



ANNUAL REPORT 2020



DOCTORAL
STUDENT
UNION Malmö

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1§ Foreword

Dear DSU Members,

The year 2020 has definitely not proceeded as we all had imagined. According to the UN, the COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents. Closures of schools, including universities, have impacted 94 per cent of the world's student population¹. And it has certainly impacted all of us, doctoral candidates at Malmö University.

Consequently, many planned activities of the Doctoral Student Union had to be postponed. When the new Board of the Doctoral Student Union was elected in January 2020, we had planned a diverse range of activities, such as social gatherings, workshops or a lecture series that had to be cancelled. All of us representing PhDs at different levels of the University had to re-focus our efforts on discussing and handling the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on doctoral students in Malmö.

This report will partly reflect on that. It will present the activities undertaken by the Doctoral Student Union at Malmö University (DSU) during the year of 2020, in relation to the positioning document that was adopted by Malmö PhD candidates on October 25th 2019. However, the DSU was also involved in other activities that will be briefly detailed in the report. In addition, reports from PhD faculty representatives as well as the 2020 DSU Board's suggestions for the work ahead are also included .

However, despite the pandemic, we feel that the DSU has managed to increase its organizational capacity. While the DSU Board was composed of four members at the beginning of its 2020 activities, it has grown to nine members. The position of vice-president was filled, and the new roles that were introduced last year have continued (event coordinator, responsible for the website and communication).

Since much of the decision-making power has been transferred to the level of faculty and institution , more effort has been put into increasing the communication between the DSU Board and PhD faculty and institution representatives, with the DSU vice-president taking extra responsibility on such issues.

1

UN (2020). Policy brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. Available at:
https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf

Ensuring PhD representation to the university-wide relevant committees has also been on the DSU's agenda since last year's Annual Meeting. The DSU was continuously represented at KFU (Kommitté för Forskarutbildning) and BFF (Beredning för Forskning och Forskarutbildning), which are the two most pertinent committees for PhD education.

In conclusion, during the course of the year 2020, the DSU has continued to look a bit more "inwards" in order to ensure continuous PhD representation where it is needed, and to build a stronger and more resilient Union at the benefits of all PhDs at Malmö University.

The Board

Michel Anderlini

Elsa Andersson

Magnus Gustafson

Hamza Ouhaïchi

Roel Roscam Abbing

Carolina Robertsson

Isobel Squire

Johan Ekstedt

Marika Hedemyr

2§ DSU Representation 2020

DSU Board

Michel Anderlini: President, Faculty of Culture and Society [KS]

Elsa Andersson: Vice-President, Faculty of Education and Society [LS] (since 2020-04-24)

Magnus Gustafson: Board Member, Faculty of Education and Society [LS]

Hamza Ouhaïchi: Board Member, Faculty of Technology and Society [TS]

Roel Roscam Abbing: Board member, responsible for memberships, Faculty of Culture and Society [KS] (since 2020-05-19)

Carolina Robertsson: Board Member, Faculty of Odontology [OD] (since 2020-05-19)

Isobel Squire: Board Member, Faculty of Culture and Society [KS]

Communications officer: Marika Hedemyr [KS]

Treasurer: Vacant

Johan Ekstedt, Board Member, Faculty of Culture and Society [KS] (since 2020-09-23)

Other positions

Collegium co-ordinator: Elsa Andersson, [LS]

Council of Research Ethics: Alexander Engström (HS)

Council of Equality and equal terms: Ylva Grönvall (HS)

Committee for Global Engagement: Michel Anderlini (KS)

DSU representatives at local level

LS: Sofia Sebelius, Elsa Andersson (research programs board, FUN), Aurelien Daudi, Emma Hall (research committee, FR), Majid Jaffari (faculty board), Rebecka Fingalsson (strategy group)

KS: Sarah Bodelson (research committee FFN), Johan Ekstedt (faculty board)

HS: Simon Wallengren (research committee FFN), Per Arvidsson (faculty board)

TS: Lars Holmberg (research committee FFN), Johan Salo (faculty board)

OD: Carolina Robertsson (research committee FFN), Marie Nordström (faculty board)

Collegium chairs within faculties

KS: Roger Westin

TS: Alberto Enrique Alvares Uribe

LS: Elsa Andersson
OD and HS: vacant

3§ Activities

3.1. Activity plan

Every year, the DSU board decides which activities that are prioritized. In this annual report, the DSU Board describes how they have worked with these activities as well as other activities during 2020.

All activities pursued by the DSU board in 2020 were based on the overall aims of the organization, as stated in the Activity Plan that the board published on the DSU website at the beginning of 2019:

“The main goal of the DSU is to remain actively engaged in creating a dynamic, reliable and creative research and work environment for all doctoral students at Malmö University (MaU). By actively and continuously partaking in conversations on all administrative levels of MaU, the DSU’s ambition is to create and maintain influence in the decision-making process of areas that touch upon the education, research environment and employment of doctoral students. To this end, the DSU strives to ensure that all levels of representation and influence can be easily identified and proactively engaged with”

All of the activities in 2020 were also based on the positioning document that PhD candidates at Malmö University have vote for on October 25th, 2019. Such positioning document recommended further actions in seven different areas:

- PhD “back-pack” money
- Institutional duty hours and courses in higher pedagogy
- Factor time
- Research and work environment
- PhD Ombudsperson
- PhD courses
- Supervision

3.2. COVID-19 pandemic

As stated in this report’s foreword, the COVID-19 global pandemic has had tremendous effects on PhD education: seminars and conferences were cancelled, field trips or data collection made

impossible, work gradually shifted from the university's buildings to our homes, as well as the negative effects on the stress level and mental health of us PhDs.

Besides continuously discussing such issues at the relevant university levels, the DSU Board has undertaken three different actions:

- It has endorsed a letter (drafted by K3 PhDs) sent to the university leadership², which was published on the website *Universitetsläraren*³. Such letter has triggered a discussion with the possibility for PhDs candidates to apply for an extension of their employment in case of delays. Guidelines on how to apply for such extension will be prepared and discussed at KFU.
- It has sent another letter to the university leadership on travel restrictions, as some doctoral candidates find themselves in a situation where they can no longer postpone their field or data collection trips, due to the length of the COVID-19 pandemic. A dialogue with the university leadership is to take place on December 19th 2020.
- It has launched a "Corona survey" in order to get a better knowledge of the negative effects felt by doctoral candidates at Malmö University because of the pandemic. The results of such survey will be made available on the DSU's website and will be discussed with the university leadership.

3.3. Doctoral Ombudsperson

All through the year of 2020, contacts have been established with Linnéus University in Växjö in order to explore the possibility of hiring a Doctoral ombudsperson together. After initial discussions, it was decided to inquire if Höskolan i Kristianstad, Höskolan Väst and Höskolan i Borås were also interested to be included in hiring a common ombudsperson.

However, after positive first signals, the Student Union at Linnéus University withdrew their interest and decided to no longer aim for hiring an external ombudsperson.

Since there are too few issues that would necessitate the help of an external ombudsperson at Malmö University, hiring an ombudsperson by ourselves seems impossible. Further discussions on how to proceed now are ongoing.

²<http://www.doktorandkaren.se/2020/04/the-doctoral-student-union-endorses-the-open-letter-to-extend-phd-contracts/>

³<https://universitetslararen.se/2020/04/23/extend-the-phd-and-postdoctoral-contracts-during-the-corona-crisis/>

3.4. Information and communication

DSU's work towards improving our communication and providing relevant information is an ongoing process. Two specific goals last year have been to improve co-ordination between the faculties' doctoral collegiums and to continue to improve our outreach via the webpage and Facebook page.

Actions taken:

The last years effort to update the DSU website are still ongoing. Information and links have been updated and the work to get the website more user friendly will continue. The DSU will strive to continue improve the information channels that are relevant for PhD students through our website and other forms of media.

The DSU board has prioritized co-ordination between doctoral collegiums and doctoral coordinators at the faculties. The DSU vice president has organized one meeting together with the collegium chairs and the PhD coordinators at the faculties in order to exchange information and discuss PhD issues important at the different faculties and find ways to facilitate communication and joined efforts. The future goal is to continue to organize meetings with the faculty representatives once per semester.

3.5. Social events

At the start of 2020 a number of social events were planned by the DSU's social coordinator and supporting board members; a continuation of last years' PhD After Work Series and a workshop from *Finish on Time* author Åsa Burman. Due to social distancing restrictions the After-Work series was unfortunately cancelled, however, the DSU was able to continue to the planned workshops online.

Åsa Burman hosted two workshops for DSU members, first in the spring and again in the autumn. The workshops were held on Zoom and focused academic productivity. In the workshops Åsa outlined the processes central to completing work on time and maintain good mental throughout. She introduced three academic productivity tools- the 80/20 principle; end product focus, and the unit method. The content of the workshops proved more essential as our workplace transitioned from university to our homes and the challenges this presented.

Besides, the DSU is represented in the group that organizes the academic ceremony week at the university (Carolina Robertsson). During 2019, a seminar series for all doctoral students to display and present their research in popular scientific formats, followed by mingling, was planned and booked. However, due to the covid-19 pandemic, the event was postponed for the future, but hopefully it can take place during the academic ceremony week in the fall 2021.

3.6. Membership payments

Like last year, the membership payments have been handled by Mecenat. whose interface and payment options are more user-friendly (notably the possibility to pay directly online, instead of doing a manual bank transfer).

As of December 31th, 2020, the DSU had 85 members.

3.7. Method courses at faculty level

On April 6th, 2020, KFU decided to terminate the university-wide method courses, which had received a significant amount of complaints from PhD students. The Doctoral Student Union had consistently raised the weaknesses associated with such method courses, which were too generic and not adapted to the special needs of each discipline.

The two university-wide method courses (one in quantitative and one in qualitative methods) will run one more time during the course of 2021, and will afterwards cease to be given.

Method courses will then be the responsibility of each faculty, and work in KFU is ongoing to monitor each faculty's strategies for course development so that no gaps will exist between the termination of the university-wide method courses and the start of the faculty ones.

3.8. Doctoral back-pack

During the course of 2020, the last faculty that did not offer "back-pack money" to its PhD students, the Faculty of Odontology, introduced it, which was a long-standing issue that the DSU had been advocating.

A discussion at KFU took place in May 2020 to monitor how PhD students are using their back-pack money. The conclusion of such discussion was that there is a great variety of how PhD students are spending their back-pack. No need for common guidelines or harmonization was seen.

Besides, KFU, on its meeting of May 4th, 2020, agreed that the sum of PhD back-pack money should be tied to inflation – which had also been defended by the DSU for a long time.

3.9. Relevant issues discussed at KFU and BFF

- Effects of the covid-19 pandemic on research education, with special emphasis on guidelines for prolongation for doctoral students, travels, strategies and support for PhD students that need to substantially re-organize or change their research programmes.

- The digital ISP was launched and handling of the software was discussed and will be followed up on.
- Ethics course established as mandatory, review of content.
- Development of a PhD course in quantitative methodology and biostatistics as requested by PhD students (OD, HS).
- Introduction of our new vice-chancellor of research and research education centrally at the university, Thomas Arnebrant. Discussion about resource allocation.
- Should the format for course plans for PhD courses be standardized?
- Should the dates for disputation be coordinated between faculties?
- Quality control in research education in general and supervision and conflict management in particular. Competence development for senior supervisors (AKL).
- Plagiarism control within research education. Pilot projects will be run in cooperation with the library to test for appropriate software during 2021.
- Carrier planning for PhD students. Development of a programme with external mentors, driven centrally at the university by Karin Fälvh and Camilla Kroon.

3.10. Work environment

A report about physical work environment has been presented at USG, KFU and BFF in December 2020 with good response. At USG-meeting principal Kerstin Tham said that the report should be a part of the future work when it comes to buildings and physical work environment. We have sent the report to Jessica Hansson at the building department, "byggnadsavdelningen". It will now be a part of "lokalprocessen", the process of planning buildings and rooms for students and staff at Malmö University.

A few words of the background to the report and the result in the report: In order to provide a broad and comprehensive picture of the physical work environment, we created a working group with representatives from the student union and the doctoral student union as well as the work environment representative Lina Corter. The report is a result of this cooperation during the last year. An important conclusion in the report is that open plans are not suitable for the university's actual activities. Common to both students and staff is the lack of smaller (quiet) workspaces. Quiet and peaceful environments are as important as meeting places that enable exchange and conversation. In the future Doctoral Student Union, as well as others, can refer to this document when it comes to issues about physical work environment.

The report will be published on the Doctoral Student Union's website.

3.11. Membership in the Doctoral Committee of the Swedish National Union for Students (SFS-DK)

Members of the DSU board (Elsa Andersson, Magnus Gustafson, Carolina Robertsson) took part of a meeting with SFS-DK regarding effects on research education of the covid-19 pandemic. Elsa and Carolina then attended a meeting with the vice-chair of SFS (Linn Svärd) and the chair of SFS-DK (Pil

Saugmann) for information about membership. After positive correspondence with other member doctoral student unions, the question of membership was discussed on a DSU board meeting and suggested to be approved during the next annual meeting. Membership would give DSU the opportunity to provide input in the central politics that are conducted nationally regarding all questions related to research education.

3.12. Other activities

- Participated in the university's quality dialogue.
- DSU is interested to increase the communication between PhD students, both between faculties (the vice-president called a first meeting for faculty representatives and PhD coordinators, and the aim is to keep these meetings up on a more regular basis in the future), and to other doctoral student unions nationally (SFS-DK) and internationally (EuroDoc through SFS-DK).

4§ Reports from the faculty boards

4.1. Faculty of Culture and Society (KS)

In 2020, the discussions at the Faculty Board of Culture and Society were dominated by the university's response to COVID-19. The representative has continuously informed the board of issues facing doctoral students in the period. In particular, the issue of travel restrictions, mobility and prolongations was a reoccurring topic of discussion.

Moreover, some of the issues present in the DSU Positioning Document from 2019 continued to drive the doctoral representatives' efforts in the board, with particular focus on the increase of the doctoral student back-pack.

Overall, most issues relating to doctoral education at the faculty continued to be discussed in other fora, in particular at the Research and Supervisor Collegium (FHK) at each department and through the PHD Coordinators. Overall, the PhD representation at the various boards and collegiums within the faculty structure is satisfactory.

In the spring term of 2020, the doctoral representative of the Faculty Board of Culture and Society was Calle Håkansson and in the autumn term it was Johan Ekstedt.

4.2. Faculty of Teaching and Society (LS)

At LS the representation and participation of PhD student has increased the past year. All the positions for PhD representation are now filled. The doctoral collegium has had 6 meetings during the year with good attendance and the information exchange is working properly between the different representatives. Some issues that have been in focus:

- An ethics course 4hp has been made mandatory as a result of the increased ethical demands in research.
- The issue of the doctoral ruck-sack has been continually discussed both in the faculty board and in the research boards.
- Discussions concerning Covid- 19: the PhDs overall situation, the quality of education, issues of prolongation have been held in all boards.
- Implementation of the electronic ISP has gone well but is also still under further debates regarding assessments of educational aims as well as regarding the documentation of delays.
- Quality evaluation systems regarding doctoral programmes are being discussed.

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- LS have had an increasing number of PhD student, and are hosting or co-hosting five research schools and employ around 70 phd students. Which have led to discussions about the organization and coordination of the research schools at the faculty.

4.3. Faculty of Technology and Society (TS)

TS Doctoral Collegium

At the TS Doctoral Collegium, the aim is to encourage sharing ideas, drafts, presentations, the ISP, or any different experiences! The purpose of the seminar is to help Phd-students in the research by sharing material, getting feedback, or discussing any other relevant issue.

Some of the activities and discussions during 2020:

- Doctoral hearing with director of studies, and subsequent follow-ups on what should be prioritized and how to address them.
- New TS doctoral courses and other courses
- International opportunities
- Discussion of the Union's positioning-document
- Teaching challenges for PhDs regarding choosing courses to teach and to what extent we influence the decision. Document presented at the supervisor board.
- General discussion on research and teaching
- PhD Fika during VT-20

TS Faculty board

At the faculty board, the following was discussed and shared:

- The Union's positioning-document and the implementation (this was further developed and brought up at the supervisory board and the doctoral collegium)
- How KFU (kommittén för forskarutbildning) has decided that delays caused by Corona should be written down in the ISP. KFU mean that the back-pack should be inflated each year, and this was raised at the "TS Forsknings-och forskarutbildningsnämnd" or Supervisory board
- The DSU-seminar initiatives via Zoom
- The teaching-challenges discussion and other suggestions based on the doctoral hearing held each year with our Director of studies.
- The Corona situation of stress and work environment
- The faculty board thinks it is essential for the Ph.D. students to be a part of social and academic contexts since many of our students are from outside of Sweden.

The teaching challenges and parts of the Unions positioning was also brought up at the "The Research and Research Programmes Board".

Board representatives

- Hamza Ouhaichi is our TS representative on the DSU board.
- Johan Salo is the DSU representative on the TS faculty board.

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- Alberto Alvarez is the president of the TS doctoral collegium, and also our representative on the Supervisory board.
 - Lars Holmberg is the doctoral representative in the TS Research and Research Programmes Board.

Other work

- Sergei Dytckov, part of the group work with the directors of phd studies (TS) that worked on addressing the feedback from the doctoral hearing - 2019.
- Agnes Tegen, worked with Alberto Alvarez to discuss and collect information about teaching challenges, and write the teaching challenges document that was later presented at the supervisor board.

4.5 Faculty of Odontology (OD)

Many doctoral students at OD are located outside of the University, which makes it challenging to engage and involve them in joint activities such as research seminar series. During 2019 we have however had at least 2 PhD student lunches per semester, arranged by the FFN PhD student representative at the faculty. These lunches are an important forum to discuss relevant issues for doctoral students at OD, but also a good opportunity just to meet and socialize. During the pandemic, the lunches were moved online to zoom. This reduced the socializing aspect of the lunches, but it worked fine for conveying information and increased the total number of people attending. The “Doktorandryggsäck” (50.000 SEK) and the role of a doctoral coordinator were approved during the fall at the faculty and are now in effect. The role as doctoral coordinator at OD will be appointed for the spring semester 2021. The communication with the head of research education at OD was increased during the fall semester, and will continue to improve along with the appointment of a PhD student as doctoral coordinator at the faculty. Specific conditions of the “Doktorandryggsäck” and PhD coordinator will be continuously discussed and followed up on. FFN is also working to increase the seminar environments for PhD students at OD by expanding the research day that normally occurs during the fall semester, to research weeks during both spring and fall semesters. PhD students at OD are currently pushing the possibility to credit one university pedagogy course as institutional work outside of the ISP, in order to promote competence development and facilitate an academic carrier path for the PhD students. OD is also working together with HS to create a PhD course in quantitative methodology and biostatistics, as requested by many PhD students at these faculties. Possibilities to create other specialized PhD courses at the faculty have also been up for discussion. FFN is engaged in discussions on how to support PhD students in problems in their research projects that may have arisen from the current covid-19 pandemic, as well as the questions about quality control of research education in general and supervision in particular.

5§ Suggestions for further work ahead

- Continue to work towards the implementation of the conclusions raised in the ERA19 evaluation. Three different aspects were particularly relevant for PhD students:
 - strengthening the equality of research education at all levels at Malmö University
 - a better inclusion of PhD students in research environments
 - the further development of career paths for young academics
- Promote seminar cultures and social contexts for PhD students at Malmö university (Events during academic ceremony week, discussion series, AW).
- Follow up on the questions about quality control and support in research programmes, as well as guidelines for prolongation for PhD students due to effects of the covid-19 pandemic (representation in and dialogues through KFU, survey about effects of the pandemic on research projects)
- Joining the Doctoral Committee of the Swedish National Union for Students (SFS-DK). The decision will be put for a vote during the DSU Annual Meeting on January 21th 2021.
- Cooperation in development of the career development programme with external mentors for PhD students.
- Promote continuous and improved cooperation between the faculties and with doctoral student unions at other faculties.
- Continue to work on strategies to improve the organizational memory within DSU.
- Continue the work with an external ombudsman.