

HTDR Activity Plan 2020-2021

The Humanistic and Theological Doctoral Student Council (HTDR) is one of the seven doctoral student councils at Lund University. Its main task is to monitor doctoral student issues within the Faculties of Humanities and Theology and to act according to the interests of the doctoral students, especially with regard to employment conditions and the quality of the research education.

During the fall of 2020 and spring of 2021, HTDR assembles for six council meetings (three in the fall semester, and three in the spring semester). The attending PhD students report from the Lund Doctoral Student Union (LDK), the faculty bodies and the department councils. Occasionally, external speakers are invited.

The HTDR activity plan consists of two focus areas: (a) teaching opportunities for doctoral students and (b) improving access to information in English and to information in administrative matters. In addition, there are two secondary focus issues.

FOCUS ISSUES

(a) Teaching Opportunities for Doctoral Students

A survey conducted in autumn 2019, sent out to all doctoral students at the HTDR faculties and generating 49 responses, made it clear that:

- 95% of all doctoral students want to teach.
- Virtually all respondents see teaching experience as absolutely essential to postdoctoral employment.
- The opportunities to teach vary a lot between the departments and subjects, ranging from good opportunities to almost none.

During the last academic year, the members of the working committee met with the Dean of Postgraduate Studies and with HTS (the student union) to discuss increased teaching opportunities for doctoral students. Students and doctoral students have a shared interest in regards to teaching: HTS is working to increase the amount of teacher-directed learning (*lärarledd tid*), while some doctoral students do not get to teach as much as they would like to. The Dean was positive towards HTDR taking the matter forward, and encouraged cooperation with HTS.

This academic year, HTDR would like to continue exploring the possibilities to guarantee teaching as part of the doctoral education at the HT faculties.

(b) Access to Information in English and to Information in Administrative Matters

Increased access to information in English has been on HTDR's agenda for many years. The situation has improved a lot, but there are still things that can be done. HTDR sent out a survey in January 2020 aimed specifically at international doctoral students. 78 percent of the 17 respondents had experienced issues with accessing information in English. The report has been distributed to relevant faculty bodies.

In addition, access to Swedish courses depends much on respective departments, which means that some students have to go outside the university and pay for their Swedish lessons themselves. Unequal treatment impedes the quality of the education for non-Swedish speaking doctoral students.

HTDR will therefore continue working i) towards equal access to documents and information between Swedish speaking and non-Swedish speaking doctoral students, and ii) for equal access to courses in Swedish for non-Swedish speaking doctoral students.

The theme for this year's quality dialogues is internationalization, which means we will have many opportunities to discuss these matters with the faculty management.

As a new doctoral student, it can also be hard to know how to access information in general, for example about billing, payment of scholarships and other financial matters. HTDR will therefore work towards developing a clear guide in administrative matters for doctoral students. Through LDK (Lund's Doctoral Student Union) we have been made aware that some of the other doctoral student councils are working on similar guides, which could be used as a starting point for this work.

SECONDARY FOCUS ISSUES

Prolongation

HTDR has worked on establishing new routines for prolongation for several years, and a new system has now finally been implemented. However, the corona situation brought about new issues in relation to prolongation, since doctoral students' work has been affected by e.g. closed borders, closed libraries and archives and work-from-home policies. In spring 2020, a decision was made that delays caused by pandemic-related restrictions can make doctoral students eligible for an extension of their employment. HTDR now has to monitor the implementation of this decision and see if the prolongations granted correspond to doctoral students' needs and expectations.

Another aspect of this matter is that a digital system for managing prolongation could make life easier for both doctoral students and administrators. HTDR has suggested this before and will continue pushing for such a system.

Mental health issues

Doctoral students' mental health is a matter that deserves more attention. The corona-related restrictions have also probably not improved the situation. A starting point for HTDR could be to conduct a survey to see what kind of help and support the faculties' doctoral students would like to see.