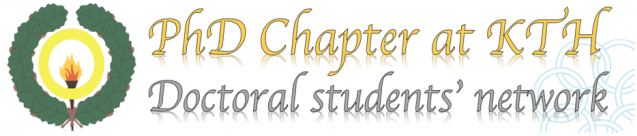


Input to “Focus Group on ISP”

To: Focus Group on ISP	 Doktorandsektionen vid Tekniska Högskolans Studentkår
Attention: KTH Committee on Third Cycle Education (Forskarutbildningsutskottet)	Copy: PhD School Councils; PhD Chapter Board; THS CFUs;
Date of Issuance: 08-September-2020	PM Type: Recommendations, PM Responsible: Chapter Presidium
	Diary number: Dr2020-CP-00/0001

Background

Section 29 of Chapter 6 of The Higher Education Ordinance¹ states that “An individual study plan shall be drawn up for each doctoral student. The plan must contain the university’s and doctoral student’s commitments and a timetable for the doctoral student’s education. The plan must be decided after consultation with the doctoral student and his or her supervisor. The individual study plan **must be followed up regularly** and **after consultation with the doctoral student and his or her supervisor be changed by the university to the extent necessary**. The training period may only be extended if there are special reasons for it. Such reasons may be leave due to illness, leave for service in the total defense or for positions of trust within trade unions and student organizations or parental leave. Regulation (2010: 1064).” In the eISP system used at KTH, the possibility to initiate changes is limited to the doctoral Supervisor.² In June 2020, the PhD Chapter released a report on doctoral student survey³ which has raised minor issues concerning ISP and the eISP system.

Recommendations

- 1) **Ensure that the Doctoral Students have a possibility to initiate follow-ups and amendments to eISP.** In the present eISP system, the doctoral student cannot initiate amendments or review to the ISP. Numerous doctoral students, in the doctoral student survey expressed that the work situation mentioned in the ISP do not properly reflect their current work. (See Figure A). The PhD Chapter believes that the current system, where the PhD

¹ <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/#chapter6>

² <https://intra.kth.se/utbildning/utbildningsadministr/eisp/revidering-av-studieplan-doktorand-1.983069>

³ https://www.dr.kth.se/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/06/Report_on_Survey_Results.pdf

Students do not have a possibility to initiate updates to the ISP is a main hindrance at regularly following up and updating the ISP. It should be noted that *the Higher Education Ordinance* is neutral about who among the doctoral students and the supervisors should be able to initiate follow-up or amendments to the ISP.

Recommendation. The doctoral students should have the opportunity to initiate follow-up and amendments to the ISP in the digital system.

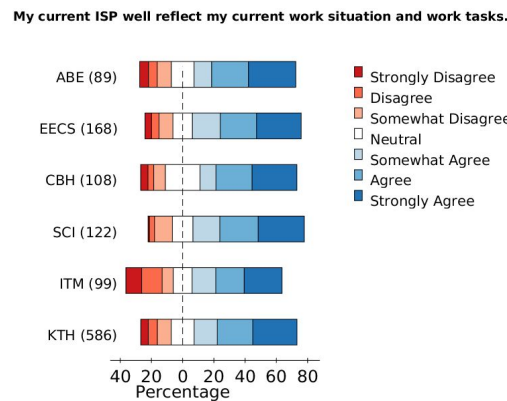


Figure A. Response to the Doctoral Student Survey on the Question, “My current ISP well reflect my current work situation and work tasks”

2) **Ensure that all ISPs include the correct subject study plans.** Alarming, in the recent doctoral study survey, numerous doctoral students do not know (See Figure B) where to find the subject-specific study plan (sv: Allmän studieplan, ASP), this is despite the fact that all doctoral students should insert a link to their subject-specific study plan in their ISP, and also have to state that they have read it (by checking a box).

Recommendation. The doctoral administration support groups in each school should make the subject-specific study plan available and easily retrievable for all doctoral students. It is also crucial that all subject-specific study plans are translated and are available in English.

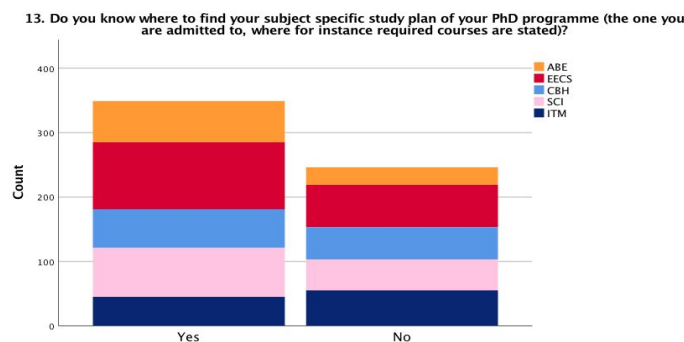


Figure B. Response to the Doctoral Student Survey on the Question, “Do you know where to find your subject study plan of your PhD programme (the one you are admitted to, where for instance required courses are stated)?”



3) **Ensure that the eISP System is improved.** The doctoral survey reports that around 40% of the respondents disagreed that the online system used for updating ISP works well (See Figure C). The PhD Chapter understands that the approval ratings for any digital tool could be low due to varied reasons. But this should not be an excuse to cease improvements to the online system used for updating ISP.

Recommendations. It should be possible to have regular updates from Ladok to ensure that course credits are updated in ISP without delays. Further, doctoral student feedback should be continuously sought to ensure ongoing improvement of the design and overall digital eISP system.

The online system (eISP) that is used to updated my ISP works well.

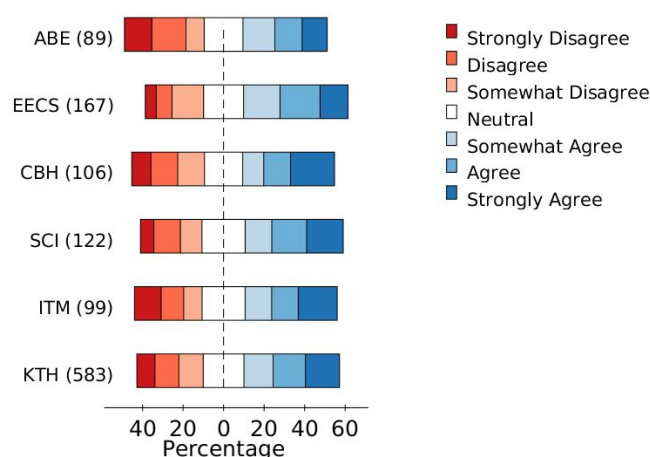


Figure C. Response to the Doctoral Student Survey on the Question, "The online system (eISP) that is used to update my ISP works well"

4) **Pedagogical Aspect of ISP.** The PhD Chapter understands that the ISP is a regulated document, for which rules find a mention even in The Higher Education Ordinance. At the same time, the PhD Chapter believes that ISP could act as an important document to facilitate the pedagogical aspects of requirements for doctoral students mentioned in the Higher Education Ordinance - Annex-2⁴:

- demonstrate intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude as well as the ability to make assessments of research ethics, and
- demonstrate specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used.

Recommendations. The PhD Chapter recommends that right from the beginning of the doctoral education, the supervisors should have a discussion with the doctoral candidate about the pedagogical aspects of the ISP; for instance, the use of the ISP as a tool to collaboratively design the student's action plan during the course of their

⁴ <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/Annex-2/>

doctoral studies and to reflect on their progress. The Chapter appreciates that the replacement of the earlier ISP paper format with the digital eISP system has made it more convenient to make updates to the eISP from either side. But at the same time, the Chapter emphasizes the importance of the doctoral student and their supervisors sitting through a session and discussing each point mentioned in ISP and reflecting on the same. This could be done at regular intervals of the doctoral studies but more importantly at the beginning of the doctoral program.

On behalf of the PhD Chapter,

Gloria Samosir
Chairperson, PhD Chapter - 20/21
Stockholm, Date 08-September 2020

Mohit Daga
Vice Chairperson, PhD Chapter, 2020
Stockholm, Date 08-September 2020