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Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

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# Table of contents

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# Table of contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>	Research seminars	32
<b>Practical information</b>	<b>7</b>	Studies abroad and international exchange	33
Before travelling	8	Options for extending the period of study	34
On arrival	9	Withdrawal of resources	34
Living and studying in Sweden	10	<b>Maintenance—study funding</b>	<b>37</b>
Recognition of foreign degrees	12	Maintenance	38
<b>The postgraduate student</b>	<b>13</b>	Employment as a PhD student	39
The choice of a lifetime—some voices	14	Study grants	41
Who chooses to study for a PhD?	16	Employment at an institution of higher education	43
The purpose of research training	16	Employment related to postgraduate studies	44
Different areas of study		Scholarships	44
—what do they have in common and where do they differ?	17	External funding	45
Swedish institutions of higher education	18	Unemployment compensation, accident insurance and retirement pensions	45
Changes in postgraduate training	19	<b>Supervision</b>	<b>47</b>
Mobility in Sweden and abroad	20	The supervisor is very important	48
<b>Admission and eligibility</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>The awarding of degrees</b>	<b>52</b>
The highest academic degree	22	Prior to the public defence or Licentiate degree	53
Rules of admission	23	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>56</b>
Eligibility requirements	23	Ernesto Fumero, a PhD student in the Physics Department at Stockholm University	57
The funding requirement	24	Karin Broberg, former “shadow PhD student”	58
<b>Research training</b>	<b>26</b>	Marie Tapper, PhD ombudsman, Lund University	59
A demanding programme of education	27	<b>Inadequate gender equality and other discrimination</b>	<b>60</b>
General curriculum	29	Inadequate gender equality	61
Individual curriculum	29	Sexual harassment	62
The doctoral dissertation	30	Ethnic and social bias in recruitment	62
A dissertation is not a life’s work	31	Mohammad Fazlhashemi, a PhD student at Umeå University	63
Courses and course reading	31		

<b>Research ethics</b>	<b>65</b>
Interview with Gisela Dahlquist, a professor in children's medicine at Umeå University and chairman of MFR's board for research ethics	66
<b>Government agencies, foundations and scholarships</b>	<b>69</b>
The National Agency for Higher Education	70
Research councils	70
SAFARI—a research information data base	71
Research foundations	71
Scholarships	71
<b>Student unions and trade unions</b>	<b>72</b>
Student unions	73
Trade unions that represent PhD students	74
Unemployment benefit funds	74
<b>Legislation related to postgraduate studies</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Links</b>	<b>79</b>

# Foreword

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

This Handbook for postgraduate students is intended primarily for those who have been admitted, or plan to apply for admission to, postgraduate education. It aims at providing clear and concise information about important aspects of postgraduate education. Please note that in this context the term postgraduate studies only refers to studies leading to a PhD. The information in this Handbook is not for students studying at Master's level.

The Handbook is adapted for foreign postgraduate students and is published on the Internet only, so that it can be continuously updated, not only with respect to regulations and similar data but also in order to keep the links current. Wherever possible, links go directly to the web site on which the relevant information can be found.

Applications to postgraduate studies should be sent directly to the institution of higher education where you wish to study. Please contact the department for further information.

The Swedish version of the Handbook was written by Anki Gundhäll Wood, a journalist and formerly press secretary at the Ministry for Education and Science. It has been adapted to foreign Ph.D. students by Tim Nordin, Head of Section at the Ministry of Education and Science.

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# Practical information

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The Handbook for Postgraduate students is aimed at students who intend to pursue some or all of their doctoral studies at a Swedish institution of higher education. Please note that in this context the term *postgraduate studies* only refers to studies leading to a PhD. The information in this handbook is not for students studying at Master's level.

## Chapter summary

If you are a citizen of a country outside the European Economic Area (EEA), you need to apply for a permit before travelling to Sweden. You will also need to prove that you have some form of financial support during your period of study. EU/EEA students are exempt from this process, but those who are from non-Nordic countries must apply for residence not later than three months after their arrival.

Student dormitories are owned by the student unions and are usually situated on the outskirts of towns/cities. Rooms for both male and female students are located in the same corridors. The cost of a room usually varies between 2,000-2,500 kronor per month.

Foreign students with a residence permit of one year or more are entitled to some benefits such as medical and dental care if they register for a social security number.

The Swedish system of higher education, especially at higher academic levels, is based on individual responsibility. Relations between teachers and students are very informal compared to most other countries.

## Before travelling

### Visa and residence permits for non-Nordic and non EU/EEA citizens

If you are a citizen of a country other than the Nordic and EU/EEA countries and intend to study in Sweden, you must apply for a residence permit. Permits are issued by the Migration Board, (*Migrationsverket*) and must be granted before you come to Sweden. ([Link 1](#))

Visas and residence permits can be applied for at the Swedish Embassy/Consulate in your home country. A decision on the application may take two weeks or more, depending on the number of applications submitted at the time.

You should present the following documents when you apply: a valid passport, a letter of admission and the original letter stating that you have been awarded a scholarship (by the Swedish Institute, an EU programme or some other body) or other papers that certify that you have some form of guaranteed financial support. Visiting students coming to Sweden at their own expense should also bring original certificates and diplomas as well as copies, as they will need them when enrolling.

The residence permit is limited to the duration of the study period, or to one year if the studies last longer. The permit will be renewed annually, provided that you achieve the number of credits required and that you have some form of continued financial support.

Students from countries outside the EU/EEA and the Nordic area must, when applying for residence permits, prove that they have a guaranteed sum of money for the entire duration of their studies. The Migration Board determines the minimum sum, which is currently 6,300 kronor per month, for ten months of the year. If you bring your family, you must be able to prove that you will have at least 3,000 kronor per month for your spouse and at least 1,800 kr per month per child.

## Visa and residence permits for citizens from non-Nordic EU/EEA countries

Students from non-nordic EU/EEA countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) are exempted from the above procedure, but must apply for a residence permit within three months of their arrival in Sweden.

To apply, contact the local Foreign Student Advisor for an application form, or the Migration Board at: +46 (0)11 156 279 or +46 (0)11 156 377 (telephone) or +46 (0)11 156 691 (fax). The application should be sent to: Migrationsverket, Box 6113, SE 600 06 Norrköping. They will send your permit to the address you request. This procedure may take several months, but may also be completed more quickly. Along with your application form you must also send copies of your letter of admittance from your institution of higher education, papers showing financial security (e.g. bank statements, scholarship letters, guarantor letters from parents etc. that prove that you are able to support yourself for the duration of your studies) and some proof of social insurance coverage, e.g. form E111 or a private insurance policy.

## On arrival

### Accommodation

Most student dormitories are owned by the student unions. Most of them are situated on the outskirts of towns/cities. In most halls of residence there are 10-15 single rooms in each corridor. Kitchens are shared by 4-15 students. Female and male students have rooms along the same corridor.

A single room must not be occupied by more than one person—a rule that is strictly enforced. Students are required to clean their rooms and the communal kitchen themselves.

The rooms have basic furniture but blankets, pillows, sheets, towels and light bulbs must be provided by the occupant. In the communal kitchen some utensils may be available but you will usually have to bring your own plates,

cutlery, pots and pans etc. Most student housing has self-service laundry facilities. There is a booking list and you may have to pay a small fee for the use of a washing machine.

The cost of a student room varies between locations, but is usually around 2,000-2,500 kronor a month. Rent is paid in advance on a monthly basis.

Visiting students arranging their own accommodation have to contact a student union directly. In order to sign a lease for a room or a flat, you must be able to prove that you are already studying or that you have been admitted to the institution of higher education. When you want to move out you must give at least one month's written notice.

In some cases special accommodation is available for international students. Housing for families can also be arranged for postgraduate students.

## Insurance and Medical Treatment

### Stay of one year or more

As a foreign student with a residence permit valid for one year or more, you are entitled to benefits such as reduced costs for medicine, medical and dental care, and low-cost hospital treatment. You are also eligible for housing benefits if you are single, have no children and are aged 29 or under.

To be eligible for these benefits you must be registered as a resident and at a social insurance office. Application for civil registration is made at your local tax office.

When your application is approved you will be given a national registration number (*personnummer*) (see Civil Registration). The application procedure may take time, but you will be fully covered if you can show that you have applied for registration as a resident.

Once you have received your registration number, your local social insurance office, *Försäkringskassan*, will send you an application form so you can register with it. ([Link 2](#))

**Please note:** Social insurance does not cover your travel to Sweden nor the time you spend here country prior to registration. Thus, to be fully covered you will need some kind of travel insurance.

### Stay of less than a year

If you have a residence permit valid for a period of less than a year you will not be able to register as a resident. However, if you come from an EU/EEA country you are entitled to use the public medical services on the same basis as Swedish citizens for emergency medical care. In order to be eligible for this you must be registered at a social insurance office in your home country and have an E111 form, which will be issued upon request.

Sweden has reciprocal agreements for public medical benefits with the following countries: Australia, Algeria, Estonia, Hungary (hospital care only), and Poland. Students from these countries need only show their passport and a certificate from the social insurance office in their home country. For the reciprocal agreement to apply, the need for medical care must arise during (not prior to) your stay in Sweden.

Students from other countries or from EU/EEA countries (except from the Nordic countries) who are not registered with any social insurance office and are going to stay in Sweden for less than a year must arrange their own insurance coverage. Medical treatment is extremely expensive if you do not have insurance. (The cost for hospital treatment is at least 2,800 kronor per day.) Check with your student union. It is likely to have a special agreement with an insurance company.

If you need to consult a doctor you can either make an appointment with the doctor at the student union health centre at your university or college, or go to the health care centre, (*vårdcentralen*), that serves your neighbourhood. It might be a good idea to have a thorough check up at your dentist before leaving for Sweden. Should you still need to visit the dentist here, go to your nearest public dental clinic, *folktandvården*. For urgent dental treatment contact an emergency dental clinic, *jourhavande tandläkare*.

### Civil registration

If you intend to stay more than one year in Sweden you can register with the civil registration authorities at the local tax office, *lokala skattemyndigheten*. You will then be given a national registration number (*personnummer*) which consists of ten digits: year, month and day of birth, plus four variable digits,

e.g. if you were born on 25 May 1975, your national registration number would look something like 750525-1045. ([Link 3](#))

Bring your passport, a letter of admittance from your department/educational institution or the National Agency for Higher Education, documents from the Swedish immigration authorities, and if you are married, your marriage certificate, when you apply for registration. Once you have registered, you will be entitled to the same medical benefits as all residents of Sweden through the Swedish National Public Health Insurance System. Every time you see a doctor, for instance, you will be asked for your national registration number.

### ID cards

To get a Swedish ID card you have to be registered as a resident (see Civil Registration above). Identity cards are issued by post offices and banks. To apply for an ID card, you will need the certificate with your national registration number, a photo (black and white or colour, with white background, 4x5 cm) and a person with a valid Swedish ID card who can vouch for your identity. The cost is between 150 and 180 kronor.

In Sweden a special student ID card is generally not required. To identify yourself as a student, use the receipt for your student union fee together with an ordinary ID card or your passport.

The SFS card is a national student card, which entitles you to discounts on domestic travel by air, train and bus. You will obtain more detailed information with your SFS card, which you will receive one month after you join the student union. Student union membership is mandatory.

## Living and studying in Sweden

### The Academic Year, classes

The academic year is divided into two terms. The autumn term starts in mid-August and lasts until mid-January, when the spring term starts. The spring term lasts until the beginning of June. Normally there is brief break of about

a fortnight at the end of December. From mid-June to mid-August there is as a general rule no teaching, but at some universities summer courses are offered.

The Swedish academic environment may strike foreign students as being very informal: professors and staff members dress informally, speak in a familiar style with the students and may socialize with them during breaks.

There is a small fee to be paid each term for your compulsory membership of a student union. Apart from that, higher education in Sweden is generally free of charge.

### **Postgraduate studies in Sweden**

Research in Sweden, in contrast to many other countries, is conducted largely within the higher education system. Many teachers are involved both in education and research, and supervise PhD students.

In 1997/98 about 18,000 students in Sweden were enrolled in postgraduate studies, and nearly 1,900 were awarded doctoral degrees. Postgraduate training is conducted in some 450 different subject areas. All the universities and some other institutions of higher education are empowered to confer doctoral and licentiate degrees in one or more areas of research/faculties. These institutions have permanent resources for research.

The Government can decide, on application by the institution, if a university college is to be permitted to confer doctoral and licentiate degrees (often limited to some specialized subjects) within an area of research. To obtain this right, the university college must maintain a high level of scientific competence in research projects and high quality in its undergraduate programmes.

The professors and senior lecturers (with doctoral degrees) are members of a faculty. The faculty boards determine the content of postgraduate programmes of education, the specific admission requirements and selection criteria. Postgraduate training is then organized and administered by the departments.

### **Eligibility/Admission**

To be admitted to postgraduate studies for a doctoral degree, a student must hold a university degree equivalent to a Bachelor's degree with a major in the same subject as the intended postgraduate subject of study. In some cases a Master's degree is required. The major must include a paper (degree thesis) presenting the results of independent research (in contrast to the standard practice in many other countries).

A university degree is not always sufficient for admission to postgraduate studies. Specific eligibility conditions exist for each subject. There is also an assessment of the applicant's suitability and capacity to complete doctoral studies. The student must also have a very good command of English.

Many departments have no formal requirements regarding knowledge of the Swedish language for admission to postgraduate studies. However, for many subjects a good command of Swedish is necessary as the lectures and seminars are often held in Swedish. Some postgraduate students are advised to attend Swedish language courses alongside their post graduate studies.

Admission to postgraduate education is restricted; only those applicants thought capable of handling the intense competition are admitted. Since 1998 institutions of higher education may only admit a postgraduate student with financing for the entire period of postgraduate training, or who is appointed to a postgraduate studentship (*doktorandtjänst*) or qualifies for a training allowance (*utbildningsbidrag*) from the university. Students who are enrolled for postgraduate studies at their home university may, as part of their thesis work, be admitted to some of the postgraduate courses at Swedish universities.

### **Application**

Students considering postgraduate studies must get specific information and application material directly from the university and the department of the subject concerned. Applications for PhD studies must be sent directly to the department together with officially certified copies of diplomas/certificates or official transcripts, diploma work and letters of recommendation, etc. Authorised translations are often required.

## Recognition of foreign degrees

For a foreign programme of education to correspond to at least 120 credits in Swedish basic higher education, the programme must comprise at least three years of study and be pursued at an officially recognized institution of higher education and/or the degree must be officially recognized. For some countries, a programme of education must comprise more than three years for it to be considered to correspond to 120 credits in Sweden. Factors influencing this assessment include the inclusion of ideological courses (political and/or religious), general sports courses, military training, work experience (internship) during term time not considered to be relevant to the programme of education and of greater extent than an equivalent Swedish work experience period, and possible adjustments of level in subjects such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and languages in which the entry level is deemed to be lower than for an equivalent programme of education in Sweden. **(Link 4)**

# The postgraduate student

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## Chapter summary

This chapter provides an idea of the people who choose to take a PhD, the conditions under which they do it and the purpose of postgraduate training.

Postgraduate training is an integral part of the development of knowledge, and it may perhaps be summarized in the words: new knowledge and scientific training. Its goal is to produce new, high-quality researchers able to work at universities or outside the higher education system. Its purpose is to train PhD students in the scientific and academic traditions, but above all to develop independent and critically minded researchers.

This chapter describes the common foundations that constitute research training, but it also sheds light on a number of differences between different areas of academic and scientific enquiry. It is difficult to write in general terms about what taking a PhD is like, as each programme of postgraduate training is in principle tailor-made for the individual doctoral student.

The various ways of funding postgraduate studies mean that the financial conditions of PhD students can differ greatly.

In this chapter you will also see which institutions of higher education are authorized to award PhDs and what changes were introduced into postgraduate training in 1998 with a view to making it more effective. And finally—it pays to take a PhD!

## The choice of a lifetime —some voices

The conditions of different PhD students vary greatly depending on which subject they are studying. The path to postgraduate training can be very different, too: some students are goal-oriented and search for the best options “on their own”, while others follow the encouragement of teachers who have confidence in a student’s capacity. The following are some voices about this choice of a lifetime:

“Curiosity! That’s the motive force that makes me want to do research. I wonder why things are the way they are. Why people do what they do. How society is actually possible at all!

If you succeed in the humanities—you have no answers, only new questions. And it’s not a bad idea to get paid for reading what I would be reading anyway!”

**Stephen Fruitman, PhD student, History of Ideas, Umeå University.**

“I knew I would choose to take a PhD from my very first term as a law student. There is so much in the field of legal scholarship that is open for research and discussion. In spite of everything, the legal system is continuously changing. Taking a PhD is satisfying on a personal level, too, since you become an expert in your field quite quickly. And you have the opportunity of defining this field yourself to a great extent.

Now that my degree will soon be finished, I can say that I was right to choose to take a PhD. I would not want to have missed the opportunity.”

**Christina Helgesson, former PhD student in Civil Law, Stockholm University.**

“I usually oscillate wildly in my attitude to taking a PhD, but usually reach the conclusion that it’s a good thing on the whole. And I always feel a tingle of happiness when I do!”

**Daniel Sjöberg, PhD student, Lund Institute of Technology.**

“When I stepped out of the Härnösand Institute of Education as a newly qualified pre-school teacher, I was clear about the future—first some years of professional activity and then further studies. The pre-school teacher-training programme had such enthusiastic and highly motivated teachers that I wanted more.

I worked as a pre-school teacher for eight years before I once more applied to training college, this time in Stockholm. During my Bachelor and Master’s studies I came into contact with a Reader at the Department, and began to work as a research assistant in her research project. All this was my ticket to postgraduate training.

And I’m still hungry for more!”

**Mie Vågberg, PhD student and lecturer at the Stockholm Institute of Education.**

“Encouragement from a supervisor and my own desire to know more, a kind of seeking for knowledge, made me apply for postgraduate training.

Even if it can be tough as a PhD student, because you are by yourself and get little support from the department, I still find it hard to imagine doing anything more rewarding.”

**Mats Fagerberg, PhD student in Economic History, Uppsala University.**

“On a deeper, personal level, it’s about getting an opportunity for reflection, seeking knowledge and a deeper understanding of the world. I worked for many years as an information officer at an institution of higher education, and applying for postgraduate training was a way of moving on in the academic community.

It’s still something special to do a PhD, in the same way as it used to be something special to study after upper secondary.

Sometimes I notice an attitude of ‘who does he think he is?’ from some people when I tell them I’m doing a PhD.”

**Lena Lundén, PhD student at the Department of Media and Communication at Uppsala University, but working at the University College of Halmstad.**

“As soon as I started my medical studies at Lund, I knew that I didn’t want to be a doctor. I was interested in molecules and cells. My interest in research had probably been aroused long before but I was unable to formulate it properly at the time. After my fourth term I immediately started doing full-time research.”

**Björn Båtshake, Doctor of Medical Science at Lund University.**

“One of the great advantages of being a research student is the stimulating environment: there’s a wide choice of courses, seminars, lectures and meetings with interesting people. It’s an inspiring arena not open to many people.

“The objective is to take the PhD, but the path there is relatively free. The freedom to a large extent consists of being able to choose your subject, your approach and your methods.”

**Henric Stenmark, PhD student at Umeå University. The quotation is taken from the university journal *Actum*.**

“After working as a district vet in the depths of Småland for about five years, I decided to start looking for other work. It emerged that quite a lot of the employers I got in touch with wanted applicants with a PhD.

So I applied for a PhD student position\* in veterinary pharmacology at Uppsala, a subject I was not particularly interested in. The study plan for the programme of postgraduate training had already been written, and it was impossible for me to influence the orientation of the project. The reason that I accepted the place anyway, was that it appeared to be a good job and the position also involved teaching.

**Karolina Törneke, veterinary surgeon and PhD student in Veterinary Pharmacology at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala.**

\*The correct term for this is employment as a PhD student (*anställning som doktorand*), but in everyday speech it is referred to as a PhD student position (*doktorandtjänst*). Both terms are used in this handbook.

## Who chooses to study for a PhD?

The first answer to this question is: not many! Only three per cent of any year group goes on to do postgraduate training, or some 3,000 individuals a year.

Today, however, there are as many research students as there were upper secondary students in the 1950s.

The recruitment of students, teachers and researchers to higher education is still far from equitable, and study choices are highly gender-related. In the statistics on current postgraduate students it is possible to see the differing preconditions at work in society today. Gender discrimination, social bias and ethnic alienation all become clearer, the higher you go in the hierarchies of higher education.

In basic higher education some 58 per cent of students are women, while this proportion declines to 41 per cent at postgraduate level. In basic higher education, the proportion between women and men is thus 60–40, whereas among postgraduate students it is already the exact opposite: 40 per cent women and 60 per cent men. Finally, among professors, the proportion of women is only about 11 per cent.

There is not much information available about the social and ethnic backgrounds of postgraduate students, but bearing in mind that the proportion of new students in higher education from working class homes is only 13 per cent, it is highly likely that the figure will be even lower at postgraduate level.

The average age at admission is just under 30, and the median age of those taking their PhD is just over 34. Most PhD students are found in the fields of medicine and engineering, followed by the social sciences, the humanities and the natural sciences.

The number of active PhD students, that is to say students with a level of activity of at least 10 per cent, has increased over the past ten years to almost 18,500 in 1998.

## The purpose of research training

The following inspirational summary of the general goals of research is given in the report *God sed i forskningen* [Good practice in research<sup>1</sup>].

“The general goal of research is to gain knowledge so we may better understand the world we live in and if possible change it for the better.”

Research training forms part of the development of knowledge and may perhaps be summarized in the words ‘new knowledge’ and ‘scientific and academic training’. Its aim is to produce capable new researchers, whether or not they will be working in the higher education system or outside it.

The purpose is to train PhD students in the scientific and academic tradition, but above all to develop independent and critically minded researchers. PhD students must learn scientific methodology, critical analysis and independence in their studies. Research training must therefore stimulate them to adopt a scientific attitude, which includes the ability to formulate questions, to give structure to a scientific argument, to find adequate methods and theories for tackling problems and to be able to reflect critically on the subject of the dissertation. PhD students are expected to probe deeply into their subject and be at the forefront of research in their field. Research is a craft, and the dissertation is the ‘masterpiece’ proving that the practitioner is now a fully-fledged craftsman!

### PhD students do most research!

A great part of the research done at institutions of higher education is carried out by PhD students. In the academic year of 1997/98, they were responsible for some 40 per cent of the volume of research, according to the annual report of the National Agency for Higher Education, 1999 (Link 2). The proportion varies widely between different fields, however. In the field of theology, for instance, PhD students do almost four fifths of the research that takes place, while in odontology they only do a quarter. In the humanities, law, the social

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1 *God sed i forskningen* [Good practice in research], SOU 1999:4, p 5.

sciences, the natural sciences and engineering, PhD students are responsible for around half of the volume of research.

## Different areas of study—what do they have in common and where do they differ?

It is difficult to write in general terms about what it is like to take a PhD since there are such great differences between different programmes of postgraduate training. Working conditions and attitudes towards PhD students also vary between different institutions of higher education and different faculties. The relations that develop between different individuals are crucial for determining the degree of creativity and stimulation provided by the working conditions at a department. Labour market demand can also give certain PhD students a stronger position. The following are a number of fairly characteristic features, however:

- research training for all PhD students consists of course work, writing a dissertation and, crucially, collaboration with a supervisor. In addition, many programmes have various kinds of research seminars;
- most PhD students also have some kind of paid employment at the institution of higher education, often including teaching at undergraduate level;
- there is a marked difference between laborative and non-laborative subjects, however. In non-laborative subjects research is usually a lonely pursuit requiring independence and discipline. PhD students doing research in laborative subjects often belong to research teams, however, and a student's individual research assignment may well form part of a larger project, which means that the student receives ongoing support. It is usual for the project to be led by the supervisor, who as a result will in most cases be more accessible;

- in the humanities and the social sciences, there is often a greater capacity for admitting PhD students both with respect to supervision and training, but the possibilities here are restricted by a lack of financial resources. In more technical subjects it is easier to find funding for students, but a lack of supervisory capacity and/or potential PhD students may put obstacles in the way of admitting new students instead.

### Different financial conditions

Even if the objectives of new knowledge and scientific and academic training apply to all PhD students, their circumstances may be very different depending on the faculty in question. But there may also be great differences within a single faculty or even within a single department.

The most common and secure way of pursuing postgraduate training is to have employment as a PhD student. Forty per cent of research students have this kind of employment. Eleven per cent have study grants and 16 per cent have some other form of funding by way of their institution of higher education. One third of PhD students fund their studies in other ways. Eight per cent of these have scholarships and 32 per cent combine research training with normal employment.

Salaries are determined on an individual basis for those employed as PhD students, so rates of pay can differ widely. There are salary scales for PhD students, however, which are followed by many departments (see Postgraduate training, Employment as a PhD student).

Subjects in the fields of engineering, the natural sciences and mathematics are often able to offer such employment. It is easier for them to find external funding for their postgraduate students, and where departments are actually having to compete with other employers for the students, they have to offer conditions that are sufficiently attractive for these to apply to postgraduate training in the first place. 'Hot' fields in this respect are computing science, telecommunications, IT and bio-technology.

In the fields of the humanities and the social sciences, on the other hand<sup>2</sup> it is becoming more common for PhD students to receive study grants for the first two years and to be employed as PhD students for their final two years. This is due to the grants being cheaper for the departments concerned than PhD student posts, and the financial support available covering more PhD students if the first two years are funded by way of grants. These grants are the same size for all who get them.

The practical and financial differences may be great within a single department, too, according to Sulf (the Swedish Association of University Lecturers). In medical subjects, medical students often receive higher salaries than students from the natural sciences. In both cases it is a matter of competition with the labour market—graduate engineers and doctors are in greater demand and their salaries are forced up to attract them to postgraduate training.

The financial resources for taking part in congresses and travelling to externally organized courses, etc, also vary between different faculties and departments. At first glance it appears as though the harshest conditions, especially where funding is concerned, always affect the humanities and the social sciences. But there are reports from engineering and medical faculties about the existence of what are known as shadow PhD students (see p 18). These are students who have finished their undergraduate programmes and are taken on to do research at a department while waiting and hoping to be admitted as PhD students. There are unfortunately departments, which bind students to themselves in this way despite the absence of any level between undergraduate and PhD studies in Sweden. Such shadow PhD students have not been admitted to a PhD programme, and are therefore not covered by laws, agreements, insurance schemes or legal protections. They are often

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<sup>2</sup> There are four major areas of academic study in higher education: the humanities and social sciences (consisting of the humanities, the social sciences, law and theology); medicine (medicine, pharmaceuticals, and odontology); the natural sciences; and engineering. (The Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences is not covered by these categories.)

financed by scholarships and thus lack social security agreements. There is also no guarantee at all that a shadow PhD student will eventually be admitted to a programme of postgraduate training.

## Swedish institutions of higher education

There are 13 state-run universities and 23 other state-run institutions of higher education, plus three privately run institutions of higher education, in Sweden today. The following institutions of higher education are authorized to award PhDs, either in general or for certain scientific and academic areas of enquiry or subjects:

Uppsala University  
Lund University  
Göteborg University  
Stockholm University  
Umeå University  
Linköping University  
Karolinska Institute  
Royal Institute of Technology  
Luleå University of Technology  
Karlstad University  
Växjö University  
Örebro University  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences  
University College of Kalmar  
Blekinge Institute of Technology  
Malmö University College  
Chalmers University of Technology  
Stockholm School of Economics  
University College of Jönköping

All universities with the exception of Chalmers University of Technology the Stockholm School of Economics have a general right to award PhDs in any subject they wish. The other institutions of higher education are authorized to award Licentiate and PhD degrees in the area or areas of scientific and academic enquiry present there. The only exception to this rule is the University College of Jönköping, which despite its lack of any authorized area of scientific or academic enquiry is permitted to award certain PhDs.

Links with research are important for the quality of basic higher education. In recent years not only universities but all institutions of higher education have been allocated permanent research resources. This makes it easier for them to offer a high level of education provided by teachers who are themselves engaged in research. But research resources are still much greater at Sweden's traditional universities than at small and medium-sized institutions of higher education.

## Changes in postgraduate training

As early as the reform of postgraduate training in 1969 a four-year programme of postgraduate training was introduced leading to a PhD. The aim was for postgraduate training to be an individually planned programme of education with a high standard of teaching and individual supervision. This goal was realized in many faculties, above all those with laborative or clinical orientations, while the reform succeeded less well in the humanities and the social sciences. Over the years these faculties have admitted a large number of PhD students even though they did not have the resources for either supervision or study funding. In certain cases this led to an unreasonable prolongation of the study period, and many PhD students were compelled to abandon their studies because they lacked funding.

Statistics from 1997 indicate that only five per cent of PhD students in the humanities or social sciences who lacked funding for their studies had taken their degree after 20 years of postgraduate training. The government considered this to be an unacceptable situation and included a declaration in

the 1998 Budget Bill that those who choose to enter on a research career should know from the outset that they have the support necessary from their department to successfully conclude their studies.

To make postgraduate training more effective, considerably clearer and stricter rules were introduced regarding postgraduate training on 1 April 1998<sup>3</sup>. Everyone admitted as a PhD student, including those in the humanities and the social sciences, must be able to complete their programme of training after four years of full-time study or after no more than eight years of part-time study. The government hoped that this would also lead to a growth in the number of PhDs being awarded.

Institutions of higher education have to take greater responsibility for their PhD students, and must therefore only admit as many students as they are capable of providing with an acceptably high standard of supervision and study conditions. PhD students must also have the funding of their studies covered. PhD students with study grants must have been offered employment as PhD students with not less than two years of their studies remaining<sup>4</sup>.

There are certain transitional rules for PhD students who were admitted to their programmes prior to 1 April 1998 (see the chapter on Maintenance—study funding, Transitional regulations).

### A more rapid pace

Until the mid-1980s, some 800 PhDs per year were taken in Sweden. In recent years the number of PhDs taken has increased, and in 1999 2,120 PhDs (and 970 Licentiates) were awarded. Thirty-seven per cent of the newly created PhDs were women. Most of the degrees—30 per cent—were awarded in the field of medicine.

In the autumn term of 1999, there were 18,108 active PhD students in Sweden. The number has increased markedly over the last ten years.

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<sup>3</sup> *En reformerad forskarutbildning* [A reform of postgraduate training], Budget Bill, 1997/98

<sup>4</sup> Ch 9 par 3 of the Higher Education Ordinance

### **Constantly growing demand for non-specialists**

It appears to be a growing desideratum of employers, particularly in the industrial sector, that PhDs should have a broader general range of competence, and that a varied and many-sided programme of education should have prepared them for different kinds of careers. They are of course expected to be able to tackle problems with a scientific approach, but they are also expected to manage such challenges as project management, languages, and IT, and be able to express themselves well in both oral and written contexts<sup>5</sup>. (**Link 5**)

## **Mobility in Sweden and abroad**

Mobility in Swedish higher education is not particularly great. Central government has indicated this low degree of mobility as a problem capable of undermining the standard of Swedish research.

An attractive form of mobility on the other hand is studying abroad. Swedish institutions of higher education have a great deal of contact with similar institutions in other countries. Both students and teachers/researchers take part in exchange programmes or apply to foreign institutions of higher education on their own initiative. In 1999, 833 Swedish PhD students went abroad to study in another country, while 707 foreign PhD students came to Sweden. Most of these students study technical subjects, and the commonest kind of exchange takes place with Europe and the USA.

### **Foreign PhD students in Sweden**

In 1997 some 13 per cent of PhD students held foreign citizenship. The medical faculty had most foreign PhD students, followed by the engineering faculty.

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5 *En genomlysning av svensk forskarutbildning* [An analysis of Swedish postgraduate training], SUHF, January 1999, p 82.

The number of PhD students from countries other than the Nordic countries or the Europe Union has increased during the 1990s, but their proportion has diminished<sup>6</sup>. They comprised about 8 per cent of all registered students, but represented 14.7 per cent of all degrees taken. They are from some 80 countries, but most of them—a little over a third—are from China. The universities of Lund and Uppsala, and the Karolinska Institute received most foreign students.

Of the foreign PhD students registered as admitted to programmes of postgraduate training in the academic year of 1990/91, about 30 per cent had left Sweden by the end of December 1997.

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6 National Agency for Higher Education, 1998:40 R

# Admission and eligibility

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

According to the Higher Education Ordinance, which regulates all state-run programmes of education, no more PhD students may be admitted to programmes of postgraduate training than can be offered supervision and acceptable conditions of study in other respects, and have their study funding settled.

Applicants to research training may be admitted if they are employed as PhD students or approved for a study grants for PhD students, but the faculty board may also admit applicants with some other form of study funding if it finds that this funding can be guaranteed for the duration of the proposed programme and that the applicant is in a position to complete the programme in no more than eight years.

The following are the eligibility requirements for postgraduate training:

1. general eligibility, that is to say basic higher education of at least 120 credits or the equivalent knowledge;
2. special eligibility, that is to say knowledge gained during basic higher education or the equivalent, or special professional experience according to the stipulations of the faculty board;
3. the capacity on the part of the applicant, in the opinion of the faculty, to complete the programme of education.

The rest of the chapter deals with how the institutions of higher education should advertise the posts in question, how an application is made, and how institutions of higher education rank and select applicants. It also deals with “shadow PhD students”, who are following PhD courses without having been formally admitted.

## The highest academic degree

The PhD is the highest academic degree in Sweden. It is the result of a programme of research training of 160 credits, which is the equivalent of four years' full-time study, of which the dissertation must comprise at least 80 credits.

A Licentiate may be a step on the path to a PhD. It corresponds to 80 credits, of which at least 40 credits must comprise a paper meeting high academic standards. There are no separate programmes leading to a Licentiate, but every student applies for the four-year research-training programme.

Those students who are employed as PhD students or have study grants usually take part in the work of the department, doing teaching or administrative duties. Those who are employed as PhD students may have a certain amount of departmental work included in their post, while a PhD student with a grant may obtain a part-time assistantship in addition to the grant. Not all PhD students do departmental work, but the experience and the educational qualifications gained are considered to be valuable.

The faculty board has general responsibility for the programme of research training. There are at least three student representatives in the faculty board<sup>7</sup>.

### Choice of subject and institution of higher education

Most PhD students proceed to postgraduate training at the institution where they did their undergraduate studies. The wish to proceed is often sparked by a teacher who encourages students to continue their academic careers and perhaps is even able to arrange funding within the framework of a research project.

If you apply for a programme of postgraduate training on your own initiative, it is a good idea to contact supervisors, other researchers and preferably also other PhD students at the department to discuss your plans before you submit your formal application. This gives you an opportunity to form an idea of how research is carried out at the department in question, the

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<sup>7</sup> Higher Education Ordinance ch 3 par 3, ch 8 par 5.

projects that are being conducted or planned for the future, study funding and future prospects in the subject field.

It is not always the case that the department you have in mind has supervisors with specialized knowledge of the field in which you are interested. For this reason it may be worth your while to investigate programmes being offered by other departments and other universities—including foreign ones.

## Rules of admission

According to the Higher Education Ordinance ([Link 1](#)), which regulates all state-run higher education, certain requirements must be met before a student may be admitted. These are as follows:

“Only that number of PhD students may be admitted to programmes of postgraduate training as can be offered supervision and acceptable conditions of study in other respects, and who have study funding (...)

The faculty board may only admit applicants to programmes of postgraduate training who are employed as PhD students or have been given study grants for PhD students. The faculty board may, however, admit applicants who have some other form of study funding, if the board considers that this funding can be guaranteed for the duration of the programme and that the applicant will be able to devote sufficient time to the programme that it will be completed within a period of eight years.”

### Admission to postgraduate training

#### High demands made on supervision and study funding

The new rules make high demands on the responsibility of institutions of higher education for their postgraduate students, their supervision and their maintenance.

Admission normally takes place in conjunction with the announcement of a study grant or an opening for employment as a PhD student. Certain departments have fixed application dates, while others admit students on an ongoing basis. Any student with another form of study funding should get in touch with the department in question to find out when an application should be submitted.

### Admission procedures

On 1 January 2001, a new regulation was included in the Higher Education Ordinance, which requires the governing body of each institution of higher education organizing postgraduate training to establish special admission procedures for these programmes. These procedures must cover the rules to be applied locally for such matters as application, eligibility and selection, as well as the method of deciding who is to be admitted. The procedures must be accessible to everyone.

This regulation was included in the Higher Education Ordinance because many institutions of higher education neglected to establish rules for admission to programmes of postgraduate training, sometimes delegating such decisions all the way down to departmental level.

The purpose of introducing a set of procedures for admission is to make information more accessible and to increase the legal rights of students.

## Eligibility requirements

For admission to a programme of postgraduate training, you need to meet the following requirements (in addition to having guaranteed funding):

1. **general eligibility**, that is to say basic higher education of at least 120 credits or the equivalent knowledge;
2. **special eligibility** according to the stipulations of the faculty board;
3. **the capacity**, in the opinion of the faculty in question, to complete the programme of training.

Special eligibility varies from subject to subject as the faculty board determines it. The requirements often relate to matters applicants should have learnt during their undergraduate training or the equivalent. But requirements stipulating previous knowledge in other subjects, or professional experience, may also be made.

Get in touch with the Head of Department or another member of staff responsible for postgraduate training at the department you are interested in if you wish to know more about special eligibility or other admission requirements. This information should be available in the general curriculum of the subject in question (see Research training—General curriculum).

## The funding requirement

In the admission process the faculty board is obliged to assess whether the PhD student has sufficient funding for the whole of the training period.

Study funding is of two kinds:

On the one hand students may be offered employment as a PhD student or a study grant, or on the other they will have “other funding”, such as government-backed financial support for students, paid leave of absence from other employment or some other kind of reliable maintenance during the programme of training. PhD students with “other funding” are often referred to as part-time PhD students—and although this need not always be the case, it is common for these students to study part-time, that is to say at least fifty per cent.

Students with “other funding” may only be admitted if the faculty board or department considers their funding to be guaranteed for the whole period of training and that the students in question can devote a sufficient amount of time to their PhD studies to complete them within eight years. This has proved to be a difficult matter to determine in advance. (See Maintenance—Study funding)

## Announcing positions for PhD students

When a position for a PhD student that is wholly or partly funded by an institution of higher education falls vacant, the institution must advertise the fact (or provide information about it to the same effect) so that anyone interested is able to apply for the position within the stipulated time<sup>8</sup>. Many institutions of higher education also advertise externally funded positions.

## Applications

More and more departments are making use of fixed periods for applications to programmes of postgraduate training. There are still many departments that admit PhD students successively during the academic year, however, as and when supervisory capacity becomes available, positions for PhD students fall vacant or applications are received from students with “other funding”.

Applications to programmes of postgraduate training are made directly to the department in question. There are often special forms for applying for a position as a PhD student and for applying for admission to the programme itself. Ask the department secretary or someone with responsibility for postgraduate training. You are often required to include a funding plan for the duration of your studies with your application.

## Ranking/selection

If there are more eligible applicants than there are places available for PhD students, a selection will be made. The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates that such a selection must be based on the applicants’ capacity to benefit from the training provided. In practice, this means that the applicants’ previous academic achievements are examined and assessed—including undergraduate term papers or degree projects. This academic ranking must be done without taking the funding available to the different applicants into account.

If admission takes place on a given date during the term—and not successively as resources become available—it is easier to draw up this kind

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<sup>8</sup> Higher Education Ordinance ch 5 par 9. National Agency for Higher Education Report 1999:15 R, p 43.

of academic ranking. Fixed application periods are also becoming more and more common. Decisions with respect to employment as a PhD student are not subject to appeal.

### “Shadow PhD students”

The Swedish system of higher education has no level between undergraduate studies and postgraduate training in the framework of a PhD programme. Students doing research training must have been admitted to such a programme. But there are examples of certain departments attempting to get around the regulations by introducing preparatory programmes or study periods of a different character between undergraduate studies and postgraduate training<sup>9</sup>.

Students who embark on such a period in the hope of being admitted to a proper programme of postgraduate training are known as shadow PhD students, or grey-zone PhD students. Such in-between periods are also referred to as ‘waiting rooms’. Shadow PhD students are commonest in the medical faculty.

Such shadow PhD students are often very vulnerable. They are often funded by scholarships giving them no social insurance benefits or the legal guarantees accompanying a study grant. There are also examples of students doing experiments while not covered by the institution’s insurance policies, since they have not been formally admitted to a programme of postgraduate training. What is more, there is no guarantee that they will eventually be admitted to such a programme. (See Interviews, Karin Broberg, former “shadow PhD student”)

According to the Higher Education Ordinance requirements concerning special eligibility must be based on knowledge acquired during undergraduate studies or the equivalent, and the institution of higher education is therefore not permitted to demand qualifications exceeding this, that is to say it there may be no requirement that an applicant has been a “shadow PhD student”. Certain institutions of higher education have tried to rectify this by introducing local rules forbidding this kind of arrangement.

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9 1999:15 R

# Research training

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

A great part of research training is made up of a student's own studies, research and a doctoral dissertation corresponding to at least 80 credits. Many programmes of research training include course work of varying duration, but never exceeding 80 credits.

A Licentiate degree may be a step on the path to a PhD. It is the equivalent of 80 credits, of which at least 40 credits comprise a paper of good scientific or academic standard.

This chapter describes the various parts of postgraduate training, including the experience of starting in a new department, a place of work for several years to come.

Every subject in which a programme of postgraduate training is organized must have a general curriculum describing the contents of the programme.

Everyone admitted to a programme of postgraduate training must draw up an individual study curriculum together with his or her supervisor.

The doctoral dissertation presents the results of the student's research, at the same time as it is evidence of the PhD student's ability to formulate and deal with a scientific or academic problem, and to perform independent research.

The dissertation may be on a unified theme, or a collection of previously published articles (and summaries) by the candidate.

This chapter describes the course-work included in programmes of postgraduate training, research seminars and the importance of training in educational theory and practice. It contains advice about what to do if you "dry up", or if the seminars prove unsatisfactory. You can also read about research schools, international exchange, and the possibilities of extending the period of training, as well as matters relating to withdrawn resources and procedures for appealing against certain decisions.

"I would like to give one piece of advice to all PhD students.

Academic life swallows you up—and it can be very unforgiving... So make sure you have more fixed points of support in your life than just your own research!

Cultivate other interests (in my case I love music and dancing!) and get yourself friends outside the academic world. Otherwise you will be far too vulnerable.

The same thing goes for your programme of research training. Don't get too attached to a single individual, a single supervisor. Make sure you are part of a network of supervisors, other competent judges of your work and PhD students. Make sure you have some space around you!"

**Agneta Stark, guest professor at Tema Genus, Linköping University.**

## A demanding programme of education

A great part of research training is made up of a student's own studies, research and a doctoral dissertation corresponding to at least 80 credits. Many programmes of research training include course work of varying duration, but never exceeding 80 credits.

To earn a PhD a student must pass the courses that form part of the programme, and write an acceptable doctoral dissertation that is defended successfully in public.

An alternative path is to take a Licentiate, corresponding to 80 credits of which at least 40 credits comprise a paper of good scientific or academic standard. Even students intending to go no further than a Licentiate have to apply for the full four-year programme.

Anyone embarking on a programme of postgraduate training must be very aware that there is a vast difference between research training and undergraduate studies. A PhD student does of course have a supervisor for support, but the lecturers, lectures, classes and continual monitoring of knowledge in the form of tests and exams are all virtually absent. PhD students have to drive their own studies forward under their own steam. A great part of the programme consists of writing in the form of preparing the dissertation.

It is not a matter of course that a successful undergraduate will be just as successful as a PhD student. Postgraduate results are based on independence, self-discipline and a capacity for formulating and tackling original scientific and academic problems.

Most PhD students work in clinics and laboratories, however, and the not uncommon procedure of working in research groups provides plenty of support. It is common for the supervisor to lead the research project in question and for the PhD student to be working in the same lab and with the same apparatus. Continuous contact with the supervisor, and the research group's shared need to produce results also make it easier to work in a disciplined fashion.

### **Responsibility for research training**

The faculty board is responsible for research training. A good deal of responsibility is delegated to the head of the department in question, however. Sometimes there are directors of study whose role is to be easily accessible to students and whose work includes following up general and individual postgraduate curriculums, providing support if conflicts arise between a supervisor and a postgraduate, and taking responsibility for information (both internally for students and colleagues, and externally in relation to the recruitment of new students and the improvement of cooperation with the local community).

### **Don't just seek information—demand it!**

Far too often PhD students say that their department did not give them a particularly positive reception when they began their studies. They were given no introduction to the department and received no comprehensive information about what it entails to study for a PhD, or what is expected of them as colleagues at a department.

The lack of information has involved matters great and small—from the location of office material, copying codes, journals, etc, to where the PhD student is expected to sit and work. Anyone met with this degree of indifference will naturally find the initial stages of their time at the department depressing and confusing.

Many departments have finally begun to realize that PhD students should be treated in the same way as other staff, and that snafus and problems might easily be avoided if the information flow and communication worked better.

So demand information!

## General curriculum

Every subject in which postgraduate training is organized must have a general curriculum describing the contents of the programme. This is determined by the faculty board and according to the Higher Education Ordinance (ch 8 par 7) it must contain (**Link 1**):

1. the principal contents of the programme and in relevant cases the compulsory reading for the subject;
2. the general arrangement of the various parts of the programme;
3. requirements of previous knowledge and other conditions in addition to the basic eligibility required of all those admitted to a programme of postgraduate training (special eligibility);
4. the selection rules applicable in relation to admission;
5. the tests and exams that form part of the programme; and
6. where applicable, the possibility of completing a part of the programme with a Licentiate degree.

If you are interested in postgraduate training in a certain subject, you should contact the department providing the programme and ask for the general curriculum for the subject.

## Individual curriculum

The contents of a programme of postgraduate training are different for each individual PhD student—even when they are studying the same subject.

Everyone admitted to a programme of postgraduate training must draw up an individual curriculum with his or her supervisor. This requirement has been in place since 1993, but for a long time it was not taken as seriously as it should have been. As of 1 April 1998, however, there are detailed regulations for these curricula. They give significant assistance and great

support in making it possible to successfully complete a programme of postgraduate training within four years of full-time study.

It will make clear what the rights, duties and expectations are between faculty, supervisor and postgraduate.

According to the Higher Education Ordinance ch 8 par 8, an individual curriculum must contain:

- a timetable for the programme of education;
- a description of the PhD student's and the faculty board's respective obligations during the period of postgraduate training;
- other matters needed for an effective programme of study.

The timetable should show the courses the PhD student is to take and preliminary dates for projected article manuscripts or dissertation chapters. For obvious reasons the timetable will be more detailed for the immediately impending years than for later ones.

So far there is no unified practice with respect to the obligations of the PhD student or the faculty board. It is, however, appropriate to indicate in the curriculum that the PhD student and the supervisor will meet regularly—every other week, for instance—to discuss the progress of the programme of studies.

Other matters needed for effective studies might concern a workspace, computer facilities, access to a telephone and e-mail, or ensuring that the PhD student gets to attend seminars or conferences which are relevant to the subject, or finding ways for the student to take part in a relevant research project.

The following aspects might also form part of an individual curriculum:

- the specific objectives, both short and long-term, of the PhD programme;
- a detailed description of the research assignment;
- a preliminary title for the dissertation;

- courses and reading for the programme;
- the future plans of the supervisor in so far as they might affect the PhD student's studies.

The faculty board is responsible for postgraduate training, but usually delegates this responsibility, in most cases to the head of the department concerned. But this, too, can vary between faculties and institutions.

The person who takes on this responsibility examines the individual curriculum and then approves it. This step is very important! It is not enough for a PhD student and a supervisor to sign a curriculum, but the official responsible for postgraduate training must also sign it, otherwise it will be difficult for the student to argue later that the department has failed to meet its obligations in relation to supervision and other resources.

The faculty board is also responsible for making sure that the curriculum is followed up at least once a year. The PhD student and the supervisor must then give an account of the progress being made in the programme of study. The faculty board (or its delegate) may then amend the curriculum. The period of study may only be extended if there are special reasons for doing so, such as illness, parental leave, service in national defence or representative assignments for trade union or student organizations. (See also Research training, Extending the period of study.)

Many faculties and institutions have produced templates for individual curricula, as has the Swedish National Union of Students (SFS). ([Link 2](#))

## The doctoral dissertation

A doctoral dissertation presents the results of research, at the same time as it provides evidence of a PhD student's ability to formulate and solve scientific or academic problems, to be an independent researcher. A doctoral dissertation must provide new knowledge and in this way take research forward. A supervisor should have both a comprehensive fund of knowledge and long experience of research training, and for this reason it is crucial to select a field of research in which the department in question has adequate supervisory

capacity. If this capacity is not present, the student should consider choosing a more appropriate department.

In laboratory and clinical subjects, the individual PhD student's own opportunities for choosing a PhD subject are rather limited. Being admitted to a programme of postgraduate training in these faculties often entails being offered the chance of becoming the member of a research project that is already in progress, and being given an appropriately dimensioned research assignment. In these cases the student must be prepared to adapt the subject of the dissertation to the projects being carried out at the department.

There are two different kinds of dissertation: monographs and compilations.

A monograph is a dissertation written as a unified and coherent work. Such dissertations are commonest in non-laboratory subjects. Dissertations are almost exclusively in the form of monographs in the humanities, theology and law.

It is important for students writing a monograph to choose their subject with care. Discuss the matter with the supervisor and other researchers at the department. The supervisor has a good deal of responsibility for narrowing down the choice of subject and making sure that it is realistic and achievable. It is easy to be seized by the desire to answer too many questions at once, but then there is a great risk that the dissertation will not be ready within the prescribed period. (See ch Supervision.)

Compilation dissertations comprise a number of papers written during the period of postgraduate training and a summary of the articles. In laboratory and clinical subjects, dissertations are almost exclusively in the form of compilations. Some of the articles in the dissertation may have been written by several individuals, but the PhD student must normally be the principal author of a major part of the dissertation. In most cases the summary is written independently, and it should be written so that it is accessible to more than a restricted audience of those specializing in the field of the dissertation.

In the medical and scientific faculties, published papers are known as part papers (the Swedish term is: *pek*). Before it is submitted, a compilation dissertation normally contains 3–6 such papers. (Six *pek* is an extraordinary amount. What's more, it is considered a better qualification to have a

dissertation containing four papers to your name plus two papers published elsewhere.) Critics of this system consider that more emphasis should be placed on the content of what is published than on the number of papers.

The papers are published in journals reviewed by referees<sup>10</sup> and are thus subject to peer review<sup>11</sup>. This continuous quality assessment makes the public defence of the dissertation less crucial than in the case of a monograph.

## A dissertation is not a life's work

Public debate about the scope of a dissertation has a long history, and has been full of vicissitudes. Should it represent a life's work or be part of a programme of training and a first relatively comprehensive research assignment?

The latter view has come to dominate the discussion and the recent reform in postgraduate training emphasizes that what is involved is a programme of education that should be completed within a relatively limited period of time. The PhD is a kind of journeyman's certificate, evidence that the postgraduate has the capacity to conduct research.

### The standard of language

The PhD student and the supervisor should devote a lot of effort to the production and presentation of the texts. Using inaccessible language excludes the reader and this means that research results do not become known or used. A popularising summary of the dissertation may be one way of reaching a wider audience with your research.

In the fields of engineering, science and medicine, the dissertation is practically always written in English. Most dissertations in the humanities and the social sciences are written in Swedish.

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<sup>10</sup> Referees—experts reviewing a text

<sup>11</sup> Peer review—one or more researchers in the field reviewing the work of another researcher

### Writer's cramp

At some time or other during the writing of a doctoral dissertation most postgraduates begin to despair. The material feels overwhelming, time is running away and the student starts to panic. A really bad attack may lead to temporary paralysis and writer's cramp.

If this happens it is important to get support and find someone to talk to. The best solution is for the supervisor to do this. It may help to intensify supervision for a while, to meet more frequently or to systematically work through things to discover what the block might be. It could also be a good idea for the supervisor and the PhD student to jointly set interim targets for the work. What precisely will the student be working on in the coming week? Taking a clearly delimited problem at a time and checking off the results at frequent intervals can be a useful way of breaking a log jam and overcoming the doubts and diffidence that are preventing progress.

It is also important that there is reciprocity between the supervisor and the PhD student with respect to making the first move. Sometimes time is wasted unnecessarily when both the supervisor and the student find themselves waiting for the other to get in touch. Matters of this kind should be discussed during the preparation of the individual curriculum.

## Courses and course reading

Research training contains courses requiring course reading. The scope of these courses varies from subject to subject, but usually comprises 40 to 60 credits and in any case not more than 80 credits. (One credit is the equivalent of one week's full-time studies.)

The purpose of these courses is partly to provide the PhD student with broad general expertise in the subject and partly to impart sufficient specialized knowledge to be able to complete the dissertation. Some courses and reading are compulsory for all post-graduates in a subject, while others are individual and tailored to fit the research assignment in question. Courses and course reading that are compulsory for the subject must be specified in the general

curriculum. Individual courses are chosen by the PhD student in consultation with the supervisor, and are listed in the individual curriculum.

In recent years, regularly held faculty-wide research training courses have been developed. Courses in scientific theory, methodology, ethics and statistics are often included in these courses.

It is becoming more common for more institutions of higher education to organize joint courses in certain subjects. It is also possible to attend courses being given by other departments or institutions, but the supervisor should always be consulted to check that the course will be approved as part of the student's programme of training.

All these courses end with some form of examination giving a grade of pass or fail.

The basic courses should be completed during the first two or three terms of training, and it is usually a good thing for most of the courses to have been done during the first half of postgraduate studies.

## Research seminars

Research seminars constitute an important factor of continuous support for many PhD students. PhD students, teaching staff and other researchers at a department or in a research group meet regularly for seminars chaired by a senior colleague to discuss new methods and findings, new literature in the field and the various problems that PhD students may run up against. The frequency of seminars varies—some departments have seminars every week while others are held at fortnightly or even longer intervals. The seminars are often chaired by a professor, but other researchers with doctorates may be given the assignment, too.

Sometimes guest lecturers are invited from other institutions of higher education in Sweden or abroad. During foreign visits, the discussions may be held in English or some other language.

The research seminar also makes it possible for PhD students to present chapters of their work, sections of their dissertation or papers for review and discussion. This provides an opportunity for discussing a student's disserta-

tion work—sometimes it can be difficult to judge the progress of your own work.

For subjects in which it can be difficult to get a reaction to dissertation work these seminars have a very important function. Dissertations in the humanities and social sciences are often written in the form of monographs and this makes the academic discussions conducted at seminars even more crucial. This is where you can be confident that you will get an assessment of your own work in relation to other research both nationally and internationally. Another PhD student is often given the assignment of reviewing a contribution, which also means that the seminars provide training in preparation for the public defence of a dissertation.

In the natural sciences, engineering and medicine it is more common to work in groups or research teams, which makes for better opportunities for continuous quality assessments of a student's work, for instance through the challenge of writing a paper for an international journal reviewed by expert researchers before publication.

### When seminars fail to work

Interview with Professor Britta Lundgren

“A seminar should be somewhere you can present your ideas and know you will be treated with respect—even if your ideas are subjected to criticism. Unfortunately it sometimes happens that seminars are ruined by a destructive atmosphere”, says Britta Lundgren, Professor of Ethnology at Umeå University.

There are many unpleasant stories about dysfunctional seminars where PhD students presenting their material have been so harshly criticized that they have found it hard to recover afterwards.

“The person chairing a seminar can prevent this happening by being aware of the group dynamics affecting this kind of meeting. It is also important to vary the form of seminars as much as possible. It's possible to rotate the job of chair or to introduce review groups in which PhD students are given different roles: some checking facts and formal presentation, some with a supportive function, others again reviewing the general logic of the contribution, etc.

“It is important that a seminar is constructive and supportive. If opposition is too compact and the attitude is too negative, then openness and creativity are suffocated. But it can of course be just as catastrophic if everyone just heaps a contribution with praise and no one dares to voice any criticism at all. The critical process is made less dramatic if roles are rotated and everyone gets a turn at both giving and taking criticism.

“Giving seminar participants different roles also helps everyone to be active and prevents a few individuals from dominating seminars.

“Female PhD students are particularly affected by a harsh atmosphere, since university structures are not yet characterized by gender equality.”

What can be done if the chair is the cause of the problem?

“The chair of a seminar is a very important person who affects the atmosphere to a great degree. If it proves difficult to cooperate with the chair, the student needs to contact the head of the department. Sometimes of course this can be a problem, because the head of the department sometimes chairs the seminars. But every department should create various kinds of ‘safety valves’, which make it possible to discuss problems arising in postgraduate training in different forums.

“There is a tradition of the principal representative of the subject leading research seminars. I myself advocate regularly changing the chair of research seminars—rotation is necessary to allow new ideas to emerge. It’s good for everyone if various qualified researchers at a department or faculty take turns in chairing the seminars.

“Many departments have created supervisor groups which constantly work to improve the standard of supervision provided. I think these groups should also tackle the issue of seminars.”

### **Training to be a teacher**

It is common for a PhD student’s departmental duties to include teaching at undergraduate level. Most institutions of higher education have training courses in educational theory and didactics for lecturers which PhD students are also eligible to attend. PhD students should not accept teaching assignments without having undergone some such course.

### **Research schools**

Setting up research schools is a way of creating an inspirational environment for research at universities. Research schools may be structured in a great variety of ways. The most important components in research schools in Sweden today according to a report from National Agency for Higher Education<sup>12</sup> (Link 3) involve improved supervision for PhD students, cooperation between different subjects and institutions in providing courses and seminars, cross- and multi subject projects and national and international networks.

## **Studies abroad and international exchange**

Research is an international activity and contacts with foreign researchers are essential and necessary. Meeting researchers from other countries and other scientific cultures brings new perspectives into research training. Spending some of your period of study at a foreign institute or institution of higher education gives valuable experience<sup>13</sup>. In many subjects, too, international fieldwork forms part of a postgraduate’s training.

International exchange also takes place by way of international publications—each year Swedish researchers publish over 16,000 scientific articles in journals worldwide, also via IT, of course, to a growing extent. Research councils, research foundations and certain government agencies are able to award grants for studies abroad. Research councils also distribute special funding for guest professorships for women and post-doctoral scholarships for female researchers.

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12 National Agency for Higher Education Report 2000:2 R

13 Higher Education Ordinance ch 8 par 16. A PhD student may also be granted the right to count to his credit a programme or course of education pursued at a foreign institution of higher education. Such a programme or course will be assessed for recognition by an examiner at the institution of higher education at which the student wishes the credits to be counted.

Swedish institutions of higher education have many contacts with institutions in other countries. The greatest interest is in studies in other European countries and the US. In the EU and the Nordic countries there are agreements concerning the movement of students, in other cases agreements are made directly between institutions, while many students apply to programmes abroad on their own initiative.

The EU provides support in various ways for PhD students who wish to study abroad for shorter or longer periods, principally by way of the Erasmus programme and within the fifth framework programme for research and technological development. The framework programme often requires international cooperation around a research and development project, and for this reason it is difficult to obtain funding as an individual student, but a number of scholarships do exist, including some for studies with internationally recognized research groups.

The Nordic countries have common research programmes, which sometimes involve PhD students. The programmes are approved by the Nordic Council of Ministers. For instance, courses of postgraduate training are given through NORFA. Not all departments have the same ability to make grants for shorter or longer stays abroad, but in most cases the opportunities for spending at least a brief period abroad are quite good. Supervisors can usually help obtain funds for PhD students to participate in or organize international congresses. Post-graduate students with employment positions should be able to obtain expenses, which is not possible for those who only have study grants. Suitable scholarships may be sought on the STINT home page (Link 4).

### **The educational system in other countries**

Systems of postgraduate training look very different in different parts of the world. The EU has produced an overview of European education systems<sup>14</sup>.

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14 Strategies and Policies on Research Training in Europe. EUR 18880 EN.

### **Foreign students in Sweden**

The number of foreign students among PhD students is gradually increasing. In 1997, 13 per cent of all PhD students had foreign citizenship. Eight per cent of all students were from countries outside the Nordic area and the EU (the largest group, with just over 30 per cent, coming from China). The medical faculty had most foreign PhD students, followed by the engineering faculty. Most foreign PhD students were studying at Uppsala and Lund Universities and the Karolinska Institute.

## **Options for extending the period of study**

In the Higher Education Ordinance ch 8 par 8, it is stated that a period of study may be extended if there are special reasons for doing so, such as for instance illness, service in national defence, representative assignments for trade union or student organizations, or parental leave. The formulation “such as” means that other reasons besides those specified in the ordinance may constitute special reasons for granting an extension of a study period.

The requirement that a programme of postgraduate training should be completed within four years of full-time study is based on the assumption that no serious obstacles will arise during the study period. But research activity always involves risks, as it is impossible to anticipate everything that may happen. Such problems as inadequate supervision, unexpected problems with experimental equipment or empirical material that proves impossible to obtain, may all slow a programme of research training.

## **Withdrawal of resources**

PhD students who are unable to carry out studies as set out in the individual curriculum must discuss the matter with their supervisor. This step in itself may suffice to bring about a change in the study plan so that it becomes more realistic.

If the studies begin to go really badly, however, the faculty board is empowered to decide that a PhD student who substantially violates the obligations set out in the individual curriculum may have the right to supervision withdrawn together with other resources. (The faculty board has no authority to delegate this task to any other body or person.) Resources may not be withdrawn during a running agreement (normally of not more than one or two years' duration), however, in the case of students who have employment as a PhD student or receive a study grant<sup>15</sup>. If such a decision is taken, the resources will be withdrawn as soon as the period specified in the original agreement is over.

Before a decision is taken, the PhD student and the supervisor have the right to state their views. An assessment is to be made on the basis of the PhD student's and the supervisor's accounts and of other information available to the faculty board. The assessment must also take into consideration how the faculty board itself has fulfilled its obligations as stated in the individual curriculum. The decision must be in writing and must also specify the reasons justifying it.

A faculty board's decision to withdraw resources for a PhD student's programme of research training may be appealed against to the Appeals Board for Higher Education (ÖNH), according to the Higher Education Ordinance ch 12 par 7. The decision of the Appeals Board is final, however.

The address of the Appeals Board is:

ÖNH

Box 7249

103 89 Stockholm

Phone: +46 8 563 087 00

Even after a decision by the faculty board to withdraw resources, the PhD student is still registered, and may regain the right to supervision after applying to the faculty board if the board considers that the student has been

able to show study results "of adequate quality and dimensions", or if the PhD student is able to demonstrate in some other way a likelihood of being able to fulfil the study obligations involved. The student may also continue to study alone and may subsequently apply to submit the dissertation when it is ready.

It is possible to appeal against the rejection of a request to have resources reinstated.



In the National Agency for Higher Education's report entitled *Antagning till forskarutbildning* [Admission to research training]<sup>16</sup> it is mentioned that certain departments have withdrawn resources from PhD students without using the relevant clauses in the Higher Education Ordinance. This was because they wished to protect the student from the public exposure such a procedure would involve. However, such a course of action entails that the student loses any right of appeal against a withdrawal of resources!

In addition, it is possible for a research student with employment as a PhD student to be given notice due to lack of money. Fortunately this rarely happens, as most departments and faculties take their responsibility for ensuring that PhD students will be able to complete their training. The period of notice is determined by the length of employment, but is at least one month.

### Suspension

It is extremely unusual for a PhD student to be suspended from a programme of postgraduate training. According to ch 4 par 6 of the Higher Education Act (**Link 5**), such a measure is only permissible in cases in which a student is suffering from a mental disorder, abuses alcohol or drugs, or is guilty of a serious misdemeanour. But even in such cases only if there is a tangible risk that the student will cause injury to another person or to valuable property.

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<sup>15</sup> The Higher Education Ordinance ch 8 par 10.

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<sup>16</sup> National Agency for Higher Education Report 1999:15 R, p 43.

Cases of suspension are assessed by *Högskolans avskiljandenämnd* (HAN) [the Higher Education Suspensions Board]. Decisions taken by the Board may be appealed against to the public administrative courts (the County Administrative Court in Stockholm County)<sup>17</sup>. Like the secretariat of the Appeals Board (ÖNH), the Board's secretariat is located at the National Agency for Higher Education at 43, Birger Jarlsgatan, in Stockholm. The postal address and telephone number are the same as those of the ÖNH (see above).

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<sup>17</sup> The Higher Education Act ch 4 pars 6 & 7, and ordinance 1987:915 concerning the suspension of students from higher education.

# Maintenance —study funding

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

Admission to research training should in the first instance take place in connection with employment as a PhD student or the approval of a study grant. It is, however, possible to be admitted to a programme of research training with other forms of study funding. This chapter details the conditions, rules, ordinances and the social safety net for the various methods of study funding:

- employment as a PhD student;
- study grants;
- employment at an institution of higher education;
- government guaranteed study support.

### Transitional regulations

There are transitional regulations for certain of the new rules regarding employment as a PhD student, study grants and government guaranteed study support. Most of them will be in force until the end of 2001.

It is also possible to finance postgraduate training by means of **scholarships** or **paid employment**, that is to say by having a job that can be combined with studies.

The chapter explains **external funding**, and the advantages and drawbacks of being an industrial PhD student.

The rules for obtaining **unemployment compensation** are also given.

## Maintenance

According to the regulations relating to study funding, admission to a programme of research training should in the first instance take place in connection with employment as a PhD student or the approval of a study grant. It is however possible to be admitted to postgraduate training with

some other form of study funding if the faculty board judges that the student in question has maintenance guaranteed for the whole duration of the study period.

The commonest form of maintenance is employment as a PhD student. Other forms of funding are study grants, other employment at an institution of higher education, paid employment giving scope for research studies, government guaranteed study support, scholarships or other external funding. The conditions for each of these are detailed in this chapter.

Statistics indicate that PhD students with employment as a PhD student or a study grant are more successful in their studies than others. Even if they obtained these in hard competition, it is likely that this guaranteed maintenance is a significant factor in their results. The statistics also show that the prospects of successful studies relying only on government guaranteed study support are very poor—and this is in fact a powerful reason for tightening up the rules for government-backed financial support for research students.

### Distinguish between work and training

It is usual for PhD students to have some form of departmental duties, such as administration, research or teaching, alongside their research training. It is important to distinguish between time devoted to postgraduate training and time spent working for the department, and the simplest way of doing this is to regulate it in the individual curriculum. It is important to prolong the time allowed for research training in proportion to the time spent working. If students are uncertain about the extension a department will allow for work done, they should ask to be advised of this in advance. They should not begin working without a clear idea of the details of the compensation they will receive.

### Responsibility for funding remains throughout the study period

A faculty board is permitted to admit an applicant whose funding is considered to be secure for the whole of the period of training. But according to the National Agency for Higher Education report *Antagning till forskarutbildning* [Admission to research training]<sup>18</sup>, different institutions of higher education and even faculty boards within a single institution interpret this paragraph in different ways. Some faculty boards see themselves as bearing full responsibility for the assessment. If funding fails to materialize, then the faculty board will accordingly have to use its own means to provide maintenance for the PhD student. Others interpret it as meaning that the faculty board is responsible for the existence of a credible funding plan, but provide no financial guarantees for their own part<sup>19</sup>.

According to the report, departments are very hesitant to admit PhD students with ‘other’ sources of funding. This is particularly the case with applicants claiming private means or funding from relatives, etc. To avoid future problems certain faculty boards require a written certificate from the provider of the funds in question. It seems easier to accept a certificate from an employer as a provider of funds, and the same applies to scholarships and government guaranteed study support. There are examples of students who have been admitted with their parents or a partner as financial guarantors. This has been severely criticized, as it means that an individual’s personal financial circumstances are able to influence their opportunities of being admitted to a programme of research training.

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18 National Agency for Higher Education Report 1999:15 R

19 The National Agency for Higher Education considers that the institution of higher education bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that funding is guaranteed for a PhD student. In the view of the Agency the situation is comparable with the responsibility of an institution of higher education for providing supervision and other resources.

## Employment as a PhD student

Employment as a PhD student is the most secure form of study funding during a programme of postgraduate training. Those who have employment as a PhD student are covered by the same social benefits as other employees at the institution of higher education concerned.

You must be admitted to a programme of postgraduate training to get employment as a PhD student (or be admitted in connection with such employment). If studies are pursued full-time, then such employment may be held for four years. An initial period of employment may last for one year, and may subsequently be renewed for not more than two years at a time. Such a position may not be held for longer than one year after the doctoral degree has been taken. No appeal is allowed against a decision regarding employment as a PhD student.

When a PhD student who has been admitted with some other form of funding obtains employment as a PhD student, any period of study with another form of funding is deducted.

The maximum period for employment as a PhD student is five years (corresponding to four years of study and one year of departmental duties), but this may be extended if there are special reasons for doing so (see Research training, Options for extending the period of study).

For PhD students admitted prior to 1 April 1998 certain transitional rules apply (see Maintenance—study funding, Transitional regulations).

### Departmental duties

Those who have employment as a PhD student are to devote most of their time to their own postgraduate studies, but it is common practice for PhD students to also spend time on administration, research or teaching at the department. Departmental duties are often included in a description of the position or the employment agreement when such a position is advertised. The employer has the right to decide that departmental duties should be

included in the position. Departmental duties are not permitted to exceed 20 per cent of the PhD student's time, however<sup>20</sup>.

Anybody who has departmental work may have his or her appointment as a PhD student extended by a corresponding degree. If departmental work is equal to 20 per cent per year, the postgraduate appointment can then be held for five years (the maximum time allowed).

20 per cent of working hours is equal to one workday a week, but departmental work can also be combined in blocks of time. How many hours constitute 20 per cent of a full-time position depends on the set number of hours worked per year (see below).

It is important that PhD students receive payment, and an extension of their appointment, which reflects the actual work they put into the department. However, it can be difficult to determine how working hours should be calculated – how much time, for instance, goes into preparing seminars and lectures?

Different institutions of higher learning apply different principles for calculating payment for instruction. The principles of calculation are to be regulated in the local agreement on working hours. PhD students are not mentioned at all in these agreements, but should be paid exactly as other teachers are paid in accordance with the agreement for instruction. The first time a person teaches a course, the extra preparation that is required should be included in the calculation. Before PhD students begin to teach, or work with other departmental work, they should have received documentation of what principles of calculation apply. (See also “Extra hours,” page 43.)

In its Budget Bill for 2000 (expenditure area 16, p 117), the Government is a little less strict in its interpretation of how certain a faculty board has to be when it takes its decision: “If the applicant cannot be offered employment as a PhD student or be approved for a study grant, then it is the responsibility of the faculty board to make a thorough examination of the financial circumstances of the applicant in as far as these may be assessed at the time of admission.”

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20 The Higher Education Ordinance ch 5 pars 1 – 7 ([Link 1](#)).

Thus the Government sees this as an admission rule: the assessment only applies to funding circumstances as these appear at the time of admission. The question of responsibility in the longer term is left unregulated. If the assessment should prove mistaken and the funding of the PhD student fails to materialize at some later stage, then the institution of higher education has no legal responsibility (though it may perhaps have a social and moral responsibility) to assist with funding.

### **Salaries and agreements**

The monthly salary for employment as a PhD student usually varies between 16,000 and 21,000 kronor a month.

The salary is set in local negotiations between trade union representatives and representatives of the institution of higher education. At most institutions agreements have been reached concerning special salary grades for PhD students and these may also be used by PhD students who are not in a union (see Student unions, Trade unions working for PhD students).

Pay is normally raised once a student has earned 80 and 120 credits respectively. The “burden of proof” that such a new level has been reached normally lies with the PhD student and it can sometimes take some time for a pay rise to materialize. In this connection it is possible for a PhD student to find support in the individual curriculum, which should be designed to make it easy to follow the progress of a student's studies. A certificate from a supervisor should also prove helpful.

### **Pay negotiations**

Pay can be influenced by relevant professional experience after an undergraduate degree, or by the work included in the employment position, such as teaching. Since the initial salary will influence subsequent pay developments, it is appropriate to get in touch with the local trade union branch regarding suitable pay demands. If you are in a trade union, then it will conduct the negotiations on your behalf, otherwise these will be the responsibility of the PhD student concerned. Students will not always be invited to take part in negotiations, but must often take the initiative in this matter themselves.

## Hours worked per year, holiday and overtime

The working hours of PhD students are regulated in so far as there is a set number of hours worked per year and students are entitled to holiday days.

The number of hours worked per year is regulated in collective agreements (it is used as a standard for sick leave, for calculating the number of holiday days earned and for departmental work), and is set at:

- 1,756 hours up to and including the year a person turns 29 (when 28 vacation days are given).
- 1,732 hours up to and including the year a person turns 30 (when 31 vacation days are given).
- 1,700 hours up to and including the year a person turns 40 (when 35 vacation days are given).

Holiday days are normally taken in the summer, but exceptions can be made. The general rule is that a person should take holidays days as free time, but by applying ahead of time and having the request approved, students can take their holiday pay in cash rather than in free time for part of their holiday.

PhD students are not entitled to **overtime** pay, but it is possible to receive payment for what are called “extra hours” for extra work in the department (see Extra hours, page 43). Payment is seldom received in extra hours for work on the dissertation unless a clearly intolerable situation arises.

The possibilities of being granted a **leave of absence** are limited (apart from an extension of the postgraduate appointment under special circumstances).

## The social security net

People hired as PhD students are entitled to benefits negotiated in collective agreements that are in addition to the basic protection stipulated by law. These include a pension as covered in collective agreements, work injuries insurance, health insurance and sickness benefits, and parental leave. People hired as PhD students also comply with the condition for work entitling them to receive unemployment insurance benefits (“A-kassa”).

People who have been hired as PhD students or receive a study grant should contact their place of employment immediately in the event of illness. A doctor’s certificate should be submitted after seven days of illness.

People hired as PhD students are entitled to sick pay from their employer during the first 28 days of illness. After 28 days of illness, responsibility for remitting sick pay falls to the regional social insurance office (Försäkringskassan). Sick pay is based on the income reported to the regional social insurance office.

Sick pay amounts to 80 per cent of the student’s salary. However no payment is made for the first day of illness.

## Study grants

Study grants may be given to people who are admitted or have already been admitted into the doctoral programme. However, the ordinance on study grants only applies to state universities and university colleges as well as the Stockholm School of Economics. PhD students studying at Chalmers University of Technology and Jönköping University are not covered under the provisions of the ordinance.

A PhD student who has a study grant is not to be offered employment as a PhD student after applying for the appointment until no more than two years of studies remain, according to the student’s individual curriculum<sup>21</sup>. Once PhD students have received their postgraduate appointment, they are entitled to all the social benefits that employment provides for at least the final portion of their studies.

The grant is given for a maximum of twelve months at a time, after which time a new application must be submitted. Those people who have already been given a study grant and who are pursuing successful postgraduate studies are given priority in renewing their grants.

A PhD student can receive a study grant for no more than three years (that is, studies for two years and five months and departmental work for seven

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21 The Higher Education Ordinance ch 5 par 4

months, or 20 per cent of the time); this however can be extended under special circumstances (see below) so that the time a student has a grant can be much longer.

As of 1 April 2000, the study grant amounts to 13,000 kronor a month and is taxable. The government determines the size of the study grant. It is the same size for everyone and is thus not increased as postgraduate studies progress. Nor does it entitle the recipient to the same social benefits as a postgraduate appointment.

### Departmental work

The university is entitled to decide whether a study grant can in certain cases be given on the condition that the PhD student is also employed as an assistant at the university, that is, that the PhD student carries out certain departmental work.

It is important to distinguish between working hours and study hours. A PhD student with a study grant who teaches or carries out some other type of departmental work should request an assistantship (see Employment at an institution of Higher Education, page 43 and “Extra hours”, page 43).

### Having a study grant converted to a postgraduate appointment

PhD students who have been given a study grant for the first time after 31 December, 1997 are entitled, after applying for the grant, to convert it to a postgraduate appointment when two years of study remain. An application to receive a postgraduate appointment is submitted to the Faculty Board (or to the authority that has assumed the responsibility delegated to it). The basis of the decision is the student's individual curriculum.

The most common arrangement is that an assistantship of 20 per cent is set up. An assistantship can correspond to no more than 40 per cent of full-employment while no less than 80 per cent of the entire grant can be given for a study grant. There are instances of assistantships of 20 per cent combined with a full study grant. (see Employment at an institution of Higher Education, page 43).

The study grant can be extended under special circumstances (see Options for extending the period of study, page 34).

PhD students who have a study grant retain this in the event of illness. (But they should not forget to apply to their regional social insurance office.) It is the institution of higher education that pays the grant, but students who earned an income entitling them to sickness benefits (in Swedish SIG) before the grant was awarded may as a rule leave it untouched, and if the income entitling them to sickness benefits is higher than the study grant it is possible to revert to it in the event of illness.

If students have a study grant combined with an assistantship, they may be given sick pay or a parental allowance based on the assistantship if their income exceeds one base amount a year (a figure fixed by the government).

Students who take time off to care for a child can also have their study grant reduced to 50 per cent of the entire grant until the time the child turns eight, or until the child completes the first year of school. The study grant thus gives students a greater opportunity for childcare than a postgraduate appointment, where the Act on Parental Leave applies.



**The study grant is pensionable income but does not qualify the recipient for sick pay or unemployment insurance benefits.**

PhD students with a study grant can remove themselves from the rolls of the regional social insurance office if they are abroad for more than six months in a given year.

## Falling into the gap

When PhD students with a study grant are given a postgraduate appointment, it takes six months before certain social benefits begin to apply. PhD students who are offered an appointment when they are in a late stage of pregnancy and do not have previous income entitling them to sickness benefits which has been left untouched should contact the regional social insurance office to see what forms of financing are best suited to them.

More detailed information about payment in connection with sickness or parental leave can be provided by the student's regional social insurance office ([Link 2](#)).

## Employment at an institution of higher education

### Assistant, research assistant and clinical assistant

An **assistantship** is a part-time appointment that can only be given to PhD students with a study grant.

An assistantship can be for a maximum of 40 per cent of full-time employment.

There are instances where work together with studies is equal to 120 per cent of full-time employment, that is, the student has a 100 per cent study grant and 20 per cent assistantship – but such a workload can be highly demanding over a longer period.

The tasks of an assistant are instruction, research and/or administrative work.

For a **research assistantship**, the student must be admitted for postgraduate university studies but need not be admitted to the doctoral programme. The research assistantship is also a part-time appointment and can be for no more than 50 per cent of full-time employment. The position includes instruction, involvement in research and/or administrative work.

A clinical assistant must have completed a medical or dental degree or have been admitted to a doctoral programme in the field of medical sciences.

An appointment as clinical assistant can be for either full-time or part-time employment.

Employment for these positions can be for no more than one year, but they may be renewed. The period of employment for a research assistant or clinical assistant may not exceed three years. Assistants may only be employed as long as they have study grants for postgraduate studies.

In general, monthly salaries (full-time) vary between 14,500 and 17,500 kronor a month.



PhD students with positions as assistants or research assistants of at least 20 per cent of full-time employment are entitled to the same collective social benefits as other employees. These rights are regulated in the collective agreement that applies to all state employees (in Swedish ALFA, [General Agreement on Salaries and Benefits]) ([Link 3](#)), with the exception that these PhD students are not entitled to overtime pay (although overtime can be remunerated by what are called extra hours, see below).

### “Extra hours”

The term extra hours is a common expression for teachers paid on an hourly basis. A position as a teacher paid on an hourly basis is intended to be for no more than 20 per cent of full-time employment. Teachers paid on an hourly basis are hired for no more than one year at a time, but the appointment can be renewed.

Extra hours are sometimes used when PhD students have done more teaching than what is specified in their particular appointment (that is, more than what is really allowed). It is of course also possible to resolve this by reducing the number of teaching hours the following year.

The number of working hours that are to be calculated for different types of instruction is regulated by local agreements on working hours. However the figures used for recalculating hours vary considerably between institutions (for instance at Uppsala University, the figure that has been adopted is one teaching hour normally corresponding to four working hours, while

Linköping University only gives a guideline that it be equal to 2–7 working hours).

### Salary negotiations:

Hourly wages vary depending on the type of work involved and the formal education and experience of the employee. Consideration should thus be given to how far students have progressed in their postgraduate studies and whether they have any relevant work experience after their undergraduate degree.



In order for collective agreements to apply, the appointment must be for at least 40 per cent of full-time employment (except for assistantships and research assistantships, which only require 20 per cent). A PhD student with no appointment other than as teacher on an hourly basis is thus not included in ALFA [General Agreement on Salaries and Benefits].

## Employment related to postgraduate studies

Postgraduate studies can be financed by having an appointment that can be combined with studies. This means that studies are pursued part-time and, since they must be completed within eight years, students are required to devote at least half of their working hours to their studies.

University lecturer, doctors, teachers, priests, journalists and nurses are some of the professions in which PhD students are found. Some of these PhD students have been able to negotiate with their employer for time for postgraduate studies during paid working hours, while others may have a scholarship to supplement their finances.

## Scholarships

The studies of a PhD student can be financed in full or in part through scholarships.



Scholarships are normally not payment for work. In some cases, a scholarship can be an alternative to a salary, and should then be declared as income and taxed accordingly.

Those awarded a scholarship for studies, however, should not have any duties that normally fall to an employee. If the holder of a scholarship carries out such duties, the scholarship can later be considered taxable income.

### The social security net

The safety net is very thin for PhD students who are financed through scholarships. Scholarships do not provide any social benefits at all; all insurance must be arranged by the student.

Scholarships are often set up with private funds or money from research foundations – from the perspective of the PhD student, it would provide more security if the money were used for study grants.

Scholarships do not entitle the holder to sickness benefits. Nor do students who have not previously earned an income qualify for health insurance.

People who have earned income entitling them to sickness benefits (SGI) in previous jobs may sometimes not be allowed to let such income remain untouched during the period the scholarship finances their studies.

People who have resigned from a position to pursue postgraduate studies in their professional field are entitled to sick pay for one year; from that point their sickness benefits are terminated. However, students who have taken leave from their job retain their health insurance for the entire period of studies.

Only scholarships that can be declared as income and are taxable can be considered pensionable income.

Obviously, for people who have a position outside the university during their studies, the social insurance benefits associated with their position apply.

## External funding

External financing is not a special form of financing studies, but it is not uncommon that study grants, postgraduate appointments and scholarships are financed by someone outside the university. The regulations that apply for PhD students whose appointment, grant or scholarship is externally financed are the same as for those financed by the university's own funds.

Organizations offering external financing include research councils, research foundations, trade organisations, Riksbankens jubileumsfond [the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation] and the business community. A large share of these funds thus comes from the public sector.

### PhD students with positions in the private sector

PhD students with positions in the private sector probably enjoy the best financial situation among PhD students. They are employed in the private sector but can pursue their studies through their jobs while keeping their salary. Some of these students complete their studies at their place of work, while others spend most of their time at the department that admitted them. PhD students often have one supervisor at their workplace and one in the department.

## Unemployment compensation, accident insurance and retirement pensions

### Unemployment compensation

Unemployment compensation cannot be paid while studies are ongoing. In order for PhD students to receive compensation, they must have completed or interrupted their studies.

Students who can show that there are only minor editorial changes to be made in their dissertation are considered to be finished and thus need not wait for the day of their public defence.

Students who have not proceeded as far must interrupt their studies to receive compensation. The interruption should be for at least one term. Postgraduate studies cannot be pursued in the student's free time and the student should not be registered as a student, which is to be attested by the supervisor.

People who have had an appointment, for instance, as a postgraduate student, research assistant, or assistant and who apply for compensation in money using a special form must attest that their studies have been finished or interrupted. This must also be attested by the department.

### Exceptions:

1. People who have worked full-time in combination with full-time studies over a longer period prior to becoming unemployed may under certain conditions continue their studies.
2. Students can study part-time under certain conditions after applying for unemployment benefits. Normally approval is only given for short courses taken for less than half-time studies.

There is helpful, detailed information on the requirements for receiving unemployment compensation available on Sulf's homepage (**Link 4**) and at AMS (the Swedish National Labour Market Administration) (**Link 5**). (See also Unemployment compensation, page 45.)

PhD students from EU countries are covered by unemployment insurance. Other conditions may apply for PhD students from other parts of the world. Contact the regional social insurance office for more detailed information.

### **Accident insurance**

New regulations in the Higher Education Ordinance went into force 1 July 2000 and mean that all students in state universities and university colleges are insured for personal injury from accidents in connection with their studies.

### **Retirement Pensions**

In the new pension system, pensions are based on the income earned over a person's entire professional career. Long periods of study with a low income can mean that a person's pension will be lower—which can affect many PhD students. But the low income early in a person's professional career can of course be offset by a higher income later in life.

According to Sulf, it is calculated that a pension will be 2 per cent lower for each year a person has study allowances or scholarships instead of employment.

PhD students from other EU countries may include the pensionable income they have qualified for through their appointment. PhD students from other countries should contact the regional social insurance office for more information.

# Supervision

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

A number of surveys show that by far the most important factor for successful postgraduate studies is co-operation with the student's supervisor.

One or more **assistant supervisors** can be appointed along with the main supervisor. The PhD student can in principle have as many assistant supervisors and other advisors as desired.

The supervisory role is currently undergoing change and development. Many institutions are setting up training programmes for supervisors, and supervisory committees are being formed where supervisors can give each other advice and exchange experiences.

In this chapter there is also advice for when **your supervision is not working out**. Perhaps a conversation with the supervisor or department head can help. The student union, trade union or student health services often give support, or perhaps an assistant supervisor can address the situation. If nothing works, you have **the right to change supervisors**.

There are instances of PhD students and their supervisor becoming romantically involved. Then it is important that the supervisor resigns immediately and sees to it that a replacement is named.

## The supervisor is very important

In connection with their admission into the postgraduate programme, all PhD students are assigned one or more supervisors who will give help and support during their studies.

Professors and lecturers who qualify as senior lecturers have research supervision as one of their duties. As supervisors, it is their duty to guide their PhDs student through the postgraduate programme, from their initial selection of courses, through the great array of literature, through projects, experiments or field studies, to the final public defence. It is important that the supervisor is an active researcher, so that the PhD student can gain insight into new developments in research. Supervisors should also teach their students about the ethical norms of research and good research methods.

Supervision and the way that supervisors are chosen can differ considerably by discipline and faculty. Sometimes the choice is made because there is only one person in the department who qualifies as a senior lecturer in the subject. In faculties with laboratory-based studies, it is customary that PhD students are invited to be members in a research project that is already under way, where the researcher leading the project becomes the student's supervisor. In these cases, supervision is often concrete and hands-on, whereas supervision in the humanities and social sciences to a greater extent entails having the supervisor as a partner in discussions, someone to sound out about ideas, texts, problems and limitations. However, it is not equally important for everyone to formalise supervision, with regular, scheduled meetings.

### Visit the department

PhD students and supervisors will work together for a long time, often intensely and under great pressure. Therefore it is good to contact the department the student would like to study at even prior to being admitted. Find out as much as possible about the department, contact the professor and other researchers. Try to meet the person who is likely to be the supervisor and find out what he or she expects from a PhD student. Ask about that person's future plans – does he or she have plans, which might entail interrupting the co-operation?

### Assistant supervisors

Alongside the main supervisor, one or more assistant supervisors can be named. If there is no expert in the dissertation topic in the department, assistant supervisors can be named from another department or another institution in Sweden or abroad—or consider applying directly to an institution of higher education with the right expertise.

The position of assistant supervisor is not always that formalised; instead PhD students can in principle involve as many as they desire. PhD students who surround themselves with a network of support people are less vulnerable than students who only have a main supervisor. The support and the feeling of fellowship with other PhD students and other employees in the department/section are also of great importance in postgraduate studies. The network of social contacts is an extremely important means of support, and also reduces the risk that any individual PhD student will be neglected.

### The role of the supervisor

The primary duty of the supervisor is to help PhD students develop into independent researchers with a scientific approach.

The contact between the PhD student and supervisor changes depending on where the student is in the programme. Often contacts are most intensive in the beginning, when the dissertation topic is to be chosen, the study programme is to be structured and the student is to begin the research, and at the end of the study period, when the dissertation is to be completed.

The role of the supervisor differs depending on the topic and on the needs of the individual student. But every PhD student needs someone to convey enthusiasm and help create a good environment for work and research. Supervisors should share their knowledge and experience and in this way help and support their students. They should give guidance and a great deal of encouragement, and ensure there is open communication.

It is critical that the PhD student and supervisor have considerable trust in one another. Clearly, their relationship is first and foremost a professional one, but the personal side of it will be critical because they will be working together for several years. The supervisor will also be one of the few people

who have an essential understanding of what the student is working with. The student, however, cannot expect the supervisor to help out at any time and without notice. On the other hand, the student should, for instance, be able to expect to meet regularly with his or her supervisor, that the supervisor will provide comments on the material within a reasonable period of time and that the supervisor will give ample notice if he or she will be away for a longer period of time.

#### Requirements and expectations

PhD students and supervisors should make it clear at an early stage what requirements and expectations they have for one another. Guidelines for co-operation and each side's commitments should be included in the individual curriculum. If one side does not meet its commitments, it can be taken up in the annual review of the individual curriculum and any problems can be discussed, for instance, with the department head.

Supervisors should make sure that their PhD student starts his or her studies as soon as possible. It is also the responsibility of the supervisor to see to it that the dissertation topic is realistic and that the research project can be carried out. The supervisor must ensure that the student sticks to the topic and is not tempted into pursuing interesting tangents and becomes sidetracked. It is important that supervisors are open and positive to the proposals put forward by their student; it is frustrating when a supervisor is not open to new ideas. But a supervisor who is open to new angles without reservations can cause even greater damage. Supervisors must thus both support and encourage their student while at the same time assume a critical attitude.

Towards the end of the work on the dissertation, the supervisor must set aside a great deal of time for reading and critically examining the dissertation manuscript. The supervisor has considerable responsibility for the final shape

of the dissertation and for not allowing the student to publicly defend the dissertation if the dissertation is not acceptable. The supervisor must also prepare the student for the actual public defence.

### What the supervisor should do:

- \* Help in the choice of a dissertation topic and make sure it is realistic and can be carried out
- \* Examine the manuscript and other material
- \* Recommend courses and interesting and relevant literature
- \* Help in establishing contacts with other departments in Sweden and abroad
- \* Help the student so that he or she can attend and participate in international conferences and meetings
- \* Recommend sources of funding to which the student can apply

### The amount of supervision

All PhD students are entitled to supervision that is given regularly and continuously throughout the entire period of studies. However, there are no rules that stipulate exactly how much time students are entitled to. The Higher Education Ordinance only states that “PhD students are entitled to supervision during the period that can be considered necessary for the prescribed 160-credit programme of studies.” Some departments have set up their own guidelines for the number of supervisory hours that students are entitled to. If the number of supervisory hours is included in the individual curriculum, it can then be referred to if the help agreed is not forthcoming.

### What should a student do if problems arise?

Many PhD students have problems related to supervision. If there is a conflict of some type between the student and his or her supervisor, the student should request a meeting with the supervisor. If the problem is acute, it is

important to act as quickly as possible so that the student’s studies do not suffer. If the conversation does not result in anything constructive, the student should meet with the department head or someone else in charge of postgraduate studies. The student union, older PhD students or the trade union can also provide support. One possible solution may be to appoint an assistant supervisor.

### If supervision is not working out:

- \* Speak with the supervisor
- \* Try to find an assistant supervisor
- \* Contact the head of department
- \* Contact the faculty dean
- \* Speak with the student union and/or trade union
- \* The student health services can provide support

### The right to change supervisors

According to the Higher Education Ordinance, PhD students are entitled to change supervisors if they request it. Usually this entails many practical problems—for the PhD student as well. It may be the case that there is no suitable supervisor in the field or that the student’s studies have progressed so far that it can be difficult for a new person to become involved in the work. For people participating in a project that is led by the supervisor, it is of course particularly difficult. In the worst case, the student may be forced to change dissertation topics, but even that may be worth the trouble! It is important to know that the department or university is obliged to help.

### Romantic involvement and sexual harassment

There are instances of a PhD student and a supervisor becoming romantically involved. Then it is important that the supervisor resigns immediately and

sees to it that a replacement is named. (Students can also take the initiative to change supervisors—but the supervisor bears a greater responsibility.) Even if the romantic involvement is equal, this is not the case with the roles of student and supervisor. It is almost always the student who suffers if the relationship comes to an end.

There are also instances of sexual harassment—and in this situation the student is very much at the mercy of the supervisor. Anyone experiencing sexual harassment should contact the nearest superior or the university official in charge of gender equality issues. The student health services, the student union or the trade union can also give support and advice. (See Sexual harassment, page 63.)

Once again, it is important that PhD students build up a network and have assistant supervisors and other people reviewing their work to avoid being completely at the mercy of a single person.

# The awarding of degrees

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

**The Licentiate degree.** It is not stipulated in the Ordinance how the academic essay or thesis that is a part of the Licentiate degree is to be examined; however it is customary that students seeking a Licentiate degree hold “a Licentiate seminar” and discuss their work.

**Public defence.** The final part of doctoral studies is an oral, public defence in which PhD students defend their dissertation.

The defence is public and the time and place are to be announced far in advance. The dissertation should be made available far enough in advance and in a sufficient number of copies so that anyone who wants to can study it.

Prior to the public defence, the faculty board appoints a chairman for the defence, an opponent and an examination board. The opponent should have good command of the dissertation topic and examine the dissertation in detail. The examination board consists of three or five members, with at least one of them coming from another of the faculty board’s areas of responsibility or from another university.

The very last step is the conferment ceremony, the academic celebration for all PhD students who completed their degree during the year.

## Prior to the public defence or Licentiate degree

For a Licentiate or PhD, students are required to have passed the tests that are a part of the postgraduate programme and have written an academic dissertation or thesis that has been accepted.

### The Licentiate degree

A Licentiate degree (of 80 credits with an academic essay or thesis corresponding to 40 credits) can be one phase in the programme en route to the public defence. Roughly one quarter of those awarded a PhD were first awarded a Licentiate degree.

Writing a Licentiate thesis naturally takes extra time, but many people find that in return the time spent after getting the Licentiate is used more effectively; taking notes becomes more systematic, and students have the training to write and an understanding of how much time it requires.

For students who do not complete their postgraduate studies for some reason, the Licentiate degree is valuable proof of completed studies. The Licentiate degree is also well known in the private sector.

### Licentiate seminar

It is not stipulated in the Ordinance how the academic essay is to be examined, but it is customary that students seeking a Licentiate degree hold a seminar and discuss their work. Listeners can present their views and any criticism—it is like a mini-defence.

There must be an examiner who studies the essay, but in many instances there is an opponent as well as a more or less formal examination board.

### PhD

To be awarded a PhD, students must pass the courses that are included in the postgraduate programme and have written a dissertation corresponding to at least 80 credits that has been admitted by the department.

## Printing the dissertation

The faculty board decides on the minimum number of copies for the public defence and on payment for printing costs. Previously, issues related to printing were regulated in a special ordinance; now, instead, the faculty board (or the body that the board delegates decision-making powers to) will decide what is suitable in each case. Decisions thus vary between universities and between research topics.

Nor is it longer obligatory to provide copies to libraries, but many universities have adopted local rules, which are often similar to what was previously stipulated in the ordinance.

## Posting of the dissertation

The vice-chancellor is to decide far enough in advance the time and place of the public defence. At least three weeks beforehand, the dissertation should be available in a sufficient number of copies so that it is possible for the academic community and the general public to study it prior to the public defence. This is done in part by “posting the dissertation”. In the past, dissertations were actually posted on the university’s official notice board; today most departments are content to post information about the time and place of the public defence.

## Press release

One way of spreading research results is by sending out press releases—the university’s information department can usually help with this. Remember to write clearly!

Nor should you forget to provide information about your research through the Swedish Research Council’s research database, SAFARI ([Link 1](#)).

## The public defence

The defence of the dissertation is oral and public.

Supervisors should be sure that the dissertation is good enough to be approved before the student is allowed to defend the dissertation. For compilation dissertations, the articles have often already been published in

refereed journals. In other words, it is unusual for a student to fail at a public defence.

Prior to the defence, the faculty board names an opponent and chairman for the public defence.

Below is a description of a public defence given in the student handbook for postgraduate studies at the Lund Institute of Technology:

“The public defence is opened by the chairman, who describes the structure of the defence. The chairman then presents the PhD student, the title of the dissertation, the opponent and the members of the examination board.

The student then takes the floor and can report any errata or other corrections in the dissertation.

The opponent and/or in some cases the student gives a general overview of the topic with a description of how the dissertation can contribute to knowledge in the field and gives a presentation of the dissertation.

Then there is a discussion, with the opponent offering questions and views on the scientific relevance, methods and results and the student then orally defending his or her dissertation in relation to the questions raised by the opponent.

The members of the examination board then have the opportunity to ask the student questions. The floor is then opened up to the audience, with the public having the right to ask the student questions in the order determined by the chairman. Students always have the right to express themselves in Swedish or English.”

## The opponent

The opponent should have good command of the dissertation topic and study the dissertation in detail. If the opponent comes from another country and is not certain about the Swedish educational system, it is the duty of the chairman to inform him or her about what requirements and expectations are entailed.

## The examination board

The examination board consists of three or five members. The faculty board will decide the number of members and name them. At least one of the five

should come from another of the faculty board's areas of responsibility or from another university. The student's supervisor may not be included on the board unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The opponent and the supervisor are entitled to participate in meetings with the examination board. They may participate in the deliberations, but not in the decision.

Normally, dissertations are awarded either a pass or fail.

### **Degree certificate**

Students awarded a PhD or Licentiate degree will be given a degree certificate from their institution of higher learning upon request.

### **Conferment ceremony**

The conferment ceremony is the large academic celebration in which all students who have been awarded their PhD during the year can receive their insignia: a ring, a diploma and a mortarboard or laurel wreath. (However new PhDs must pay for their ring and mortarboard.)



PhD students who have not paid their term fees (student union dues) can be refused their Licentiate degree or PhD.

# Interviews

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

**Ernesto Fumero**, a PhD student in the Physics Department at Stockholm University, is writing a compilation dissertation in nuclear physics.

**Karin Broberg** was a “shadow PhD student” in Clinical Genetics at Lund University for ten months.

**Marie Tapper**, the PhD ombudsman at Lund University, has the job of trying to find solutions when PhD students have problems.

## Ernesto Fumero, a PhD student in the Physics Department at Stockholm University

Ernesto Fumero is in his ninth term of postgraduate studies in the Physics Department. He is one of 70 PhD students and is working on a compilation dissertation in nuclear physics.

### **Is it stressful? Are you worried that you won't be done in the time allotted?**

“Sometimes, but I'm trying not to get too worked up about it and instead push that feeling of uncertainty aside. It depends mostly on me whether I finish in time—and to some extent on my luck with the equipment. There's nothing to be gained by worrying.”

Ernesto Fumero has a degree in physics from Cuba. He fled the country in 1994, and when he had learned a little Swedish he contacted the Physics Department. A research group there had the opportunity to hire him for six months, and after that he was admitted as a PhD student. In the beginning he was financed through the research group, then a scholarship, and after that he received a study grant and finally a postgraduate appointment.

“There is 20 per cent teaching included in my appointment. I started teaching undergraduate courses that were related to what I'm doing research in as soon as I was admitted. At first, I taught together with another PhD student, which meant that it wasn't so awful. We also got a lot of support from the teachers.

“I'm glad I get to teach; I find that I have knowledge that I wasn't aware I had and at the same time I also learn something new in every course, even if I've taught it before.

“It's also good to be able to extend my time as a PhD student by 20 per cent. I'm an experimentalist and it's often the case that things get all messed up or a piece of equipment breaks down, and then you have to wait a couple of weeks for spare parts. Then you can fill your time with teaching.

“I also find that undergraduate students think it’s interesting to meet PhD students. I often get asked about what it’s like to study for a doctorate, what life as a PhD student is like.”

**How much teaching corresponds to 20 per cent of working hours?**

“The department uses a standard for how many hours each course is expected to take up. But it doesn’t take into account whether it’s the first time you’re teaching the course. – Then there’s a lot of extra time involved in preparing – or how many students are in the course – the more there are, the more work it entails.

“But if you think that teaching takes up too much of your time, you can talk to the person in charge of assigning courses. There’s usually never a problem making changes.”

This term, 10 per cent of Ernesto’s time is given over to departmental work as deputy chairman of the PhD student council.

Ernesto Fumero thinks that his postgraduate studies are sometimes a bit divided up:

“I hate doing two, three things at the same time—but for some periods I have my own research, a few courses to take and one or two courses that I teach. Every time I get interrupted in my own research, it takes a certain amount of time to get back into what I was actually doing—it means the work goes more slowly.”

**What happens if you’re not done in time?**

“If just a little bit is missing, the research group may be able to finance it—especially if you’re about to produce some important results. Otherwise, I suppose I’ll have to find a job and finish the work on my dissertation on the side.”

**What are your plans for the future?**

“I would really like to continue to do research, but not really in the academic world. I’m more interested in applied research than basic research, which is what people mainly do at the university.

“I can also imagine a post doc outside Sweden (but I’d really like to avoid learning another language). If I don’t get a job in Sweden, a post doc may be a way of finding out what it’s like to live in another country and check out the labour market there.”

## Karin Broberg, former “shadow PhD student”

Today, Karin Broberg is a PhD student in the Section for Clinical Genetics at Lund University. The road there has been marked by waiting, scholarships and a large degree of uncertainty. For a year she was a “shadow PhD student,” which meant she worked in Clinical Genetics while she waited to be admitted for postgraduate studies—but without a guarantee that she would really be a PhD student.

“I got a Master’s in biology and included in it was a degree project for 20 credits. After I finished my project in Clinical Genetics, I knew I wanted to get a PhD. I was asked to stay and was given a scholarship to finance my studies,” Karin recalls.

The period during which she had a scholarship was extended to ten months as she waited to be admitted into the postgraduate programme. When she was finally admitted, she had to continue another year with a scholarship before she got financing via a study grant.

“There are advantages to having scholarships, like you have a chance to get to know the department and the supervisors and see what it’s like to do research.”

But in no way do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, Karin points out:

“You have no insurance coverage, you can’t qualify for unemployment benefits, sick benefits or a parental allowance, and if you’re in an accident at the department, you’re not even covered by insurance for personal injuries at work.

“The time spent at the department is not an asset if you don’t publish anything and it’s difficult to assert yourself if a problem arises. You don’t get information because you’re not registered, you can’t go to postgraduate courses, and you’re not even included in the e-mail system.

“After a while I started to think about whether my situation was acceptable. What would happen if I had an accident? If I suffered permanent injuries? How would I manage without a parental allowance if I had a child?”

It is Karin’s impression that the system of “shadow PhD students” is quite extensive.

“In the medical faculty, this type of financing is more the rule than the exception when you start your postgraduate studies.”

#### **Why did you go along with not getting an appointment?**

“After many years of student loans, I was grateful to have an income. At first, it felt like it was a very good solution; I didn’t see all the disadvantages. I also took it for granted that I would be admitted as a PhD student.

“I also think it’s difficult to speak up when your supervisor says ‘we’ll wait a bit before we formally admit you.’”

## **Marie Tapper, PhD ombudsman, Lund University**

“Most PhD students concentrate only on research and when there are problems, they don’t know what to do or what rights they have. Especially in the humanities, where there are so few services available, students go along with almost any kind of condition just to do research.”

When we first meet, Marie Tapper has been the PhD ombudsman at Lund University for almost four months and has the job of trying to find solutions when PhD students have problems.

The foundations for many of the problems she encounters have been established early on because the introduction for PhD students is often bad. Moreover, many PhD students come to the student union only when they have had the problem for a long time and the problem has taken root.

“It’s common that the PhD students I talk to say that they’re at a complete disadvantage and that they don’t dare complain because they’re afraid it will hurt them when they apply for an appointment at a later date.

“It’s also common that departments think it’s disloyal of students to come to the student union, but when we find a solution, the chances are good that things will function again,” says Marie Tapper.

“Many problems are about conflicts with the supervisor. It may be because of personal chemistry, or for instance because the student’s research has gone in a new direction but the supervisor doesn’t want to support this. Many people say that they feel like serfs and completely dependent on the benevolence of their supervisor.

“I try to mediate and we often come up with a solution. In nearly half the cases, however, the solution is that the student changes supervisors.

“We also have problems where PhD students who have been admitted under the old rules don’t get any supervision at all, because the department says they can’t afford it.”

#### **Why do you think things are like this?**

“Because the academic world is so hierarchical, conservative and male-dominated.

“It’s strange how the university is so nonchalant about how students feel in their studies when it’s the next generation of colleagues that’s being shaped.”

But she does see a bit of hope:

“I hope that supervision will take on greater status because teaching skills have been given a greater value. For instance, I place great faith in all the supervision training programmes that are starting up right now.”

But this PhD ombudsman has a dark picture of postgraduate studies:

“I think there are many more PhD students than the ones I meet who need help in some way; the number of cases that go unreported is probably quite high. In this job, you almost stop believing that people are intrinsically good,” says Marie Tapper.

# Inadequate gender equality and other discrimination

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

The number of women is consistently increasing in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies. In undergraduate studies, women are in the majority, while the percentage of women decreases the higher up in the hierarchy one goes. Today the percentage of women in the category of professors is only about 11 per cent.

“I think you need dynamite to blow up this system—it’s apparent that the system is completely incapable of reforming itself when it comes to gender equality,” says **Agneta Stark**, who is a visiting professor at Tema Genus at Linköping University, in an interview.

In 1997 two Swedish researchers published an op-ed article in *Nature*, which showed that what was then the Swedish Medical Research Council (MFR) discriminated against female applicants for research appointments. A female researcher must have produced more than double the amount that a man has in order for the MFR’s expert panel to consider her to be as skilled as the man, the authors of the article wrote.

As Minister of Education, Carl Tham worked hard to speed up the work on gender equality. Among other measures, he put forward a government bill on gender equality, which included funding to finance “Tham professorships,” and he made sure that recruitment targets were introduced for a given percentage of women among newly hired professors.

One of the factors that prevent women from pursuing a career in academia is the number of **unexpressed rules** that are concealed within the walls of our universities,” says Agneta Stark.

## Inadequate gender equality

In the 8 March, 1996 op-ed page of the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter, an article was published which showed that what was then the Swedish Medical Research Council (MFR) discriminated against female applicants for research appointments. A female researcher must have produced more than double the amount a man has in order for the MFR’s expert panel to consider her to be as skilled as the man!

The authors of the article, Agnes Wold and Christine Wennerås, showed in their research that in the eyes of the MFR, skills mean “being scientifically productive, being a man and being personally acquainted with the MRF’s evaluators.” The article was later published in the journal *Nature*<sup>22</sup> and the authors’ findings drew a great deal of attention both in Sweden and abroad.

In 1997 recruitment targets were introduced for the percentage of women among newly hired professors. The idea behind the recruitment targets was to force universities and university colleges to intentionally invest in women at all levels of the university in order to develop a base for recruitment for the highest positions. The bold target was to have the percentage of women in professorships overall reach 25 per cent in 2008, compared to about 11 per cent today.

Most universities achieved their different recruitment goals for the period 1997–1999.

Gender research was given strong support, with the establishment of a national secretariat for gender research at Göteborg University, ([Link 1](#)) as well as the introduction of 18 positions, six of which are professorships, with a focus on gender research. And at Linköping University, Tema Genus, an interdisciplinary unit on gender, was started in 1999.

The National Agency for Higher Education has been commissioned by the government to examine the gender work of the universities. But in the budget proposal for 2000, the Ministry of Education has criticised the institutions of higher learning because many of them have provided incomplete

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22 *Nature*, vol 387, 22 May, 1997, pp. 341-343

reports on gender equality work. It is clear that requirements and continual reminders are needed to keep this work alive.

## Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined in the Higher Education Ordinance as unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature or other unwelcome behaviour based on gender that violates the integrity of a student in his or her university studies. Examples of sexual harassment can be comments, allusions, touching (groping) and suggestions or demands for sexual services.

It is the liability and responsibility of the universities to prevent instances of sexual harassment.

Anyone subject to sexual harassment should, in addition to noting that the attention is not welcome, report to the nearest superior or to the university's gender equality officer. The student health services, the student union, the trade union or the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman can give support and advice.

The incident can be reported to the police in serious cases included under the criminal code, but such cases are most often a question of serious offences rather than of the more subtle behaviour that sexual harassment normally entails.

In postgraduate studies, there are instances where PhD students feel that they have been sexually harassed by their supervisor or someone else in the department. When such a case arises, it is often women who are in a position of dependence on a male superior who are most affected, and they naturally feel extremely vulnerable and violated. (See *Romantic involvement and sexual harassment*, page 50.)

In the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, it is stipulated that the university should always observe and promote equality between men and women. In the Higher Education Ordinance it is also stated that universities are to take measures to guard against and prevent any student from being subject to sexual harassment. There is also a definition of sexual harassment, which corresponds to the one given in the Act Concerning

Equality between Men and Women. Included in the Higher Education Ordinance is a provision that disciplinary measures can be taken against a student that sexually harasses a student or teacher. For people with appointments as PhD students, provisions in the Act also apply, which means among other things that PhD students with an appointment enjoy the more extensive protection against sexual harassment and sex discrimination that the laws provide. If a teacher subjects a student to sexual harassment, it can lead to measures stipulated in labour laws.

## Ethnic and social bias in recruitment

Issues concerning discrimination in university recruitment as well as in university operations have attracted growing attention in recent years. The location of the new university college at Södertörn, south of Stockholm, was an example of a conscious effort to move closer to people who have less of a propensity to pursue higher education.

At the national political level, attempts are being made to counteract socially and ethnically unrepresentative recruitment in particular by building institutions of higher education throughout the country, which makes higher education more accessible—at least geographically speaking. Distance learning is a method that makes education available to many people. New pedagogical methods of work and examination are also being promoted as means of attracting new groups of students in the long term.

But the changes are slow in coming; reality cannot be altered so easily at first. University boards and vice-chancellors, students themselves and their organisations must also become involved in order to find solutions.

And there is a great deal to be done: the percentage of people starting university from white-collar homes is 28 per cent, while the percentage in blue-collar homes is 13 per cent. If instead an entire age group is examined and not just the people who attend university, the difference is even greater: among young people born in 1976, 54 per cent of young people from white-

collar homes up to the age of 21 had started university while the figure for young people from homes with non-academically trained workers was 14 per cent.

It is stated in the Higher Education Act that universities should promote understanding of other countries and of international relations in their activities.

## Mohammad Fazlhashemi, a PhD student at Umeå University

Mohammad Fazlhashemi comes from Iran; he is a PhD student in the history of ideas at Umeå University, where he also has the job of assisting the vice-chancellor with advice and information about ethnic issues in connection with the university's quality assurance work.

“Today in Sweden, 18–20 per cent of the population has another ethnic background, but we have no ready figures on how they are represented at the university. In Umeå, it is clear to the naked eye that there are few such people on the teaching staff and in the university's decision-making bodies, but it's now time for us to find out exactly where things stand. One of my duties is to carry out an in-depth survey on this.

“The university world has not noticed that people are left out. When you aren't confronted with people from another ethnic background, it's easy to forget them. By making the problem visible, you can generate interest.”

When Mohammad Fazlhashemi came to Umeå as a visiting student in 1977, he was one of the few foreign students there. He tells how he has always been well received in Umeå.

“I've had good support and extra help. When the department couldn't give me adequate supervision—I wrote my dissertation on a Persian philosopher who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century—I instead got extra financing to pay for travel and remuneration to an assistant supervisor at another university in Sweden and then also to check the language in my dissertation.

“I think it's different today—especially for people born and raised here; they may not have such positive experiences in terms of how they are treated

by society. Their ethnic background and different cultural heritage are often viewed as a burden, which contributes to their sense of isolation.

“These young people also see that immigrants with an academic education haven't found work in Sweden, that their knowledge isn't put to use. The young people then conclude that it's safer to pursue a shorter vocational education programme.

“Many students with an immigrant background need remedial instruction in Swedish, but there isn't anything like that when you've been admitted to university. Language difficulties are critical—they create a sense of isolation and the feeling that students are at a disadvantage.”

Mohammad Fazlhashemi participates in the university's training programme for supervisors. He follows issues related to supervision and ethnicity, and he thinks that the supervisory committee can be a good form of support, where new experiences are continually collected.

“Ethnic diversity means many different things, there are so many aspects and perspectives to experiment with. But if people are prepared, if teachers are aware of how different groups can react, the culture clash will be softer. Knowledge about this must be included in the development of pedagogical skills.” Mohammad talks about a professor in Lund who is just as happy each year when new PhD students come who have their roots in other countries. He is glad that they can take in source material in other languages and thus expand the research front in Sweden!

But when I ask Mohammad Fazlhashemi whether he has any advice for students with a foreign background, he answers:

“If I were to begin my postgraduate studies today, I would choose a 'normal' subject, one that's established in Sweden.

“I really want to be an optimist, but if your field of expertise is too odd, there may be no positions in a Swedish university that are suitable for you. It's easy to be left out—not because of your origin – but because your research field doesn't fit into what's considered to be mainstream studies. Some subjects, especially the history of ideas, are based on a Euro centric perspective.

“If there are no experts who can assess your skills, you aren't given consideration! I have my own experience of this: on two occasions when I applied for a position, the expert panel wrote that they didn't have the

expertise to assess me. Yet they still ranked me third and as a result I didn't get the position.

“The fact that the expert panel admit that their knowledge is limited isn't so surprising in and of itself, but in the end, it's the applicant with a different ethnic background and a non-traditional field of research who suffers.”

# Research ethics

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

**Research ethics** concerns problems and issues related to how people conduct research. For instance, how far can people go in risking the integrity and safety of other people to gain the knowledge that is being sought?

**The researcher's ethics** concerns the honour and honesty of the researcher, how people conduct themselves to achieve results, in their work together with colleagues, with the business community and with other institutions and people.

“The ethics that apply to research and researchers are of course no different from what applies everywhere else. But because researchers regularly face certain types of ethical and moral problems, which others may perhaps not face, special guidelines have been developed for research,” says **Gisela Dahlquist**, a professor in children's medicine at Umeå University and chairman of MFR's board for research ethics.

“Supervisors have an incredibly important role, as a role model and as a provider of knowledge.

“Another important ethical aspect is how PhD students themselves are treated. There are research groups that recruit PhD students for their projects and then simply use them as labour and forget that students are first and foremost employed to complete their studies and not to carry out the work for a research group,” Gisela Dahlquist points out.

## Interview with Gisela Dahlquist, a professor in children's medicine at Umeå University and chairman of MFR's board for research ethics\*

### What are research ethics?

“The ethics that apply to research and researchers are of course no different from what applies everywhere else. But because researchers regularly face certain types of ethical and moral problems, which others may perhaps not face, special guidelines have been developed for research.”

Gisela Dahlquist divides up the professional ethics of researchers into two dimensions:

**Research ethics** concerns problems and issues related to how people conduct research. For instance, how far can people go in risking the integrity and safety of other people to gain the knowledge that is being sought?

The second aspect, **the researcher's ethics**, concerns the honour and honesty of the researcher, how people conduct themselves to achieve results, in their work together with colleagues, with the business community and with other institutions and people.

“At the university, committees on research ethics have been formed which follow national rules and guidelines, which are in turn based on international guidelines, like what's called the Helsinki Declaration, and it's increasingly common to include courses in ethics as basic courses offered to PhD students by the faculty,” Gisela Dahlquist adds.

“There should be an ethical examination of every medical research project carried out on humans or animals. Nowadays an ethical examination is often also carried out on research projects in the social sciences and humanities. For instance, HSFR\* requires one whenever the council allocates funds.”

\* MFR and HSFR are now part of a new organisation  
—the Swedish Research Council

### **Are questions about ethics important when students are at the postgraduate level?**

“It’s obvious that all researchers, even if they’re still pursuing their studies, must be aware that their research runs the risk of damaging other important values in their quest for knowledge.

“If people aren’t aware of the conflict that can arise between knowledge and the integrity of people, the general public’s faith in research will gradually be damaged. The public contributes to research but also consumes it—if that faith disappears, their support disappears,” she warns.

### **What is the responsibility of the supervisor in postgraduate studies for training in ethical issues?**

“Supervisors have an incredibly important role, as a role model and as a provider of knowledge. Unfortunately, there are far too many supervisors who have not completed training in ethical issues themselves, and they are thus not used to working from this perspective. It’s the responsibility of the faculty to see that supervisors have the training that’s required.

“Another important ethical aspect is how PhD students themselves are treated. There are research groups that recruit PhD students for their projects and then simply use them as labour and forget that students are first and foremost employed to complete their studies and not to carry out the work for a research group.

“The supervisor must furthermore make sure that the PhD student also knows what rules apply for the documentation and filing of material. It’s important that the results can be verified and that it can be proved no cheating is involved, but also that other researchers can use the material in their work.

“It’s also critical to teach PhD students to request permission, for instance, from an ethics committee, a committee on the ethics of using animals in experiments, the Data Inspection Board or the Medical Products Agency.”

### **Then sharing the honour of research results can also be an ethical issue?**

“Absolutely. Quarrels in a research team about who should be the first author listed are quite common – it’s certainly the most common reason for why researchers quarrel with one another. One recommendation is that a contract should always be written up from the beginning about who does what and who will be the first author listed for what parts.

“This is laid down in the Vancouver Declaration,”<sup>23</sup> **(Link 1)** Gisela Dahlquist adds.

“It’s important that research groups assign the work ahead of time because it’s almost impossible for an external examiner to determine afterwards who did what. It’s one person’s word against another’s.”

But the major ethical issues involve the researcher’s relation to society, Gisela Dahlquist argues:

“What’s important from the view of society is that researchers are always honest with their results—that they never cheat by distorting results or by falsifying, overemphasising their importance or giving misleading interpretations of their research results.”

### **What happens if a PhD student is caught cheating, or if a PhD student finds out that someone else is?**

“Cheating is always unacceptable and must be reported. The most complicated situation is obviously the case where a PhD student discovers that the professor or someone else is cheating. PhD students are in a position of dependence and naturally run the risk of being dismissed and then manoeuvred out of the group.

“Universities must ensure that there is protection available for anyone who reports cheating. There is a clear risk that senior colleagues gain more of a hearing, and institutions must therefore make sure that everyone is treated well and also that younger people should dare to report it if they discover something improper.”

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23 Published by the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. JAMA, 269, 2282-2286. 1993.

PhD students should always first talk with their department head or someone in the faculty leadership if they suspect there is cheating. This person is obliged to take this matter up with the vice-chancellor. Then the faculty, with the help of the vice-chancellor, decides whether the matter should be investigated. At this point in time, it is the local institution of higher learning that investigates and takes measures against cheating. For the medical faculties, the MFR has set up an “expert committee” that can help the university with the actual investigation and decision.

“The MFR wants investigations into cheating to be handled at the national level to minimise the risk of challenges and so that decisions will be as consistent as possible. Of course even today you can immediately deal with such matters externally – but it’s always the vice-chancellor who decides whether the investigation will be conducted and by whom.”

# Government agencies, foundations and scholarships

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

**The National Agency for Higher Education** is the central government authority for higher education.

The Swedish Research Council is responsible for the research information database **SAFARI**, which makes information about Swedish research readily available on the Internet.

In addition to the approximately 15 billion kronor that the state invests in research annually, **research foundations** provide about two billion kronor annually.

There is an abundance of various **scholarships** that undergraduate and postgraduate students can apply for; below you will find links to a number of homepages where anyone interested can begin to explore.

## The National Agency for Higher Education (Link 1)

The National Agency for Higher Education is the central government authority for higher education. The agency works with monitoring and evaluating, quality assurance issues and with the renewal of teaching methods, oversight, the application of laws, student information and international issues in higher education.

## Research councils

A new organisation of councils was formed on 1 January, 2001 and consists of the Swedish Research Council, the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research, the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning and the Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems.

The Swedish Research Council is the major authority for basic research. Within the Swedish Research Council are councils for three general subjects: one for medicine, one for the natural sciences and engineering sciences and one for the humanities and social sciences. The majority of the council's funding for research will be awarded through applications from researchers.

The Research Forum is an organisation within the Swedish Research Council that will be able to discuss and debate broad research issues that are important to the needs of both research and society. Examples of such issues can be ethical aspects of research, gender and diversity perspectives in research and the conditions and opportunities for interdisciplinary research.

The Research Council for Working Life and Social Research is responsible for research into issues that affect working life, the way the labour market works and people's social and economic situation.

The most important area of responsibility for the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning is research in the agricultural sciences, in the environment and for ecologically sustainable development.

The council's activities should also help to increase knowledge about areas such as social planning, building and administrative issues and housing.

## SAFARI—a research information data base ([Link 2](#))

The Swedish Research Council is responsible for making information available about Swedish research. SAFARI (The dissemination of research information for the general public on the Internet) has been set up on the Internet where visitors can use search words to find material of interest.

The goal is to make available information about all research that is funded by taxes via SAFARI.

The information in SAFARI has been posted on the Internet by the research organisations themselves. It should be designed so that it is suited to different target groups, for instance, schools, companies, government authorities, the research community and the general public.

PhD students can use SAFARI to contact other researchers in their field and to inform others about their research.

## Research foundations

In 1994, five research foundations were established. It was further decided that two universities would be converted and run as foundations in accordance with civil law. This took place in a period of great political turbulence.

In addition to the 15 billion kronor that the state invests in research annually, the research foundations provide about two billion kronor annually.

The research foundations are:

Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research, SSF ([Link 3](#))

The Knowledge Foundation ([Link 4](#))

The Swedish Foundation for International Co-operation in Research and Higher Education, STINT ([Link 5](#))

The Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, Mistra ([Link 6](#))

The foundations have extensive assets; in 1999 they amounted to 25 billion kronor.

In connection with the formation of the research foundations, the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond [The Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation] ([Link 7](#)) made a donation to research in cultural studies.

Rarely can individual PhD students apply for funding or appointments from the foundations; the funds are instead granted to larger research projects.

## Scholarships

There is an abundance of various scholarships that undergraduate and postgraduate students can apply for. Often these scholarships are designed so that they are directed at a field and/or special aim. Rarely is this money given to cover student living expenses; usually it is a question of grants for travel and conferences and in some cases also for equipment like computers and software programmes.

At most of the larger institutions of higher learning, there are different types of scholarship offices that can give more detailed information and suggestions. Most faculties and many departments also have special grants that can be applied for, in particular for travel and conferences.

The Sweden-America Foundation administers fellowships for research and graduate level education in the United States and Canada ([Link 8](#)).

The American-Scandinavian Foundation, ASF, administers scholarships for American citizens for research in Scandinavia. The ASF also administers fellowships for Swedish visiting lecturers at colleges and universities in the United States ([Link 9](#)).

# Student unions and trade unions

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## Chapter summary

All students at universities and university colleges are required to be members in a student union; this also applies to PhD students. At most institutions that have postgraduate studies, there are different types of organisations for PhD students in the student unions, which should address the interests of PhD students at that institution. In the student unions of larger institutions, there is often also a PhD **ombudsman**. These are hired by the student union and have the duty of providing information to students, giving them advice and supporting them when they encounter some type of problem.

There are two national co-operative organisations where PhD students from different institutions of higher learning can meet and exchange experiences, **the SFS Committee for Doctoral Students (SFS-KD)** and **Sweden's Doctoral Students (S-Dok)**. These organisations are also responsible for information, the national monitoring of education and commenting on proposals from the government.

The trade union representing PhD students is **Sulf**, the Swedish Association of University Teachers, a union within Saco, Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations, that specialises in higher education and organises university teachers, researchers and PhD students. Sulf has a section for PhD students, **Sveriges doktorandförening**, with roughly 4,500 members, which oversees the interests of PhD students in particular.

Within TCO, Confederation of Professional Employees is **DoFF**, the Swedish Association of Doctoral Students and Researchers. Under TCO and the Salaried Employees' Union is **ST-ATF**, its branch for academics.

When people join a union, they also sign up with an **unemployment benefit fund**. However, it is possible to sign up only with an unemployment benefit fund. The largest fund for academics is **AEA**, which is Saco's unemployment benefit fund. TCO's unemployment benefit fund, **SeA**, also has many PhD students as members.

## Student unions

All students at universities and university colleges are required to be members in a student union; this thus also applies to PhD students.

A university education is to be free of charge, but the student union, for instance, can charge its members fees. PhD students who are active as students for 10 per cent or more of full-time studies during the term must pay a term fee. Many student unions offer a reduced fee for students if they are registered to study for less than 50 per cent of full-time studies.

Prior to a public defence, all term fees (student union fees) must be paid; otherwise a person can be denied certification of a Licentiate or PhD.

### What do student unions do for PhD students?

At most institutions of higher learning that have postgraduate programmes, there are different types of organisations for PhD students in the student unions. In these associations, elected student representatives have the task of seeing after the interests of the PhD students at that institution. Many of these doctoral associations have information available on the Internet (**Link 1**).

In the student unions of larger institutions, there is often also a PhD ombudsman. These are hired by the student union and have the job of providing information and give advice to students.

The PhD ombudsman can help them find their way through the jungle of rules, ordinances and customs that apply in postgraduate studies. This person can also be consulted if students have a problem or have been badly or wrongly treated in their studies. The ombudsman can also work as a type of intermediary in conflicts between students and their supervisor/department. (Read the interview with a PhD ombudsman, page 59.)

There are two national co-operative organisations for PhD students who are active in the student union, the SFS Committee for Doctoral Students (SFS-KD) and Sweden's Doctoral Students (S-Dok). In these organisations students from different places of learning can meet and exchange experiences. These organisations are also responsible for the national monitoring of education and disseminate information to politicians and decision-makers, for instance, by commenting on proposals from the government.

## Trade unions that represent PhD students

**Sulf**, the Swedish Association of University Teachers ([Link 2](#)), is a union within Saco that specialises in higher education and organises university teachers, researchers and PhD students. Sulf has a section for PhD students, the **Swedish Association of Doctoral Students** (Sveriges Doktorand-förening), with roughly 4,500 members, which oversees the interests of PhD students in particular.

On Sulf's homepage those people who are interested can find laws and agreements, salary levels, working conditions, special information for PhD students etc.

Other associations within Saco that organise many academics include the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers, Jusek and the Swedish Medical Association.

DoFF is part of **TCO**, the Swedish Association of Doctoral Students and Researchers.

Under TCO and the Salaried Employees' Union is **ST-ATF**, its branch for academics.

## Unemployment benefit funds

When students join a trade union, they also sign up for an unemployment benefit fund. It is however possible to sign up only for an unemployment benefit fund.

The largest unemployment benefit fund for academics is AEA, which is Saco's unemployment benefit fund. Their homepage has a clear, thorough description of the rules for PhD students about membership and compensation.

TCO's unemployment benefit fund, SeA, also has many PhD students as members.

# Legislation related to postgraduate studies

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## **Higher Education Act (1992:1434)**

### **Link 2**

[http://www.utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/higher\\_education\\_act.pdf](http://www.utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/higher_education_act.pdf)

Chapter 1: Introductory provisions

Chapter 4 § 6-7: Suspension

## **Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100)**

### **Link 1**

[http://www.utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/higher\\_education\\_ordinance.pdf](http://www.utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/pdf/higher_education_ordinance.pdf)

The following chapters in the ordinance concern postgraduate studies:

Chapter 1 § 4 (definition of PhD student), §§ 8-9 (gender equality)

Chapter 5: Employment as a PhD student etc.

Chapter 8: Postgraduate studies

Chapter 9: Admission to postgraduate studies programmes

Chapter 12 § 2: Appeals

Provisions for the entry into force of laws and provisional regulations

# References

Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

**Doctoral handbooks**—see list of links

HsV 2000:2 R, **Forskarskolor—ett regeringsuppdrag**

HsV 1999:11 R, **Årsrapport för universitet och högskolor**

HsV 1999:15 R, **Antagning till forskarutbildning**

HsV 1998:40 R, **Doktorander från länder utanför Norden och Europeiska unionen**

HsV 1997:9 R, **Rekvisitions mål för kvinnliga professorer**

[www.hsv.se](http://www.hsv.se)

**Strategies and Policies on Research Training in Europe.** EUR 18880 EN.

**SULF—Six theses on postgraduate studies**

[www.sulf.se](http://www.sulf.se)

**Vancouver Declaration**, International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. JAMA, 269, 2282–2286. 1993

[www.cma.ca/publications/mwc](http://www.cma.ca/publications/mwc)

**Wennerås, Christine and Wold, Agnes**, Nepotism and sexism in peer-review, Nature, vol. 387, 22 May, 1997. pp. 341–343.

[www.nature.com/nature/](http://www.nature.com/nature/)

Links

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Handbook for  
*Postgraduate Students*

## **Agreements**

ALFA, General agreement on salaries and benefits.

<http://www.sulf.se>

## **Government authorities**

CSN (Swedish National Board of Student Aid)

[www.csn.se](http://www.csn.se)

The Ministry of Education and Science

<http://utbildning.regeringen.se/inenglish/index.htm>

The National Agency for Higher Education

<http://www.hsv.se/english/>

The Swedish Government Offices

<http://www.regeringen.se/inenglish/index.htm>

The Swedish Parliament

[http://www.riksdagen.se/index\\_en.asp](http://www.riksdagen.se/index_en.asp)

## **Research council**

<http://www.vr.se/English/english.htm>

## **Research foundations**

The Knowledge Foundation

<http://62.20.66.194/english/>

Mistra

<http://www.mistra-research.se/>

The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research

<http://www.stratresearch.se/eindex.htm>

The Swedish Foundation for Health Care Sciences and Allergy Research

[www.vardal.se](http://www.vardal.se)

STINT

<http://www.stint.se/eng/index.html>

## **Research on women, gender**

<http://www.genus.gu.se/news.html>

## **Scholarships (homepages)**

<http://www.stint.se/eng/index.html>

## **Student unions with information for PhD students**

Chalmers University of Technology AB

[http://www.chs.chalmers.se/sects/dokt/index\\_e.htm](http://www.chs.chalmers.se/sects/dokt/index_e.htm)

Karolinska Institutet

<http://www.ki.se/org/df/main.html>

Lund University

<http://www.ldk.lu.se/>

Royal Institute of Technology

<http://www.nada.kth.se/dr-sektionen/>

Uppsala University

<http://www.student.uu.se/us/doktorand/>

## **Trade unions for PhD students**

Saco

<http://www.saco.se/internat/engelska.htm>

Sulf

<http://www.sulf.se>

TCO

<http://www.tco.se/eng/index.htm>

### Unemployment benefit funds

AEA

<http://www.aea.se/english.asp?sektion=english>

### Universities and university colleges in Sweden

<http://www.hsv.se/english/students/addresses.html>

### Other links in alphabetical order

AMS (the National Labour Market Board)

<http://www.ams.se/englishfs.asp?C1=223>

Försäkringskassan [Regional Social Insurance Offices]

<http://www.fk.se/utl/eng.html>

Riksbankens jubileumsfond [the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation]

<http://www.rj.se/en-default.asp>

Suhf, The Association of Swedish Higher Education

<http://www.suhf.se/>

SAFARI

<http://www.hsv.se/safari.htm>