



## **Doctoral Student Union (DSU) – Annual Report 2014**

During 2014 the DSU board consisted of Susan Lindholm (chairperson and information officer), Malin Mc Glinn (vice-chairperson and secretary), Banafsheh Hajinasab (treasurer and responsible for membership), Margareta Serder (board member) and Åsa Ståhl (board member). In July 2014, Erliza Lopez Pedersen replaced Åsa Ståhl. Susan Lindholm (25% chairperson and 5% information officer), Malin Mc Glinn (20%) and Banafsheh Hajinasab (10%) were funded from the central administration. Margareta Serder and Åsa Ståhl/Erliza Lopez Pedersen were funded on faculty level (LS and KS).

As stated in the Activity Plan, the main goal of the DSU during 2014 was to remain actively engaged in creating a dynamic, reliable and creative research- and work environment for all doctoral students at Malmö University (MU). Priority was given to the following identified areas:

*Courses and funding for doctoral students; Education for supervisors; Improved communication and information; Improved representation; Statutes; Members; Introduction of new doctoral students; Doktorandombudsman.* In the following Annual Report, the work done relating to each of these areas will be discussed under separate headings. The report will be concluded by some suggestions of issues that we believe need to be stressed in the future.

### **Courses and funding for doctoral students**

**Background (from AP):** *It has been pointed out by many doctoral students that the courses that are currently offered at MU do not meet individual needs sufficiently. The question of possible courses at MU also ties in with the question of doctoral funding; in some research education programs doctoral students cannot afford to pay for courses elsewhere. Partaking in courses that are of relevance for the research of individual doctoral students, as well as in obligatory courses that meet the requirements of the General Study Plan is of great importance for both doctoral students and MU as a research environment. In order to create a doctoral student community that enables doctoral students (and other members of academic staff) to meet and engage in research conversations across faculty boundaries, it is therefore preferable that doctoral courses of high quality and relevance are given at MU. The DSU therefore will work for a revision of the courses that are offered by MU at both general and faculty levels.*

*The DSU also proposes an investigation into the distribution of doctoral student “spending money”, that is how expenses of courses, books, travel and conferences are paid for at each faculty.*

**What the Board has done:** Through out the year the DSU board has continuously discussed issues concerning available courses and additional funding at all levels of administration, such as in Forskningsberedningen (FB), Forskarutbildningsutskottet (FUU) and Högskolestyrelsen (HS). As a result, the DSU board was invited to participate in conversations with Christina Lindh who, on behalf of AKL, was responsible for conducting an inventory of available doctoral courses. The inventory was the first step of a process aiming to change the range of courses offered at MU. The goal to work for a revision of available courses has thus been successful and we are curious to see whether the new and improved courses will meet the needs and standards of doctoral students.

Furthermore, the DSU board has encouraged doctoral students at all faculties to take part in the internal evaluation of research programs, and, in these settings, discuss both funding and courses. The internal evaluations have thus also functioned as an investigation into the distribution of doctoral student ‘spending money’. The board is hopeful that the upcoming evaluation reports and action plans will include suggestions of how the issue of funding will be improved in the future.

### **Education for supervisors**

**Background (from AP):** *The academic environment goes through transformations continuously which calls for the need for academic staff to do the same. The DSU therefore would like to initiate a conversation about how education for supervisors could be updated as well as how new attractive courses for supervisors could be offered.*

**What the Board has done:** As part of the mandatory supervisor education, Susan Lindholm gave a presentation in which she stressed the importance of attractive courses for supervisors. All supervisors that were present during the meeting agreed that it would be a good idea to have continued education/seminars for supervisors at MU. This would enable supervisors to meet and discuss important issues with each other. In addition, the DSU board raised the issue of a new and improved course for supervisors in Forskarberedningen (FB), Forskarutbildningsutskottet (FUU) and in meetings with Hans Lindqvist, Peter Jönsson and Maria Dahlberg.

One suggestion resulting from these meetings is a checklist for supervisors. The purpose of the checklist is to ensure that doctoral students regardless of research subject, supervisor or faculty/department affiliation should get the same information and be fully aware of their rights and obligations. The DSU board looks forward to the realization of such a document.

### **Improved communication and information**

**Background (from AP):** *During 2014 the DSU wishes to further improve both external and internal communication and visibility, using the DSU website and social networks as the main tool. By translating all DSU related documents into English and creating a calendar on the website, the DSU hopes to make visible the work of the DSU and also to work towards a bottom-up and including structure.*

**What the Board has done:** The DSU website has been updated with relevant information for doctoral students such as information about available courses, tips from BIT and news from Forskarservice. Relevant documents written in English (such as the Activity Plan 2014 and DSU board meeting protocols) are now available on the site. The calendar function has been upgraded and has been used to communicate relevant meetings and upcoming events. In addition, the blog on the DSU website has been used to communicate relevant information to doctoral students.

The goal of improving both external and internal communication has thus been met.

### **Improved representation**

**Background (from AP):** *The ambition for 2014 is to work towards a structure in which all faculties at Malmö University are represented in the DSU Board. To achieve such a goal, the DSU believes that a first step is to have frequent and structured meetings with all DSU faculty representatives. We believe this can be the start of creating so called "Doktorandkollegier" at faculty level, which hopefully will help build the bottom-up structure that we wish to achieve.*

**What the Board has done:** In line with our objectives to create a bottom-up structure, Doctoral Collegiums have been established at almost all faculties (HS is just getting started with this):

LS – Margareta Serder (chairperson)

KS/TS – Erliza Lopez Pedersen (chairperson)

OD – Liv Kroona (chairperson)

Most collegiums have had 1-4 meetings during 2014. In addition, the board initiated a meeting with all representatives in April 2014.

### **Statutes**

**Background (from AP):** *During 2014, the DSU statutes that will be undergoing some revisions to better meet the current situation. This includes a translation to English as well as unified and easily accessible language.*

**What the Board has done:** Margareta Serder and Malin Mc Glinn have rewritten the statutes. The changes have been accepted by the members, authorized by a legal commentator and translated into English. Both the Swedish and English versions are available on the DSU website.

### **Members**

**Background (from AP):** *The DSU will continue to work towards increasing the number of members. Special attention will be given to non-Swedish doctoral students. In order to do so, the DSU will be present at different gatherings where doctoral students are invited, as well as organizing a Doctoral Student Union day.*

**What the Board has done:** The DSU board gave a presentation at the Doctoral Student Day at HS and was also in charge of a presentation/work-shop related to the introduction for new doctoral students. Furthermore, Margareta Serder represented the union at OD's "väravningslunch" in October.

Due to a heavy workload related to the internal evaluations as well as the effort to set up doctoral collegiums at each faculty, the organization of a Doctoral Student Union Day felt both overwhelming and superfluous and hence wasn't realized.

During the spring semester (2014) there were 75 registered members of the DSU:

HS (17)

KS (14)

LS (29)

OD (11)

TS (4)

In the autumn semester (2014) the number of members increased to 84:

HS (21)

KS (19)

LS (28)

OD (11)

TS (5)

In total, 27 new members were recruited during 2014. All members received a mecenat card and Banafsheh Hajinasab helped answer questions related to membership as well as student discounts.

### **Introduction of new doctoral students**

**Background (from AP):** *The DSU will continue the work to improve the routines for the introduction and welcoming of all new doctoral students at MU.*

*We suggest: that routines for the admission process (including the appointment of supervisor) are formalized and transparent; a checklist for supervisors (including information about ISP, ASP, rights and obligations, DSU membership etc.) in order to safeguard that all doctoral students, independent of faculty or department, receive the same information. Such a checklist should be accessible for all stages of research education; that the DSU are routinely informed of the admittance of new doctoral students; that the DSU receives up-to date information about doctoral students from all faculties (that includes doctoral students who have finished their degree, those who no longer work as doctoral students due to other reasons, and those who are not formally registered as doctoral students, yet work as such at MU etc.)*

**What the Board has done:** The DSU board participated in the introduction course for doctoral students and new students, of whose arrival the board was informed, were contacted by e-mail. In addition, Margareta Serder (faculty chairperson at LS) invited all new doctoral students to meet with her individually. A checklist for the introduction of doctoral students at LS is currently in the pipeline.

Although some aspects of communication have been improved there is still some work ahead. The DSU board needs to get information of new students continuously and proposes that someone at each faculty or from the central administration is made responsible for supplying the board with updated information. This is an aspect that has been discussed throughout the year in different meeting settings.

## **Doktorandombudsman**

**Background (from AP):** *The DSU wants to initiate a discussion regarding the employment of an Ombudsman for doctoral students.*

**What the Board has done:** During 2014 the DSU board initiated a discussion regarding the employment of an Ombudsman. The issue was discussed in both Forskningsberedningen (FB), Forskarutbildningsutskottet (FUU), as well as in meetings with Hans Lindqvist, Peter Jönsson and Maria Dahlberg. In addition, contact was made with Alexandra Popovic, ombudsman for doctoral students at Lund University. The DSU board suggested that Alexandra could share her time between Lund and Malmö but this idea unfortunately hasn't been realized due to Alexandra's full-time commitment in Lund. The DSU board hopes that the discussion will live on and that the new board will look into other possible ways of employing an Ombudsman at Malmö University. One suggestion is to contact other Universities in the region and investigate whether it is possible to share an ombudsman.

## **Other**

In addition to the above, the DSU board has done the following in 2014:

- Contributed to a re-launch of a mentorship program for doctoral students. Together with Magnus Lindqvist from *Alumni och vänner* a timetable has been agreed upon. After information about the initiative was sent out approximately ten doctoral students signed up for the program. The first meeting was held in November. There have been some difficulties finding suitable mentors for all students, especially outside the University, which was one of the suggestions from the board. As the program is scheduled to go on for a year, we believe that further conversations with *Alumni and vänner* are of great importance.
- Become part of an international network called SAR (Scholars at risk). Contact person is Naser Eftekharian.
- Increased cooperation with the other student unions at MU (sporadic attendance in meetings with the Vice-chancellor)
- Been involved in discussions about the revised working agreement (Arbetsavtal)
- Taken part in discussions about the continuation of LEG (Language Editing Group)
- Been actively involved in discussions about "Trygghetsavtalet"
- Engaged in discussions concerning the re-organization at MU
- Initiated a discussion concerning the possibility of discounts for doctoral students when booking trips through Via Egencia
- Initiated a discussion regarding standardized regulations and routines for increased salary after 50% and 90% seminars
- Continuously raised issues concerning the situation for international doctoral students at MU
- Partaken in the internal evaluation of research education at MU; Åsa Ståhl (former board member) – hearing at LS; Margareta Serder – hearing at HS, OD and KS; Malin Mc Glinn – hearing at TS (upcoming, Feb 2015)

### **Suggestions for work ahead**

The DSU board has identified the following issues that we believe need to be stressed during 2015

- The situation for international students needs to be further discussed and improved
- The reports that come out of the internal evaluations need to be followed up on all levels
- The DSU should be involved in the ongoing re-organization at MU
- The mentorship program needs to be followed up in order to safeguard it's quality and outcomes

Malmö, January 2015

Susan Lindholm  
Malin Mc Glinn  
Margareta Serder  
Banafsheh Hajinasab  
Erliza Lopez Pedersen