Verksamhetsberättelse (Activity Report)

Datum:    HT 2017 – VT 2018

Presidium:   Houman Sadri, ordförande, (ordf.gudk@gus.gu.se)
             Malin Podlevskikh Carlström, vice ordförande
             Alexei Cravcenco, sekreterare

Summary of GUDK Activity: 2017-2018

GUDK has had 7 meetings between fall 2017 and spring 2018. The meetings were held on the following dates:
- M1: 2017-09-21
- M2: 2017-11-03
- M3: 2017-12-08
- M4: 2018-02-20
- M5: 2018-03-23
- M6: 2018-05-04
- M7: 2018-06-01

In accordance with our 2017-2018 action plan, GUDK has worked on the following issues:

Decision making at the university

While we have had some success in ensuring that all important boards and groups have had doctoral representation, language continues to be an issue. In January, GUS elected three doctoral students (Malin Podlevskikh Carlström, Elizabeth Dessie and myself) to sit on Utbildningsnämndens Utskott för Forskarutbildning. Dessie does not speak Swedish, but this was not seen as an issue, owing to the fact that Utskottet had previously voted to use English as a meeting language in the event that a representative was limited in this way. Unfortunately, the committee's new chairman unilaterally decided to rescind this decision, and Dessie was therefore forced to step down. As a result, there are only two current doctoral/student representatives on Utskottet.
This is an important issue, and one that continues to affect GU’s doctoral students. As we pointed out in last year’s equivalent of this document, 20% of the doctoral students at GU are non-Swedish speaking, and it is vital that they are represented, especially since their positions are sometimes especially vulnerable. In 2017-2018, only two GUDK board members spoke Swedish: the chair and vice-chair. If GU is as serious about internationalisation as it purports to be, the language issue will only become more acute, and GUDK will continue to advocate for it.

This year, the new Vice-Chancellor inaugurated Forskningsnämnden, a new board dedicated to decisions regarding research at the University. GUDK has ensured that three doctoral students sit on this board as representatives.

The group inaugurated to help set up FUBAS - the University’s new database of doctoral courses - has a doctoral representative, though we believe we should have one more, preferably from SA.

**Cooperation with other organizations**

GUDK cooperated with several organizations this year.

GUS – Houman has attended several GUS meetings in order to learn about the agenda of the other student unions and inform them about PhD issues. Malin has also attended some GUS meetings. This cooperation is further strengthened by the fact that the GUS chairman always come to GUDK meetings. Overall, GUDK and GUS have had an active and well functioning flow of information during 2017/2018.

Göta – Both the chair and vice-chair maintained constant and productive dialogue with Göta Studentkår’s chair and presidium.

SFS – Palle Borenborg from HumFak was chairman of SFSDK, and while we extended an invitation to him to attend our meetings, he very seldom did so. He was also less than forthcoming with reports from the board, though it is our belief that this is more a reflection of the ineffectiveness of SFSDK as it currently exists than it is of Borenborg’s leadership of it, per se.

GU – Houman has attended the Vice-Chancellor’s strategy meetings, as well as her breakfast meetings with the student unions.

JIGU - As vice chairman Malin has kept in close contact with Martin Thulin and the JIGU projekt. She took responsibility for trying to find PhD students for the ARIA interviews. This turned out to be rather difficult and quite time consuming. She also attended JIGU meetings and initial meetings with the ARIA consultants.

URKUND - Malin represented GUDK with a Keynote talk about PhD students and academic integrity at the URKUND PEPP-talks in Stockholm.

PIL (the European council) - Malin gave a talk about the PhD students' view on academic integrity and plagiarism.

Unions – While in previous years, GUDK has been invited to regular monthly meetings with the trades unions, this has not happened this year. Speculation as to the reasons for this is probably fruitless, but a contributing factor could be the fact that the person with whom the previous presidium had contact has stepped down from their position.
Doctoral representatives from the departmental level and upwards

During the year GUDK had representatives from all faculties except the IT faculty. GUDK has repeatedly tried to engage the IT faculty doctoral students, for example by sending them personal e-mails or contacting the head of their department, but without success. In the end of the year, Malin had a meeting with a PhD student at Department of Computer Science and Engineering who might be interested in joining GUDK in the fall. However, this department is shared between Chalmers and GU and does not have many GU doctors.

We have also experienced serious issues with the organisation of SA’s doctors. As the faculty with the largest concentration of doctoral students, it is imperative that Sahlgrenska is properly represented, but their doctoral committee has been a little intransigent on this matter. Their doctoral representative was replaced at very short notice at the beginning of the academic year, but the replacement representative was very seldom able to attend meetings. It is important that SA’s doctors are better organised going forwards.

GUDK has made an effort to be clear about the responsibilities of faculty representatives and how the communication flow should work.

The situation for international students

GUDK’s official language is English. This is to make it easier for international students to participate in our meetings and understand the communications sent out from GUDK. As mentioned, GUDK has ongoing discussions with university leadership about advocating the speaking of English at meetings when there are English speaking doctoral representatives present. This discussion continues to be frustrating on many levels.

At present (2018-2019) only GUDK’s chair speaks fluent Swedish. What this means, in effect, is that no faculty representatives can speak Swedish to meeting standard: this will continue to be a problem for the university until a proper solution or policy is hit upon.

Sandwich doctors continue to be an issue (see below), but after the redrawing of the doctoral rules in 2016-2017, the University seems intent to continue not to speak about them, despite the admission (both tacit and otherwise) that finances as they currently stand will lead to an increase in doctoral students financed externally.

Pedagogy for teaching higher education

It was brought to our attention (at Utskottet för Forskarutbildningen). that HPE101, the university Pedagogy course that is compulsory for most doctoral candidates at the University, was being made obligatory for some ‘sandwich doctorals,’ which is to say international PhD students financed by external stipends, many of whom san speak neither Swedish nor English (the two languages the course is offered in). As a result, some of these students felt obligated to cheat or plagiarise in order to pass the course, and therefore attain their doctorates. Houman and Malin discussed this matter at length with Thomas Grysell at PIL, and he pledged to keep us posted on his attempts to fix the problem (we have not, to date, heard anything else on the subject, from Grysell or any other PIL representative).
Shortening of the PhD education
We have continued to monitor this question. GUDK is firmly against the Bologna 3-2-3 version of PhD education (3 years of first cycle education, two years of master studies and 3 years of doctoral studies). Such a program would mean that a student who aims to become a PhD student will essentially need to know when commencing master studies what area they want to do research in. Also, all fields and faculties have different traditions and a shorter program would be less beneficial for some faculties and subjects.

Courses for doctoral students
FUBAS is nearing completion, and the information flow from our representative is excellent. We continue to monitor the progress of this project, as we see it as being of the utmost importance to PhD candidates going forward. As stated above, we believe that an additional doctoral representative from SA would be beneficial, as that faculty appears to have the most stringent demands for the system, yet we have heard only from faculty representatives (as opposed to doctoral students) on the subject.

The mapping of PhD education at GU - the doctoral survey
Malin has as vice chair been responsible for preparing a survey aimed at scientific tradition. The quantitative version of the survey was supposed to be sent to all PhD students and a more qualitative version to all vice head of departments. The survey has been discussed at several GUDK meetings and also at utskottet för forskarutbildningen. The preparation has taken some time and the process will continue next year.

#MeToo and Doctoral Students' Vulnerability
The increased awareness of issues relating to sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace was keenly felt amongst PhD students. Malin, Houman and Alexandra Bousiou from SamFak gave an interview to GU Journalen, wherein they discussed such issues, as well as that of power dynamics between doctorals and their supervisors, and the safety or otherwise of doctoral students conducting fieldwork in potentially dangerous territories.

Ethics
The promotion of ethics in research, and the importance of ensuring that doctoral candidates are properly trained in such matters, is currently being debated at Utskottet, and we will continue to monitor and contribute to the discussion.

Houman Sadri
Malin Podlevskikh Carlström
Chair 2017-2018
Vice-Chair 2017-2018