

Modifying Elections/Voting Procedures



*Submitted for consideration to the PhD Chapter Meeting
The PhD chapter at KTH/ Doktorandsektionen vid Tekniska Högskolans Studentkår*

Background

Consider the following:

1. According to Wikipedia, KTH has around 1600 doctorands.
2. The PhD Chapter Election Meeting in 2022-12-13 had roughly 9 people present, and 11 virtually. The election meeting lasted over 4 hours. In 2022-06-13, the election meeting lasted 3 hours and a half, with 19 people present (i.e., not all of them were votes). In 2021-12-14, the election meeting had 20 people present as well.
3. Even though the current hybrid meetings are a means to increase participation of members in Chapter's decision, they do not scale well in the case of a very large number of participants.
4. KTH gives the PhD Chapter over 1M SEK in direct money per year to promote integration, student influence and increase education quality.

The aforementioned statistics shows that only 1.25% of the total KTH PhD Students engages actively in the PhD Chapter. While many factors might play a role in explaining why the percentage is so low, very long meetings in odd hours and/or lack of understanding of the PhD Chapter processes are certainly among them.

Furthermore, the current Statutes and Bylaws were written in another context; the Covid-19 pandemic made remote procedures more common, which includes digital voting – which is already used by THS and other Chapters. In practice, the physical attendance of $\frac{3}{4}$ of all PhD Chapters members (1200 people) is impossible and, even within KTH, there is no such structure that can accommodate such amount of people. Alas, the quorum of 75% for a decision is too high – other institutions, such as the European Union, uses a 55% for qualified majority or 70% for a “reinforced” qualified majority. While the idea of a $\frac{3}{4}$ quorum was possibly inspired from the Swedish system, the rigidity that should prevail in a document that grounds an entire, solid, democracy is certainly very different than the one that should be used for a student association.

Finally, the 1M kronor given by KTH also enables the PhD Chapter to use existent proprietary solutions or to even build a custom one for whatever problems that might arise.

In a nutshell, the suggestions below translate to the following purposes:

1. Allow digital voting on elections and motions.
2. Elections shall take place digitally and extend for a suitable duration.
3. The nominating committee makes the nominations to the whole chapter during the election process (i.e., it might appear on the voting system), not only for the Meeting.
4. The qualified majority concept is changed to $\frac{2}{3}$ (66%) of all members.
5. Upon approval of this motion, the PhD Chapter Board, in consultation with the Nominating Committee, is empowered to look for existent solutions or even build a custom one. The new system should be in place within 1 year.

Suggestions

To, Amend the PhD Chapter Statutes as the following (in bold, the proposed modifications):

At §2.6., regarding the voting procedure, modify:

[...]
The PhD Chapter employs voting by acclamation or show of hands. If the PhD Chapter Meeting so desires, a ballot vote should be used.

PhD Chapter members must be present at the start of the specific point of the agenda to be eligible to vote on the matter at hand.

Modify to:

[...]
The PhD Chapter employs voting by acclamation or show of hands. If the PhD Chapter Meeting so desires, a ballot vote, **either analog or digital**, should be used.

If the voting procedure is occurring during a meeting, PhD Chapter members must be present at the start of the specific point of the agenda to be eligible to vote on the matter at hand.

At §3.3., concerning Elections:

The PhD Chapter Meeting elects the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, the Treasurer, and the other members of the PhD Chapter Board.

Replace with:

The PhD Chapter shall aim to have a broad participation of its members during elections and/or voting procedures and, if possible, hold elections digitally for enough amount of time to ensure participation of its members. Secrecy and authenticity of the voting should be assured to a fair degree.

The PhD Chapter Meeting ratifies the results from the elections. In case of vacancy following the ratification, a PhD Chapter Meeting may elect the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson, the Treasurer, and/or any other members of the PhD Chapter Board or functionaries.

At §5.11.3., concerning the responsibilities of Nominating Committee:

c) Propose nominations to the PhD Chapter Meeting. Nominations are established through single majority of the committee.

Modify to:

c) Propose nominations to the **PhD Chapter**. Nominations are established through single majority of the committee.

At §7, regarding the amendment to the PhD Chapter Statutes:

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

§7. Amending the PhD Chapter Statutes

§7.1. Submission

Proposed amendments to the PhD Chapter Statutes are to be submitted in writing for consideration at a regular PhD Chapter Meeting, during which the PhD Chapter Board position on the matter should be given.

§7.2. Approval

Approval of any amendments to the PhD Chapter Statutes requires 2 (two) identical decisions at 2 (two) consecutive PhD Chapter Meetings, at least one of which must be a regular meeting or a qualified majority (3/4) at a regular PhD Chapter Meeting.

Replace with:

§7. Amending the PhD Chapter Statutes

§7.1. Submission

Proposed amendments to the PhD Chapter Statutes are to be submitted in writing for consideration at a regular PhD Chapter Meeting, during which the PhD Chapter Board position on the matter should be given. **Alternatively, the board may establish an alternative voting process, either analog or digital, for such amendments, where the result of such vote shall be ratified at the following PhD Chapter Meeting.**

§7.2. Approval

Approval of any amendments to the PhD Chapter Statutes requires 2 (two) identical decisions at 2 (two) consecutive PhD Chapter Meetings, at least one of which must be a regular meeting. **Alternatively, an amendment can be approved with a qualified majority (2/3) for the PhD Chapter Statutes by the PhD Chapter members during any established voting process in a single round.**

To₂ Amend the PhD Chapter Bylaws as the following (in bold, proposed modifications):

At §1.2., regarding amendments to the Bylaws:

Amendments to the Bylaws shall be adopted if they have been approved by a relative majority at an ordinary PhD Chapter Meeting.

Replace with:

Amendments to the Bylaws shall be adopted if they have been approved by a relative majority at an ordinary PhD Chapter Meeting, **or during any alternative voting procedure established by the board, with its ratification at the following PhD Chapter Meeting.**

To₃ Allow the PhD Chapter Board, in consultating with the Nominating Committee, search for solutions to enable digital voting for elections and other matters within the PhD Chapter and to use it within the two following election.

Daniel Medeiros,
Stockholm, 2023-06-03