's measures to resolve the challenges of maintaining a high quality of doctoral education that are presented in (a) the forthcoming Lund University doctoral barometer (doktorandbarometer), which was not delivered in 2012 as was expected, (b) the plan for quality assurance in higher education 2013 (handlingsplan för kvalitetsarbete i utbildningen på grund-, avancerad och forskarnivå för 2013, Dnr LS 2013/32), and (c) the internal audit of the university concerning doctoral education, irev rapport 2011-12-19, Dnr IR 2011/23
- Ensure awareness of that the bad working situation for doctoral students at Lund University undermines the quality of the education, through participation in the university education board (utbildningsnämnden) and the university research education committee (forskarutbildningskommittén) – as well as relevant boards and committees at faculty or department levels.

#### Background

According to Chapter 1 Section 4 and 4 a of the Swedish Higher Education Act (högskolelagen) every higher education institution has the explicit responsibility to ensure that its resources are used in an efficient way to maintain a high quality of education and research and to ensure the students' right to influence their education and their active involvement in the development of the education.

### **3. ORGANISATION**

A sound internal organization and open channels of communications between the LDK, the councils and the individual students are essential in order to ensure that LDK is truly representative of doctoral students and that those students feel that the LDK is there for them. To that end, during the next academic year LDK is going to:

- have regular meetings with the council leaders to ensure good communication of LDKs activities and their progress
- spread information continuously about the ongoing projects and achievements to our representatives and members
- improve its structure, communication of our achievements and appearance.
- administrate membership fee questions
- be informed about the economic situation of the union
- maintain an updated website with important information regarding PhD student matters
- update the central email lists yearly
- inform its members about important matters regarding LDK and Lund University via email

- newsletters
- update LDKs information material
- remind representatives that they have to be members of LDK (prolongation)
- improve internal organization – see focus question
- negotiate with Lund University financial aids for doktorandsombudsmannen
- work actively to recruit new members

LDK employs a person, on hourly basis, in order to provide services regarding the membership fee (terminräkning) and related matters. Additionally LDK appoints a volunteer to run the its IT, mail system and website

#### 4. COOPERATION

##### LUS

The cooperation with LUS will take the form of LDK:

- Appointing a representative to the LUS' election committee
- Appointing a representative to LUS' assembly
- To the extent it is possible, ensure that discussions that are held in the university board are communicated to the faculty boards and vice versa
- Nominate doctoral student representatives to the university education board, the research board, the university collegium and the university board.

##### Background

LUS is an association between the student unions at Lund University. Through LUS, student representatives are appointed to a variety of university bodies. LUS' budget, activity plan and membership fees are decided by LUS assembly. LUS' board has the operative responsibility in the organization. Issues which are of interest only to sole individual student unions can also be raised within the LUS framework.

##### TLTH

LDK will keep continuous contact with TLTH for discussions which concern issues which are common to all doctoral students and the board of the doctoral section of TLTH will be invited to attend to LDK board meetings.

##### Background

TLTH organizes doctoral students at LTH. LDK's Ombudsman for doctoral students also represents students at LTH and it is therefore important that there is mutual communication between the two doctoral student organizations.

##### **National student organizations and governmental agencies**

LDK will:

- Appoint representatives to SFS general assembly
- Nominate university representatives in the SFS doctoral committee
- Respond to relevant referrals from *inter alia* SFS.

##### Background

Lund University is a governmental body. The framework for its function is set by the parliament and the government. The Swedish Higher Education Authority (Univeritetskanslerämbetet) and other governmental authorities and foundations have great impact on the doctoral education and the activity of the student unions. SFS is the national association of student unions and LDK is one of

its members.

### **Cooperation with trade unions**

Many PhD student interests are covering the responsibilities of both LDK and the trade union (e.g. SACO-S). In these cases LDK wants to aim for a stronger cooperation with the relevant trade union in order to achieve the respective goals.

### **International student organizations and agencies**

LDK will, through its membership in the national association of student unions, also continue to be involved in:

- the European Students' Union (ESU)
- the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc).

### Background

There are many agencies, both within and without of Europe, that work for the protection of doctoral students' interests and the quality development in doctoral education. As an example EU has framework programmes for research financing and works continuously on improving the higher education in Europe e.g. through the so called Bologna Process. Another international institution of importance for doctoral education is Nordforsk. Through SFS, LDK is also represented in the European Students' Union (ESU) and through the SFS doctoral student committee in Eurodoc.

## **5. DOKTORANDOMBUDSMANNEN**

### **The Office of the Doctoral Student Ombudsman (domb)**

During 2013/2014 the doctoral student ombudsman shall:

- review individual complaints
- make necessary inquiries and map structural challenges
- review reports and audits which concern issues related to third cycle education
- through participation in *inter alia* introduction days for doctoral students, supervisor courses and panel discussions spread information about:
  - the office of the doctoral student ombudsman
  - the challenges doctoral students face during their education
  - the rules and policies that apply in third cycle education
- acquire and maintain knowledge of rules, policies and decisions which concern third cycle education
- be a resource for the research education committee

### Background

The assembly has established the office of the doctoral student ombudsman to review and analyze complaints over the execution of public authority at Lund University which doctoral students report to the ombudsman, to aid those doctoral students who want to formally raise those complaints with relevant authorities and to monitor the measures Lund University takes to resolve the breaches of rules or policies discovered in this process.