

Activity Report 2020/2021



Antagen av doktorandsektionens styrelse den 14 september 2020 och gäller till 30 juni 2021.

Enacted by PhD Chapter board on the 14th of September 2020 and shall henceforth be valid until 30th of June 2021 unless amended, replaced or repealed.

Doktorandsektionen vid Tekniska Högskolans Studentkår

Organisation number: 802412-5026, Website: www.dr.kth.se, E-mail: contact@dr.kth.se

Postal address: Drottning Kristinas väg 15 – 10044 Stockholm



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Document History

Version	Description, By	Date
Dr2020-CP-01	Drafted jointly as a shared document by the PhD Chapter Board of Academic Year 2020/2021 and adopted by the PhD Chapter Board Meeting of the 14th September 2020	14th September 2020
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Nomenclature

KTH: Kungliga tekniska högskolan (The Royal Institute of Technology)

FR: Fakultetsrådet (The faculty council)

US: Universitetsstyrelsen (The university board)

THS: Tekniska högskolans studentkår (KTH student union)

Dr/THS: Doktorandsektionen vid Tekniska Högskolans Studentkår (PhD chapter at KTH)

KS: Kårstyrelsen (The union's board)

KL: Kårledning (The union's management team)

KF: Kårfullmäktige (The union council or the general assembly)

CFU: Chef för utbildningsinflytande (Head of educational affairs)

PAD: Program ansvarig doktorand (PhD student representative for the program)

DrInK: Doktorand Integrerade Klubbmästeriet (Master of ceremonies group)

SFS: Sveriges förenade studentkårer (The Swedish National Union of Students)

SSCO: Stockholms studentkårer centralorganisation (Stockholm's student unions central organisation)

STAD: Stockholm förebygger alkohol- och drogproblem (Stockholm prevention of alcohol and drug problems)



Background

The objectives of the PhD Chapter are to promote more effective and higher quality PhD education and research, promote a stimulating work environment, and improve the general conditions for its members. The PhD Chapter should also work toward fostering greater unity and fellowship among its members.

The purpose of the operational plan is to guide the executive work of the board of directors throughout the operational year 2020/2021. The creation of the operational plan was started on the introduction day for operational year 2020/2021, which was held on the 12th of August 2020. All elected board members *Gloria Samosir, Mohit Daga, Saiman Ding, Tharagan Kumar, Tanja Richter, Inês De Miranda De Matos Lourenço, Deniz Yildiz, and Sofia Broomé* participated in the development of the operational plan.

Focus Areas for 2020/2021

Social Events and Collaborations

This year, the PhD Chapter aims to put significant effort into organizing social events and activities for its members. A variety of ideas are in the works, including pub & quiz nights, a mentor (or “buddy”) program for new students, picnic lunches, and other kinds of social mingles. The PhD Chapter can expand its network and increase its outreach by collaborating with other established groups that share an interest in enhancing the well-being and social scene for KTH doctoral students, including THS, KTH Relocation, and labor unions. For example, the Chapter is currently working with KTH Relocation to organize social activities with a focus on well-being, such as hikes in the forest and guided tours. The Chapter has started collaborating with the THS International Reception management team to start a tradition of holding a Reception for new doctoral students. This would allow new students to be introduced to the PhD Chapter and its goals from the beginning. The Chapter also hopes to work with other activity groups at KTH (e.g. KTH outdoors, KTHSS), and increase doctoral students’ participation in these groups. Furthermore, the Chapter shall aim to create a platform to connect the doctoral students on a common platform where fellowship among the students is promoted.

In order to allow the PhD pubs to be organized sustainably, the Chapter should ensure that there is ample promotion through our communication channels (e.g. social media, newsletters, emails, etc.) to fill positions of Master of Ceremonies.



Done:

- Set up the Stockholm Doctoral Students Meetup group, which serves as a common platform for doctoral students to organize social events.
- Continued collaboration with KTH Relocation, which has allowed the PhD Chapter to join a Relocation hiking event, get a Chapter meeting advertised in the KTH Relocation newsletter, get the Meetup platform publicized by KTH Relocation, and get the PhD Chapter to run the KTH Relocation Instagram for one week in November to showcase their activities.
- Collaboration with THS International Reception was initiated, though a decision was later made to organize a smaller outdoor lunch event (instead of large-scale indoor party) in order to keep things social distance friendly.
- Organized an Outdoor Lunch event at the beginning of the year (primarily targeting, but not exclusive for) new doctoral students.
- Organized an afterwork event following the first Chapter Meeting (given the inability to host pub nights in the Chapter Hall under present circumstances).
- Working with a PhD student to coordinate a yoga/wellness event.
- Regular monthly check-in meetings between PhD Chapter Board and the THS Management team.
- Increased contact with labor unions and engagement with matters where the PhD Chapter and the labor unions can align on common issues (e.g. salary ladder criteria, salary levels, extension of the doctoral employment due to COVID-19-related delays). A PhD Chapter Board member has joined the Saco-S board for the coming year and a meeting with a PhD student representative in ST is forthcoming.

Educational Advocacy

Section §4a of Chapter 1 of the Högskolelag¹ (1992:1434) states “The students shall have the right to exercise influence over the education at the higher education institutions.” The PhD Chapter is part of the student union at KTH (THS - Tekniska högskolans studentkår). THS is responsible for student influence at all levels of education, including third-cycle education. In the last academic year, THS has delegated the PhD Chapter to represent the doctoral students and appoint representatives for them. This was done via a decision of the THS Board dated 12th December 2019².

Central Level Representation

The PhD Chapter representatives in central level bodies of KTH shall engage in dialogues in connection to subjects that include but are not limited to Doctoral Courses, Supervision, Individual Study Plan, Stress and Well Being

¹ <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Swedish-Higher-Education-Act/#chapter1>

² <https://cdn.thskth.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ks06-1920-handlingar.pdf>



and Subject Study Plan. The Doctoral Student Survey Report - Recommendations³, which is based on a student survey conducted in Nov-Dec 2019 and published in June 2020, can serve as a basis for selecting doctoral issues to highlight at relevant forums. The PhD Chapter's representatives shall actively engage the different bodies of KTH and present issues concerning the doctoral students. The Chapter shall place consultation with school councils as a matter of paramount importance, particularly for representations about doctoral student issues in all major work-groups, which emanates from the central organizational bodies of KTH including the third-cycle education committee.

The Chapter shall actively work to anticipate future issues about doctoral education, and raise it appropriately at different forums of KTH. The current reality of the global Coronavirus pandemic will continue to impact the doctoral students' work situation, e.g. transforming or restricting how teaching or research is conducted. It is critical that doctoral students' voices and perspectives are an active part of shaping how these challenges are dealt with.

Done:

- The results of the Doctoral Survey Report have been presented at numerous KTH central forums, including the Faculty Council (Sv: Fakultetsrådet), Board of Education (Sv: Utbildningsnämnden), and FA-PA network meeting (Sv: Forskarutbildningsnätverksträff).
- Participated in an eISP Focus Group, where the Dr side manage to get their main suggestion from the Doctoral Survey Report recommendations (that the doctoral student, and not just the supervisor, should be able to initiate a revision of the eISP) voted through as a feature to be implemented in Spring 2021.
- Participated in the Language Committee (Sv: Språkkommittén). A Language Survey was sent out. Dr has proposed to expand the range of Swedish language course offerings (e.g. to include research-focused courses) and opportunity to take courses (e.g. for time or credit).
- Advocated for increased clarity in the processes of applying for an extension of the doctoral studies as a result of COVID-19-related delays.
- Issues have continued to be raised at central forums based on the Doctoral Survey Report. The Third Cycle Education Committee (Sv: Forskarutbildningsutskottet) has agreed to work further with supervision quality, third cycle courses, and a common introduction for doctoral students at the school level.

School Level Representation

The PhD Chapter shall work with the various School Councils and coordinate appropriately. The Chapter shall encourage the School Councils to use the aforementioned Doctoral Student Survey Report - Recommendations to highlight doctoral student issues. Furthermore, the Chapter shall constantly seek feedback from the school councils

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



to understand issues faced by them and raise them appropriately at central bodies of KTH. The Chapter shall work with School Councils in ensuring proper representation. For details see section on Council Coordination.

Done:

- Council coordinator regularly attends school council meetings and liaises between the PhD Chapter and school councils.
- Regular emails sent to school councils to communicate news and items of particular interest to the councils.
- The doctoral survey report was sent out again to all of the school councils.
- School councils were given the opportunity to participate in FA-PA Research Education Network meetings.
- School councils have been briefed on the opportunity to participate in the program analysis process.
- A presentation of the doctoral student survey report was given at a SCI FA-PA meeting.

- ITM has used the Doctoral Student Survey Report to highlight areas of improvement for the school.
- The Applied Mathematics Department in SCI has succeeded in getting the number of requisite credits for their program decreased partly using the survey results to support their case.
- School councils were invited to send a representative to participate in their school's quality dialogue meeting.

Supervisor of the Year Award

To promote good supervision at the third cycle level at KTH, the PhD Chapter Board of Academic Year 2019/20 had proposed to give out the Supervisor of the Year Award. The rules for this award were decided by the PhD Chapter Board Meeting held on 23rd April 2019⁴.

In this academic year, the PhD Chapter shall invite the nominations for the inaugural Supervisor of the Year Award. The Chapter shall engage the School Councils and seek possible coordination regarding this award. The Chapter shall work in cohesion with THS and respective bodies at KTH to ensure that the Supervisor of the Year Award is given at an official KTH Ceremony.

Done:

- The Supervisor of the Year Award has been initialized and launched. Communications regarding the award were sent out through a variety of channels, including PhD Chapter emails, council emails, social media, school-level newsletters, and the KTH Relocation newsletter. More than 50 nominations have been submitted and will be evaluated by the Jury. The winner will be announced in January 2021.

⁴ <https://www.dr.kth.se/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/04/Meeting-20200423-Minutes.pdf>



- The winner of the inaugural Supervisor of the Year Award has been selected, announced, and handed the award.

Professional Development

The PhD Chapter shall work to facilitate the professional development of doctoral students. One of the prime focus areas would be to work with THS Armada to find career opportunities for the doctoral students. The THS Armada career fair is the largest career fair in Scandinavia. In 2020, this career fair will take place virtually. The PhD Chapter Board shall strive to work with THS Armada to ensure that doctoral students could find career opportunities via THS Armada's virtual fair. The Chapter will aim for continued collaboration with THS Armada for 2021, the planning of which will begin in March 2021.

Still with a focus on improving doctoral students' contact and collaboration with external research bodies and industry, the PhD Chapter will explore possibilities of organizing workshops or discussions with invited speakers. The Chapter will also look into creating discussion spaces that explore the idea of "communicating research for a popular audience", an important question for many academic researchers.

Done:

- The PhD Chapter liaised with THS Armada. This year, the THS Armada virtual career fair explicitly catered to doctoral students (in addition to first- and second- cycle education students) for the first time. Collaboration with THS Armada is intended to continue in 2021.

Council Coordination

During the previous mandate period, there has been improved coordination between the PhD Chapter and the school councils. This year, the Chapter hopes to continue to strengthen this relationship. The council coordinator will continue to serve as a point of contact for all doctoral school councils and ensure that there is synchrony between central and local representation. The Chapter aims to hold a "PAD Workshop Day" (an idea which has been floated around in previous terms) this year, an event in which doctoral student representatives from all parts of KTH can learn more about the purpose and possibilities of their role. The precise format of the "PAD Workshop Day" is subject to the constraints of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If circumstances allow it, the event could be conducted as a full-day lunch to lunch event with an overnight stay at a venue in Stockholm, and could double as the 40th Birthday Celebration of the Chapter (a plan that was postponed from academic year 19-20).

The Chapter also hopes to present a modest grant opportunity for school councils, in which the PhD Chapter would support some school-level initiatives. The awarding of this grant would be contingent on the submission of



a feasible proposal by the PhD school councils intended to benefit the doctoral student community at their particular school.

Furthermore, the Chapter will continue to advocate for comprehensive student representation at all levels of KTH. To that end, the Chapter shall encourage the school councils that a doctoral student representative (PAD) is appointed for every program. The PhD Chapter Board shall ensure that free and fair elections are held for all these positions.

In order to facilitate school-level event management efforts, the Chapter shall encourage the school councils to nominate student representatives to undertake STAD training with support from the PhD Chapter. STAD is a qualification that allows a person to operate a pub in student areas at KTH. STAD-holding student representatives would thus be able to make use of the Chapter Hall, T-Centralen (for example) to host school-level events, hopefully improving doctoral student life at KTH and bolstering the relationship between the PhD Chapter and school councils.

Done:

- The PhD Chapter has continuously consulted the school councils, including with regard to issues to be raised at the FA-PA research education network meetings, program analysis, and the Time Compensation workgroup.
- The PhD Chapter is helping the school councils to administer elections to elect council members for 2021.
- The Seminar Series on Doctoral Student Representation has been initiated. The “series” format, which entails multiple shorter meetings with one main guest who is the focus of each meeting, was decided as preferable to a full-day event given the constraints of the online format. The first meeting will take place on May 20th and features Ingrid Iliou (PhD Student Advisor) as the guest.
- Meetings between the School Council Chairs have been initiated, and a Slack channel has been set up, to ensure that there is synergy and exchange of information between the councils.
- Information guidelines were sent out, e.g. regarding the right to student representation in school- and program- level advisory and decisional bodies and recommendations on how to account for hours spent on doing commission of trust assignments.

Communication

The PhD Chapter aims to strategically improve communication strategies to reach a wider audience and raise awareness of the Chapter and its work. The PhD Chapter’s communication strategy for these efforts will greatly focus on its established social media presence (e.g. Facebook) and website (dr.kth.se). Occasional emails will be primarily used to introduce new doctoral students to the PhD Chapter and refer to social media and the PhD Chapter website for further information. The Chapter plans to gradually improve our website to provide a more up-to-date appearance and user-friendly interface. In addition, the Chapter aims to create an introduction video of



the PhD Chapter, which can be added to our Facebook page and website, and shared with our collaborators, such as KTH Relocation.

Information Dissemination

Another focus area for communication between the PhD Chapter and doctoral students will entail the transmission of important information. The Chapter will prioritize creating guides and flyers that can be distributed among the doctoral students. This material could include:

- A guide on “How to do a PhD”, with experiences and stories from alumni.
- A flyer with information about the social groups and services that exist at KTH (e.g. counselling, the doctoral Student Advisor), as well as entities that new students might find beneficial to join, e.g. the Student Union, SSSB, a labor union, A-kassa, etc.
- A flyer about the PhD Chapter itself; the activities that the chapter is planning, its new ideas (e.g. the FAQ, the survey), its goals, contact details of its board members, etc.

These could be distributed to the students during our events and printed and placed in different parts of KTH, as well as posted on our website.

Done:

- Flyers advertising the PhD Chapter were printed for the Outdoor Lunch event at the beginning of the year and posted in various locations around KTH.
- Social media (Facebook) use has increased.
- Emails containing news and updates from the PhD Chapter have been sent out to all students.
- Blog entries have been posted on the PhD Chapter website covering upcoming events and ongoing advocacy work.

Treasury and Finance

At present, the PhD Chapter only receives their share of member fees from THS. However, it is matter of fact, that every other Chapter, in addition to THS member fees, receives an annual grant from KTH to support their activities. The Chapter aims to rectify this discrepancy during the coming year. Having additional financial resources would allow the PhD Chapter to pursue more initiatives (academic, social, and professional) for the benefit of doctoral students at KTH.

Currently, the PhD Chapter's payment system could at times be inconvenient to use, as it requires an individual to cover Chapter expenses upfront and claim reimbursement later. This year, the Chapter will look into obtaining SWISH or other bank account or debit card options that would allow for more hassle-free transactions, though the Chapter has to weigh additional fees involved (if any) against the value of increased convenience.

Done:



- The PhD Chapter inquired with THS into the possibility of acquiring funding from KTH to support doctoral student activities. This has recently been announced as a strong possibility. The Chapter Board drafted a budget proposal to cover a variety of student influence, JML, wellness, professional development, and introductory reception activities. THS Management is now in dialogue with KTH to secure the PhD Chapter a share of annual funding for student activities.
- Application for a PhD Chapter debit card is underway.
- A decision was made not to obtain Swish for the time being, as it would incur an additional fee for each payment made.
- The PhD Chapter's budget proposal of SEK 1.000.000/year for its activities was approved in full by KTH.
- The PhD Chapter has obtained a debit card, which will facilitate paying for Chapter-related expenses in the future.

Sustainable Engagement

Section §4a of Chapter 1 of the Högskolelag⁵ (1992:1434) states "The higher education institutions shall work to ensure that the students take an active part in the work of further developing the education. Lag (2000: 260)." Further, Section §7 of Chapter 5 of the Högskoleförordning⁶ (1993:100), includes elected positions in Student Union as a possible ground on which the employment of doctoral students may exceed more than the ordinary stipulated time.

Adequate time compensation for doctoral students working in commission of trust positions shall be a critical issue for the PhD Chapter. A workgroup addressing this very matter has been initiated by Forskarutbildningsutskottet (Third Cycle Education Committee), in which the Chapter Board has a representative. The Chapter hopes that a fair, transparent, well-defined, and standard process for securing time compensation for doctoral student representatives across all parts of KTH will be achieved during this year.

Done:

- The Workgroup "Time Compensation for Doctoral Student Commission of Trust Assignments" is underway and the first meeting has taken place. School councils have been informed and invited to give input. A time compensation proposal is due to be presented at the Third Cycle Education Committee (Sv: Forskarutbildningsutskottet) by March 2021.
- The Workgroup has finished a final version of guidelines on "Time Compensation for Doctoral Student Commission of Trust Assignments." Based on this, the KTH vice president of education will initiate an assignment for all schools to create appropriate routines.

⁵ <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Swedish-Higher-Education-Act/#chapter1>

⁶ <https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/#chapter5>