

DOMB Activity Plan 2021/2022

The Doctoral Student Ombudsman (hereafter “the DOMB”), has the task to provide legal counselling to doctoral students at Lund University (Hereafter “LU”) concerning their educational rights. This task includes assisting them in advocating for their rights in contact with the university, or helping them to place formal complaints to relevant authorities when applicable. The DOMB is also an important resource for the student unions who represent doctoral students at LU. The general tasks of the DOMB, as well as specific tasks for the activity year of 2021/2022 are described in this activity plan.

The activities are divided into seven action areas:

1. Individual cases
2. Preserving and sharing acquired knowledge
3. Information and education
4. Cooperation and networks
5. Professional development
6. Planning, reporting and budgeting
7. Outreach

In the following, each action area is described individually. Each section describes what tasks need to be done within each action area.

VISION

The vision for the work of the DOMB is that the activities in these seven areas will ensure that every doctoral student at Lund University knows their rights and duties, and that they have easy access to support and advice, helping them to enjoy their rights.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Individual cases	3
Processing complaints	3
Scope of the assignment	3
Documentation, confidentiality and handling of personal data	3
The annual case report	4
The new case handling system	4
2. Preserving and sharing acquired knowledge	4
3. Information and education	5
Doctoral student awareness of their rights and obligations	5
Lund University employee awareness	6
Informing and educating external actors	6
4. Cooperation and networks	7
Cooperation with the university	7
Cooperation with the student unions	7
Cooperation with the employee organizations	8
Cooperation with other ombudsmen in higher education	8
Contact with media	8
5. Professional development	8
Networking for professional development	8
Courses	9
Evaluation	9
Monitoring the response to the Covid-19 pandemic	9
6. Planning, reporting and budgeting	9
7. Outreach	10

1. INDIVIDUAL CASES

The processing of individual cases is the core of the DOMB's occupation. It includes meeting doctoral students who feel mistreated by the university in the course of their education. It also includes gathering anonymized data based on the cases, and analyzing that data to be able to report on any structural problems that the data might indicate. The purpose is to enable proactive work towards the goal of doctoral students enjoying their rights, and to provide a basis for the student unions' and the university's quality assessments and quality development.

PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

The help and support offered to doctoral students can consist of e.g. providing legal advice, accompanying students to meetings with the university, helping students appeal decisions made by the university, or, if all parties consent, acting as a mediator between students and university actors. The DOMB must establish which specific measures are appropriate on a case-to-case basis, using professional judgment and taking the specific circumstances of each case into account. Action should not be taken without the consent of the doctoral student.

SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The DOMB is mandated to assist all doctoral students at Lund University when they run into challenges related to their third cycle studies. The DOMB may also assist persons who have not (yet) been admitted to third-cycle education at LU, but who have concerns about their rights in connection to third cycle education at LU, such as e.g. persons having problems with the admission process. If the DOMB is unsure about whether handling a certain case falls within their mandate, they can ask the LDK presidium for guidance.

DOCUMENTATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF PERSONAL DATA

To make sure that doctoral students feel safe contacting the DOMB, any information shared in confidence should be handled confidentially, and personal data should be processed according to applicable laws regulating the processing of personal data.

The DOMB will keep correspondence and notes from meetings with doctoral students in a structured manner, in order to access it while the case is still being worked on. When the case is considered closed, any data that could make the student identifiable will be handled in accordance with the document *DOMB Confidentiality and Policy for Handling Personal Data*¹. During the academic year of 2021/2022, the DOMB should evaluate this document, and make any changes that are found to be necessary.

If the DOMB does not have the means or knowledge necessary to help a student with a request that falls within the scope of the Doctoral Student Ombudsman's tasks, the DOMB can ask for outside help or guidance on the matter, but never in a way that makes the student identifiable unless the student consents to it. If the issue falls partly within the scope of the task of the DOMB and partly within the scope of

¹ Available at https://de4232c2-eec3-4a8d-9e5e-bcb471f290ef.filesusr.com/ugd/0b0fe1_73d9237a8c504780b80cd060295f9351.pdf

another party, such as e.g. the labor unions or the Occupational Health Services, the DOMB should communicate with the other parties about the case, if the student consents.

THE ANNUAL CASE REPORT

The DOMB will register anonymized data from the individual cases to use for statistics and distinguishing patterns for writing an annual report. To do this, the data gathered during the year will be analyzed to find trends or patterns over time. The results of the data analysis will be published in a report. The year for data gathering is counted from the 1st of July to the 30th of June. The DOMB should strive to synchronize with the LUS Studentombud to finish the report at around the same time as they finish theirs, as it would enable presenting results on the same occasions to those organs who have an interest in both reports. The report will be made publicly available at the LDK webpage and the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH webpage.

THE NEW CASE HANDLING SYSTEM

The case handling system ÄHS² that has been developed by a project group of student ombudsmen from six different student unions during 2019-2020 is finally ready for use. LDK has purchased the system during the spring 2021. During the academic year of 2021-2022, the DOMB should test the system, so that it can be evaluated around the time of the writing of the 2021-2022 case report whether it should become the DOMB's standard way to register and analyze cases for the year of 2022-2023. The DOMB should attend meetings with the project group in order to evaluate and develop the ÄHS system together with other ombudsmen who also use the system.

The way of categorizing data will be a little different when using the new system compared to how it has been done before, primarily because the case categories are different. During the academic year of 2021-2022 the DOMB should categorize data both in the way that has been done previously, as well as the way recommended in the new system. Depending on how the DOMB experiences working with the new system, it is up to the DOMB to decide whether the 2021-2022 case report will be published using the old or the new way of categorizing data.

The DOMB should make changes in the *DOMB Confidentiality and Policy for Handling Personal Data* so that it accounts for how personal data is stored in the new system.

2. PRESERVING AND SHARING ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE

Experiential knowledge is easily lost within the student unions due to student representatives changing every year, and because doctoral students finish their education and leave the student union. The DOMB office can be a valuable resource of knowledge and continuity to the student organizations who work with doctoral issues at LU. Furthermore, if the person holding the DOMB office will change at some point, the new DOMB should not need to start from zero. Even if personal data needs to be deleted when

² Information about the new system is available (in Swedish) on the blog: [ÄHS :: Sveriges Enade Ombud - SEO \(webnode.se\)](#)

cases are closed, it is important to keep general information acquired from working with cases, so that case work can become more efficient over time.

Therefore, the DOMB should preserve acquired knowledge for future use. Useful documents should be kept in a structured way. The DOMB will keep a document with general knowledge that has been acquired when working with cases, to be able to use it for handling future cases revolving around the same type of issues, and possibly also for future general rights awareness raising.

The DOMB should offer experiential knowledge to individual doctoral students, student unions and their representatives, as well as to other actors in the field of research education on demand. This information will primarily be acquired from working with the individual cases, but also from staying updated about issues that relate to doctoral students' rights in general.

3. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

An important part of the DOMB's proactive work is to educate and inform the student unions, doctoral students, and other important stakeholders about issues that are relevant for quality assurance of doctoral education, *inter alia* issues concerning relevant laws, regulations and university policies and guidelines, and who doctoral students can turn to when they need support. Both doctoral students and university employees have knowledge gaps concerning doctoral students' rights and obligations, what problems are recurring and where doctoral students should turn to get help to resolve their problems.

To address this problem, the DOMB can hold presentations and workshops, participate in introduction courses for supervisors and doctoral students, participate in relevant networks, and keep regular contacts with student union and trade union representatives, including the LUS Studentombud, to generate information exchange. The DOMB should share the results of the annual case report to bodies of LDK, the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH, FUN and other interested actors.

The DOMB should work to inform doctoral students about their respective rights and obligations within the framework of doctoral education, and ensure that doctoral students know where they can turn to receive support. The DOMB should work to ensure that the knowledge gathered in the case report reaches the actors working with quality assurance and quality development at Lund University, so that quality assurance work can be directed at the issues that are the most urgent and relevant.

DOCTORAL STUDENT AWARENESS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

The DOMB will:

- Stay informed of LU doctoral students' awareness, e.g. by drawing conclusions about knowledge gaps apparent in what cases come in, as well as taking part of LU quality assurance services' results of surveys.
- Describe the results of the annual case report in a presentation, and present it to groups of student representatives who are interested.

- Uphold regular contact with student representatives for student unions who organize doctoral students at Lund University. On demand, provide them with information about current rules which is useful for their work with quality improvement of research education and furthering doctoral students' rights.
- Participate in LDK meetings for student representatives on demand.
- Participate in TLTH meetings for student representatives on demand.
- Conduct presentations and workshops on demand.
- Conduct an ISP workshop at each faculty. During the academic year of 2020/2021, the DOMB started offering workshops to doctoral students about the relationship between their ISP:s and their educational rights. The plan is to make this a yearly event, so during the academic year of 2021/2022, the DOMB should offer one ISP workshop for each faculty's doctoral students. (see more under section 7).
- Offer to participate in introduction courses for doctoral students at the different faculties.

The DOMB can:

- Participate in other courses.
- Develop presentations and workshops on relevant issues concerning doctoral education by their own initiative.
- Make surveys and write reports on topics important for doctoral student rights
- Organize workshops by their own initiative.

LUND UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE AWARENESS

The DOMB will:

- Keep themselves informed of LU employees' awareness, e.g. through taking part of their quality assurance services' results of surveys.
- Participate in introduction courses, presentations and workshops at different LU organs/departments/faculties concerning relevant research education issues, such as e.g. introduction courses for supervisors.
- Describe the results of the annual case report in a presentation, which will then be presented to actors within the university with interests in assuring the quality of research education at LU, at both central and faculty level. The DOMB will specifically offer to hold the presentation for FUN (*Forskarutbildningsnämnden*).
- Participate in FUN-meetings when invited.

INFORMING AND EDUCATING EXTERNAL ACTORS

The DOMB can also make contributions to conferences and network gatherings that the DOMB attends.

4. COOPERATION AND NETWORKS

The DOMB works independently and under an obligation of confidentiality, which means that without active networking, the DOMB has to rely solely on their own competence. The DOMB should cooperate and maintain good relationships with other actors at Lund University and actors outside the university who work with quality development of research education. The DOMB should use their knowledge as a resource for the work of the DOMB, and be a resource for them as well. Maintaining good relationships can provide knowledge, make contacts with the university smoother, and improves the work environment.

When faced with challenges, the DOMB should use their networks for support. The goal is to maintain an open communication and good relationships with other actors working with improving research education, and to maintain an adequate picture, both of the organization of Lund University and of the Swedish model of doctoral education, and to exchange experiences, information and analyses.

COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY

The DOMB will:

- Maintain a fruitful relationship with the university. The DOMB should assist FUN and UN and responsible persons on a faculty level when they request input from the DOMB.
- Keep contact with AHU (*Avdelningen för högskolepedagogisk utveckling*) and other organizers of supervisor courses and introduction courses for doctoral students.

The DOMB can:

- Interact with administrators for doctoral education, as well as division, department and faculty managers, if needed to get a picture of how doctoral education is organized on a more local level.
- Keep contact with the lawyers at Lund University legal department for the purpose of knowledge exchange concerning legal analyses.
- Keep contact with the Occupational Health Services (FHV, *Företagshälsovården*) and the student priests.
- Keep contact with the student services (*Sektionen Student & Utbildning*), including their division for Quality and assessment (*Kvalitet och utvärdering*).
- Keep contact with FS (*Forskningservice*), for updates on changes in policies regulating research education.

COOPERATION WITH THE STUDENT UNIONS

The DOMB will:

- Keep contact with the LDK Presidium, the LDK Board and the LDK Governing assembly.
- Keep contact with Teknologkåren and the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH.
- Keep contact with the LUS Studentombud.
- Keep contact with LUS Presidium.

COOPERATION WITH THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS

DOMB cases may complement or overlap with cases handled by the employee organizations. These cases require coordination to ensure that the doctoral students get the best help from both organizations. If the doctoral student consents, the DOMB can cooperate with labor union representatives in working with those cases. The DOMB can also have contact with labor union representatives for more general knowledge exchange.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER OMBUDSMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The DOMB should participate at conferences and meet other ombudsmen in higher education (see more under Professional Development).

CONTACT WITH MEDIA

The DOMB may interact with media according to this policy:

- Only public information is given.
- If journalists want to speak to doctoral students with problems, no names are provided without prior consent – instead, the journalist's contact info is passed to doctoral students who then can choose to contact the journalist or not.

If the DOMB knows that a case that relates to Teknologkåren is to become public, the DOMB should inform the main student safety representative at TLTH (who also works under an obligation of confidentiality) as soon as possible.

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The DOMB at Lund University is a renowned institution with longstanding history within Swedish academia. To keep being a strong force in advocating for doctoral students' rights, it is important to further the development of the ombudsman-institute in higher education in general and the personal professional competence in the specific. It is also important that there is a feedback loop that enables doctoral students who have been in contact with the DOMB to give feedback on how they perceived the services provided by the DOMB. To attain the goal of maintaining a high professional standard, the DOMB should participate at conferences, continuously update their knowledge of relevant laws and university regulations, and on the situation of doctoral students in general. Furthermore, the DOMB should offer doctoral students a possibility to leave feedback on the services they have been provided by the DOMB. The results of those evaluations should be reflected in the yearly Activity Report.

NETWORKING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The DOMB will:

- Participate in conferences related to quality improvement of research education, arranged by e.g. SEO (*Sveriges Enade Ombud*), FONSYD, the Scandinavian Network for Student Ombudsmen (*Skandinavisk nettverk for ombud i høyere utdanning*), and ENOHE (the *European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education*).
- Use relevant online communication platforms as information resources, and also, when appropriate, provide knowledge to others there in solidarity.
- Network with other ombudsmen, in order to exchange knowledge and experiences.
- Keep themselves updated on newsletters issued by relevant organizations in areas such as work environment, discrimination issues, and labor law.

COURSES

The DOMB should look for and attend courses that can be useful to further develop skills needed for performing DOMB tasks. For the academic year of 2021/2022 we have allotted 10 000 SEK for “Education” in the budget.

EVALUATION

If doctoral students who have been in contact with the DOMB leave feedback on how they experienced the DOMB’s services, it should be accounted for the yearly activity report. Furthermore, if there is negative feedback, the DOMB should consult the LDK presidium to discuss what can be done to improve the services provided by the DOMB.

MONITORING THE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

To be able to give the best help possible to individual doctoral students affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and also in order to be a good information resource for the student unions addressing those issues, the DOMB should keep themselves updated concerning the development of regulations and policies related to doctoral students and the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. PLANNING, REPORTING AND BUDGETING

The DOMB has many stakeholders who have expectations on the quality of the DOMB’s activities. Therefore, the DOMB plans their activities in an activity plan and drafts a suitable budget annually, and follows up on the previous activity plan in an activity report on a yearly basis. The documents are reviewed by the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH, the LDK Board and LUS, and approved by the LDK General Assembly in agreement with Teknologkåren. The earlier activity plan, acquired experiences and new information should be followed up in the yearly activity report.

The DOMB will:

- Make an activity report for 2020/21 based on their activities during the time period they have been on their post and evaluate them in comparison with the activity plan for 2019/2020.

- When evaluating the activities performed, the DOMB should answer whether the planned tasks have been fulfilled. If not, the DOMB should answer to why they have not been fulfilled.
- Establish an activity plan for 2022-2023.
- Draft a budget for the DOMB for 2022-2023 in consultation with the LDK Chief Financial Officer, adapted to suit the activities planned in the activity plan.

7. OUTREACH

A precondition for the DOMB to be able to help individual doctoral students when they have problems is that doctoral students are aware of the DOMB's existence, and what services the DOMB can provide. Due to a high turnover of doctoral students, student representatives, and University employees it is necessary to maintain a constant information flow to reach out to all the doctoral students at the University. Therefore, the DOMB should give presentations at introductory courses for doctoral students and supervisors. The DOMB should also offer to give presentations to doctoral students at a faculty level on at least a yearly basis. Other measures are networking, distribution of flyers, and making sure the information about the DOMB at the LDK website is up to date.

The DOMB will promote their services through:

- Networking, as described in earlier sections.
- Presentations at introduction courses for doctoral students and supervisors.
- Participating in the welcome days for new employees at LU, and any faculty welcome days for new doctoral students.
- Distributing flyers at e.g. meetings with Doctoral Student Councils and the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH, at presentations, introduction courses and possible workshops, and at strategic locations such as the waiting room at the Occupational Health Services or the like.
- Keep information about the DOMB on the LDK webpage up to date.
- Other possible channels for marketing, when opportunities are presented.
- Giving one ISP workshop to the doctoral of each faculty, annually. This has proven to be a good way of giving visibility to the DOMB position to doctoral students. At the faculties where there is active doctoral student organization on a faculty level, the DOMB should cooperate with them in arranging the workshops, making it possible to promote both the services offered by the DOMB and the services offered by the doctoral student unions in connection to the workshop.