

## 1. Introduction

The Doctoral Student Guild (DS) is a student union body at Chalmers University of Technology (Chalmers). It is the key coordinating body that represents the interests of all doctoral students across Chalmers in several boards and committees within the institution and outside of it (the Swedish National Union of Students - Doctoral Student Committee or SFS-DK).

More specifically, our goal is to improve the existing conditions for doctoral students at Chalmers by:

- Representing the interests of doctoral students in several boards and committees at Chalmers (including the Institutional group: Chalmers AB, Faculty Board, Committee for research education, or Forskarutbildningsnämnden – FUN, etc.)
- Identifying, preventing, and eliminating issues related to doctoral education at Chalmers (such as contributing to a better work environment that fosters the growth of both the PhD student and their research output)
- Becoming a communication hub by facilitating a direct link between the PhD students and the institution groups (such as the Chalmers AB foundation, FUN, etc.)
- Ensuring that the rights of every doctoral student are protected by closely working with the doktorombud (DOMB) and the vice-rector for research education at Chalmers
- Promoting connections and a sense of belonging among doctoral students both within Chalmers and outside by working with onboarding and communication of information as well as organizing social activities

The DS exists to promote and monitor/follow-up on matters that are of joint interest to all the doctoral students across the university. Every doctoral student is a voting member of the DS and has the right to elect the governing board (which is done annually at the General Assembly). In general, the activities of the DS are divided into:

1. Core operating activities
2. Supplemental activities
3. Sideline activities

The new board was elected in the month of April 2023. For the first time, a co-chair was elected as an addition to the roles of chair and vice-chair. Both the chair and co-chair resigned from their positions and membership in the board in the beginning of March 2023. Both positions were filled through by-elections at the general assembly 2024-03-22 for the rest of the mandate.

During the year 2023/2024 the Doctoral Student Guild (DS) board has been actively representing the doctoral students in several different committees and activities within and outside Chalmers. This report will briefly highlight the main activities performed in the committees, as well as summarize the internal activities. General information about the activities and committees as well as full board meeting notes can be found on the DS webpage (<http://www.dokt.chs.chalmers.se/>).

The board underwent a major restructuring (see next section), which proved to be a challenge and due to the lack of prior established routines in the new structure resulted in an immensely increased workload on a few central positions. This together with the resignation of chair and co-chair during the term was challenging for DS as an organization and resulted in some activities being below the level of previous years. However, it also resulted in an increased awareness for outdated organizational statutes, routines and practices, and work to revise them has been initiated.

## 1.1 Members of the Board 2023-2024

| <b>Name</b>                           | <b>Position</b>   | <b>Department</b>                     |
|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Angelica Avella</b>                | Board member  | Industrial and Materials Science      |
| <b>Athanasios Theodoridis</b>         | Board member  | Physics                               |
| <b>Carolin Behrens</b>                | Board member  | Technology Management and Economics   |
| <b>Christina Lee</b>                  | Board member (until March 2024), Co-chair (from March 2024) | Industrial and Materials Science      |
| <b>Emelie Tornéus</b>                 | Board member (until February 2024)                          | Physics                               |
| <b>Evgeniya Pavlova</b>               | Board member (until January 2024)                           | Life sciences                         |
| <b>Francisco Blas Izquierdo Riera</b> | Chair (until March 2024)                                    | Computer Science and Engineering      |
| <b>Fredrik Sandén</b>                 | Board member  | Chemistry and Chemical Engineering    |
| <b>Gabriel Arslan Waltersson</b>      | Board member  | Electrical Engineering                |
| <b>Heng Zhu</b>                       | Board member  | Mechanics and Maritime Sciences       |
| <b>Ioanna Motschan-Armen</b>          | Board member  | Mathematical science                  |
| <b>Isabelle Dombeck</b>               | Board member (from February 2024)                           | Life sciences                         |
| <b>Johan Ulander</b>                  | Board member  | Mathematical science                  |
| <b>Leon Müller</b>                    | Board member  | Architecture and Civil Engineering    |
| <b>Lorenzo Perticone</b>              | Board member (from March 2024)                              | Computer Science and Engineering      |
| <b>Michael O'Connell</b>              | Board member (from February 2024)                           | Communication and Learning in Science |
| <b>Michail Vourakis</b>               | Board member  | Mechanics and Maritime Sciences       |
| <b>Mustapha Saleh</b>                 | Board member  | Chemistry and Chemical Engineering    |
| <b>Paul Imgart</b>                    | Board member (until March 2024), Chair (from March 2024)    | Electrical Engineering                |
| <b>Prabhat Kumar Jha</b>              | Board member  | Computer Science and Engineering      |
| <b>Rahul Aggarwal</b>                 | Co-chair (until March 2024)                                 | Technology Management and Economics   |
| <b>Yin Zeng</b>                       | Board member  | Microtechnology and Nanoscience       |
| <b>Yingxiao Yan (called Yan)</b>      | Vice-chair (treasurer)                                      | Life sciences                         |
| <b>Yiting Cai</b>                     | Board member  | Space, Earth and Environment          |

## 2. Core operating activities

The Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild is a part of Chalmers student union and has during the operational year 2023/2024 represented all registered doctoral students at Chalmers University of Technology. During the year, the board has had 6 board meetings, the minutes from the board meetings are available on the DS website. During the board meetings the members report on their different activities and discussions regarding strategic topics of the doctoral studies are held. The main topics that have been addressed are detailed in this report.

During the year, DS has had three general assembly meetings (2024-02-22, 2024-03-22 and 2024-05-20). The meetings were held during lunch and food was provided for the attendees. Minutes from the meetings are available on DS website.

### 2.1 Board structure

As a result of evaluation of the board structure during 2022/2023, a proposal was made to decentralize the work done by board members and to form committees working on thematically similar topics. The goal of the restructuring is to both make the board smaller and more effective while at the same time also increasing the participation possibilities for DS members who are not part of the board. The board of 2023/2024 was structured according to this proposal and formed the following committees:

- General representation/management
- Work environment, sustainability, equality and ethics
- Research and education
- Communication
- IT
- Onboarding
- Events

For some committees starting up the work at the beginning of the term proved to be challenging, due to the lack of prior experience with this structure and clear responsibilities within the committees. For some topics the committee-oriented structure also seemed to be more of a hindrance than an improvement.

As a consequence of this experience, a work group was formed by the board to reevaluate the structural changes. The key outcomes of this work was to significantly reduce the size of the board; to reinterpret the role of board members as a more coordinating role for specific topics, each supported by a committee; and to clarify and advertise the possibilities of DS members to engage with and participate in DS work without board membership. These proposed changes have been approved by the board as the direction the DS board structure should be developed, with eventual changes to the statutes to be prepared and proposed to the GA in the future.

### 2.2 Communication

The contact with our members is vital for the Guild's operations. The main way to communicate with our members is through our mailing list(s), which have been operational but only updated once during the term. It was used to send out a newsletter to inform our members of current activities and social events to join. Our social media accounts have also been used to some extent; however, this has mainly been



limited to gaining attention for social events. Our main information-hub is our website (<https://www.dokt.chs.chalmers.se/>). Here all official documents are stored and available for our members.

Internal communication relies on mailing lists and a nextcloud instance.

## 2.3 Finance

The vice-chair Yingxiao Yan was responsible for the finances, and these are presented in a separate document.

## 2.4 Local PhD councils

An important part of PhD representation at Chalmers are the local PhD councils at each department. They act as points of contact since they foster a forum for direct dialogue with and between individual departments. Communication was established with all Local PhD council chairs of all thirteen departments. Two chairs' meetings that facilitated inter-departmental communication have been organized and received positive feedback from the participants.

## 2.5 Collaboration with student union

The collaboration between DS and the student union management team has been intensified from both sides, in particular with the education officer David Hedgren, who has offered a lot of support. The relationship with the student union is important for DS as they have a more stable organization and a strong voice in matters which are of importance for PhD students.

Discussions and actions have revolved around enabling a more active role of PhD students in the student union as well as using the union's larger and more stable organization to ease DS' administrative burden. As part of this, the employment of the DOMB has been moved to the student union and discussions about moving accounting and IT maintenance have been initiated. The union has also been involved in the work group revising DS' statutes and board structure.

## 2.6 Recruitment of the board

The nomination committee consisted of five members from the board (23/24). The recruitment was done according to the statutes. As part of the restructuring process, representation of all departments through board members was no longer seen necessary. Similar to the previous year, the roles of chair, vice-chair/treasurer and co-chair have been nominated and elected individually.

## 2.7 IT

All services and data are hosted on DS' own servers. Parts of the servers' software are outdated and not easily upgradable. Work has been initiated to simplify and modernize the IT structure and remove unused services, as well as to move hosting of our IT to the student union in the long term.

## 3 Representation, Policy, and Advocacy

Advocacy work is a core operation of the Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild. This chapter outlines the work performed within advocacy work at the university, regional level, and national level. The main channel for this work is through direct representation in bodies, committees, and work groups. This chapter outlines some of the main issues through the academic year of 2023/2024. For full details see the public minutes from each university group and the DS board meeting minutes.

### 3.1 Representation

DS is involved in several activities that directly impact both the quality of doctoral education as well as the overall environment for research. These activities are in the direct interest of every doctoral student employed at Chalmers. DS is also indirectly involved in several other activities at the university which impact the quality of doctoral education. These advisory involvements are primarily through representation in various committees (such as at the research education committee, FUN). The stated goal for the year has been to provide active representation in bodies, committees, and work groups at Chalmers. Active representation has been defined in the plan of operations (POO) as DS representation in at least 75% of the meetings.

| Group  | DS representative                        |
|--|--|
| Central skyddskommite/central protection committee             | Christina, Emelie                        |
| Chalmers Research Foundation                                   | Gabriel, Heng                            |
| Chalmers University Board (Chalmers AB Board)                  | Daniel Gyllenhammar (chair of 2022/2023) |
| CLS institutional council                                      | Gabriel                                  |
| Fakultetsrådet (Faculty council)                               | Fredrik                                  |
| Forskarutbildningsnämnd/ Research education committee (FUN)    | Francisco, Gabriel, Paul                 |
| Forskningsnämnd (FN)   | Fredrik                                  |
| Labor union (SACO)   | Johan                                    |
| Research misconduct (EOK)                                      | Francisco                                |
| Student union council (FUM)                                    | Francisco, Rahul                         |
| Swedish organization of student unions, PhD committee (SFS-DK) | Christina, Francisco, Paul               |

### 3.2 PhD survey

The bi-annual PhD survey has been conducted in Spring 2024. The results have been made available to the local PhD councils. Analysis of the results has been initiated, and key findings have been shared with the DS board, FUN and in similar contexts.

### **3.3 Evaluation of research education**

In January, the internal evaluation process of research education at Chalmers was initiated. At each department, a local evaluation committee has been formed with involvement of PhD student representatives. DS has offered information, access to data (e.g. the PhD survey results) and offered two lunch meetings for exchange and coordination between the representatives. Furthermore, a DS member (Paul) is part of the central evaluation committee, which commenced work in September 2024 based on the local evaluation and assessment reports.

### **3.4 Doktorandombud (DOMB)**

Until this term, the doktorandombud at Chalmers has been recruited and employed by DS (with compensation from Chalmers). To be able to offer better supervision and leadership continuity to the DOMB as well as ease the administrative burden of DS, the board has decided to move the employment to the student union instead. This entails a new recruitment process. As of the end of the term, this process has been initiated, but not concluded. Representation of DS in the recruitment process as well as influence over the DOMB's work are to be maintained.

### **3.5 Supervisor of the year**

A work group formed by three DS board members has collected nominations for the supervisor of the year from all PhD students, reviewed the nominations, conducted interviews with finalists and granted the award of supervisor of the year to Ida-Maja Hassellöv from M2.

### **3.6 Chalmers conference on teaching and learning (KUL)**

DS was actively involved in planning, promoting and conducting the KUL conference through a representative. The representative actively worked to make the conference more accessible for PhD students, e.g. by ensuring as much of the information and content as possible were available in English.

### **3.7 Collaboration with DrGENIE**

DrGENIE is the doctoral student branch of Chalmers' initiative on gender balance, Genie. In this forum each department should be represented by one doctoral student, and the representative's work is considered as departmental duties. DS has initiated a good cooperation with Dr. Genie and attempts to join efforts to improve equality, diversity and inclusion within Chalmers.

### **3.8 Action against (sexual) harassment**

During the previous term the DS board has formed a work group to improve prevention of sexual harassment at Chalmers and discuss Chalmers' routines and policies regarding this topic. The work group has continued work also during this term and, with the participation of members from DrGENIE, DS and local councils formulated a letter with proposals. The letter was signed by the student union, all local councils and DS and has been followed up by a discussion with Chalmers leadership, where several concerns about the planned changes were expressed by the work group members. The discussions about these changes are ongoing and the work group continues to be actively involved even after the end of the term.

### **3.9 Departmental duties**

The way departmental duties are organized across Chalmers has been investigated, as this has been seen to be a point of dissatisfaction among PhD students and anecdotally varied considerably across departments, divisions and research groups. A workshop with the PhD Council representatives was held to gather data on this which would be complimented by statistics from the PhD survey. A written report about the results is to be prepared.

### **3.10 Sustainability strategy/climate action**

DS involvement in this area has been relatively low in previous years. During the last term, contacts both with Chalmers functions working on this as well as other key organizations and groups have been established. As a result, DS has been able to provide feedback on Chalmers' yearly sustainability report.

### **3.11 Duration to licentiate and requirement for pay raise**

Many PhD students take their licentiate degree or mid-term seminar after more than 2-2.5 years. Concerns about this have been raised by DS board members with Chalmers leadership already in previous years. One possible way around the apparent challenges with this that was discussed within the board is to decouple the pay raise from the licentiate and to instead receive an automatic salary increase after a certain duration of employment. This is to be further discussed within the DS board and with the labor union.



## 4 Social and career events

### 4.1 Social events

The organization of social events by the DS board was impacted and delayed by the new structure of the DS board. Due to this, the focus of social events was on the second half of the term. A new addition was the participation in the student union's pub crawls through a collaboration with the rotary pub and a PhD student group led by a board member participating in the crawl.

### 4.2 Alumni event

One of our appreciated yearly events is the Alumni event, which enables current PhD Students to meet Chalmers PhD alumni from the industry. This with a rather high alumni/PhD student ratio. This year, DS has also started a collaboration with Unimeet, which lead to a joint Alumni-event between Chalmers and GU.

### 4.3 Introduction session

DS board members have been present at all introduction lunches for new PhD students and introduced DS as well as import support functions available to PhD students. The introduction session is no longer mandatory. This impacts DS possibility to reach all PhD students with the information that is needed. Information about labor union, student union, student discounts, DS in general, etc. does not reach some of our members. This has been brought up with both FUN and the student union.

## 5 Final remarks

Based on this report, I hope that it is clearly shown that the DS Board of 2023/2024 has fulfilled its obligations towards the Doctoral student guild at Chalmers.

Paul Imgart, DS board member 2023/2024 and chair March – June 2024.



# Signature page

This document has been electronically signed  
using eduSign.

eduSign