



**LUNDS**  
UNIVERSITET

Research Programmes Board

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## **Guidelines for evaluation of third-cycle courses and study programmes**

Lund University's policy for quality assurance and quality enhancement of education outlines the basis for quality management at the University. These guidelines are based on the policy and provide proposals for conducting evaluation of third-cycle courses and study programmes. In other words, the aim of the guidelines is to exemplify how the evaluation task can be carried out in practice.

The faculty boards are responsible for implementation of, and decisions relating to, education evaluations on the basis that all degree-related courses and study programmes at all three levels of education (first, second and third cycle) are to be evaluated at least once every six years. The faculties decide individually if, and how, courses and study programmes are to be best grouped in appropriate clusters for evaluation. The basis for possible groupings is that the evaluations are to be able to generate meaningful information based on the criteria with an aim to secure and enhance the quality of the courses and study programmes.

Various methods can be used to evaluate the quality of education. For the evaluation to be meaningful, have legitimacy and reflect the diversity of courses and study programmes, it is not reasonable to have one method that fits all. As support, the University provides various services, tools and supporting documents that can be used for course and study programme evaluations (see the website<sup>1</sup> and appendix to this document or contact the expert functions in the university-wide administration). The use of these support resources is optional and can be an inspiration for continued method enhancement within the faculties.

As stated in the policy, student and doctoral student influence is crucial in quality enhancement work, which is why the doctoral students are to be given the opportunity to take part in planning, execution and follow-up of third-cycle course and study programme evaluations.

### **Criteria**

The evaluation criteria are based on targets in the Higher Education Act, the Higher Education Ordinance (including qualitative targets), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the Strategic Plan for Lund University and other internal policy documents. The

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.medarbetarwebben.lu.se/forska-och-utbilda/stod-till-utbildning/kvalitetsarbete>

criteria, which are from the LU policy for quality assurance and quality management, are as follows:

- That actual study results correspond to learning outcomes and degree targets.
- That the education focuses on students'/doctoral students' learning.
- That the education is based on scientific and/or artistic foundations as well as proven experience.
- That teaching staff, including supervisors, have appropriate expertise in terms of the subject, teaching and learning in higher education, subject-teaching and other relevant skills, and that the teaching capacity is adequate.
- That the education is to be relevant for the students and doctoral students, and meet society's needs.
- That students and doctoral students have influence in the planning, execution and follow-up of education.
- That an appropriate study and learning environment with well-functioning support activities is in place and accessible to all.
- That continuous follow-up and development of education takes place.
- That internationalisation and international perspectives are promoted in education.
- That gender equality and equal opportunities perspectives are integrated in education.
- That subject-relevant perspectives regarding sustainable development are promoted in education.

### **Aim**

The aim of the evaluations is to generate the knowledge that is required to ensure and enhance the quality of the courses and study programmes. This aim is achieved in accordance with the policy through peer assessment of the quality of third-cycle education.

### **Assessment panel**

The policy emphasises the importance of peer review, which can be realised by engaging scientific/artistic and educational experts, for example from other higher education institutions in Sweden or from abroad, who together with student representatives act as an assessment panel. The assessment panel can be complemented with assessors from another faculty within the University. Such an assessor can contribute interdisciplinary knowledge and assist in knowledge transfer within the University. Assessors who represent working life and other possible target groups can also contribute to the evaluations, for example as members of the assessment panel. Within the scope of this proposal, the assessment panel can be composed in different ways. The main principle, in accordance with the policy, is that the assessment panel is to have the legitimacy and opportunity to evaluate the quality of the education.

The Faculty Board, which has the collective responsibility for the quality of its own operations, can, in consultation with the courses and study programmes to be

evaluated, decide on the composition of the assessment panel. Doctoral student representatives are appointed by the faculties' doctoral student committees, or if none such exists, the Lund Doctoral Students' Union (LDK) or Faculty of Engineering Students' Union's doctoral students' division.

### **Supporting documents**

To facilitate the assessment panel's work, the environment to be evaluated can draw up a self-evaluation or similar documentation that presents and analyses strengths and areas of improvement. Other material, such as doctoral students' individual study plans, acts as important material for the assessment panel.

Interviews can be used as part of the evaluation. The main aim of interviews is to complement the supporting documents that the assessment panel has received and enable discussions between the assessment panel and the environment to be evaluated. In general, the interviewees include the programme directors at the various levels, teaching staff and doctoral students. Decisions on interviews and the way in which they are to be conducted are made by the Faculty Board in conjunction with the planning of the evaluation.

The doctoral students may be given the opportunity to write a statement in which they can express their views on the course or programme to be evaluated. This can be communicated directly to the assessment panel or as a response to the evaluation.

As doctoral theses are already subject to external review in a public defence, these do not need to act as supporting documents in this evaluation. However, there may be reason, for example, to account for how the public defence is to be quality assured and how the doctoral theses have been received by other researchers in the field.

Decisions on what constitutes supporting documents for evaluation are made by the Faculty Board. In this process it can be a good idea to consult with affected parties, e.g. the courses and study programmes to be evaluated and the assessment panel, to ensure that the supporting documents are adapted to what is to be evaluated. As a starting point, most of the documentation is already included in the regular follow-up and does not need to be produced solely for the evaluation.

### **Evaluation**

The assessment panel, in a report or statement, can compile its evaluations on the course or programme's strengths and areas of improvement as well as recommendations based on the criteria used for the evaluations. The details of how feedback is to be relayed and the form of the evaluations can be decided by the Faculty Board following consultation with the affected parties.

### **The faculty's response**

Based on the assessment panel's statement, the faculty can develop an action plan that describes measures or other activities resulting from the evaluation. The action plan can be used, for example, as a supporting document in connection with the quality discussions and to enable the university-wide Research Programmes Board to follow the quality enhancement work. To ensure doctoral student influence, the doctoral students can be given the opportunity to comment on both the assessment

panel's conclusions and the faculty's continuing work. The faculty is responsible for ensuring that measures are taken based on the evaluation results.

**Publication**

The Faculty Board is responsible for making the material accessible. For example, the documentation concerning the evaluation can be collected on a dedicated website.

**Follow-up**

The vice-chancellor annually follows up the continued quality management work stemming from conducted programme evaluations in the quality discussions with the faculties. Prior to the discussions, the faculties can, for example, present a summary of conducted evaluations and the ongoing enhancement work resulting from them.

## **Appendix 1. Proposal for supporting documents and areas of enquiry in the evaluation of third-cycle courses and study programmes**

Here are some proposals for areas that the courses and study programmes to be evaluated can discuss in the material submitted to the assessment panel. The areas are not to be considered as compulsory or delimiting, but to serve to give ideas for how the courses and study programmes can demonstrate that they fulfil the evaluation's criteria.

In conjunction with the writing of the material, the following can act as supporting documents:

- Statistics on throughput and other relevant key figures (see Kuben etc.).
- General syllabi.
- Individual study plans.
- Course syllabi.
- Documentation that describes forms of teaching and staffing of courses.
- Information about seminar activities.
- Course evaluations and course evaluation reports.
- Publication lists of supervisors, doctoral students and other teaching staff/researchers.
- Documentation that describes the supervisors' supervision and teaching and learning in higher education credentials and participation in educational enhancement projects.
- Doctoral student statements.
- Documentation about the supervisory group's composition (see section Supervisors and teaching staff/researchers below).
- Information about local, national and international networks and how doctoral students are integrated in these.
- Documentation that shows internal work on follow-up and enhancement.
- Business intelligence.
- Surveys, evaluations, exam forms or similar documentation about doctoral students' and alumni's experiences of the programme.

## Third-cycle subject area and third-cycle environment<sup>1</sup>

### Describe and justify

- How the third-cycle subject area is delimited regarding breadth and depth.<sup>2</sup>
- The third-cycle subject area's connection to scientific/artistic foundations and proven experience.

### Describe and analyse using examples

- How the admission of new doctoral students is conducted in a secure way that guarantees the most suitable candidates are admitted to third-cycle programmes.
- How work is conducted to expand doctoral students' third-cycle environment through the local, national and international networks that include doctoral students and are of importance to the programme. How doctoral students are included in these networks and the way these networks enhance the third-cycle environment regarding scope and quality, how external engagement with wider society is conducted.
- How the higher education institution ensures the quality of the theses that are presented at a public defence. The routines that exist in relation to the public defence relating to aspects of the faculty's external reviewer and examining committee.
- How systematic reviews are carried out to ensure that the third-cycle education environment is of high quality, what measures, if any, are to be taken in conjunction with the follow-up and how feedback on these measures is to be relayed in order to ensure that the third-cycle education environment is of high quality and that relevant cooperation takes place with wider society.
- How the form and content of the programme ensures that doctoral students demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding both in the third-cycle subject area and in associated scientific methodology/artistic research methodology.
- How progression is achieved during the programme and the nature of the connection between degree targets, intended learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment.
- How it is ensured that there are conditions for the doctoral students to complete the programme within the planned study period.
- How the form and content of the programme ensure that doctoral students demonstrate an ability to plan and, using suitable methods, conduct research and other qualified (artistic) assignments within given time limits, and in national and international contexts, orally and in writing, can present with authority and discuss research and research findings in

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<sup>1</sup> The areas of inquiry are based on those used by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) in national education evaluations, but have been adapted and developed in accordance to experience of these evaluations gained at Lund University.

<sup>2</sup> If several third-cycle subjects are evaluated jointly the description can embrace either the entire cluster or each subject separately.

dialogue with the scientific community and society as a whole. How doctoral students demonstrate prerequisites so that within research and education as well as in other qualified professional contexts they can contribute to the development of society and support other's learning.

- How the form and content of the programme ensure that doctoral students achieve intellectual autonomy, (artistic integrity) and the ability to demonstrate scientific probity/probity in research as well as the ability to make assessments relating to research ethics. How it is ensured that the doctoral students gain a deeper insight into the possibilities and limitations of the sciences and arts, the role of these in society and people's responsibility for how they are used.
- How the work is geared so that a gender equality and equal opportunities perspective is integrated in the programme's design and implementation. How follow-ups are conducted to ensure that a gender equality and equal opportunities perspective is integrated in the programme's design and implementation, how the results of follow-ups are converted into relevant measures for quality enhancement, and how this is later relayed back to relevant stakeholders.
- How the work is geared up to integrate an internationalisation perspective in the programme, with regard, for example, to mobility of doctoral students, supervisors and teaching staff/researchers as well as the opportunity to take courses in languages other than Swedish.
- How subject-relevant perspectives on sustainable development are promoted in the programme.

## **Supervisors and teaching staff/researchers**

### **Describe and analyse using examples**

- The collective expertise of supervisors and teaching staff/researchers in relation to the programme.
- How the work is geared to ensure there are sufficient supervisor resources in the long term.
- Current procedures for enabling a change of supervisor, if required.
- How the scientific/artistic and educational professional development of supervisors' and teaching staff/researchers is achieved, for example in the case of associate professorships and supervisor training.
- The opportunities available for supervisors and teaching staff/researchers to follow developments in society that are significant for their supervision and teaching.
- How the work is geared to ensure that the quality of supervision and teaching is high and sufficient in scope. The measures taken in conjunction with the follow-up of the supervisors' collective composition and expertise and how feedback on quality enhancement measures is relayed to relevant stakeholders.
- The composition of the supervisors' group (regarding, for example, gender, age, and language skills relevant to the programme) and the proportion of supervisors who will possibly be based somewhere else or in another environment. The potential opportunities and challenges that have been identified in this respect and how these have been addressed.

## **The doctoral students**

### **Describe and analyse using examples**

- The doctoral student body's composition (regarding, for example, gender, age, specialisation, and language skills relevant to the programme) and doctoral students who will possibly be based somewhere else or in another environment. The potential opportunities and challenges that have been identified in this respect and how these have been addressed.
- The situation regarding the doctoral students' forms of funding and how this may affect the programme's design and quality.
- The extent to which the doctoral students are given opportunities for departmental duties or similar in the form of teaching, administrative work or other duties.
- How the work is geared so that the doctoral students are to take an active part in enhancing the programme and learning processes.
- How doctoral students participate in decision-making processes, including drafting, concerning matters that affect third-cycle education.
- How a good physical and psychosocial work and study environment is ensured for the doctoral students.
- How viewpoints on the programme from doctoral students, including alumni, are collected, compiled and reported for the doctoral students and how they are used in quality assurance and enhancement of the programme, and the possible measures to be taken with an aim to strengthen doctoral student influence, in connection with the follow-up of the programme. How feedback on this is relayed to relevant stakeholders.
- The doctoral students' access to infrastructure including library resources, IT equipment and other resources relevant to the programme.
- The opportunities and challenges that have been identified from a gender equality and equal opportunities perspective regarding the composition of the doctoral student body and how this has been addressed.

## **Wider society**

### **Describe and analyse using examples**

- How the programme's usability and preparation for working life has been ensured through the programme's content and design.
- The way in which programme directors collect information that is relevant for the programme's quality assurance and enhancement regarding its usability and preparation for working life and different career paths, both in Sweden and abroad.
- How programme directors utilise alumni's experiences.
- The potential measures that are taken in conjunction with the follow-up and how feedback on these is relayed with an aim to ensure that the programme is usable and prepares the doctoral students for a changing working life, and how feedback is relayed to relevant stakeholders.