

# Guidelines for Doctoral Ombudsman



*Submitted for consideration to the PhD Chapter Meeting*

*The PhD chapter at KTH/ Doktorandsektionen vid Tekniska Högskolans Studentkår*

## Background

The PhD chapter is the only chapter out of the 21 chapters of THS, where its board members get time compensated for attending a board meeting, and even chapter meeting. The KTH rector has given 2 full-time PhD positions to run the PhD chapter. This costs nearly 2Mn SEK every year to KTH. The PhD chapter also gets 1Mn SEK grant from KTH to organize activities. The PhD Chapter also has a school council at each school, where each council roughly has 1 PhD position. If one does an underhand calculation this is nearing 8Mn SEK in costs to KTH, or about 8000 SEK per PhD student at KTH; or about 40K per student throughout the 5-year program. Where is the money coming from? From the research grants received to hire PhD students and other research money for doctoral education at KTH. To put the cost-figure into perspective, in one chapter meeting, a student complained that his supervisor is not paying 1000 sek for publishing one extended page in his research article produced after months or years of hard work

In addition to the above, the PhD Students also have a resource provided by KTH, employed by THS in the position of Doktorandombudsman. The budget for Doktorandombudsman is in the approved budget by THS student council. This motion talks about these.

## Dokotrandombudsman

Many universities in Sweden have dokotrandombudsman. They are employed by the student union (eg. KTH and KI), or the student support office (eg. SLU).

### A comparison with KI and KTH

It is worthwhile to compare the dokotrandombudsman at KI and KTH. Both the universities are similarly sized, and the dokotrandombudsman are employed by the student union. At KTH, THS the student union employees a dokotrandombudsman for doctoral students. The student union of KI, Medicinska Föreningen also has a similar position. The KI ombudsman also writes an annual report highlighting the number of students who get help from the ombudsman, major issues that arose during the year, and the proposed solutions. Such a report is, unfortunately, lacking at KTH. The student union of KI also has recommendations for the doktorandombudsman. .

## Recommendations for doktorandombudsman of THS.

1. Doktorandombudsman should conduct 5 or more open house sessions every year - with an invitation to all PhD students of KTH. The topics of open house could involve
  - a. Sensitizing rights of PhD students
  - b. How to handle issues during conflict
  - c. Discussion about role of ISP
  - d. Discussion about education rights
  - e. Any other topical issue impacting doctoral students: for ex. Change in laws or regulations, pandemic, etc.
  - f. Any other topics suggested by the students or
2. After every one or at most two years, Doktorandombudsman should write a report about the work of Doktorandombudsman. This is recommended to contain
  - a. Compilation of cases with anonymized statistics (similar to MF doctoral ombudsman) <sup>1</sup>
  - b. Categories of cases
  - c. General recommendations from the issues seen during the year, those could be adopted as policy measure by THS representatives at different forums.
3. Actively improve the engagements with doctoral students through three principles

## Recommendations for DOs and DONTs for Doktorandombudsman

### Dos

1. Be a neutral and independent instance between PhD Student and KTH in a possible conflict
2. Help PhD Student understand her own rights and obligations
3. Help PhD Student with complaints
4. Investigate whether KTH follows the rules in handling your cases and protects PhD Students' rights

### Donts

1. Should not take sides in the matter
2. Should not decide on the matter
3. The student union has an obligation to treat equally all members and non-members students of KTH. Thus, doktorandombudsman should not represent a Ph.D. Student when the issue or conflict involves two other Ph.D. students.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://medicinskaforeningen.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/DO-report-2020-English.pdf>

4. Should not Instruct or get instructed by units or decision-making bodies at KTH
5. Should not be an appeal body for issues already addressed and dealt with by other entities or decision-making bodies at KTH

## Suggestions

To<sub>1</sub> Direct the Board of Ph.D. Chapter to take up the issue of the Doktorandombudsman with the THS Board and THS Management Team, and suggest the recommendations, dos and donts, pointed out in this motion.

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