

DOMB Activity Plan 2022/2023

The Doctoral Student Ombudsman (hereafter “the DOMB”), has the task to provide legal counselling to doctoral students at Lund University (Hereafter “LU”) concerning their educational rights. This task includes assisting them in advocating for their rights in contact with the university, or helping them to place formal complaints to relevant authorities when applicable. The DOMB is also an important resource for the student unions who represent doctoral students at LU. The general tasks of the DOMB, as well as specific tasks for the activity year of 2021/2022 are described in this activity plan.

The activities are divided into seven action areas:

1. Individual cases
2. Preserving and sharing acquired knowledge
3. Information and education
4. Cooperation and networks
5. Professional development
6. Planning, reporting and budgeting
7. Outreach

In the following, each action area is described individually. Each section describes what tasks need to be done within each action area.

VISION

The vision for the work of the DOMB is that the activities in these seven areas will ensure that every doctoral student at Lund University knows their rights and duties, and that they have easy access to support and advice, helping them to enjoy their rights.

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1. INDIVIDUAL CASES

The processing of individual cases is the core of the DOMB's occupation. It includes meeting doctoral students who feel mistreated by the university in the course of their education. It also includes gathering anonymized data based on the cases, and analyzing that data to be able to report on any structural problems that the data might indicate. The purpose is to enable proactive work towards the goal of doctoral students enjoying their rights, and to provide a basis for the university's and the student union bodies' quality assessments and quality development.

PROCESSING COMPLAINTS

The help and support offered to doctoral students can consist of e.g., providing legal advice, accompanying students to meetings with the university, helping students appeal decisions made by the university, or, if all parties consent, acting as a mediator between students and university actors. The DOMB must establish which specific measures are appropriate on a case-to-case basis, using professional judgment and taking the specific circumstances of each case into account. Action should not be taken without the consent of the doctoral student.

SCOPE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The DOMB is mandated to assist all doctoral students at Lund University when they run into challenges related to their third cycle studies. The DOMB may also assist persons who have not (yet) been admitted to third-cycle education at LU, but who have concerns about their rights in connection to third cycle education at LU, such as for example persons having problems or questions related to the admission process. If the DOMB is unsure about whether handling a certain case falls within their mandate, they can ask for guidance from Lund's Doctoral Student Union (LDK) and Teknologkåren (TLTH).

DOCUMENTATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND HANDLING OF PERSONAL DATA

To make sure that doctoral students feel safe contacting the DOMB, any information shared in confidence should be handled confidentially, and personal data should be processed according to applicable laws regulating the processing of personal data.

The DOMB will keep correspondence and notes from meetings with doctoral students in a structured manner, in order to access it while the case is still being worked on. When the case is considered closed, any data that could make the student identifiable will be handled in accordance with the document *DOMB Confidentiality and Policy for Handling Personal Data*¹.

If the DOMB does not have the means or knowledge necessary to help a student with a request that falls within the scope of the Doctoral Student Ombudsman's tasks, the DOMB can ask for outside help or guidance on the matter, but never in a way that makes the student identifiable unless the student consents to it. If the issue falls partly within the scope of the tasks of the DOMB and partly within the scope of another party, such as e.g., a labor union or the Occupational Health Services, the DOMB can communicate with the other parties about the case, if the doctoral student consents.

¹ Available at https://www.ldk.lu.se/_files/ugd/0b0fe1_e3924f2600234fd4b1cf541d9a777c8a.pdf.

THE ANNUAL CASE REPORT

The time period for data gathering for case reports follows the academic year; from the 1st of July to the 30th of June. The DOMB will register anonymized data from the individual cases during 2022/2023 to use for statistics that are to be published in an annual report during the next activity year.

The DOMB will also finalize the case report for 2021/2022 based on data gathered during that year. The data should be analyzed to find any trends or patterns over time. The results of the data analysis will be published in a report. The DOMB should ask to have the report made publicly available at the webpages for LDK and the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH (Dokt) when it is finished.

THE NEW CASE HANDLING SYSTEM

The case handling system that has been developed by a project group of student ombudsmen from six different student unions during 2019-2020 has been tested during the academic year of 2021-2022. Around the time of the writing of the 2021-2022 case report, the DOMB should evaluate whether it seems worthwhile to keep it as the DOMB's standard way to register and analyze cases.

The way of categorizing data is a little different when using the new system compared to how it has been done before, primarily because the case categories are different. During the academic year of 2021-2022 the DOMB has categorized data both in the way that has been done previously, as well as the way recommended in the new system. Depending on how the DOMB experiences working with the new system, it is up to the DOMB to decide whether the 2021-2022 case report will be published using the old or the new way of categorizing data.

2. PRESERVING AND SHARING ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE

Experiential knowledge is easily lost within the student unions due to student representatives changing every year. The DOMB office can be a valuable resource of knowledge and continuity to the student organizations who work with doctoral issues at LU. Furthermore, if the person holding the DOMB office changes at some point, a new DOMB should not need to start from zero. Even if personal data needs to be deleted when cases are closed, it is important to keep general information acquired from working with cases, so that case work can become more efficient over time.

Therefore, the DOMB should preserve acquired knowledge for future use. Useful documents should be kept in a structured way. After sorting out personal data from closed cases, the DOMB can keep notes of a more general nature with knowledge that has been acquired when working with cases, to be able to use it for handling future cases that concern the same type of issues.

The DOMB should offer experiential knowledge on demand to individual doctoral students, student unions and their representatives, as well as to other actors in the field of research education. This information will primarily be acquired from working with the individual cases, but also from staying updated about issues that relate to doctoral students' rights in general.

3. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

An important part of the DOMB's proactive work is to educate and inform the student unions, doctoral students, and other important stakeholders about issues that are relevant for quality assurance of doctoral education. Both doctoral students, and university employees have knowledge gaps concerning doctoral students' rights and obligations, what problems are recurring and where doctoral students can turn to get help.

To address this problem, the DOMB can hold presentations and workshops, participate in introduction courses for supervisors and doctoral students, participate in relevant networks, and keep regular contacts with student union and labor union representatives, including the LUS Studentombud, to generate information exchange. The DOMB should share the results of the annual case report to bodies of LDK, the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH, FUN and actors who might be interested.

The DOMB should work to inform doctoral students about their respective rights and obligations within the framework of doctoral education, and to ensure that doctoral students know where they can turn to receive support. The DOMB should work to ensure that the knowledge gathered in the case report reaches the actors working with quality assurance and quality development in research education at LU, so that quality assurance work can be directed at the issues that are the most urgent and relevant.

DOCTORAL STUDENT AWARENESS OF THEIR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

The DOMB will:

- Stay informed of LU doctoral students' awareness of their rights and obligations, e.g., by drawing conclusions about any knowledge gaps apparent in the cases that come in.
- Describe the results of the annual case report in a presentation, and present it to groups of student representatives on demand.
- Uphold regular contact with representatives for student unions who organize doctoral students at LU. On demand, provide them with information about current rules which is useful for their work with quality improvement of research education and safeguarding doctoral students' rights.
- Participate in LDK meetings for student representatives on demand.
- Participate in TLTH meetings for student representatives on demand.
- Offer to participate in introduction courses for doctoral students at the different faculties. The DOMB should strive to inform all new doctoral students at LU about the services that the DOMB offers.

The DOMB can:

- Develop presentations and workshops on relevant issues concerning doctoral education on demand or by their own initiative. During the activity year of 2021-2022, some have expressed wishes that the DOMB should develop some type of workshop/lecture about how doctoral students from outside of the EU/EEA can maximize their chances to get a permanent residence permit in light of the changes that were made in the migration

legislation during 2021. If this continues to be a relevant issue during 2022/2023, and if time allows it, the DOMB should consider appropriate ways of informing doctoral students on this topic.

- Make surveys and write reports on topics important for doctoral student rights
- Organize workshops by their own initiative.

LUND UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEE AWARENESS

The DOMB will:

- Offer to participate in introduction courses, presentations and workshops at different LU organs/departments/faculties concerning relevant research education issues, such as introduction courses for supervisors.
- Describe the results of the annual case report in a presentation, which can be presented to actors within the university with interests in assuring the quality of research education at LU, at both central and faculty level. The DOMB will specifically offer to hold the presentation for FUN (*Forskarutbildningsnämnden*).
- Participate in FUN-meetings when invited.

INFORMING AND EDUCATING EXTERNAL ACTORS

The DOMB can also make contributions to conferences and network gatherings that the DOMB attends.

4. COOPERATION AND NETWORKS

The DOMB works independently and under an obligation of confidentiality, which means that without active networking, the DOMB has to rely solely on their own competence. The DOMB should cooperate and maintain good relationships with other actors at Lund University and actors outside the university who work with quality development of research education. The DOMB should use their knowledge as a resource for the work of the DOMB, and be a resource for them as well. Maintaining good relationships can provide knowledge, make contacts with the university smoother, and improves the DOMB's work environment.

When faced with challenges, the DOMB should use their networks for support. The goal is to maintain an open communication and good relationships with other actors working to improve research education, to stay informed both about the organization of Lund University and of the Swedish model of doctoral education, and to exchange experiences, information and analyses.

COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY

The DOMB will:

- Maintain a fruitful relationship with the university. The DOMB should assist FUN and UN and actors on a faculty level when they request input from the DOMB.

- Keep contact with AHU (*Avdelningen för högskolepedagogisk utveckling*) and other organizers of supervisor courses and introduction courses for doctoral students.

The DOMB can:

- Interact with research education administrators, as well as managers on all levels, if needed to get a picture of how doctoral education is organized on a more local level.
- Keep contact with the lawyers at Lund University legal department for the purpose of knowledge exchange concerning legal analyses.
- Keep contact with the Occupational Health Services (FHV, *Företagshälsovården*) and the student chaplains.
- Keep contact with the student services (*Sektionen Student & Utbildning*), including their division for quality assurance and development (*Utbildningsstrategiskt Stöd*).
- Keep contact with FS (*Forskningsservice*), for updates on changes in policy documents regulating research education.

COOPERATION WITH THE STUDENT UNIONS

The DOMB will:

- Keep contact with the LDK Presidium, the LDK Board and the LDK Governing assembly.
- Keep contact with TLTH and Dokt. The DOMB should offer to attend the Dokt Guild Assembly's meeting every semester, as well as at least one meeting per semester with the Dokt Guild Board.
- Keep contact with the LUS Studentombud.
- Keep contact with LUS Presidium. When LUS are working with projects which concern research education, the DOMB can offer their input on demand.

COOPERATION WITH THE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS

DOMB cases may complement or overlap with cases handled by the employee organizations. These cases might require coordination to ensure that the doctoral students get the best help from both organizations. If the doctoral student consents, the DOMB can cooperate with labor union representatives in working with those cases. The DOMB can also have contact with labor union representatives for more general knowledge exchange.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER OMBUDSMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The DOMB should participate at conferences and meet other ombudsmen in higher education (see more under section 5 Professional Development).

CONTACT WITH MEDIA

The DOMB may interact with media according to this policy:

- Only public information is given regarding individual cases.

- If journalists want to speak to doctoral students with problems, no names are provided without prior consent – instead, the journalist’s contact info is passed to doctoral students who then can choose to contact the journalist or not.

If the DOMB knows that a case that relates to Teknologkåren is to become public, the DOMB should inform the main student safety representative at TLTH (who also works under an obligation of confidentiality) as soon as possible.

5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The DOMB at Lund University is a renowned institution with longstanding history within Swedish academia. To keep being a strong force in advocating for doctoral students’ rights, it is important to further the development of the ombudsman-institute in higher education in general and the personal professional competence in the specific. It is also important that there is a feedback loop that enables doctoral students who have been in contact with the DOMB to give feedback on how they perceived the services provided by the DOMB. To attain the goal of maintaining a high professional standard, the DOMB should participate at conferences, continuously update their knowledge of relevant laws and university regulations, and on the situation of doctoral students in general. Furthermore, doctoral students should be offered a possibility to leave feedback on the DOMB’s services.

NETWORKING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The DOMB will:

- Participate in conferences related to quality improvement of research education, arranged by e.g., SEO (*Sveriges Enade Ombud*), FONSYD, the Scandinavian Network for Student Ombudsmen (*Skandinavisk nettverk for ombud i høyere utdanning*), and ENOHE (the *European Network of Ombuds in Higher Education*).
- Use relevant online communication platforms as information resources, and also, when appropriate, provide knowledge to others there in solidarity.
- Network with other ombudsmen, in order to exchange knowledge and experiences.

COURSES

The DOMB can look for and attend courses that can be useful to further develop skills needed for performing DOMB tasks. For the academic year of 2022/2023, 3 000 SEK has been allotted for “Education” in the budget.

EVALUATION

If doctoral students who have been in contact with the DOMB leave negative feedback, the DOMB should consult the LDK presidium to discuss what can be done to improve the services provided by the DOMB.

6. PLANNING, REPORTING AND BUDGETING

The DOMB has many stakeholders who have expectations on the quality of the DOMB's activities. Therefore, the DOMB plans their activities in an activity plan and drafts a suitable budget annually, and follows up on the previous activity plan in an activity report on a yearly basis. The documents are reviewed by TLTH, the LDK Board and LUS, and approved by the LDK General Assembly in agreement with TLTH. The activity plan, acquired experiences and new information should be followed up in the annual activity report.

The DOMB will:

- Finalize the activity report for the academic year of 2021/22 based on the DOMB activities performed during that time. The performed activities should be evaluated in comparison with the activity plan for 2021/2022.
- Establish an activity plan for 2023-2024.
- Draft a budget for the DOMB for 2023-2024 in consultation with the LDK Chief Financial Officer and TLTH, adapted to suit the activities planned in the activity plan.

7. OUTREACH

A precondition for the DOMB to be able to help individual doctoral students when they have problems is that doctoral students are aware of the DOMB's existence, and what services the DOMB can provide. Due to a high turnover of doctoral students, student representatives, and University employees it is necessary to maintain a constant information flow to reach out to all the doctoral students at the University. Therefore, the DOMB should strive to give presentations at all introductory courses for doctoral students and supervisors. Other measures are networking, distribution of flyers, and making sure the information about the DOMB at the LDK website is up to date.

The DOMB will promote their services through:

- Networking, as described in earlier sections.
- Offering to hold presentations at introduction courses for doctoral students and supervisors.
- Offering to participate in the welcome days for new employees at LU, and any faculty welcome days for new doctoral students.
- Distributing flyers when appropriate.
- Ensure that the information about the DOMB on the LDK webpage and the webpage for the Doctoral Student Guild within TLTH is kept up to date.
- Other possible channels for outreach, when opportunities are presented.