

Recommendations for the university-wide level – with Action Programme

An internal evaluation of third-cycle education at Malmö University was conducted throughout the 2013-2015 period. During the evaluation, a number of recommendations for universitywide measures were gathered. The Doctoral Education Board synthesised this evaluation in May 2015. The following recommendations for the university-wide level are the result of this synthesis.

There are two types of proposed measures. The measures that should be implemented under direction from the University Administration and Services or with the financial resources for research and third-cycle education distributed by the Vice-Chancellor, and those measures that should be implemented equally at all faculties. In certain cases, the measures are intended to be implemented in a collaboration between the faculties and University Administration and Services.

To be able to conduct high quality third-cycle education at Malmö University, it is necessary to make Malmö University an attractive workplace for doctoral students. Academic personnel are included in the third-cycle education environment, and it is their responsibility to ensure the continuity of third-cycle subject areas through research specialisation, supervision and seminar activities. Consequently, the requirements for the operating conditions of senior academic personnel are to be such that they guarantee the quality of third-cycle education at Malmö University.

Conditions

- In the event that the third-cycle education environments risk becoming too small due to a lack of academic staff, Malmö University should, in conjunction with recruitment, offer senior academic staff such terms regarding research within the framework of the position that applicants perceive the conditions at the University to be attractive. This recommendation should be especially viewed in light of the new working hours agreement for professors. The effect the working hours agreement has on third-cycle education will be monitored.

Measure: The Doctoral Education Board should annually follow the development of third-cycle subjects that risk becoming seriously under-staffed regarding supervisors and doctoral students. The supervisor situation is included in the planned Doctoral Student Barometer.

- Good and predictable conditions for staff to participate in third-cycle education must be created. Therefore, adequate time for supervision, seminar activities, course development and implementation, administration for third-cycle education and research is to be set aside and highlighted when planning the position.

Measure: The University should develop guidelines for how working hours for staff participation in third-cycle education are highlighted when planning the position.

- Conditions are to be in place so that doctoral students have the opportunity to influence the formation of third-cycle education. This can be achieved by establishing long-term agreements between Malmö University and the Doctoral Student Union Malmö. The faculties are encouraged to assess the mood at annual hearings where all of the faculties' (area of degree awarding powers) doctoral students are gathered. These hearings are for discussing matters raised by the doctoral students in a structured manner.

Measure: The Doctoral Education Board should follow the results of the hearings that are recommended.

- A doctoral student is in a state of dependence, particularly towards their principal supervisor. Problems may arise when the following roles overlap: principal supervisor and examiner, principal supervisor and in charge of externally financed projects, and principal supervisor and manager (unit manager, head of department or dean). Universal guidelines should be established regarding fundamental operations when these roles overlap.

Measure: Universal guidelines are implemented in a revised policy for third-cycle education 2016.

Financing

- Malmö University should employ a fundraiser. It is their task to attract donations that benefit third-cycle education and its associated research.

Measure: -

- Malmö University should continue to deepen the work within the researcher service [Forskarservice] by identifying, initiating and mediating contact with lesser-known research financiers for third-cycle education.

Measure: -

- Each faculty shall ensure that there is an administrative system for the financial resources covering doctoral students' expenses in their education (known as "backpack" "or ungraded funding"). Equality should be in place for doctoral students at Malmö University for both the size of the "backpack" and what the backpack/ungraded funding may be used for. There should be a university-wide definition of what backpack/ungraded funding can be used for.

Measure: University-wide guidelines for backpack funding are attached to the revised policy for third-cycle education 2016.

Internationalisation

- Make all joint administrative systems available to non Swedish-speaking staff, including doctoral students.

Refer to Handlingsplan för Malmö högskolas internationalisering och globala engagemang 2015–2017 [Internationalisation and global engagement plan for Malmö University 2015–2017].

- In cooperation with the faculties, ensure that thorough and up-to-date information about third-cycle education at Malmö University is available on the website in both Swedish and English.

Measure: The Communications Unit annually reviews the Malmö University website for third-cycle education, in consultation with the study directors for doctoral studies. In connection with this, they present an improvement plan to the Doctoral Education Board.

- Should ensure a university-wide system to cater to the needs of newly-arrived foreign doctoral students, such as contact with the Swedish authorities, housing and banking issues as well as courses in Swedish for beginners. The system includes an introduction package for Swedish third-cycle education that includes information about conditions applicable to third-cycle students with doctoral studentships. The introduction package is linked to the university-wide introduction that is synchronised with other levels at Malmö University.

Refer to Handlingsplan för Malmö högskolas internationalisering och globala engagemang 2015–2017 [Internationalisation and global engagement plan for Malmö University 2015–2017].

- A central travel grant fund for doctoral students should be trialled.

Measure: This rests upon the policy for third-cycle education being revised.

Work environment

- Should investigate the conditions for the relatively large number of doctoral students at Malmö University working with skills development at an employer other than Malmö University. Often, third-cycle studies take place on a part-time basis, with limited physical presence at Malmö University. Such an analysis will lead to the “best practices” in question.

Measure: A survey is being conducted during 2016. The reason for this is that Malmö University belongs to the higher education institutions in Sweden with the highest proportion of doctoral students carrying out their studies as a form of skills development within a position outside of the University. Investigators should be appointed as soon as possible. This type of run-through can lead to the “best practices” in question and can then be appended to the policy.

- In cases where there are flexible workplaces within third-cycle education, their impact on implementing the education is to be mapped.

Such mapping should be included in a larger survey, in which results for doctoral students are presented separately.

Courses and specialisations

- The Doctoral Education Board, in collaboration with the Centre for Academic Learning (AKL), ensure that there is an adequate selection of university-wide third-cycle courses that always meet high standards.

Measure: Establish routines for the development process up until a decision for the course syllabus is made. AKL should annually report the number of participants and evaluation results from the university-wide courses to the Doctoral Education Board and present the selection of courses to supervisors and doctoral students for the following academic year.

- All third-cycle courses at Malmö University shall be offered in English, in the event of applications from doctoral students that do not have sufficient Swedish language skills.

Measure: The Doctoral Education Board monitors that this is the case.

- Specialisations in academic theory and method differ between the courses at Malmö University which provide the entry requirements for third-cycle studies. Consequently, prior knowledge varies depending on the courses studied by a doctoral student which meet the entry requirements. The knowledge level suitable as the basis for third-cycle studies should be investigated, as well as whether there is a need to coordinate with lower levels – for example, by awarding course credits in third-cycle studies for the completion of second-cycle courses after admission to third-cycle studies.

Measure: Together with the Advisory Committee for Education, the Doctoral Education Board should examine the possibility of surveying the specialisation within academic theory and methodology for all studies that meet the entry requirements for third-cycle studies. The survey should guide the way the next generation of courses are realised regarding theory and methodology. This could include clear rules for determining which of Malmö University's second-cycle theory and methodology courses can be evaluated into third-cycle studies.

Career planning

- In addition to their studies and on a voluntary basis, a doctoral student can participate in departmental duties. These often include teaching that is relevant to the thesis project – up to 20% as a step in career planning. Both the departmental duties and the academic teaching skills development necessary for tuition are to be documented in the individual study plan and planned in consultation with the doctoral student.

Measure: The individual study plan shall be reviewed so there is room (and instructions) for documenting career planning and departmental duties (when planning the position). In the long term, the potential to also provide doctoral students with consultative individual support should be investigated.

- A mentor programme is to be available for existing doctoral students.

Measure: During 2017, the alumni coordinator should be assisted by the Doctoral Student Union Malmö in investigating the interest amongst doctoral students with regard to a mentor programme.

Examination quality assurance

- There shall be documentation that ensures that all doctoral students meet the qualitative targets for their studies before the examination.

Measure: The individual study plan shall give room for documenting how each qualitative target has been met.

- The individual study plan is a planning tool that describes the commitments of both the university and the doctoral student. The university-wide individual study plan shall be revised and should be digitalised no later than 2016. The revision includes adding a [checklistcheck list](#) for the qualitative targets where there is room to document how the doctoral student has met the individual targets.

Measure: The first step involves the Doctoral Education Board reviewing the existing form for the individual study plan. At the same time, the available options for developing a digital study plan will be investigated either internally or externally.

Supervision and monitoring

- Together with the Centre for Academic Learning, the Doctoral Education Board is planning how the professionalisation of the supervisor role can be continually strengthened at Malmö University.

Measure: Each semester, the Doctoral Education Board should invite representatives from the Centre for Academic Learning to discuss forthcoming activities that are aimed at staff acting as supervisors.

- Alumni activities will be planned for those with third-cycle qualifications.

Measure: As part of the collective alumni activities, the Office of Education and Research Support together with Innovation and Development will develop routines for alumni activities for those with third-cycle qualifications. This will also include a questionnaire.