

Introduction

The Doctoral Student Guild board (DS) has during the year been actively representing the Doctoral Student Guild in a number of different committees and activities within Chalmers and outside, which will be accounted for in this report. Further, the internal activities will also be briefly mentioned. During the year 2014/2015 the board consisted of:

Oskar Thulin	Chairperson	AM
Virginia Claudio	Vice chairperson	AP
Ragnar Larusson	Member	AM
Alexandra Bergman	Member	B
Karin Johansson	Member	B (Left early fall)
Emma Qingnan Zhang	Member	CEE
Fatemeh Ayatollahi	Member	CSE
Alberto Alamia	Member	EE
Eskil Varenius	Member	ESS
Ronja Thies	Member	FP
Toni Gutknecht	Member	K (Joined after GA Dec 2014)
Maria Ekström	Member	MC2
Dinesh Mallipeddi	Member	MMT
Ceena Joseph	Member	MMT
Matteo Molteni	Member	MW
Erik Lindskog	Member	PPD
Francesco Baldi	Member	SMT
Naghme Taghavi Nejad	Member	TME (Joined after GA Dec 2014)
Nojan Najafi	Member	TME (Left before GA Dec 2014)

Introduction Days

During the last academic year (2014/2015) DS participated in both of the two organized introduction days. The way DS presents information to the PhD students has been developed during the year. The aim has been to market DS better as well as to provide information in a more efficient way that is considering that the PhD students are being subject of extensive information from many parties during the introduction day. At the point of the second introduction day the presentation strategy had evolved into:

- Focus is set on the PhD education as an experience which often can be both positive and fulfilling, but that it can have its tricky moments.
- Examples of PhD stories with videos/interviews tackling common problems and opportunities.
- Presentation of DS as the organization that represents PhD students in Chalmers boards and committees, including a quick overview.
- Introduce DOMB and his role.
- Final remark on awareness as key of a successful PhD experience. It can start good or bad but if one is aware of his/her role, rights, and duties any situation can be improved.

The university board

The university board is the highest decision making body within the university, and DS is given the right to have a person attend and speak, but not to vote. In this forum, the DS and the Student Union present themselves as one voice, and we have established a good tradition of having preparatory meetings before each board meeting to discuss the current agenda. The university board discusses topic of strategic value to Chalmers, among many discussed topics, venture creation has been in particular focus during the working year. DS has advocated for that the doctoral students should be included in the planning of upcoming educational activities within the area of venture creation.

Work environment and equality (AJK)

The AJK (Arbetsmiljö och jämställdhetskommitee, work environment and equality committee) discusses issues concerning work environment (in all its aspects) and equality. It usually focuses on all employees and not on a specific group of employees. The council consists of representatives from the Unions, Chalmers rektor, Chalmers coordinators for equality and working environment.

AJK works with action plans, follow-up and risk assessment regarding working environment and equality. The yearly employment survey, Akademihälsan's yearly report and Feelgood's yearly report are presented to AJK. These were the most interesting points on the agenda at AJK this year for PhD students as a

group. From the employment survey it was clear that the PhD students are the least satisfied with the work environment among all employment subgroups. DS tried to emphasize the doctoral students' vulnerable situation for the board.

Faculty senate

The faculty council is the representative body for the technical faculty's teaching staff and acts as an advisory body to the rektor and management of Chalmers. It consists of 30 members elected from all 17 departments, a PhD- and undergraduate student representative, as well as the rektor and prorektor of Chalmers. The Faculty Council should be a forum where questions of long-term and strategic character, with importance to the development of Chalmers, can be initiated and handled.

The most heavily debated topic in the faculty council 2014-2015 has been the new allocation model for departmental funds. In November 2014, a decision was made by the rektor that the funds obtained from the Ministry of Education shall be divided in a manner that are closely linked to the size of the faculty at the departments. The new model will be implemented successively from 2016 onwards, and recent effort has gone into working out the details of how this should be executed within a project called the "DI-project". Fakultetsrådet acts as a consultative body to the process of implementing the new model. Overall the faculty is positive to the new model, but there are also some concerns. For example, a fear is that the future faculty will be very rigid, since the new model only allows for a limited number of faculty positions, which may stagnate development. The large number of "forskarassistenten" currently employed at Chalmers (about 120) cannot be offered faculty positions/a traditional academic career in the future system due to this limitation, and how to handle these intellectual resources wisely will be a big task. The fact that two thirds of all funds allocated to Chalmers come from private sources also requires new senior positions to be developed. The remaining 25% of funding will be divided in accordance with a collective achievement at the departments, and ongoing work on how to set these parameters is also an issue. Most likely, the implementation of this new model will continue discussions within the faculty council. The impact on the doctoral students and the PhD education in general has been estimated to be low. However, it might have significant implications for Chalmers PhD students who desire an academic career at Chalmers.

The board of research education (FUN)

FUN (Forskarutbildningsnämnden, board for research education) is one of our most important committees as the matters concerning research education are always discussed there. The board is led by Alf-Erik Almstedt (Vice- rektor for research education) and Ulrika Josefsson (Administrator for research education activities). Furthermore all vice-heads or prodekanus (the one who is responsible for research education at the department, this varies) of the

departments at Chalmers are present. All decisions concerning research education are discussed in this board before a decision (usually by Alf-Erik) is taken. This year, similar to previous years, DS had pre-meetings with Alf-Erik and Ulrika to discuss our view of the topics on the agenda and to have an opportunity to raise other topics that DS wanted to push for. The most notable/important things that has been dealt with during the year are:

1. Individual Studyplan (ISP) IT database

The idea of having an IT system handling the ISP for doctoral students has been raised. The question was brought forward in connections to the discussion of the upcoming ISP review carried out by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (Universitetskanslerämbetet, UKÄ). Most departments have expressed a positive attitude towards having an IT system handling the ISP. GU has an ISP IT database developed by Lunds Datacentral and after the presentation the board decided to investigate how much it would cost and if needed adjustments are possible within the developed IT database system. Applied physics has also developed a semi-online study plan (a PDF) which is nice but nowhere near the sophisticated system discussed above. The working group handling the future ISP will continue during next activity year to look into the matter. DS is represented in the working group and is positive towards a future IT system, however what is seen to be even more important is that the ISP system is designed with the doctoral student in mind with the aim of helping the doctoral student to plan for their PhD education.

2. Potential challenge in the grading committee of a PhD defense

The case of clearer rules was advocated for within the board. Before, there seemed to be some grading committee members that should have declared a conflict of interest. There are now clear rules for what formal connections that are viewed as ok and what are not ok in the grading committee. There can be exceptions which have to be motivated by the main supervisor / examiner. The rules affect some PhD students within small research fields, but it seems that the rules are flexible enough to accommodate the range of research fields at Chalmers. DS has been positive towards the change.

3. Total PhD education time

There seems to be a change, from several departments, in the contract of PhD students that from now only includes the accounted time the PhD student teaches/ does department work on top of the 4 research years for the full employment time. These departments previously had full amount of 5 years specified in the contract. If and only if the department duty is at 20% the result will be the same, otherwise it will lead to a shortened employment time. This change is affecting new doctoral students and not the doctoral students that currently have other work agreements. DS have expressed that before any such change should be implemented, the department duty time needs to be accounted for correct, consistent and just manner

4. GTS courses

DS has been in contact with the management of the Generic & Transferable Skills program to give our input on the classes. It has historically been an issue to get spots in certain courses, this has now been improved extensively. Significant effort has also been made to improve the quality of the courses. DS is satisfied with the positive development.

Nomination Supervisor of the year

The Research Supervisor of the Year Award year award was attributed to [Henk Wymeersch](#), Associate Professor at department of Signal and System, for his exceptional and exemplary role as a supervisor. Henk Wymeersch excels in his ability to create a dedicated and inspiring environment and to promote both professional and personal developments of his group members, which are deeply appreciated by his students. He is also a renowned researcher in field of communication systems, currently leading a group of nine PhD students and four postdoctoral researchers. As a supervisor he stands out for his ability to create a dedicated and inspiring environment and to promote the professional and personal developments of his group members.

DS received 14 supervisor nominations during year 2014-15, which were all nominated by doctoral students within their own research groups. The board appointed a committee, which after thorough reading met to decide the most suitable candidates and proceeded with interviews with some of the nominating PhD students. After the interviews, the board committee met to summarize the impressions and presented a motivation for the final selection at a DS board meeting.

Representing Chalmers Doctoral Programs at Charm

Each year, DS represents the doctoral programs at Chalmers at CHARM, the labor market fair organized by the Student Union. Several board members participated in manning our booth and providing information for curious students about what it really means to be a PhD student. During 2015 fair, about 150 students came to talk and ask questions about the research education.

The representation at the fair usually entails to answer question about how to find available PhD-positions, the recruitment process, what the education entails, pros and cons, how a regular day might look, salary, etc. So in this respect, the DS members are not there as DS-representatives, but rather as representatives of the research education at Chalmers.

For the fair of 2015, there was a discussion with CHARM to try to integrate our booth with the research-intensive companies in need of graduated PhD-students

in a form of “Research-corner”. The companies were asked to pay slightly more in order to get an additional spot for their researchers to stand on. The initial hope was that both our booth and the companies would benefit from this, but during the fair the integration was not optimal and few companies bought into the idea. However, DS thinks it is a promising concept to develop further for upcoming years and believes that it can create significant value for the doctoral students at Chalmers visiting the CHARM fair.

SFS-DK committee

SFS (Sveriges Förenade Studentkårer) is the Swedish National Union of Students and “the collective student voice in Sweden”. There are 47 member unions in SFS, including the Chalmers Student Union. SFS-DK is the PhD candidate committee (doktorandkommitté) of SFS. SFS-DK is also a member of Eurodoc, which is SFS-DK’s counterpart on a European level. DS has one representative on the board of SFS-DK.

Five goals were set for SFS-DK to work on for the academic year 2014-15:

1. A useful research education

SFS should work for a research education that prepare PhD-students to work inside or outside academia. PhD students’ opportunities on the labor market after completing their research education should be raised in forums where research and research education are discussed.

2. Changed migration rules

SFS should work for a change in the rules that become obstacles for international students and PhD students to come to and stay in Sweden.

3. Guidelines for PhD- representation

The goal of this activity is to assure that PhD students that spend time and effort in representing their peers, such as in SFS-DK, get compensation in some form.

4. Improved economy

The study grants should be abolished and be replaced by employment (this is already the case at Chalmers). PhD students who have scholarships should have the same economic and other conditions as students who have employment.

5. Improved social security

All PhD students should ideally be fully covered by the Swedish social security system. DK had heard of cases where students with stipends had problems with being covered. Furthermore, A new agreement with the labor union Saco and the state leaves the PhD students with less support if they become unemployed. This needs to be investigated further.

Major part of DK’s effort, which ties into the first goal above, went into a “Remissvar” for UKÄ future evaluation program for PhD education in Sweden.

For the second goal DK did act more as a monitoring agent on the behalf of PhD students. DK have had discussion and collected anecdotes regarding obstacles for foreign PhD student when it comes to visa, residency and citizenship applications. Some unforeseen issues regarding receiving citizenships for PhD students have emerged after the otherwise very positive student immigration law change. It seems to be an undesired interpretation of the law affecting the PhD students in the transition period, for more information please see the last section of the report. The three last questions were less actively dealt with during the activity year. No guidelines for PhD-representation were formed but some data regarding how various universities go about that issue was collected. Regarding improved economy, SFS-DK already has data on the stipendium status for PhD students in Sweden, but it needs to be updated to the current state.

Research misconduct

The board meets only in case of a need to investigate suspect cases of misconduct in research. During the academic year 2014-2015 the board met a single time, in March. The case investigated involved only senior staff at Chalmers; no graduate students were involved. The committee agreed on dismissing all the charges for which Chalmers was responsible.

Library Council

This council discusses topics and priorities concerning Chalmers library. The Library council should, within the library's activities, identify and consider the overall strategic issues of importance to the library's long-term development and other matters of principle. The library council should support the library management and provide a communication link between other departments at Chalmers. The council meets two times a year, one time each semester. Topics that were discussed during 2014-2015 follows:

- The strategic map for the library was updated and covers until 2019. The focus of the library has change to a more supporting function for researchers and students from just providing literature. The library is aiming towards a closer collaboration between the library and researchers.
- The library building at Johanneberg will get a new main entrance at the ground floor, which will be facing kemigården. This entrance will have better accessibility.
- A Learning Centre will be created in the A-building but has been delayed, at least 6 months.
- Learning Commons will be built at the ground floor and basement of Kuggen at Lindholmen, which is a book free library that should be an attractive workplace for students.
- The site research.chalmers.se has been launched during the spring. Researchers should now have the possibility to login and check their own list of projects.

E-publishing and Open access publishing (RePub)

The DS board has been represented in the reference group for e-publication, mainly discussing issues related to CPL and the path to meet Chalmers open access policy. Topics that were discussed during 2014-2015 follows:

- Further development of CPL is a topic that keeps coming up from time to time. This year a partly new GUI has been created for CPL including some new functions.
- The site research.chalmers.se has been launched, which presents information regarding on-going and past research projects at Chalmers. Information that can be found is for example project participants, sponsor and time frame.
- Chalmers is one of several organisations supporting the ORCID convention, which is a general identification system for researchers. The CPL developers have made it possible to connect ORCID with ones CPL page.
- There is a problem with getting PhD students (or rather PhDs) to publish full text versions of their kappas in CLP. During 2014 the amount of full texts in CPL corresponded to only 65%.
- The library has a general task of delivering publication data to the DI project, how to use CPL and other sources has been discussed. The main problem is to ensure that all publications are accounted for when delivering the data.

Doktorandombud

The ombudsman (DOMB) is one of the most important services granted by DS to any PhD student who may experience a problematic situation in their PhD studies. The DOMB is bound to confidentiality and never acts on his/her own initiative. The DOMB can help the PhD student, in need of help, to identify issues, discuss potential solutions as well as be a support in meetings with supervisor or department.

During the very end of the activity year the current doktorandombudsman, Bengt Strebler announced his plan of retirement in September. Upon this announcement, DS initiated an activity to develop an up-to-date recruiting process and selection criteria for the upcoming year.

The general assembly meetings

During the year, DS has had 2 general assembly meetings. The minutes from the meetings are available on DS website.
December 2014

- Election of Naghmeh Taghavi Nejad and Toni Gutknecht as new board members.
- Presentation of the plan of operations for the year 2014/15.
- Annual report and freedom from liability for the board of 2013/14.

May 2015

- Election of a new board for 2015/16.

The work of the board

During the year, the board had 4 board meetings of approximately 3 hours each. The minutes from the board meetings are available on DS website. The main topics that have been addressed are detailed below.

Our main goal is and has throughout the year been to improve terms for doctoral studies at Chalmers. In order to better represent the students and identify key area of interest, in 2014 DS analyzed the 2013-14 survey data about PhD student satisfaction. A report was released and presented (see DS homepage) identifying a variety of problems that are encountered during the PhD education. During 2014-2015 DS started spreading the word of the findings. This was done by development of a framework for a presentation that has been held at a few departments and which also will be continued at the other departments during the coming activity year. The presentation is aimed at raising awareness of the emerged issues among the PhD students, both as a preventive measure and as a way to empower the students with the tools needed for diagnosing a problem and coming to its solution, with or without external support.

DS has become more involved in the wage negotiations between the unions and Chalmers than previously. In the end of the negotiations an agreement was reached of 3.75% increase on a 19 months basis, leading to a corresponding 2.4% for a 12 months period (continuously compounded). DS has also begun to investigate the allocation and accounting of department duty across the departments. This started since it had come to our attention that the current systems differ significantly between the different departments. This work is still proceeding. Once the outcome is clear DS will decide how to continue and if to take any actions.

The previous visa and working permit praxis for non EU/ESS doctoral students who are employed by Chalmers (or industry) was to issue student visas. This was a nuisance for the individual doctoral student, and probably had, in addition, a negative impact on the competitiveness of the Swedish Universities, including Chalmers, when attracting talents. After a 3 years-long journey advocating for change of the previous regulations, an intermediate goal was reached! A bill regarding the visa for PhD studies was approved by the Swedish parliament in the June of 2014. In short, the bill makes it possible for non-EU/ESS PhD students to obtain permanent residency after 4 years in Sweden.

After another year the non-EU/ESS PhD students can apply for Swedish citizenship.

There have initially been problems with the Swedish Migration Board regarding citizenships. If the applicant stated no interest in staying in Sweden during the visa application then these years have not been counted towards the citizenship. A choice that one was encouraged to do in order to obtain the visa. This problem is affecting the PhD students that already are far in the system and not the PhD students that are early in their PhD education. On a systematic level it will be better with time, however this will inevitably be seen as a little comfort for the PhD students that are experiencing issues at this point. DS have worked with other involved parties to help the find a solution of the situation.

Migrationsverket seems unfortunately to stay firm on their initial position. DS have proposed to another more involved party to bring the question to the Parliamentary Ombudsmän (JO) to fight what DS sees as an incorrect implementation of the law.

The board has also kept an updated homepage as well as distributed 3 newsletter with handy information to the PhD students at Chalmers. An emphasis has been put on balancing the information that is sent to the PhD students via mails. The guiding principle has been to only send information of quality, which is concerning the large majority of the PhD students, in a collected manner. The homepage, as well as the social media presence has been used more extensively since it is less intrusive. DS is today present on Facebook and LinkedIn.

On the basis of this report the board of DS thinks that it safely can be said that DS has represented the doctoral student at Chalmers well and fulfilled all its obligations towards the organization during the activity year of 2014-2015.

DS Chairman 2014-2015

Oskar Thulin

