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## **Development Plan for Third Cycle Studies in Political Science at the Department of Political Science**

### **Background**

The present development plan is the result of the evaluation of third cycle studies in Political Science carried out in autumn 2019 and spring 2020. The evaluation is based on a self-evaluation (appendix 1) and associated appendices that the Department of Political Science produced and a statement from the doctoral students' council at the Department of Political Science (appendix 2). The evaluation has led to a statement by the evaluation group (appendix 3). The evaluation group consisted of professors PerOla Öberg (Uppsala University), Ellen Immergut (European University Institute, Florence) and Åsa von Schultz (University of Helsinki).

The statement from the evaluation group is basically very positive regarding the quality of third cycle studies in Political Science. In a summarising assessment, the evaluation group finds that:

Based on the available information, our overall assessment is that the PhD programme in Political Science at Lund University works excellently. The supervising capacity in most areas is of a very high international standard, the organisation and the management of the programme is very good, and the

collegial involvement and attention to all parts of the programme, in combination with an openness to further improvement is impressive. The tendencies for specialisation and fragmentation prevalent at many political science departments elsewhere, have so far not affected the PhD programme to a large extent. These pivotal factors are to be considered as strengths of the programme, and constitute a foundation for a productive and encouraging environment for PhD students, as well as for high quality learning outcomes.

The report also contains a number of recommendations for improvements. This development plan covers all the evaluation group's recommendations. In those cases where the Department of Political Science intends to follow the recommendation, there is a description of how this will be carried out and in cases where the department does not intend to follow the recommendation, a justification is provided.

### **Concrete measures**

The evaluation group has provided 16 concrete recommendations in its statement that can be connected with five different themes: teaching, courses, benchmarking, guidelines for different components during third cycle studies and career advice. In the development plan, the recommendations are discussed based on these themes.

### **Teaching**

The evaluation group's statement contains five recommendations concerning the doctoral students' role in teaching:

- Prepare students better for teaching and help them to prepare for teaching in time-efficient and reasonable ways in order to prevent stress
- Consider a better coordination between the organisation of teaching assignments for students teaching political science and students teaching peace and conflict research

- Consider ways to provide more structured mentoring for students teaching
- Assure that teaching assignments and teaching performances by students are included in follow-up talks at the department, e.g. in order to counteract misunderstandings about the procedures
- Consider a policy for students' teaching during year one, and how it can be combined with courses and activities of the introductory team

In connection with the work on the self-evaluation, the doctoral students' group at the department had a meeting with the director of first and second cycle studies to discuss the allocation of teaching assignments. The meeting led to a decision that all doctoral students are to send in documentation to the director of first and second cycle studies containing an account of subject expertise and requests concerning teaching. The documentation will be used by the director of first and second cycle studies as a basis for the staffing of teaching assignments. This is an element in the work on increasing transparency in the allocation of teaching assignments and thus a step on the way to removing misunderstandings about how teaching assignments are allocated. The effect of this measure is to be followed up by the director of first and second cycle studies and director of third cycle studies during the academic year 2020/2021. Furthermore, the deputy head of department will also continue to discuss the role of teaching staff in the annual appraisals with the doctoral students.

The recommendations on better preparing doctoral students for teaching and more structured mentoring for doctoral students who are starting to teach are closely related. The department is in favour of the recommendations and the management group has made two decisions concerning measures. Firstly, that doctoral students should normally not teach during their first year, so as to have time to prepare themselves for the teaching role and also avoid stress during a time when third cycle studies are concerned

to a large extent with studying courses. Secondly, that doctoral students who are new to the teaching role should be included in a teaching team with experienced colleagues and in which the course director acts as a mentor for the doctoral student. In addition to this, the department intends to utilise the relatively large group of employees at the department who are also members of the department's teaching academy. The members of the teaching academy will act as a sounding board for doctoral students who are new to the teaching role.

Finally, the management group has also made a decision that the assistant director of first and second cycle studies will have a more distinct assignment in maintaining an overview of staffing relating to teaching in first and second cycle studies in all of the department's three subjects. In this way, it will be possible to fulfil the recommendation for better coordination of teaching assignments between political science and peace and conflict studies. The assistant director of first and second cycle studies will, in consultation with the directors of studies and heads of subject for peace and conflict studies and intelligence analysis, be responsible for coordinating this and will receive support in this work from the incoming assistant head of department with responsibility for first and second cycle studies (as of 1 January 2021).

### **Third cycle courses**

A central theme in the department's self-evaluation concerned the scope and content of compulsory third cycle courses. This theme recurs in the evaluation group's statement in which five recommendations relate to course activities.

- Work out a well thought out policy for mandatory and elective courses and how year one on the programme should be organised
- Consider including a mandatory theory course

- Reconsider to have the faculty level courses included in the programme
- Reconsider how reading courses are used and if they should be included in the programme or considered in-depth learning as part of work on the thesis
- Consider collaboration with other universities in Sweden and/or abroad for courses where this might work

In spring 2020, the director of third cycle studies appointed a committee tasked to draw up a proposal for a renewed range of courses for the first semester of third cycle studies which, together with the methodology courses in the second semester, would constitute a cohesive and compulsory course block during the first year. The committee's proposal meets several of the recommendations (see appendix 4). In brief, the proposal concerns establishing an introductory theory course (*Political Science Research: Problems and Perspectives*, 15 credits) and a course based on seminar series within the framework of the department's various research teams (*Research-Group Participation*, 4.5 credits). Both of these courses are to be studied in the first semester, together with the compulsory ethics course (*Research Ethics*, 3 credits), which the doctoral students already study today within the framework of the faculty's range of courses. In total, the doctoral students will study for 22.5 credits in the first semester and 22.5 credits in the second semester (*Research Methodologies*, 15 credits *Applied Method*, 7.5 credits). This means that the department will provide compulsory courses for 45 credits during the first year and that 15 credits remain for elective courses within the rest of the period for third cycle studies.

The new courses to be established combine breadth within the framework of the joint introductory theory course with an opportunity for specialisation within the different research teams. In the latter case, the proposal is based on the doctoral students following at least two research teams in order to avoid

excessively narrow specialisation. The design of this course will also be such that it takes into account the different natures of the research teams. The supervisors' group and department board have supported the proposal for a new course structure and the director of third cycle studies will appoint course directors and teaching teams during the summer tasked with drawing up proposals for course syllabi and required reading in autumn 2020. The course syllabi and required reading will be submitted to the Faculty of Social Science's Research Studies Board in autumn 2020. When the new compulsory courses are established, the general syllabus will also need to be adjusted. The director of studies is responsible for ensuring that a new proposal for the general syllabus is drawn up and then accepted at faculty level. This needs to be done before the next doctoral student group is admitted in April 2021 so that the new doctoral students are admitted according to the new general syllabus.

The new course structure means that the Department of Political Science offers a wider range of third cycle courses. In accordance with the statement from the evaluation group, we no longer see the same need for reading courses. The 15 credits from elective courses that remain after the department's own compulsory courses have been completed shall, according to the general syllabus be devoted partly to a course in research ethics (at least 3 credits according to the vice-chancellor's decision), partly to methodology specialisation and the remainder to specialisation that is appropriate in relation to the doctoral student's thesis project. The department deems that the range of courses at Lund University or other higher education institutions covers the needs that exist and the department's doctoral students are encouraged to study courses together with doctoral students from other departments at Lund University, as well as courses at other universities, in Sweden and abroad.

Regarding cooperation with other universities on the range of courses, the director of third cycle studies has already taken the

initiative for a joint information channel via the Faculty of Social Science's website for information on advertised courses at Swedish higher education institutions. The doctoral student's council at the Department of Political Science together with colleagues at higher education institutions in the Öresund region has taken the initiative for similar information channels for the region's higher education institutions.

### **Benchmarking**

In the evaluation group's statement, there is a recommendation to:

- Base discussions over future strategies on explicit benchmarking with other top-performing departments in the Nordic countries or central Europe

As a rule, benchmarking generally concerns comparisons based on set key performance indicators and similar indicators.

However, the Department of Political Science sees the benefit of such a comparison at an international level as limited, given the considerable differences in education systems, volumes and the nature of third cycle studies.

At the same time, the Department of Political Science is fundamentally in favour of being inspired by best practice from third cycle studies at other universities. During the self-evaluation, two extensive initiatives were taken regarding comparison with other universities and identifying best practice. The first example consisted of an alumni survey to all doctors of political science who earned their PhDs in the past 10 years at the universities in Gothenburg, Lund, Stockholm and Uppsala. The second was based on a study trip to the departments of political science in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala, where the directors of third cycle studies, one additional professor and doctoral students were interviewed. The aim was to identify best practice. The work on a renewed course structure is a concrete

example of a reform that originated from the examples identified during the study trip.

The Department of Political Science intends to make the alumni survey a fixed element in the department's quality management in which the questionnaire-based survey will be repeated every five years. The director of third cycle studies is tasked with implementing the next questionnaire-based survey in 2024.

The positive experiences from the study trip mean that the Department of Political Science is well disposed to using this tool on more occasions. A possible next step is to identify best practice from universities abroad. However, the department views this type of tool as more suitable for use in connection with a specific reform task when best practice relating to a specific issue are to be identified.

### **Guidelines for different components during third cycle studies**

The evaluation group submitted several recommendations relating to different guidelines for third cycle studies. These were to:

- Formalise several unwritten procedures, such as how milestones are followed up, what decision that should be communicated and how, in order to make procedures more transparent and avoid unequal treatment of students
- Consider if some of the regulations that are formalised needs to be more informative, such as guidelines for internal "examination"
- Consider if all these regulations should and can be merged into one document easily available for students and faculty members
- Consider ways to mitigate gender inequalities related to parental leaves, for example providing additional paid time on the programme in relation to the time of absence

The Department of Political Science is in favour of the recommendation on formalising how milestones are followed up.



There is reason to agree with the evaluation group and note that the follow-up of planning seminars and mid-way seminars has varied from case to case. To ensure that each seminar is followed up in a way that secures each doctoral student's possibility to obtain clear feedback, without jeopardising the usually unique doctoral student-supervisor relationship, the director of third cycle studies will draw up a revised policy for planning seminars and mid-way seminars with developed procedures for following up. The proposal for a new policy was presented to the supervisors' group in autumn 2020.

At present, the department sees no need for clearer guidelines on internal examination (grönläsning). It is the department's view that the existing procedures work well and the supervisors have not picked up any signals from the doctoral students either. In order to obtain ongoing support for this view we will, however, have a discussion about the present guidelines at the autumn meetings of the supervisors' group in 2020, something that could also become a fixed element in future.

However, during the work on the self-evaluation views have emerged on the supervisor's role in connection with the defence of doctoral theses. The fact that the supervisor in practice proposes the external reviewer and examining committee and also acts as the chair at the defence itself, can lead to suspicions that the defence is "rigged". We have no reason to suppose that any rigging occurs, but just the fact that someone could suspect that it was the case is sufficient to justify a measure. The director of third cycle studies will therefore submit a proposal in autumn 2020 regarding a change of procedure on these points.

The recommendation to merge all the guidelines into one cohesive document is something that the department supports. The chair of the doctoral students' council and the director of third cycle studies have already started on this work and a cohesive document containing relevant current guidelines is expected to be ready for the start of the autumn semester (2020).

However, the Department of Political Science does not see that it is possible to follow the recommendation to consider to provide extensions for doctoral students who return to work after parental leave. All matters concerning extensions are decided at faculty level and we leave it to the Faculty of Social Sciences to determine whether the recommendation should lead to a measure.

### **Career advice**

Finally, the evaluation group recommended that the Department of Political Science was to

- Consider if there are better ways to give students career advice for careers outside academia

The department sees scope for more developed career advice, regarding careers both in and outside academia. The research board of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the social sciences doctoral students' council have organised several career days for doctoral students at the faculty. This is a step towards more developed activities for career advice. The department also intends in the near future to initiate workshops on applications for postdoc positions. The responsibility for implementing the activity lies with the department's research council.

### **Concluding comments**

In conclusion, the Department of Political Science would like to express its thanks to the evaluation group for their meticulous and constructive work. The evaluation submitted by the group shows that third cycle studies in political science are of very good quality. At the same time, the evaluation group's recommendations contain many good examples of measures that can help to further raise quality.

## Appendix 1. Self-evaluation of third cycle studies in political science at Lund University

### **Introductory description**

The present self-evaluation evaluates third cycle studies in Political Science at Lund University. Third cycle studies in Political Science have a long history. The first person to earn a PhD in Political Science in Lund was David Bergström, who in 1892 defended the thesis *Befolkningsstatistiska studier öfver Sveriges härad och städer, år 1811-1880* (Johansson no date.). Both political science research and education activities had been conducted before this time, but mainly within the framework of the subject of history.

Today, we have a modern third cycle programme with some 30 registered doctoral students. This group includes some doctoral students who were admitted a relatively long time ago and who today conduct third cycle studies alongside regular employment, but the majority are full-time third cycle students and are funded via doctoral studentships. Places in third cycle studies are coveted. In 2019, for example, 275 people applied for three general positions.

Third cycle studies in Political Science are organisationally located at the Department of Political Science, and lead to either a doctoral degree (240 credits) or a licentiate degree (120 credits). The doctoral degree is by far the dominant form of degree.

### **Self-evaluation based on Lund University's criteria for quality assurance**

The self-evaluation was produced by a working group consisting of Associate Professor Douglas Brommesson (convenor and director of third cycle studies), Associate Professor Sara Kalm and Professor Jan Teorell. In addition to register data and internal policies, the working group produced new documentation for the work on self-evaluation. This consisted

firstly of an alumni survey, which the Lund department drew up together with the political science departments at the universities in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala. The questionnaire was sent out in September 2019 to the 185 doctoral students who had earned PhDs at the respective departments since 2009; the response rate was 70% in total, 79% of the 42 people from Lund who had received the questionnaire. Secondly, there was documentation based on a study trip to the above-named political science departments in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala with an aim to identify best practice within each department's third cycle studies. Thirdly, in-depth interviews were conducted with a selection of doctoral students to identify the doctoral students' views on the issues of participatory influence and work environment. Fourthly and finally, the department's work environment representative conducted a work environment survey in which the doctoral students' responses were reported separately. All documentation used as a basis for the self-evaluation is enclosed.

The self-evaluation is structured based on criteria that Lund University has approved for quality assurance. Under each criterion is a description of the strengths and challenges in relation to how the third cycle programme meets the criterion and in appropriate cases there are references to the relevant documentation.

### **1. That the achieved learning outcomes correspond with the learning outcomes and qualitative targets**

Learning outcomes and qualitative targets for third cycle studies in political science are described in the general syllabus (appendix 1). It is stated here that the programme has ten learning outcomes which can be divided into three groups: outcomes regarding (a) knowledge and understanding (b) competence and skills and (c) judgement and approach. The same outcomes are found in the individual study plans (appendix 2) in which the third cycle student together with their supervisor

reflects on how the outcomes have been achieved (see examples in appendix 3).

The outcomes also form the basis for the assessments of thesis quality, partly through the internal review in the form of milestone seminars (for instructions see appendix 4), manuscript conferences (for instructions see appendix 5) and internal examinations (for instructions see appendix 6) that precede the thesis defence and partly through the thesis defence itself (for instructions to external reviewer and examining committee see appendix 7). At these stages of the programme, it is ensured through peer review that the third cycle student demonstrates development between the different milestones up to the point where they can be considered to have achieved all the learning outcomes at the thesis defence.

The procedures described here concern the assessment of whether or not the outcomes have been achieved. Equally important is the process to support the third cycle student so they can achieve the outcomes. This is a key aspect in both admission to third cycle studies and during the programme as a whole. The admissions process ultimately aims to assess if the applicant has the ability to successfully assimilate the third cycle programme. This is done through a careful process in which several hundred applicants are assessed by the admissions committee, which is led by the director of studies and usually consists of six members (associate professors or professors). After an initial review based on formal eligibility and competitiveness in terms of grades and formal qualifications, the committee members then read in pairs all the remaining candidates' academic papers and thesis plans. After discussion within the committee, 10-12 candidates are called for interview and after that a ranking is established of the interviewed candidates. The proposal is submitted to the supervisors' group and the head of department makes the final decision. In cases where there are project positions to be appointed, the project manager is included in the admissions

committee. Project positions are always advertised at the same time as the general positions to ensure that those who are offered a project position are well placed in the general competition, see appendix 8 and 9 for admissions process and policy for project doctoral students).

As stated in the general syllabus (appendix 1) the third cycle programme is made up of three substantial parts, which all contribute in different ways so that the learning outcomes can be achieved. These parts are courses, research seminars and the thesis. The course part accounts for 60 credits of which at least 30 credits are devoted to methodology studies (where the aim is also that the doctoral student “is to have a considerable breadth in their methodology education”, appendix 1 point 5.4a) and where the other parts are devoted to specialised courses or reading courses (for instructions regarding reading courses see appendix 10). The doctoral students study two methodology courses in the second semester, the Research Methodologies course (15 credits, see appendix 11) and the Applied Methods course (7.5 credits, see appendix 12). Some of the elective courses are usually taken in the first semester when, among others, the courses Kick-start to Academic Life (4.5 credits, see appendix 13) and Research Ethics (3 credits, see appendix 14) are offered by the Faculty of Social Sciences. As stated in the course descriptions, the courses are characterised by intensive teaching, significant independent study and various forms of assessment with a considerable emphasis on seminars with presentations of independent work. Many doctoral students choose to use part of their elective courses on specialised methodology courses at other universities, in Sweden or abroad. Summer schools in Michigan (USA) or Essex (UK) are recurring examples of this. Overall, courses offered locally together with the courses that the doctoral students choose to study at other higher education institutions promote a considerable breadth, not

least in terms of methodology, as well as specialisation regarding thesis themes.

Alongside the courses, the new doctoral student will be introduced in the first semester to the department and life as a third cycle student. This is done within the framework of an introduction team (for the introduction team's programme in autumn 2019, see appendix 15) which is led by the director of studies and also includes a member of teaching staff who recently earned their PhD. According to the course evaluations, the doctoral students seem very satisfied with the introduction team's activities as well as the department's own methodology courses. However, evaluations of courses at Lund University that are beyond the department's control pointed to a lack of relevance for our doctoral students. As part of the work on this self-evaluation, the department has therefore started a discussion about a more cohesive first year in which the existing methodology courses are retained but other courses with clear relevance to social sciences can be added. Based on the trip around the political science departments in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala that the working group behind this self-evaluation took to identify best practice for third cycle studies, we can note that the three other departments have a more cohesive course structure in the first year, which further strengthens our opinion that we need to reflect further on the development of our range of courses. The way in which we proceed with this work is dependent on the outcome of the ongoing evaluation.

The research seminars comprise partly of the Department of Political Science's general research seminars, which are led by two professors for one year at a time, and partly of thematic seminars within the framework of the department's research teams, which are led by senior researchers in the relevant field of research. The doctoral students present milestones of the ongoing thesis project at the general research seminar on two

occasions during third cycle studies; firstly, a plan for the thesis, which is presented at the start of the second year, and secondly an extract from the thesis, which is presented at the mid-way seminar roughly half way through the third cycle studies. In addition, the doctoral student presents a more or less finished manuscript about one year before the thesis defence at a manuscript conference with 6–8 participants (of whom two are senior researchers who then act as internal reviewers). Alongside these formal stages, the doctoral student has good opportunities to present chapter drafts or article drafts at the thematic research team seminars. These groups are smaller and thus there are good opportunities for more informal discussions about the work in progress. Furthermore, many doctoral students choose to present extracts from the ongoing thesis project at national and international conferences, which the department encourages. Overall, the different types of seminar, and opportunities for presentation of the ongoing thesis work at these, enable continuous development through the thesis work. In addition, the general participation at the seminars promotes the doctoral students' broadening and reflection on political science as a discipline in that they encounter a considerable breadth of ongoing political science research (the breadth of research discussed at the seminars is reflected in appendix 16 with a list of all the department's thesis titles). The doctoral students also have the opportunity to act as reviewers of other doctoral students' presentations and can in this way develop the ability to discuss and assess other research.

The third part of the third cycle programme concerns work on the thesis and accounts for 180 credits. An important starting point for the thesis work is that the doctoral student has considerable freedom to independently choose the topic, issue, theory and method. We view the doctoral students' freedom of choice in this as an important component in the strong pluralism that characterises research at the department. We set great store



by pluralism and it is therefore crucial for us to safeguard the doctoral students' possibility and ability to make their own well-founded decisions regarding the choice of topic, issue, theory and methods. The ability to do this is promoted through the courses and seminars described, but also through the ongoing supervision.

The thesis project can take two forms, either as a monograph or a compilation thesis (for instructions on these different forms see appendices 17 and 18). The doctoral student can choose which one, depending on the nature of the thesis topic. The third cycle programme concludes with the defence of the thesis at a public defence where a senior researcher (associate professor or professor) acts as external reviewer and an examining committee consisting of five senior researchers (associate professors or professors, two of whom are from the department, one member from a different department at the Faculty of Social Sciences, one member from a department at another faculty at Lund University and one member from another university) decide whether or not the thesis is approved and ultimately if the learning outcomes have been achieved (for forms of the thesis defence see appendix 7).

Overall, the ten learning outcomes are promoted through courses, seminar participation with student's own presentations as well as work on, and defence of, their own thesis. In relation to the first criterion, that the achieved study results correspond with the learning outcomes and qualitative targets, we see strengths in our third cycle programme in the form of quality assurance through peer review, well-established procedures for various milestone seminars and thesis defences as well as our own high-quality courses that also help learning outcomes and qualitative targets to be achieved based on pluralism of topics and approaches. At the same time, we see a need for a clearer course structure with a more cohesive first year that contains more courses with a clear relevance to political science.

## **2. That students'/doctoral students' learning is the focus of programme**

The doctoral students' learning is the focus of our own courses, through seminar activities and most clearly through the individual supervision during the third cycle programme. During the courses, a doctoral student perspective is promoted by a large amount of active participation by the doctoral students. This applies both to seminar discussions and discussion of their own texts. In the ongoing supervision, focusing on the doctoral students' learning is a matter of course. Work on the individual study plans invites both supervisors and doctoral students to reflect further on the learning outcomes and how these have been achieved or can be achieved (see enclosed examples of individual study plans, appendix 3). The recurring course Research Methodologies is assessed through reflection papers that are submitted before each lecture/seminar (see appendix 11), an approach that is intended to benefit the doctoral students' learning. In addition, the course concludes with three seminars, each about a thesis that was ultimately published as a book by an international publisher. The discussions about this aim both to highlight positive models and to laterally connect recurring themes from different parts of the methodology course. The course is evaluated orally at one of the concluding seminars; in addition, the participants have been encouraged to submit written comments anonymously, but it is very rare that someone does. The consistent impression from the oral course evaluation is that the doctoral students are very satisfied with the course.

The alumni survey gives some cause for thought regarding the range of courses (something we already touched on in point 1 and return to in point 5 below), but in one respect the results are very positive: 75% of those who replied consider that the range of courses (which refers to courses offered to those who earned a PhD over the past ten years) to some extent or to a high degree gave the doctoral students "diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives on political science as a subject".

The corresponding figure is somewhat lower in Gothenburg (60%) for example. There is thus some reason to claim that the department's third cycle programme has succeeded in its aim to educate generalists rather than specialists.

### **3. That the programme rests on a scientific and/or artistic basis as well as proven experience**

The third cycle programme is led by a director of studies with at least the qualifications of an associate professor. The director of studies has overall operational responsibility for the education, including the content of the programme and its scientific basis. Parts of the quality assurance for the third cycle programme are managed at faculty level. Such matters and even matters concerning the coordination of third cycle studies within the faculty are managed by a third cycle studies council. The council consists of all the directors of studies of the faculty's third cycle study programmes, under the leadership of the faculty's pro dean.

At the department, the director of studies role is separate from employer responsibility. The head of department has employer responsibility for all employees and in the case of the doctoral students assists the assistant head of department with support regarding appraisals and in ongoing contacts with the doctoral students regarding employment issues. The assistant head's responsibility thus concerns matters connected to employer responsibility, whereas the director of studies has operational responsibility for the content of the programme (for division of duties between director of studies, assistant head and head of department see appendix 19a, for the faculty's responsibilities see appendix 19b). Questions concerning the programme's content – e.g. courses, supervision, forms of assessment and other procedures – are also discussed regularly in an active supervisors' group, which includes all professors, associate professors and other supervisors.

On the whole, the third cycle programme is to a large extent based on the scientific expertise present in the supervisors' group. The group consists of active researchers who are well established internationally and who act as supervisors and lecturers on the third cycle courses (for information on the supervisors' research and publications see their home pages at [www.svet.lu.se](http://www.svet.lu.se), for a list of active supervisors see appendix 20). Alongside the supervisors' publications, their research quality is reflected by a relatively stable inflow of external research funding (see appendix 21).

The scientific basis is also reflected in the learning outcomes of the general syllabus (appendix 1) and in the structure of the courses that we offer at the department with their clear connection to ongoing research (see, for example, appendix 11 and 12).

Another way in which the scientific basis is promoted is through the ongoing seminar activities and research away days in which scientific quality is discussed in a collegial context throughout the third cycle programme. The research seminars' activities are led by the professors' group and thus contribute to the scientific quality of the seminar. During the working group's study trip to the universities in Gothenburg, Stockholm and Uppsala it could be noted that the professors' group had a more prominent place in third cycle studies in at least a couple of the political science departments at these higher education institutions. This concerns, for example, a clearer role in the admissions process or introductory activities in the first semester. This may possibly be cause for continued reflection on the role of the professors' group at our own department.

One aspect that could be considered to reflect the scientific basis is the fact that a large proportion of our PhD holders are regarded as maintaining good scientific quality, given the fact that a very large percentage go on to successful careers as researchers. The alumni survey shows that 78% of those who

earned PhDs at the department since 2009 still work at a higher education institution. As we will return to below (in point 4), they are also very satisfied with the supervision they received.

To sum up, scientific quality is secured by the highly qualified group of supervisors, who conduct their own research, which is of very good scientific quality. Furthermore, the scientific quality is promoted by peer review, within the framework of well-established structures for the different thesis milestones, as described in point 1.

**4. That teaching staff, including supervisors, have appropriate competence regarding the subject, teaching and learning in higher education, subject didactics and other relevant expertise, and that teaching capacity is sufficient**

All supervisors active in the third cycle programme are to take a compulsory supervisor course (for course description see appendix 22). Most supervisors have done this and in other cases such studies are planned for the near future.

All supervisors are associate professors or professors and all currently active assistant supervisors are at least senior lecturers. In all cases, the supervisors are active researchers. The quality of the supervision is expressed in the alumni survey we carried out. 50% of our alumni consider that the supervision worked very well, and 44 % that it worked quite well.

The Department of Political Science in Lund is characterised today by considerable pluralism in terms of empirical research fields, methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. This means that there is a considerable breadth of supervisors who cover the important research fields in political science. At the same time, we have in recent years been able to identify a certain teaching need in our first and second cycle studies, not least within public administration studies, Swedish and comparative politics, and political theory. A senior lecturer for both Swedish and comparative politics and political theory are in

the process of being appointed, and in the near future the department plans to recruit someone with a specialisation in public administration studies. The department deems that these positions will also create further supervisory competence in third cycle studies. Nevertheless, there remains a certain vulnerability in Swedish and comparative politics, particularly regarding the quantitative specialisation. There is currently a small group of specialised and successful researchers, but the situation is vulnerable given that this group of supervisors is limited in number. If one or more of these supervisors were to leave the department, it would have a noticeable negative effect.

On the whole, supervisor competence is currently sufficient, or will be after the ongoing recruitment and supervision is deemed to be of good quality. At the same time, the organisation is vulnerable, as there is a limited group of supervisors particularly in Swedish and comparative politics.

#### **5. That the programme is to be relevant to the students and doctoral students, and meet the needs of society**

Our alumni survey (appendix 23) shows that our doctoral students are well positioned in the labour market. None of the alumni were unemployed at the time of the survey, and 34% had obtained employment for an indefinite term within one year of completing their studies. As previously mentioned, 78% work within a higher education institution and a further 9% in the public sector at state or municipality level. As many as 97% consider that their duties correspond to their level of education.

At the same time there is on this point reason to exercise a certain self-criticism. 41% of the alumni did not at the time of the survey have employment for an indefinite term, a figure that is higher than for both Gothenburg (28%), Uppsala (28%) and Stockholm (33%). There is also a wide variation on the question of whether the supervisors provided “support and advice in matters that concern the doctoral students’ (future) career”; only

about every other alumnus (54 %) considered that this has occurred to certain extent or to a great extent. The alumni are also relatively critical about the range of courses in the third cycle programme. 44% considered it was wholly or quite irrelevant to their thesis, and almost the same percentage considered that it was wholly or quite irrelevant for their current work duties.

Here, there are other areas for improvement both regarding preparing the doctoral students for a future career and contributing practically towards career paths. It should also be stated that the doctoral students who answered our questionnaire were admitted between 2002 and 2014. During this period, the conditions have changed regarding requirements for clearer career planning as an element in supervision and the department has also in recent years prioritised career development posts such as postdoc and associate senior lecturer. The faculty has also taken the initiative to organise a forthcoming career day for doctoral students. Our hope is that these measures help to address the criticism expressed by the alumni. There is nonetheless reason for the department to reflect on further measures concerning these aspects and not least regarding the range of courses.

#### **6. That the students and doctoral students have influence in planning, implementation and follow-up of the programme**

The formal representation of the doctoral students is mainly through the doctoral students' council. The chair and vice chair positions rotate each semester so that as many as possible have the opportunity to take on these roles. The doctoral students' council is consulted, for example in conjunction with the election of head of department and director of third cycle studies, but has no formal right to make decisions. The doctoral students' council appoints representatives to bodies at a more central level, such as the doctoral students' council of the Faculty of Social

Sciences. The doctoral students have representation in the department board, the department's gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity committee and in the researchers' council. In these three bodies, the doctoral students' (and the students') representatives have roles as full members with the right to make proposals and vote. Nevertheless, in the interviews carried out in connection with this self-evaluation the view was put forward that the doctoral students have limited actual influence in the previously mentioned forums and it is unclear what their advisory role involves.

At the same time, doctoral students do not only have influence through such formal representation at group level. Equally important is that the doctoral students individually and continuously can influence their own education. In the alumni survey (appendix 23), 78% considered that their opportunity, overall, to affect their work situation as doctoral students was good or very good. In the latest work environment survey, ten of eleven doctoral students replied that they "often" or "always" could affect how their work is structured. Another question concerned how the department management is receptive to their views on the work situation. Here the scores were "always": 4, "often": 4 and "sometimes": 3. In the free text section of the questionnaire it emerged that doctoral students desire clearer information about how teaching is allocated and how supervisors are appointed. These views have also been put forward by the doctoral students' council on some other occasions. At the same time, a large majority of the doctoral students who took part in the 2019 cohort meeting expressed that the appointment of supervisors had become clearer over time. The alumni survey also shows that the doctoral students, perhaps with several years' perspective, are very satisfied with the process through which their supervisors have been allocated; 97% consider that it worked quite or very well, and 87.5% consider that the influence they had was "good as it was".



The process for the appointment of principal supervisors starts within the framework of the activities of the first semester's introduction team. Here, a representative selection of the department's researchers present their own and their colleagues' research interests – in this way the newly admitted doctoral students can gain an impression of which potential supervisors are available. Later in the first semester, when the doctoral students have presented their early concepts for their thesis topic, the director of studies organises individual meetings in which the doctoral students present the names they have reflected on as potential supervisor candidates. The director of studies presents in the same way names that they see as options. Sometimes there is an early consensus at this point and in this case the director of studies asks the person in question. Sometimes further conversations are needed before the decision is arrived at in a natural way. Formally, the head of department decides on the supervisor following a proposal by the director of studies. In practice, the doctoral student has a considerable influence on the decision through the wishes they convey during the process. The doctoral student also has the right to change supervisor, even though this very rarely happens. Assistant supervisors are appointed at the start of the second year after the doctoral students have presented their thesis plans. The process is similar to that of the appointment of principal supervisors, with the difference that the principal supervisor also contributes their views. For doctoral students on projects, the project manager usually acts as principal supervisor and is therefore appointed right from the first day of the third cycle programme. In this case, the assistant supervisor is to be brought in from outside the project (for policy regarding project doctoral students see appendix 9).

The decision on the supervisor is perhaps the most important decision for the individual doctoral student. That the doctoral student has a considerable influence on the process is therefore

also extremely important for the doctoral student's influence over their third cycle studies.

Another important element of influence that does not directly affect the education but rather employment as a doctoral student concerns opportunities for teaching assignments. As stated in point 10, these opportunities may vary depending on the ability to teach in Swedish, given that a large proportion of first and second cycle teaching is conducted in Swedish. At the same time, there is a Bachelor's programme at faculty level with considerable elements of the political science courses conducted in English and considerable parts of first cycle studies in political science are also conducted in English. This also makes it possible for English-speaking doctoral students to teach. As stated in appendix 24, many doctoral students who are teaching are close to the 20% of full-time hours that they are allowed to teach. The alumni are also substantially satisfied with their opportunities to teach during third cycle studies. 68% taught 16% of their doctoral studentships or more, and even though many considered that the teaching workload was divided quite unequally, 90% are satisfied with the amount of teaching they were allocated (they would not have wanted to teach more or less).

At the same time, there is still a variation, as certain doctoral students teach less. Sometimes this is because the doctoral student does not want to teach more, but sometimes there are other reasons. Here, the doctoral students' council has pointed out a lack of transparency regarding the opportunities for teaching that are available. The director of first and second cycle studies has therefore invited the doctoral students to send in a report on their expertise as a way to more easily match the doctoral student's expertise with current teaching needs. It is hoped that this will lead to a more even allocation of teaching assignments among the doctoral students.

### **7. That an appropriate, accessible-to-all study and learning environment with well-functioning support services is in place**

From the first day, doctoral students have access to their own workplace with computer, telephone and other office resources. During the first year, the new doctoral student cohort (usually five people) share a large joint office, after which two or three doctoral students share an office during the second year and thereafter get their own office when one becomes available. The doctoral student also has access to library resources at the Social Sciences library, where there is a contact librarian for the Department of Political Science, and at the central University library. Besides these, there are a number of subject-specific libraries at other faculties. The department's work environment survey shows that the doctoral students are largely very satisfied with the physical work environment (see appendix 25).

The activities of the previously presented introduction team consist to a large extent of introducing the doctoral student to the department and the study and learning environment. This is done through presentations of the third cycle programme and its different stages, the department's administrative procedures, the physical learning environment and the department's research. During the semester, the focus shifts more and more towards the doctoral students' forthcoming thesis project as the doctoral students begin to discuss newly defended theses and then present early outlines concerning their own thesis ideas. At the end of the year, the director of studies hands over responsibility to the then appointed principal supervisors (for more information on the introduction team see appendix 15). Overall, the introduction team aims to provide a cohesive introduction to working life as a doctoral student and to working life at the Department of Political Science.

Doctoral students have access to different forms of support that promote successful third cycle studies. At the university-wide level there is an Academic Support Centre that offers individual

coaching in the event of e.g. writer's cramp and procrastination as well as structured writing groups in which doctoral students can sit together and write (more information is available here: <https://www.lu.se/studera/livet-som-student/service-och-stod/studieverkstaden/skrivgrupp-for-doktorander>). The doctoral students at the department have also taken the initiative for a similar local arrangement at the department. Furthermore, the department has arranged workshops on themes such as "finish on time" and "academic writing" with invited guests. The faculty also offers different forms of support for doctoral students (see appendix 26).

The supervisors' group has recently adopted a policy in which different forms of support measures and other measures are specified for the doctoral students who risk not being finished within the stipulated time. The main message here is that it is of great importance that the supervisor, director of studies, and assistant head of department respond at an early stage. This is done initially through applying different possible support measures (e.g. writing groups or increased supervision) and if that is not sufficient, the doctoral student is called to a follow-up conversation with the director of studies in which the situation and other possible measures are discussed. This structure aims through a clear reaction to show the doctoral student that the department takes the situation seriously and responds before it has gone too far (see appendix 27).

These measures are also the result of a discussion that took place in connection with periods when several doctoral students have struggled with stress in relation to the thesis work, sometimes to the extent that it has led to sick leave. As shown in the attached work environment survey (see appendix 25) the stress level of currently active doctoral students continues to be problematic, but at the same time it is the department's impression that the measures described have made it possible for the department to support the doctoral students in a more appropriate way and

thereby prevent problems becoming unmanageable. Due to these measures, we have been able to see how doctoral students who had problems completing the work have been able to resume third cycle studies and complete the work leading to the defence of the thesis. When the alumni were asked about stress, the results were not particularly alarming: 56% have certainly “at some point” experienced “negative stress or feelings of psychological discomfort linked to the thesis work”, with only 28% responding with “quite often” or “nearly all the time”. And these figures, with the exception of Uppsala, are somewhat higher at the other departments.

#### **8. That continuous follow-up and development of the programme takes place**

The supervisors’ group has an important role in the continuous follow-up and development of the programme. The supervisors’ group has an ongoing discussion about the range of courses, supervision matters, experiences from completed thesis defences, milestone seminars and other aspects of the programme. At a regular annual meeting held in November there is a discussion of each individual doctoral student’s situation in which the supervisor reports on the situation and the other supervisors have an opportunity to give advice. If the overall picture from these reports reflects a systematic problem, this may lead to policy initiatives.

The department’s management group has two configurations. The daily activities are discussed in a management group consisting of the head of department, assistant head of department, director of first and second cycle studies, finance officer and HR administrator. When matters concerning research and third cycle studies are on the agenda, the participants also include the chair of the research council and the director of third cycle studies. Here, the director of third cycle studies has the opportunity to raise operative matters based on the discussions in the supervisors’ group or which have been brought up in the

ongoing activities of the third cycle programme. At the same time, this division entails a potential risk of a split management structure in which first and second cycle matters have a more self-evident place in the management group than research and third cycle studies. Up to now, this risk has been managed through a continuous dialogue between the director of third cycle studies, the chair of the research council and other members of the department's management group.

In more fundamental policy issues, the director of third cycle studies raises the matter to the collegially constituted department board, which has the decision-making right on budget and policy matters. The director of third cycle studies is co-opted to the department board.

The director of third cycle studies is also a member of the third cycle studies council of the Faculty of Social Sciences in which the faculty's directors of studies discuss and decide on the faculty's range of joint third cycle courses, evaluate these and also discuss and decide on joint guidelines for the third cycle programme.

As already mentioned, there are regular course evaluations of the courses in the third cycle programme.

As was also mentioned above, an annual work environment survey is completed by the department's staff. Here, we have an opportunity to separate doctoral students' responses from the others. This gives us an insight into how the doctoral students experience the physical and psychosocial work environment as well as opportunities for participatory influence. The questionnaire thus provides good assistance in identifying problems, and in following up and developing the programme.

### **9. That internationalisation and the international perspective are promoted in the programme**

The third cycle programme in political science is internationalised to a large extent. English is the working

language at the department, including seminars and courses within the third cycle programme. The strong internationalisation is also reflected in the large proportion of doctoral students who do not originate from Sweden. This group includes Scandinavians, Europeans and non-Europeans, some have moved to Sweden in conjunction with the start of the third cycle programme while others have moved in connection with previous studies. In the latest intake of doctoral students, only one in five of the newly admitted students had Swedish citizenship and in previous years the proportion without Swedish citizenship has also been high. According to the alumni survey, 81% of those who earned PhDs at the department over the past 10 years grew up in Sweden; which is lower than for the other political science departments. Lund also has the highest percentage of PhD holders who grew up in a country outside Europe (9%). If we also look at the doctoral students who are currently active in third cycle studies, the percentage who did not grow up in Sweden is as high as 55%. This figure can be considered to reflect the rather dramatic internationalisation that the third cycle programme has undergone in recent years.

The international perspective is promoted throughout in the teaching of third cycle studies with strong encouragement for research stays abroad, studies at summer schools or other courses abroad and for presentations of ongoing thesis work at leading conferences around the world (for these aspects see the enclosed individual study plans, appendix 3). The alumni survey confirms the picture of a high degree of internationalisation: 82% of the doctoral students had at the time of earning a PhD been to international conferences several times; 49% had spent time as a visiting doctoral student at a university abroad, 54% had taken courses abroad; and 42% had several articles accepted for publication in international journals by the time they earned a PhD.

Every year, the department welcomes exchange doctoral students to Lund. This is conducted either through visits within the framework of the department's general visiting doctoral student programme for which there are two application periods each year (see <https://www.svet.lu.se/en/education/doctoral-studies/programme-for-visiting-doctoral-students>), or within the framework of a research programme or project. Within the framework of the visiting doctoral student programme, the visiting doctoral student has access to a workplace and the department's seminars and course activities, and also has a mentor during the stay in Lund.

#### **10. That gender equality and equal opportunities perspectives are integrated into the programme**

The department has a plan for gender mainstreaming and equal opportunities which was adopted by the department board and drafted by the department's gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity committee (See the plan at [www.svet.lu.se/internt/sites/svet.lu.se.internt/files/plan-jamstalldhetsintegrering-likabehandling-2018-2020.pdf](http://www.svet.lu.se/internt/sites/svet.lu.se.internt/files/plan-jamstalldhetsintegrering-likabehandling-2018-2020.pdf)). This plan is structured based on three different central roles in the department's activities in which the department as principal for third cycle studies is one of the roles. For each of the three roles, the plan raises critical questions that those with responsibility are to ask of themselves and the organisation they lead in order to achieve a higher level of gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity. For the director of third cycle studies this concerns, for example, whether matters regarding how these perspectives are considered in admission to the third cycle programme and the composition of the admissions committee, how financial governance affects the shaping of the third cycle programme and the health of the doctoral students, how teaching assignments are allocated, how supervisors are appointed or how third cycle course syllabi take gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity perspectives into account. According



to the plan, the director of third cycle studies has overall responsibility for ensuring that these issues are taken into account in daily activities within the framework of the third cycle programme.

The head of department has employer responsibility for all employed staff and in the case of doctoral students, the assistant head of department assists in providing support regarding appraisals and ongoing contacts with the doctoral students regarding employment matters. The assistant head of department's responsibility thus concerns matters relating to employer responsibility, whereas the director of studies has operational responsibility for the study programme content (for division of responsibilities see appendix 19a).

In the annual work environment survey (see appendix 25) we ask for views on gender equality and equal opportunities. In the work environment questionnaire for 2019, there was the following question: "Is the work environment neutral (with regard to gender, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, age or language) regarding possibilities to influence at the workplace?" Here, the doctoral students' answers were divided as follows: "always": 1, "often": 3, "sometimes": 6, "never" 1. This is to be considered as worrying. In the free text section of the questionnaire, some doctoral students described the challenges facing non-Swedish speakers. This is something that the doctoral students' council has pointed out on other occasions. It may relate to such situations as feeling uncomfortable socially when their presence forces others to change language. But it could also be that it seems more difficult to enter into the role as lecturer.

From the survey, we also see that doctoral students are less satisfied compared with other staff categories concerning the possibility of receiving information on matters relating to work, concerning the work environment's neutrality and also regarding clarity about the expectations for the employee's work. The

differences between doctoral students and other staff categories can be partially explained by the fact that the doctoral students have not been in the workplace for as long and therefore have not been able to assimilate all the information channels or learn about the department's expectations. At the same time, the doctoral students' answers are to be taken seriously. One way to address the viewpoints has been to introduce clearer information channels with newsletters, more transparent advertising of teaching assignments for doctoral students and an ongoing dialogue with the doctoral students' council on issues that are important for the doctoral student community. The department's expectations are also expressed in a relatively newly adopted policy (appendix 28). The issues will also be highlighted in ongoing work environment management in order to further improve the doctoral students' work environment.

From a gender equality perspective, it can also be noted that today's department has an almost completely even gender distribution among professors, senior lecturers and associate professors. Among the doctoral students, there are more women but the difference is not that large and can be explained by a fluctuation from one year to another in the group that is admitted. Previously, the department had a certain skew with a larger proportion of male applicants but that skew was remedied by encouraging female applicants in the vacancy announcement texts, which seems to have influenced the figures in the direction of a more equal gender balance.

Overall, there is active work on gender equality, equal opportunities and diversity at the department with active participation by the doctoral students. As the work environment survey shows, there are nonetheless challenges, mainly regarding how non-Swedish speakers are integrated in the organisation, information channels and clarity regarding expectations.

### **11. That a subject-relevant perspective on sustainable development is promoted in the programme**

Moreover, the third cycle programme in political science has a clear element involving projects that relate in different ways to the environment and sustainable development. In certain cases, these projects have come into being within the framework of targeted initiatives (see, for example, the graduate school for Agenda 2030: <https://www.sustainability.lu.se/agenda-2030-graduate-school>, the BECC research environment: <https://www.becc.lu.se>, the Linnaeus programme Lucid, and the Climbeco graduate school: [www.cec.lu.se/climbeco-graduate-research-school](http://www.cec.lu.se/climbeco-graduate-research-school)), externally-funded research projects or because the individual doctoral student has chosen such a specialisation. Given that the research environment includes doctoral students with a special focus on sustainability issues, all doctoral students come in contact with such issues when doctoral students in the targeted initiatives present their milestones from the thesis projects.

Within the framework of the third cycle programme, the department has also regularly offered courses oriented towards environmental policy (see appendix 29 for examples).

### **Summarising reflections**

As our self-reflection showed, the Department of Political Science at Lund University currently conducts a third cycle programme that works well in many respects. We offer courses that are appreciated by the doctoral students, supervision is deemed to be of good quality and we have a research and seminar environment that we feel is constructive and pluralistic. Not least, we see that those who earn PhDs from the third cycle programme have a high standard of quality and in most cases also embark on a good career. There is therefore a lot that we have reason to value and safeguard for the future.

Nonetheless, there are areas in which there is a clear potential for improvement. We have in this self-evaluation pointed to:

- the need for a developed course organisation with a more cohesive course structure during the first year with a clearer political science specialisation.
- the need, based on an equal opportunities perspective, to further strengthen the integration of non-Swedish doctoral students.
- a possible additional need for greater transparency regarding how teaching assignments are allocated, even though an initiative has already been taken in this regard.
- a possible additional need to strengthen career preparation work in the third cycle programme, even though an initiative has already been taken in this regard.
- vulnerability concerning supervisor capacity in Swedish and comparative politics.
- a certain risk of imbalance in the management structure in the relative weighting of first and second cycle studies and third cycle studies.

During the working group's tour in Sweden other possible changes were also identified based on how the departments that were visited organise their third cycle studies. One very concrete aspect concerned the chair at theses defences. In Lund at present the principal supervisor is the chair, whereas at other departments an examiner who is separate from the supervision assignment has the role of chair. Another aspect concerns the role of the professors' group, as at least two of the departments have reverted to a more professor-driven third cycle programme. The latter is not a self-evident step, but there may nonetheless be reason to reflect on the role of the professors' group in the third cycle programme and whether the professors' group is to have a special responsibility for the third cycle programme.

To sum up, we have identified strengths as well as areas with potential for improvement. On the basis of this self-reflection, the doctoral students' input and the evaluation group's report, we look forward to continued work on the development of the third cycle programme.

## Appendix 2 Evaluation of the PhD program in political science at Lund University Input from the PhD council

We are overall pleased with the program. We are represented in relevant departmental boards and committees and we find that we generally have a say in matters that concern us. Our needs are adequately met for the most part. The academic and administrative staff is encouraging and supportive, new PhD students are well taken care of with an extensive introductory program, there are opportunities for non-Swedish speakers to learn Swedish, and the university library is excellent. The courses offered at the department and the workshops we are able to attend are also appreciated.

There are however three main areas where we find there is room for improvement.

### *1) Teaching opportunities*

The process of getting teaching as a PhD student is too informal and non-transparent. There is a lack of information about concrete opportunities to teach, and it is unclear who you turn to if you want to teach. Non-Swedish speaking PhD students are especially affected by this given that most courses are taught in Swedish. The possibility of being relieved of teaching without due notice is also not optimal.

While the self-evaluation report addresses some of these issues, the only suggested solution concerns the document that lists our competences. This is a step in the right direction inasmuch as it makes the people in charge of allocating teaching more aware of what we do and what courses we possibly can teach. The process of getting teaching will not change with this initiative, however, and there will still be a lack of information about concrete opportunities to teach. Distributing information about vacancies in different courses to the PhD students is one way to address this. We would also like to see more flexibility with regards to the teaching language to include non-Swedish speakers to a

greater extent, similar to what has been implemented for courses in peace and conflict studies.

### **2) *Language***

Non-Swedish speaking PhD students have fewer opportunities to participate at the department. Documents, emails, etc. are not always translated to English. Teaching opportunities are scarcer for non-Swedish speakers. Furthermore, although it is positive that the department provides support when it comes to Swedish courses, the courses are unpredictable given that they only start when a sufficient amount of people have signed up.

### **3) *Supervisors***

PhD students get their main supervisor at the beginning of the second semester. While there are benefits to this, such as the possibility of getting to know the people at the department first, there are also reasons to shorten this process. Discussing the decisions made during the first semester with a supervisor would be good.

The process of getting supervisors has also had some weaknesses. We are not supposed to ask people if they would be interested in being our supervisor, we are not encouraged to have an external supervisor, and our picks for supervisor are sometimes discouraged without explanation or reasons that relate to our education and interests.

***We furthermore have some more minor wishes:***

- We are generally happy with the PhD courses offered at the department. The PhD courses offered at the faculty level are, however, less relevant and the quality is not as high. There is a desire for more PhD courses at the department, and/or for increasing the involvement of teachers from the department in faculty level courses. There is also a wish for more information about opportunities for attending courses at other universities.

- Our office spaces are generally satisfactory. It is, however, not ideal that new PhD students share one office for the entire first year. A partial solution could for example be to have a space that could be used as a reading room.
- While there are non-Swedish PhD students at the department and the course literature can be characterized as ‘international’, the majority is Western European and American. Both could be more diverse than they are today.
- There is a desire for more information about possibilities for doing exchanges.
- There is a desire for establishing a mentor program where a senior teacher functions as a teaching mentor for a PhD student, similar to what Micke Sundström is planning to do at graduate school. This would be a way to get more concrete, “hands-on” guidance when it comes to teaching.

On behalf of the PhD council, Maiken Røed



## Appendix 3 Programme evaluation of PhD education in Political Science: Statement from the external expert group

### Assignment and external expert group

The assignment of the external expert group (see composition below) was to evaluate the PhD education in Political Science. The evaluation was based on Lund University's eleven criteria for quality enhancement, with support from the Faculty of Social Sciences' instructions<sup>1</sup>. The assignment included raising the strengths, challenges and development opportunities of the learning environment and the programme/programmes.

Prior to the evaluation, the expert group had access to LU Box with a large number of documents from the department and the faculty, including the department's self-assessment and input of students/doctoral students.

The expert group conducted a site visit February 26-27, 2020 (see the program in appendix).

The composition of the external expert group was:

- Professor PerOla Öberg, Uppsala University (chair of the expert group)
- Professor Åsa von Schoultz, University of Helsinki
- Professor Ellen Immergut, European University Institute & Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (on leave)

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<sup>1</sup> *Instructions and procedures for programme evaluations by external experts at the Faculty of Social Sciences* (2019-09-19, reg. no STYR 2019/1232) and *Instructions for external experts regarding programme evaluation at the Faculty of Social Sciences* (2019-09-19, reg. no STYR 2019/1262)

## The main strengths and challenges of the programme, and the external expert group's reflections and recommendations

The department of political science provided the necessary conditions to perform the evaluation according to the instructions. The required documents have been available in due time and the site visit was well organized. The department has been very helpful in providing all requested additional documents, and has sincerely and honestly answered questions from the expert group. Even though there have been practical restrictions that must be taken into account, for example that the short site visit makes it possible to talk to only a limited number of staff and students, the expert group is satisfied with conditions for the evaluation process and has been able to form a well-founded opinion on how the program works.

Based on the available information, our overall assessment is that the PhD program in Political Science at Lund University works excellently. The supervising capacity in most areas is of a very high international standard, the organization and the management of the program is very good, and the collegial involvement and attention to all parts of the program, in combination with an openness to further improvement is impressive. The tendencies for specialization and fragmentation prevalent at many political science departments elsewhere, have so far not affected the PhD program to a large extent. These pivotal factors are to be considered as strengths of the program and constitute a foundation for a productive and encouraging environment for PhD students, as well as for high quality learning outcomes.

The department provided the expert group with a very informative self-assessment that in itself mirrors the well-organized program and illustrates a capacity for self-reflection. In this document, the department has identified some areas for improvement, which we agree that the department should

continue to consider, for example potential vulnerability in supervisor capacities in the future, and risk of imbalances in the management structure. We will however not repeat all these important self-reflections. Furthermore, we will not repeat all the detailed information provided in the self-assessment on how the program is organized. Our overall conclusion is that everything works well, or very well. Instead the expert group wants to emphasize aspects that we recommend the department to further deliberate over, in order to fine-tune the program. First, we will share our reflections following the recommended structure of the evaluation. We end with a summary of our recommendations.

**1. That the actual study results correspond to learning outcomes and qualitative targets**

The instructions for the expert group is that it should not evaluate actual study results as expressed, for example, in the quality of dissertations. It is clear, however, from the alumni survey and from other knowledge available, that the program provides students with skills that make them well equipped for life after the program. The department has educated several top-level researchers as well as civil servants in other occupations. Almost all alumnus report that their current assignments correspond to their level of education. There is, however, less satisfaction with the relevance of the course offer, which we comment more on below in the report.

The department has an explicitly and shared strategy to educate generalists that in addition to produce high quality dissertations based on specialist knowledge, should be able to understand different theoretical perspectives and methods. This policy permeates strategic discussions at the department regarding the program, and is important for the cohesiveness of the program based on inclusive procedures involving all of the department staff. Hence, management and staff discuss and design the courses, seminars and processes that support the students in their work on the dissertation in relation to stipulated learning targets.

The throughput of the program is excellent. Since 2010, 37 candidates have received a doctoral degree. The average gross time to graduation is 6.5 years, but the net time is significantly lower with an average of 4.67 years. These numbers clearly indicate the efficiency, and perhaps of the competitiveness, of the program. The threshold for admittance is very high, and those doctoral candidates that enter the program tend to be highly motivated and ambitious. Clearly, the program is organized in a way that allows the students to fulfill their ambitions and there are processes in place to handle challenges that may arise over the course of the four to five years.

The conclusion is that the political science department should be able to systematically compare itself and compete with other top-ranked departments in the Nordic countries or even at top-European level. However, the management does not have a clear target for benchmarking. We encourage the department to discuss whether a benchmarking process where it explicitly compares itself with and targets itself to achieve the quality at other top-universities in Europe would be helpful in ambitions to retain or strengthening its position.

## **2. That the programme focuses on students'/doctoral students' learning**

The external expert group is convinced that students' learning is in focus of the program, and not for example senior researchers own carriers. The collegial engagement and responsibility for admittance of applicants to the program, the organization of the program, assignment of supervisors, as well as evaluation processes of ongoing work permeates that attitude. In addition, the department uses the individual study plan in a more active way than many other departments, which also emphasizes a focus on the students' learning.

The programme's courses and requirements do indeed focus on the key learning objectives for PhD Researchers in Political

Science. The external expert group is however surprised that this attitude, and the inclusive discussions about the program, have not resulted in a well thought out policy for course offers. The department has already started to reflect over this situation and have set up a working group with the assignment to make suggestions regarding the course structure. This group has an important task. As of now, it is not very clear how the department has organized the first year, why certain courses are mandatory, or when and why the (non-mandatory) reading courses should be included in the program. It is unclear or a matter of disagreements within faculty whether the reading courses should add to students general or special skills. In addition, faculty and students agree that courses taken jointly with students from other departments are a waste of time. The department could disseminate relevant knowledge on these subjects more efficiently, such as within activities organized by the introductory team. The external expert group concludes that there is room for improvement in this regard. The department should discuss a clear vision for the course offer, especially for year one. One option to consider is to have a first year with mandatory courses that includes broad courses on theory and methods, and still provide time for students to prepare their research plan in an organized way. The external expert group recommends that the department include the current methods courses in a mandatory block in year one, but also to consider to complement these courses with a theory course. What are now optional courses, often in the form of reading courses, could be included as work on the dissertation unless there is a clear idea for the current organization of the program. This would mean that the department could encourage students to take additional courses, organize reading groups or write review papers on prior research that supports the thesis without students getting credits for it. Rather, it would be considered as necessary work on the dissertation and therefore included in the 180 hp credit for the thesis. One of the advantages would be that such additional work

would not have to be artificially formalized and adjusted to specific credits that the student need for the exam, but adapted to what is required to write a good thesis.

The compulsory methods course is very broad, covering methods ranging from interpretative approaches used in Political Theory and discourse analysis to quantitative statistical analyses. This broad and diverse approach is in line with the department's commitment to training generalists in Political Science and its dedication to a pluralism in theory, substance, and methods. The faculty recognizes that such a course is only a starting point and must be supplemented with opportunities for more specialized and in-depth training.

The applied methods course responds to the particular needs of each cohort of researchers and allows them to pursue tailor-made hands-on methods training. Furthermore, researchers are encouraged to apply to summer and winter schools, and to participate in regional and Sweden-wide doctoral research training activities. The assessment committee also supports such activities and views regional networks—e.g. with Copenhagen or Aarhus—as promising for in-depth methods and theoretical enrichment activities.

Further, the committee supports the department's initiative to develop a mandatory theory course, given in the first semester of the programme. A broad theory course, giving students an introduction to and an overview of different theoretical perspectives in Political Science, can further strengthen the pluralistic ambition of the programme. Moreover, by organizing it in the course in the first semester, it can contribute to a more coherent and structured first year, and give less emphasis to the courses provided by the Faculty.

### **3. That the programme is based on a scientific and/or artistic foundation and proven experience**

The well-organized program that involves many faculty members which themselves produces top-class research guarantees a program based on scientific foundation. In addition, the department has several advisory bodies were active researcher discuss important aspects of the program. The many theoretical and methodological perspectives at the department imply that students find themselves embedded in ongoing discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. In addition, all students participate in continuous discussions and seminars at the department, with vast opportunities to present preliminary findings and receive comments on drafts.

The different milestones are pivotal for control, and development of the scientific quality of the theses. The students present their drafts three times during the program. These occasions are points of evaluation, but students still find them constructive and helpful and that it contributes to less, rather than more stress. Students present a research plan at a seminar with participation from faculty members after their first year, and this is followed by a presentation of a second draft when the thesis is slightly more than half way. Not only specialists within the field participates in these seminars. After the seminar, the supervisors generally have a follow-up meeting with the student where they together discuss and draw conclusions from the discussion, and decide whether input from seminar participants should affect the overall structure and content of the thesis. These procedures seem to work very well since faculty members collegially participates in the seminars and because supervisors—at least based on information available to the expert group—willingly do their job.

The expert group understand that it is important to be careful and not damage valuable norms by introducing unnecessary formal

regulations. Still, the department should be aware that this procedure might come under stress in the future. Hence, in order to make sure that the milestones continue to function as the quality controls, and as guarantees for a program based on scientific foundation, the expert group encourage the department to consider formalizing instructions for these procedures. As of now, it is sometimes unclear to faculty members and students if the conclusion from the seminar is to proceed as intended or if adjustments are necessary. Formalised meetings after the halfway seminar could include a (more) formal decision on whether the student is entitled to a rise in salary, and involve the Director of PhD studies to provide in-depth knowledge of the situation.

The expert group recommends reconsideration of the procedures for the other milestones as well. The procedure after the seminar on the research proposal could include collegial decisions on whether the proposal is accepted without revisions or not, and if ethical reviews are needed. These decisions should then be clearly communicated to the student. The procedure for the internal examination in the final stage of the program can be more specified. There seem to be a general agreement over what a dissertation “ready for defence” implies, and the expert group has not noticed any problems in this regard. Still, this formulation might be interpreted in various ways by faculty members now or in the future. Is a thesis *not* ready for defence when it is easy to improve it, even though it would pass as it is? A clarification or definition of this would assure that supervisors treat all PhDs in a similar fashion, and that they are not left out to a particular faculty member’s interpretation of the instruction.



**4. That teaching staff, including supervisors, have appropriate expertise in terms of subject, teaching and learning in higher education and subject teaching as well as other relevant expertise, and that teaching capacity is sufficient**

The capacity for supervising and teaching is very good. As emphasized before, the scientific quality of a significant share of the staff is by international standards very high. All supervisors are at least *docent*, and they are all active researchers. The department can assign qualified supervisors to all students even though the admittance procedure is not primarily based on matching students with supervising capacity, but to admit students to the program that have novel ideas too. Based on the information available to the expert group, the students seems overall satisfied with supervisors.

There seems however to be some clouds on the horizon. Some sub-subjects at the department have traditionally attracted more students, and there are tendencies of fragility in other parts that may cause problems in the future. The department could reflect more seriously about its research profile and possible gaps in order to provide strategic guidance to future recruitment of faculty and researchers. Another aspect to consider is if the department should open up the opportunity to assign more than two supervisors to student if there are specific needs for expertise that the other two supervisors are lacking.

**5. That the programme is to be relevant for the students and doctoral students and meets the needs of society**

The external expert group has not evaluated the content or the focus of dissertations. A clear impression is however that the political science department at Lund University engages with important issues of our time and as such contributes to the needs of society.

The expert group noted, however, that—in parallel to other political science departments at the larger universities—most

PhDs prefer to continue their career within academia. This is, for example displayed clearly in the alumni survey. The political science departments have a responsibility to help supply organizations also outside academia with well-educated staff to “meet the needs of society”. The department have already taken steps to inform their students about alternative careers for example within international organisations or public administration, but the department also acknowledges that these activities can be improved. The expert group encourages the department to explore novel and more efficient ways to inform students about alternative careers.

**6. That the students and doctoral students have an influence on planning, implementation and follow up of the programme**

The students can influence their situation in several different ways, especially through their local association of PhD students and by representation in the department board. The overall impression is that the management, faculty members and administration are willing to listen, and are responsive to arguments put forward by the students. As also indicated in the alumni survey report, students can influence assignments of supervisors, their choice of theme for the thesis, as well as their organisation of everyday work.

There are, however, some room for improvement when it comes to the transparency needed for students to use their channels for influence efficiently. The students find some processes less transparent than desired, for example decisions about resources for expenses, how the department assigns supervisors to students, and procedures for changing supervisors.

To some extent, this situation is due to an information deficit that the department needs address. Some, but not all processes are formalised on paper in detail, see for example about milestones above. In addition, many of the documents that regulate the program are not easy to find and are therefore

unknown, at least to PhD students. The expert group wants to highlight that these instructions are useful, and that their existence shows that the program is well organised in details. This includes several of the important and useful documents provided to the expert group, for example “Policy for Project PhD Students”, “Doktorander som inte blir klara i tid – stöd och åtgärder”, Guidelines for Monographs/compilation theses”, and “Riktlinjer hållpunktsseminarier”. At the same time, the expert group recommends that the department merge all relevant instructions to one coherent document and make that document easily available to all.

**7. That an appropriate study and learning environment is available to all and includes a well-functioning support system**

The students are well equipped with office space including computer facilities etcetera from day one. Based on the work environment survey, students in general appear to be satisfied with the physical work environment. First year students share an office. This seems generally unproblematic (and necessary due to scarcity of offices). At the same time, the department should consider if it is possible to provide office spaces for students that temporarily need to focus on specific tasks in a secluded and quiet space.

The organization overseeing the work environment is adequate with a clear division of responsibilities formalized in a specific document (dated 2019-12-10). While the deputy Head of Department is responsible for issues related to employment (that is HR-issues), the Director of PhD studies handles issues related to the actual program (such as advice the students regarding courses). This division runs the risk of being unclear to students regarding where they should turn in certain issues or that some aspects of the program fall between the cracks. However, in this case it seems that the communication between persons in different roles work well and that it instead gives students more

possibilities to discuss potential problems and guarantees that the department don't neglect work environment issues. The individuals in liable positions seems to be competent, dedicated and properly supported by the department management.

The department calls students and actively encourage them to participate in yearly employee review talks that seems well-organized and aimed at capturing also more sensitive issues such as how students experience supervising. The department has a strong support system focused in particular on reducing and helping doctoral researchers to cope with stress, such as taking advantage of their right to sickness and parental leaves. The department's policy is to inform students that they should take a sick leave if they cannot perform their job due to health issues. This is important since students otherwise might find themselves in a situation later when they are out of funding before they have finished their thesis. While long-term sick leave was a problem some years ago indicating structural problems with the program, the situation now is better with few cases of sick leave related to the program. However, general stress is still an issue, but the department have initiates several measures to actively mitigate the problem. It is particularly worth mentioning that the department deals explicitly with, and openly discuss, common problems for PhD students such as writer's block and procrastination that in other environments might be hidden problems since it is often deeply personal and therefore sensitive.

The department provides significant language instruction and encourages the integration of non-Swedish students into departmental life. As emphasized by the students and recognized by the department management, this is however still a challenge to the department. Given that the working language is English, the problem relates more to social integration than to conditions to take advantage of the education on the program. There seems to be confusion over whether all communication is in English or

not. While the management say it is, the students still points out that this is not the case.

The Department helps researchers to apply for financial support for attending conferences and external courses, as well as carrying out research, including from the generously financed Fahlbeckska stiftelsen. In addition, each researcher is provided with funds (Skr 40 000) for these purposes. Students connected to external projects have an advantage compared to other students. However, this potential inequality is mitigated by the fact that when other sources are inadequate, the department steps in to fill the gap. Exactly how this process works is not totally transparent which is a matter of discussion amongst students.

The department should clarify the need for balance between teaching and research for doctoral candidates, and provide more structured mentoring and introduction to teaching for doctoral researchers. All teachers are included in teaching teams where some mentoring for inexperienced teachers take place, which is very good and important. The expert group has not been able to investigate how well this works in practice, but have reasons to believe that it varies some between teaching groups. As students have attended many classes themselves, they might join the current courses even without prior teaching experience. They would profit from hearing about the problems encountered by others. Furthermore, if a course or workshop on teaching were to be offered to first year researchers (possibly even as part of the induction seminar), there might be less of a push for teaching experience at this very early stage when the development of the research plan should take higher priority. The expert group recommend the department to include a discussion over the policy for students teaching during year one at the same time as it reconsiders the structure of courses during year one.

It is not entirely clear to the students how the department assign teaching tasks, which has spurred a discussion about whether there are back doors to teaching for some students creating

inequalities. In spite of efforts to clarify the situation, the students still find it difficult to overview teaching opportunities. According to the department management, this is mainly a matter of information deficit. The director of undergrad studies is in charge of distribution and organization of teaching and is entitled to take all decisions about teaching assignments, exactly in order to avoid the problems raised. The expert group encourage continued exchange of views where it is in particular important for the department management to explain the difficulties associated with the planning of teaching that in fact all faculty might experience. However, it is also important that students can contribute with information to identify the reasons for their worries in spite of a clear division of labor and available information about teaching possibilities. The department should also consider if liable persons pay enough attention to teaching assignments and students teaching performances in follow-up talks with supervisors, with Director of PhD studies, and in the employment reviews. An important source of uncertainty identified by the expert group may be the fact that the department houses more than one subject, and that the Peace and Conflict unit assigns teaching through a parallel organization. The department should make sure that it implements the same principles for all students independent of whether they teach political science or peace and conflict. Otherwise, the department might treat students unequal and principles aimed to help students, such as that they should not be assigned to heavy teaching, might be difficult to implement.

#### **8. That there is continuous follow up and development of the programme**

As should be clear from comments under other headings, there are manifold ways in which the program is continuously evaluated. Standard course evaluations, the different milestones, and the employment review talks are important components for feedbacks.

In addition, supervisors meet yearly to review the status of all students on the program. It is the expert groups understanding that these meetings work well with opportunities to discuss also sensitive details (although not too personal) in an inclusive, collegial way.

The initiative taken by the department to perform an alumni survey, the ambitious interviews with peers responsible for PhD programs at other universities, as well as the preparatory work with the self-evaluation document, all clearly indicates that the department is willing and has the ability to engage in serious self-reflection.

#### **9. That internationalisation and an international perspective is promoted in the programme**

The degree of internationalisation in the programme is very high. Most supervisors have international networks and address their research primarily or exclusively to an international audience. All recently admitted and currently active students write their dissertations in English and present drafts at international conferences. A specific program for visiting PhD students contribute to scholarly exchanges with possibilities for students to build international networks with their peers that might in the future have important positions at other universities. The working language at the department is English, which means that seminars and teaching is in English. Hence, the departments research and PhD program is in every sense internationally oriented (and it would be overkill to promote an international perspective more). It might instead be important to question whether the department should promote a Swedish perspective (more) in order to have students contributing to Swedish debates and prepare for work in Swedish organizations (too) outside academia.

The clearest indicator of the internationalization is the large number of non-Swedish applicants and the number of non-

Swedish recruitments. Over the last five years, the international share of both applicants and accepted students has increased significantly, and in the previous intake in 2019, only one out of five accepted students had Swedish citizenship. And while many of the international students that are granted admission to the programme have a degree from a Swedish university, this is far from the rule; since 2016, 9 out of 20 accepted applicants, had a degree from a foreign university. Internationalisation is also apparent within the programme, where students are encouraged to (and do) take courses abroad, participate in international conferences and to spend a period as guest researcher at a university abroad.

While the programme clearly excels when it comes to internationalization, it also appears to be a source of tension in the working environment. As is noted in the self-assessment, the working language of the programme is English, but the inflow of doctoral students with a non-Swedish background also has an impact on the language policy of the department at large. In order to integrate the English-speaking students in the working environment there is a constant need for adaptation, at informal, as well as formal occasions. Our impression is that the department takes these language related issues seriously, and strive towards a situation in which all doctoral students have the same possibilities for taking part in decision-making, teaching and to be socially included. We acknowledged that this is not an easy task, but encourage the department to continue to work on these issues, and to see to it that all doctoral candidates, irrespectively of their language, are provided with equal opportunities.

#### **10. That gender equality and equal opportunities perspectives are integrated in the programme**

The department has a very active committee for gender equality, integration and equal treatment that critically scrutinizes the program and gives recommendations in which the students are also involved. The committee has initiated ambitious plans for



equal opportunity work at the department, adopted by the board. The plan includes evaluation tools for research and teaching that is well adapted to university functions and is therefore used. The instrument consists of questions that all employees need to ask themselves when they perform teaching (and other) tasks. The management explicitly support the work of the committee and faculty members acknowledge it without resistance or suspicion that observers often find elsewhere. This have for example spurred an inclusive debate on gendered course literature where the department board has taken decisions that teachers need to take gender balance into account when course literature is selected.

There is gender balance among supervisors and there seems not to be any obvious gendered pattern in how supervisors and students collaborate; many supervisor teams consist of both a male and a female, and there are several examples of male students supervised by two female supervisors. This balance mirrors also in teaching assignments on PhD level, since students meet teachers of both genders at their mandatory courses the first year.

The gender balance in the programme can be considered very good. Since 2012, 15 of the 31 accepted students has been men. There is however a tendency towards another skewed gender distribution than we historically have seen at the department, with 9 out of 12 accepted students being women in the last three rounds of applications.

The conclusion is that the department has well integrated gender equality and equal opportunity issues into the program. As emphasized above, integrating non-Swedish speakers, especially socially, is still a challenge to the department.

According to the information provided, female students take longer parental leave compared to male students, a pattern well known in the current society and not significant to the

department. Still, since there are reasons to believe that transformation costs when returning to work relates to the time of leave, this fact produces inequality between women and men. This is due to norms and other circumstances and the department may contribute to deliberation about this situation, but changes are most likely not to happen in a near future. Therefore, the expert group encourages the department to discuss if there are reasons to better support students that return from parental leave for example by providing extra time for repatriating to work. This can be important for all students, but also mitigate a gender inequality that have direct impact on conditions to perform on the program.

#### **11. That subject-relevant perspectives on sustainable development are promoted in the programme**

The department does not have an explicit strategy to implement sustainable development issues in the program. Research on environmental issues does however have a strong presence at the department, which indicates that this is a perspective that students will meet in many forms as integrated parts of the program, and which makes plans and strategies redundant. Furthermore, some students are connected to one of the two graduate schools that focus on environmental issues, and the department offer courses specializing on environmental policy.

#### **Summarised evaluation and recommendations**

The external expert group wants to emphasize once more that the PhD program at the department of political science at Lund University works excellently. The high quality of supervising and the collegial care of the program and of PhD students is impressive. The department has a clear division of labour connected to responsibilities and there are standard procedures that regulates most important parts of the program. Still, the expert group believe that there is room for improvements even at this level of high-quality performance. Well aware of the fact

that the department most likely already solidly deliberated over most aspects of the program and have decided against some of our recommendations for good reasons, we still recommend the department to consider or reconsider the following suggestions:

- Base discussions over future strategies on explicit benchmarking with other top-performing departments in the Nordic countries or central Europe
- Work out a well thought out policy for mandatory and elective courses and how year one on the program should be organised
- Consider a policy for students' teaching during year one, and how it can be combined with courses and activities of the introductory team
- Consider including a mandatory theory course
- Reconsider to have the faculty level courses included in the program
- Reconsider how reading courses are used and if they should be included in the program or considered in-depth learning as part of work on the thesis
- Consider collaboration with other universities in Sweden and/or abroad for courses where this might work
- Formalize several unwritten procedures, such as how milestones are followed-up, what decisions that should be communicated and how, in order to make procedures more transparent and avoid unequal treatment of students
- Consider if some of the regulations that are formalized need to be more informative, such as guidelines for internal "examination"
- Consider if all these regulations should and can be merged into one document easily available for students and faculty members

- Consider if there are better ways to give students career advices for careers outside academia
- Prepare students better for teaching and help them to prepare for teaching in time-efficient and reasonable ways in order to prevent stress
- Consider a better coordination between the organisation of teaching assignments for students teaching political science and students teaching peace and conflict research
- Consider ways to provide more structured mentoring for students teaching
- Assure that teaching assignments and teaching performances by students are included in follow-up talks at the department, e.g. in order to counteract misunderstandings about the procedures
- Consider ways to mitigate gender inequalities related to parental leaves, for example providing additional paid time on the program in relation to the time of absence

## Appendix 4. A New Course Structure for the First Year of the PhD Program at the Department of Political Science, Lund University

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This proposal describes a model for how to introduce new PhD students to political science research through a set of mandatory courses that are offered during the first year of the PhD program.

### **Background and Objectives**

PhD students in Lund are required to take courses amounting to 60 ECTS credits (out of 240 credits for the whole program). Of those 60 course credits, at least 30 must be devoted to methods courses.

There are currently no compulsory courses during the first semester, although many PhD students take courses that are offered by the faculty, such as the introductory course “Kickstart to Academic Life,” and Lund University is currently making it compulsory for PhD students to take a two-week course in research ethics. During the second semester, by contrast, the department offers two in-house methods courses for all PhD students: “Research Methodologies” (15 credits) and “Applied Methods” (7.5 credits).

Our proposal increases the mandatory first-year course requirement to 45 ECTS credits. In other words, if our proposal is adopted and implemented, PhD students will spend at least 75 percent of their time during the first year taking courses, together with the other PhD students in their cohort, leaving no more than 15 ECTS credits for elective courses during years two to four.

The new model we propose is meant to achieve several different but related objectives.

- The department’s PhD students will get an introduction to the ideas, concepts, questions, and theoretical approaches

that define political science, not only the methods that political scientists use (which is what the department currently offers). This will not only make the PhD students more knowledgeable in general; it will also help them understand each other's projects better and provide them with a common frame of reference as they begin their work.

- An important premise of the approach we propose is that the PhD students participate in the department's research groups at an early stage, which means that they will become more integrated in active and supportive intellectual communities. Importantly, we propose that PhD students participate in the activities of at least *two* groups, since we wish to avoid early specialization.
- It will be clearer to incoming PhD students what is expected of them in the first year of the program.
- A clear expectation that PhD students complete 75 percent of their course credits in the first year will increase the likelihood that PhD students finish in time.

### **Proposed Overall Structure for the First Year**

#### ***Fall Semester***

Meetings with the "intro team" (throughout the semester, no credits)

"Political Science Research: Problems and Perspectives" (15 credits, new course)

"Research Ethics" (3 credits, mandatory course for PhD students at Lund University)

Research-group participation (4.5 credits, including activities during the spring semester)

Total: 22.5 credits

*Spring Semester*

“Research Methodologies” (15 credits, revised existing course)

“Applied Methods” (7.5 credits, existing course)

(Research-group participation, continued)

Total: 22.5 credits

The compulsory course package thus amounts to 45 credits obtained during the first year, which leaves 15 credits of course work for the remainder of the PhD program (7.5 credits for methods and 7.5 for other courses). In our view, this is a reasonable number of credits remaining for specialization during year two or three through courses within more specific fields of relevance for the thesis work. The option of doing individually tailored literature-based reading courses is removed, since a larger number of courses will be provided by the department. Specialized reading for thesis work will be considered part of the remaining 180 credits of the PhD program.

The activities of the intro team would remain largely the same as before throughout the fall semester, with the exception that the presentations of ongoing research at the department would be removed from the intro team and placed within the new 15-credit course, albeit in a new form.

The Research Ethics course is provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences. The schedule of the proposed new course will have to be adapted to the schedule of Research Ethics (in other words, there will be a break in the new course while the ethics course runs for two to three weeks).

PhD students in political science will not participate in the course “Kickstart to Academic Life,” which is organized by the Faculty of Social Sciences.

## **The New Courses**

### ***Political Science Research: Problems and Perspectives (15 credits)***

This new course aims to provide PhD students with knowledge of the discipline of political science and its history, with an emphasis on key analytical perspectives, theories, research problems, subdisciplines, and interfaces with adjacent disciplines.

In the first part of the course, students are required to read selected classics of political science from different subdisciplines, partly in order to familiarise themselves with the rich history of the discipline, partly in order to identify perennial problems, phenomena, and concepts that have defined the contours of the discipline and continue to animate current debates.

In the second part of the course, students are required to study key analytical perspectives and how these perspectives help political scientists identify, explain and understand important concepts and phenomena (which will remain constant throughout the course even as the perspectives change). The idea of this part of the course is to show how perspectives that are sometimes held to be incommensurable or even incompatible ideally ought to cross-fertilize to improve our understanding of important political phenomena. We believe that some things currently taught in the course “Research Methodologies” could benefit from being included in this part of the new course on Problems and Perspectives, notably the relationship between theories and research problems, leaving the teachers in the Research Methodologies course free to focus exclusively on methodological issues.

The third part of the course will be devoted to contemporary scholarly debates within different subdisciplines, with reference to how the phenomena and key analytical perspectives that we



have just mentioned are discussed and treated in cutting-edge scholarship and current attempts to advance beyond the state of the art. In this part of the course, scholars representing different subdisciplines in the department will be responsible for presenting state-of-the-art scholarship from their respective fields, connecting back to the classics and analytical perspectives that are dealt with earlier during the course and also looking into interfaces with other disciplines.

We realise that it may be difficult to decide *which* classics, concepts, problems, and perspectives should be included in a course that is as ambitious as this. This is why we have divided the field of political science into several different but overlapping dimensions.

***Research-group participation (4.5 credits)***

During this course, the PhD students are expected to participate in the meetings of two research groups at the department throughout the first year of their PhD studies (in addition to participating in the general department seminar). This serves to integrate PhD students into on-going research activities at the department and broaden their intellectual horizons through increased familiarity with different research fields. We are aware that the existing research groups are quite diverse in terms of form and frequency of meetings. The purpose is not to try to homogenise these groups – although a basic level of activity of the group is of course required. Instead, the demands that are put on PhD students through the course syllabus should guide the workload and the learning outcomes to be obtained. For instance, different forms of literature presentations can modulate workload if needed in individual cases. Hopefully, an additional benefit of this arrangement will be to stimulate the research groups themselves.

We do not regard this course as a competing with the main departmental seminar series. Instead, providing credits for

research group participation in the first year should enable increased PhD student participation in those groups that does not come at the expense of participation in the general seminar. The latter should not provide credits but be considered part of the 180 credits remaining for PhD work.