

2024/25

# Plan of Operations



Board of the Doctoral Guild  
Chalmers Student Union  
2024/25

## Table of Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Introduction.....  | 2 |
| 1. Communication.....  | 3 |
| 1.1. Special Interests for the Communication Committee.....      | 3 |
| 1.2. Recruitment, grass-root (Nomination Committee).....         | 4 |
| 2. Social Activities.....  | 4 |
| 2.1. Special Interests for the Social Committee.....             | 5 |
| 3. PhD Outreach at Chalmers.....                                 | 5 |
| 4. Research Education.....                                       | 5 |
| 4.1. Supervisor of the year.....                                 | 6 |
| 4.2. Special Interests for the Research Education Committee..... | 6 |
| 5. Work Environment.....   | 7 |
| 5.1. PhD satisfaction survey.....                                | 7 |
| 5.2. Special Interests for the Work Environment Committee.....   | 8 |
| 6. Management.....   | 8 |
| 6.1. Doktorand ombudsman (DOMB).....                             | 9 |
| 6.2. Special Interests for the Management Group.....             | 9 |

## Introduction

The Doctoral Student Guild (DS) is a student union (SU) 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).

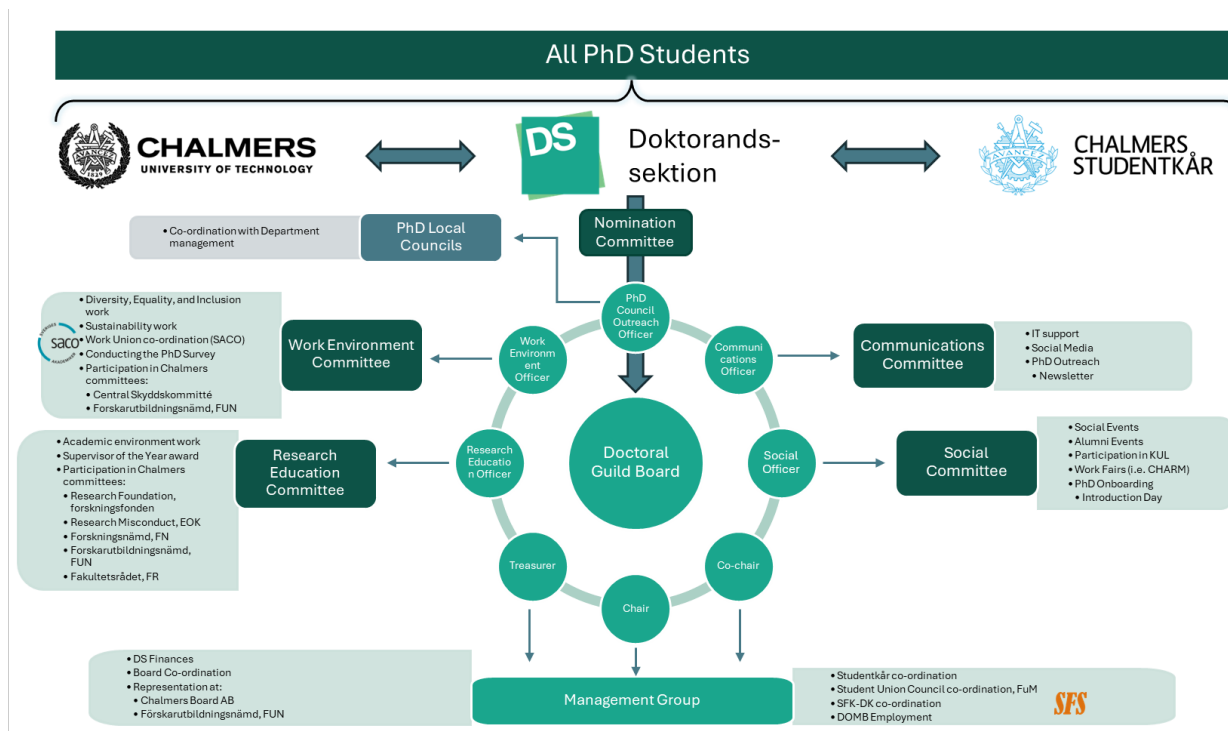
More specifically, our goal is to improve the existing conditions for doctoral students at Chalmers by:

- 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 institutional groups (such as the Chalmers AB foundation, FUN, etc.)
- Ensuring that the rights of every doctoral student are protected by closely working with the 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

Every doctoral student enrolled at Chalmers 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 line with the above mentioned goals, the activities of the DS are divided into:

1. Communication
2. Social Activities
3. PhD Outreach at Chalmers
4. Research Education
5. Work Environment
6. Management

The new board was elected in the month of May 2024. This document is drafted as a preliminary plan of operation (PoO) specifying the activities for this elected DS Board for the period of July 2024- June 2025. An overview of the DS structure and core activities can be seen below:



## 1. Communication

It is of greatest importance that information relevant to doctoral students at Chalmers is communicated appropriately. In relation to this, the DS has established a Communication Committee in 2024 to work with a number of activities that help ensure a clear and efficient communication channel is established between the DS Board and the doctoral student. The Committee will be managed by an elected Board Member who has been appointed as Communication Officer by the DS Chair and Co-Chair. This year, Carolin Behrens will perform this role.

In particular, the Communication Committee within DS shall:

- Maintain and develop an independent website (<http://www.dokt.chs.chalmers.se/>) as a means of communicating the most relevant information.
- Use the capabilities of social media (i.e. [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), etc.) to better reach out to doctoral students.
- Publish [newsletters](#) (recommended at least twice a year) to spread information about upcoming events and further highlight recent DS activities.
- Advertise the DS whenever an opportunity arises, to let the doctoral students know about its role and the kind of issues it generally handles.
- Advertise roles within the DS to help the successful continuation of the DS into the future.

### 1.1. Special Interests for the Communication Committee

On top of these core activities the Communication Committee will work with the following special interests

during the mandate period of 2024/25:

- Improve our social media strategy and expanding onto further platforms.
- Improve the DS branding for example, through updating the logo, and creating some community merchandise.
- Investigate updating current IT infrastructure being used by DS, for example for the newsletter creation.

## 1.2. Recruitment, grass-root (Nomination Committee)

In connection with the above tasks, to ensure continuity in the work of the DS board even over several terms, it is important to recruit new members. The board members ideally represent the diversity of Chalmers' PhD students and its different departments. Furthermore, it is desirable to involve doctoral students who are not members of the DS board whenever feasible. Although the Communication Committee aims to help spread information on roles, the Nomination Committee is responsible for recruitment.

In particular, **the Nomination Committee within DS shall:**

- Identify suitable and willing candidates for various roles within the DS.
- Strive towards equal representation from all departments at Chalmers. Each department is strongly encouraged to have at least one representative supporting the DS board in some capacity.
- Encourage and support the development of local doctoral student councils, which represent doctoral students at a departmental level.
- Encourage doctoral students to join their activities whenever feasible.

## 2. Social Activities

A key part of the work of DS is to create a community within which doctoral students feel that they belong. Social activities are an important enabler for this, and the DS has established a Social Committee in 2024 to work with a number of activities that provide an opportunity for doctoral students to engage in the community and participate in events relevant for them. The Committee will be managed by an elected Board Member who has been appointed as Social Officer by the DS Chair and Co-Chair. This year, Ioanna Motschan-Armen will perform this role.

In particular, **the Social Committee within DS shall:**

- Organize a selection of varied social events in which doctoral students across Chalmers can participate and engage with other doctoral students.
- Represent doctoral education at Chalmers during the **CHARM** fair.
- Organize an event where PhD alumni meet current PhD students and report about their career in industry.
- Organize educational sessions such as workshop series to navigate academia, or other suitable topics.
- Co-organize the “Introduction for Doctoral Students” to supply the new PhD student with the most relevant information regarding doctoral studies in Sweden.

- Participate in the organization of the KUL conference ([Konferens för utbildning och lärande](#)).

### 2.1. Special Interests for the Social Committee

On top of these core activities the Social Committee will work with the following special interests during the mandate period of 2024/25:

- Increase the frequency of social events during the mandate to improve PhD engagement.

## 3. PhD Outreach at Chalmers

In connection with the previous point, the DS oversees and initiates several outreach activities to include all PhD students within the discussions that are currently handled by the board. This is achieved partly by regularly reaching out to the PhD councils at the departments, thereby ensuring a smooth communication between the DS board and the local councils and, therefore, the doctoral students. This dialogue aims to give the PhD students an opportunity to directly share their immediate concerns and issues with the DS board through their local council, enabling the DS board to better represent the doctoral students in consequence.

On the other hand, this dialogue also can provide an effective way to share information about the rights of doctoral students, DS' activities, and important notices at Chalmers that can affect doctoral students. This is relevant in particular to aid doctoral students in understanding how the board's work impacts their own studies and work situation and in turn to improve the engagement of doctoral students in the work done by DS.

An elected Board Member is appointed to be responsible for this communication in the role of PhD Outreach Officer by the Chair and Co-Chair. For this mandate period, Lorenzo Perticone has been appointed to the role.

With regards to this, **the DS shall:**

- Facilitate a two-way communication between the local councils and the DS board, e.g. by allowing DS board members to attend local council meetings and appointing a local PhD council coordinator.
- Provide a way for local PhD councils to exchange challenges, experience and best-practices from their departments, as well to educate them about DS activities.
- Organize informal gatherings such as PhD barbeques, hikes, and/or other social events to try and engage all the PhD students at Chalmers.
- Present the DS at all local PhD councils in order to improve its visibility.

## 4. Research Education

Chalmers' doctoral programs are organized in subject-oriented graduate schools which are owned and developed by the departments. Each graduate school corresponds to a doctoral program subject and for each graduate school there is a general study plan that describes the required qualifications, the specializations available in the graduate school, the courses included in the program, etc. These doctoral programs determine how the research education for each doctoral student should be conducted and have a large influence on the doctoral student's experience and competence after completing the program. Therefore, it is of high importance

for DS that the research education is run successfully at Chalmers to ensure doctoral students' rights are respected. Hence, the DS is actively involved in the research education planning and operation at Chalmers. To facilitate this involvement, the DS established the Research Education Committee in 2024 that is managed by an elected Board Member appointed to the role of Research Education Officer by the Chair and Co-Chair. For this mandate period, Isabelle Dombeck has been appointed to the role.

In particular, the Research Education Committee within DS shall:

- Administer the Chalmers 'Supervisor of the Year' prize (more details are given in section 4.1)
- Follow and influence Chalmers on any issues that can affect the research education experience of doctoral students.
- Represent doctoral students in the following groups and committees at Chalmers:
  - Research Foundation (forskningsfonden)
  - Research Misconduct (etik- och oredlighetskommitté, EOK)
  - The Research Committee (forskningsnämnden, FN)
  - Doctoral Programmes Committee (forskarutbildningsnämnden, FUN)
  - The Faculty Senate (fakultetsrådet, FR)
  - CLS Institutional Council

#### 4.1. Supervisor of the year

Each year the Chalmers awards the 'Supervisor of the Year' prize. The DS is involved in organizing/supporting the award of this prize. The prize is given by the Chalmers administration and the winner is awarded 25 000 SEK. The visibility and importance that this prize carries requires emphasis, and the DS aids in such an effort by leading the dissemination of the relevant information.

In relation to this, the DS shall:

- Carry on the selection process according to the relevant criteria (as assessed by the doctoral students).
- Actively engage in reaching out to as many PhD students as possible: utilize the help of local councils for a more efficient reach-out.
- Advertise the 'call for the prize' via the several DS communication channels and through posters/flyers.
- Enhance the discussion among students and supervisors about the importance of a good supervision.
- Interview previous/current winners of the prize to further improve the visibility of the award (these interviews are published in the DS newsletter and on the webpage).
- Choose a winner and write a nomination letter for the administration.

#### 4.2. Special Interests for the Research Education Committee

On top of these core activities the Research Education Committee will work with the following special interests during the mandate period of 2024/25:

- During 2024, an evaluation of the research schools at Chalmers was initiated which is

scheduled to conclude in 2025. DS has already provided support during the initial phase of the evaluation process and will continue to support local councils and strive for the doctoral voice to be heard during the remaining part of the evaluation.

## 5. Work Environment

An employer's work environment has a huge impact on the wellbeing of its employees, and this is equally true for doctoral students at Chalmers. To help foster an environment in which doctoral students can thrive and develop, the DS works actively with work environment related topics. In 2024, the Work Environment Committee was established by DS to facilitate this work. The Work Environment Committee is managed by an elected Board Member who has been appointed by the Chair and Co-Chair to the role of Work Environment Officer. For this mandate period, Lucian Petrisor Ion has been appointed to the role.

In particular, the Work Environment Committee within DS shall:

- Communicate with SACO the rights of doctoral students and participate in wage negotiations between SACO and Chalmers (trade union dealing with labor rights and law)
- Establish and maintain a good cooperation with Dr. Genie, a recently founded doctoral student branch of Chalmers' initiative on gender balance, Genie.
- Incorporate the work against all forms of harassment and discrimination in all its efforts.
- Ensure that the topic of sexual harassment is treated with priority.
- Formulate and advocate changes deemed necessary to improve the equality situation at Chalmers.
- Monitor actions and relevant reports addressing Chalmers' commitments to reducing climate impact.
- Liaise with relevant persons at Chalmers to drive action forward concerning sustainability.
- Participate and advocate for the doctoral viewpoint in the Central Safety Committee (central skyddskommitté)
- Plan, administer and analyze a PhD satisfaction survey every other year (more details are given in section 5.1)

### 5.1. PhD satisfaction survey

DS aims at improving the conditions for doctoral studies at Chalmers. In order to better represent the students and identify key areas of interest, the DS sends out a survey which is further analyzed in the following three continuation tracks:

- 1) Follow-up Track - This can be seen as yet another opportunity to receive and analyze feedback in the Chalmers Employee Survey and hence build on the doctoral student's voice in improving satisfaction.
- 2) Publicity Track - Engage in activities aimed at raising the awareness of the emerged issues among the doctoral students, both as a preventive measure and as a way to empower the students with the tools needed for diagnosing a problem.



- 3) Policy Track - Inform Chalmers about the findings and conclusions from the survey and ask for their intervention to improve the status quo. Initiate and catalyze a change of policies and procedures that impact positively on the situation of the doctoral students and ensure fair and equal treatment.

With regards to this, **the DS shall during this mandate period:**

- Continue to spread the results from the previous survey conducted in 2024.
- Prepare and plan a new survey to be administered in 2026.
- Investigate and analyze how other surveys conducted at Chalmers (for example the employee survey, and local PhD Council surveys) can be used to support and broaden the results of the 2024 survey.

## 5.2. Special Interests for the Work Environment Committee

On top of these core activities the Research Education Committee will work with the following special interests during the mandate period of 2024/25:

- Distribution, keeping track, and compensation of departmental duties varies wildly between different departments and divisions at Chalmers. For a considerable share of doctoral students, problems regarding this area are a major cause of stress and dissatisfaction. The DS board started investigations into this issue in 2023/24 by conducting a workshop with the local PhD Councils. A summary of the results will be prepared and released to relevant parties during this mandate.
- Reducing the considerable variation noticed in the time needed for the completion of a licentiate has been a regularly addressed matter. Currently, a salary increase for doctoral students is connected to the successful completion of their licentiate. Considering the variability in licentiate timing, this can lead to large discrepancies in salary for PhDs at the same time point within their studies. To address this, DS are attempting to negotiate a decoupling of salary increase with the licentiate for a more fair wage increase for doctoral students.

## 6. Management

To ensure that the DS Board fulfills its responsibilities to the doctoral students at Chalmers, it must be properly managed and led. This has been entrusted to the management group consisting of the elected Chair, Co-Chair, and Treasurer for the mandate period. For the mandate period of 2024/25, Fredrik Sandén has been elected Chair, Christina Lee has been elected Co-Chair and Yingxiao Yan has been elected as Treasurer (vice-chair).

In particular, **the Management Group within DS shall:**

- Responsibly manage and administer the DS finances and prepare a suitable budget for the mandate to be approved by the Board as early as possible.
- Liaise with and manage the Doctoral Ombudsman (doktorandombudsman, DOMB): more details can be found in section 6.1.
- Hold biannual General Assemblies which gives every DS member the opportunity to offer

- feedback on the board and its activities.
- Ensure the Board runs smoothly and efficiently throughout the mandate period.
- Have a continuous relationship with the board of the Chalmers Studentkår, as well as the Student Union Council (Fullmäktige, FuM).
- Identify areas of improvement for DS and create action plans for the identified areas.
- Actively engage in the activities of the [SFS-DK](#).
- Communicate national level policy changes to the institution as well as the local PhD councils.
- Represent the DS at the Chalmers AB Board and FUN.

### 6.1. Doktorand ombudsman (DOMB)

The ombudsman (DOMB) is one of the most important services granted by the DS to any doctoral student. The DOMB can help the doctoral students in need of help to identify issues, discuss potential solutions as well as be a supporting party in meetings with the supervisor and/or department/institution.

In light of work done by the previous board, the employment of the DOMB will now be handled directly by the Student Union (NOTE: this means the DOMB is NOT a Chalmers employee) and the recruitment of a new DOMB is ongoing in light of this change. In order to support the DOMB, **the DS shall:**

- Engage with the DOMB regularly to understand the general nature of the cases being handled.
- Present the DOMB at the “[Introduction for Doctoral Students](#)” event.
- Be actively involved in improving the conditions of employment (through the yearly appraisal meetings – employee satisfaction discussions about the DOMB role).
- Assess general trends in the DOMB’s cases, so as to propose/enforce a suitable change at the institutional level (through the various groups such as FUN for e.g.).
- Assess how well-known, accessible and satisfactorily the DOMB’s services are perceived by the doctoral students and support the DOMB in improving these measures.
- Be actively involved in the recruitment process of the new DOMB.

### 6.2. Special Interests for the Management Group

As DS is a constantly changing organization, with new members, change of focus and activities, it is important to constantly improve the organization. Therefore, on top of these core activities the Management will work with the following special interests during the mandate period of 2024/25:

- Implement and review a new structure of working for the DS Board.
- Evaluate and suggest updates to the DS statutes to align with current working practices and ensure the longevity and integrity of the DS into the future.
- Investigate how the Withdrawal of Resources is used at Chalmers to ensure doctoral student’s rights are not violated.