

DOMB CASE REPORT 2019/20

Doctoral student grievances at Lund University

The Doctoral Student Ombudsman
Lund's Doctoral Student Union (LDK)



DOMB • DOKTORANDOMBUDSMANNEN

Lunds doktorandkår
Sandgatan 2
223 50 Lund

Phone: +4672 251 11 86
Email: domb@ldk.lu.se

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Author: Malin Rantzer

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Doctoral Student Ombudsman (hereafter “the DOMB”), has been given the task to provide support and advice to doctoral students at Lund University (Hereafter “LU”) who suspect that their educational rights might have been violated. Anonymized data is gathered from the cases that come in, to enable reporting on any structural problems that are revealed. This report presents the data gathered during the academic year of 19/20. The purpose of the report is to point out what problems are reoccurring, to provide a basis for the student unions’ and the university’s continued work to improve the third-cycle education at LU.

1.1 DEFINITIONS

1.1.1 Case

For the purposes of this report, a “case” is defined as when one or more doctoral students run into a problem relating to third cycle studies at LU, and they contact the DOMB because they are in need of some form of help or support in order to handle the problem.¹

It could be, for example:

- Doctoral students suspect that the university is not fulfilling its obligations towards them
- A doctoral student is looking for information about something rights-related
- A doctoral student is feeling harassed, discriminated or victimized

The DOMB can help the doctoral student position their problem in the relevant legal framework, and from there we can reason together about the most appropriate course of action. If another actor might be a more appropriate support for the PhD student concerning the issue at hand they are redirected there, e.g. to the labor union or the occupational health services.

In some cases, the issue might be solved through communication only between me and the doctoral student. In other cases, it is necessary to involve university actors. In those cases, it is the role of the DOMB to support the doctoral student with legal advice, to facilitate communication with the university, and to ensure that the university abides by the rule of law. The DOMB may also help to appeal university decisions that are possible to appeal, and to help doctoral students to place formal complaints to the National Authority on Higher Education (Universitetskanslerämbetet, UKÄ) when they wish to do so. As the DOMB, I have an advisory function, and ultimately it is up to the doctoral student to choose how to approach their problem.

My predecessor used another definition for what counted as a “case”: “A case before the DOMB is initiated when one or several doctoral students report either a breach of rules that apply within the doctoral education to the ombudsman, or are put through a process by

¹ This definition has been made to correspond with the one used by the LUS Studentombud, see Klingspor, Emma, *Studentombudets ärenderapport läsåret 2018/2019*, p. 3.

the University which initiates need for legal advice, [...] and they contact the DOMB.”² I chose to use the definition used by the LUS Studentombud instead, for two reasons:

Firstly, it enables comparability with the LUS Studentombud’s data. Secondly, in many cases I am contacted by doctoral students asking for advice who are not being put through a process by the university such as e.g. being taken to the disciplinary board, and it is not clear whether they are claiming that the university has broken the rules or not. Also, even if the doctoral student would claim the rules have been broken, there is no guarantee that they are right. Cases may be resolved without people having reached consensus about what is objectively right, and without any authority deciding what is right. Therefore, I concluded that making a distinction between “questions” and “cases” felt too arbitrary. Also, when a person chooses to turn to the DOMB with a question, that can be an indication that they were not able to find the answer to the question in another way, which at least suggests that there is a need for more accessible information on the rules concerning a certain topic.

The last DOMB case report also excluded complaints that “turn out not to concern students’ rights”.³ I’ve chosen to include all complaints about problems that relate to third cycle studies at Lund University, also including complaints where the relevant rules are found in e.g. labor law, social insurance law, or migration law, but still have a connection to third-cycle studies at LU. This also makes my definition somewhat broader than the one used by the last DOMB.

If a PhD student I’ve already been in contact during the year with comes back after some time with a different problem, it is registered as a new case. Since I started in November 2019, all cases from this year are new cases. For the next academic year, it is likely that some cases that started this academic year will continue. They will not be registered as new cases as long as they concern the same problem.

1.1.2 PhD student

Most of the cases have involved PhD students currently admitted to LU. Some cases also have included persons who have applied for doctoral studies at Lund University, but have not yet been admitted, persons who have not been formally admitted but still follow the studies as if they were, and persons who are no longer PhD students but have some problem that relates to the fact that they formerly have been PhD students at LU. For the purposes of this report, the terms “PhD student” and “doctoral student” include everyone who are pursuing third-cycle studies at LU, including persons who have been admitted to do only a licentiate degree.

1.1.3 Gender and nationality

The cases have been categorized according to gender and nationality. If a certain problem is shown to be more frequently occurring for one particular group of PhD students, that information can be used to target measures to benefit that particular group.

The categorization as “national” and “international” has been based on whether the contact has been in Swedish or English. The gender categorization has been based on my

² Popovic, Aleksandra, *DOMB Case Report 2017/18*, p. 1.

³ Popovic, p. 1.

perception of the PhD students' gender expression, for example if their names are typically boys' or girls' names. In a few cases no categorization has been made, either because the case concerned a group of PhD students, or because I have not been able to draw any clear conclusion based on the how the PhD student is presenting, especially if the only communication has been via email.

Categorizing a person's gender this way feels outdated and crude, as it is based on prejudices and does not recognize other gender identities than male and female. Categorizing a person as "national" or "international" based on their language of preference is also arguably somewhat crude. This method of categorization was chosen because it was used by the previous DOMB⁴ and because it is practical, but I think this deserves reconsideration. I have hope that the new case handling system⁵ that is in the pipeline can be designed to allow doctoral students to define their own genders and nationality when contacting the DOMB.

1.2 LIMITATIONS

Normally the DOMB Case Report would cover all cases that come in between the first of July and the last of June. I started my employment on the 25th of November 2019 and did not take over any material, so this report is based on the cases I have handled since the 25th of November 2019 until the 30th of June 2020.

It should also be noted that the cases are too few and the definitions too vague to give any valid statistical analyses about what problems doctoral students in general at Lund University face. The report accounts for quantitative data based on the cases, and also provides my subjective reflections concerning patterns I've noted when processing the complaints.

1.3 CASE CATEGORIZATION

The cases have been categorized into eight categories: Access to resources, Administration and information, Admission, Disciplinary measures, Employment, Equality and work environment, Examination, and Other. The categories are made to correspond with the categories used by the LUS Studentombud and that have been used by the previous DOMB, to enable comparisons. Generally, it can also be said that they correspond to certain sections of the law and policies. For this academic year, the categories "Employment", and "Other" have been added. "Other" was added simply because there were several cases that did not fit the other categories. "Employment" was added because there was a number of cases concerning issues regulated primarily by labor law and collective agreements. Some of those were redirected to the labor unions, but when people were not members, I handled those cases as well. Group complaints are filed as one single case. Several cases involve complex problems that might fit into more than one category. Those cases have been categorized based on which issue seemed most central to the complainant(s).

⁴ Popovic, p. 4-5.

⁵ Read more about the future case handling system under section 3.2.

Access to resources

According to chapter 7 section 34 of the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance⁶ (hereafter “HEO”), the university may not admit a larger number of doctoral students than the number that can be offered supervision and “otherwise acceptable conditions for study”, and whose studies are funded. The scope of the right to supervision and otherwise acceptable conditions for study is specified in section 8 of *Regulations for doctoral education at Lund University*⁷.

This case category includes cases that call into question if the doctoral students are being offered sufficient supervision (either when it comes to scope or quality), or sufficient conditions for study in some other sense. It includes cases where there is a problem with the funding, and cases where students are denied their right to change supervisor according to chapter 6, section 28 of HEO. Finally, it also includes cases that concern withdrawal and restoration of doctoral students’ resources in accordance with chapter 6 section 30-31 of HEO.

Administration and information

As a governmental body, Lund University is obliged to follow the rule of law. This includes e.g. that equal cases should be treated equally, and that there should be predictability in the university’s decision making and actions. Also, decisions should be made by the individuals in the functions that have been given mandate to make that type of decisions. The legal framework for this category is found in the Swedish Administrative Procedure Act⁸, the Higher Education Act⁹ (hereafter “HEA”) and the HEO.

For example, this category includes situations when unclarity in the rules for granting prolongation have been revealed, when doctoral students have been promised prolongation by e.g. their supervisor, who has later changed their mind, and situations where unclarity in the application of the rules about salary increase stages has become a problem. The category also includes questions about PhD students’ rights to take a leave of absence or work part time – questions that have to do with a doctoral studentship employment, but where the answers are primarily found in the laws of higher education and university regulations rather than in labor law and collective agreements.

Admission

The rules for admission are based on chapter 7 of the Higher Education Ordinance. This category includes questions and problems relating to admission, also including cases of so-called *skuggdoktorander* (“shadow doctoral students”), meaning situations where persons are pursuing third cycle studies without being formally admitted as doctoral students.

⁶*Högskoleförordningen* (1993:100), a non-official translation is available here:

<<https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Higher-Education-Ordinance/>>.

⁷ STYR 2018/652.

⁸ *Förvaltningslagen* (2017:900).

⁹ *Högskolelagen* (1992:1434), a non-official translation is available here: <<https://www.uhr.se/en/start/laws-and-regulations/Laws-and-regulations/The-Swedish-Higher-Education-Act/>>.

Disciplinary measures

Students in general can be put through two types of disciplinary procedures:

- If a student cheats, harasses or disrupts, they can be brought before the university disciplinary board, in accordance with chapter 10 of the HEO.
- If there is a risk that a student might harm another person or cause substantial damage to property during the course of their studies and the student suffers from a mental disorder, substance abuse or has been found guilty of a serious crime, the Higher Education Expulsions Board (Högskolans Avskiljandenämnd, HAN) can decide if the student should be expelled.

These rules apply for PhD students as well as undergraduates. In addition to that, PhD students can in their capacity as scientists be suspected of research misconduct or of other deviations from good research practice. Before the 1st of January 2020, those cases were all handled by the Research Misconduct Review Board at Lund University. After the 1st of January, there is a division: suspected research misconduct is to be reviewed by a national board, and other deviations from good research practice will continue to be reviewed by the board in Lund.¹⁰

Employment

This category consists of problems that have to do with the doctoral student's employment, when the answers are primarily found labor law and collective agreements rather than in the laws for higher education. Typically, these issues are handled by the labor unions, and if the person is a member I try to redirect them there. However, if the doctoral students are not members of the labor union, I advise them on these issues as well.

Equality & work environment

Issues concerning equality and work environment are generally regulated in the Work Environment Act¹¹ and the Discrimination Act¹². Cases in this category might involve e.g. bullying, sexual harassment, unresolved conflicts that cause negative stress, or also physical work environment problems.

Examination

This category includes cases concerning either examination of courses taken within the course of one's doctoral education, or examination of the doctoral thesis and defense, regulated in chapter 6, sections 32-35 of the HEO. Rules set down in appendix 2 of the HEO, the

¹⁰ *Lag om ansvar för god forskningssed och prövning av oredlighet i forskning* (2019:504), The Act on Responsibility for Good Research Practice.

¹¹ *Arbetsmiljölagen* (1977:1160), a non-official translation is available here: <https://www.government.se/government-policy/labour-law-and-work-environment/19771160-work-environment-act-arbetsmiljolagen/>.

¹² *Diskrimineringslagen* (2008:567), a non-official translation is available here: <https://www.government.se/information-material/2015/09/discrimination-act-2008567/>.

“Qualifications ordinance”¹³, can also be relevant, as they state what the doctoral student needs to achieve in order to obtain a licentiate or doctoral degree.

Other

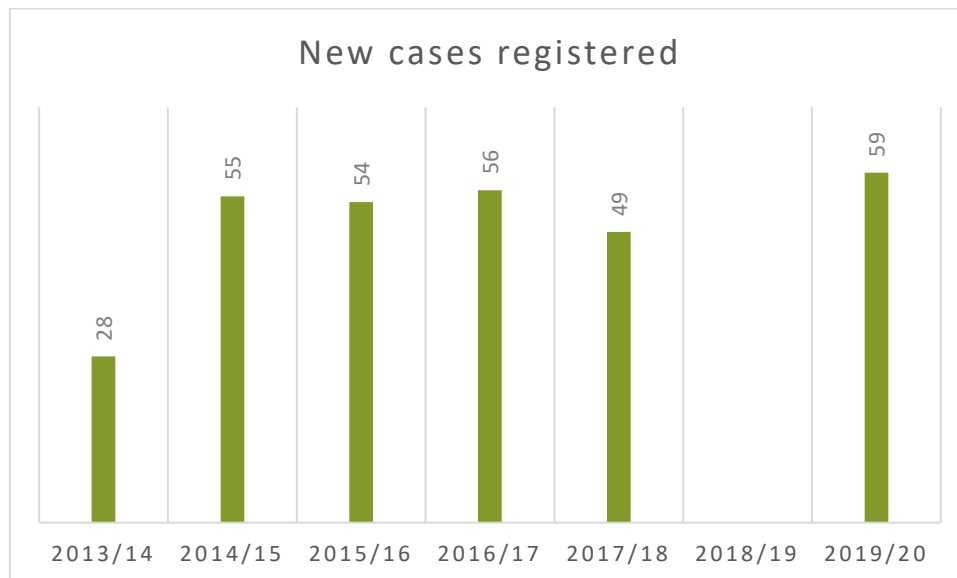
Occasionally, a doctoral student might ask the DOMB for advice on an issue that does not concern educational rights or employment related rights. Those cases fall within this category. The most common type of issues is doctoral students who seek advice about social benefits. It can also be e.g. migration issues or questions about labor unions and unemployment benefits. For more complicated issues, the doctoral students are redirected to people with more expertise in those areas. If the questions are more general in nature, I try to assist them, for example if international doctoral students need help orienting themselves in the Swedish welfare system and state bureaucracy.

¹³ *Examensordningen.*

2 CASE STATISTICS

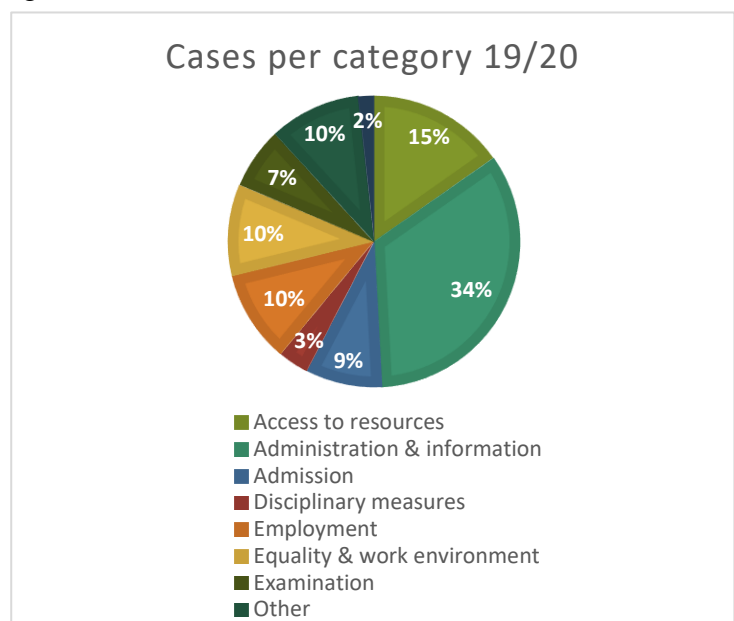
2.1 THE CASE CATEGORIES

2.1.1 General overview



This year, 59 new cases were registered. That is an increase from all earlier records¹⁴, even though this year only counts cases that have come in after November 25th, as opposed to earlier records covering an entire year each. However, the numbers are likely affected by me and my predecessor using different definitions for what a “case” is.¹⁵ Furthermore, a few of the persons who contacted me said they had been in contact with my predecessor. If I would have had access to the earlier records, they might not have been registered as new cases. Also, since there was no DOMB for large parts of the year before, it is possible that there was a buildup of cases that were not handled during that time.

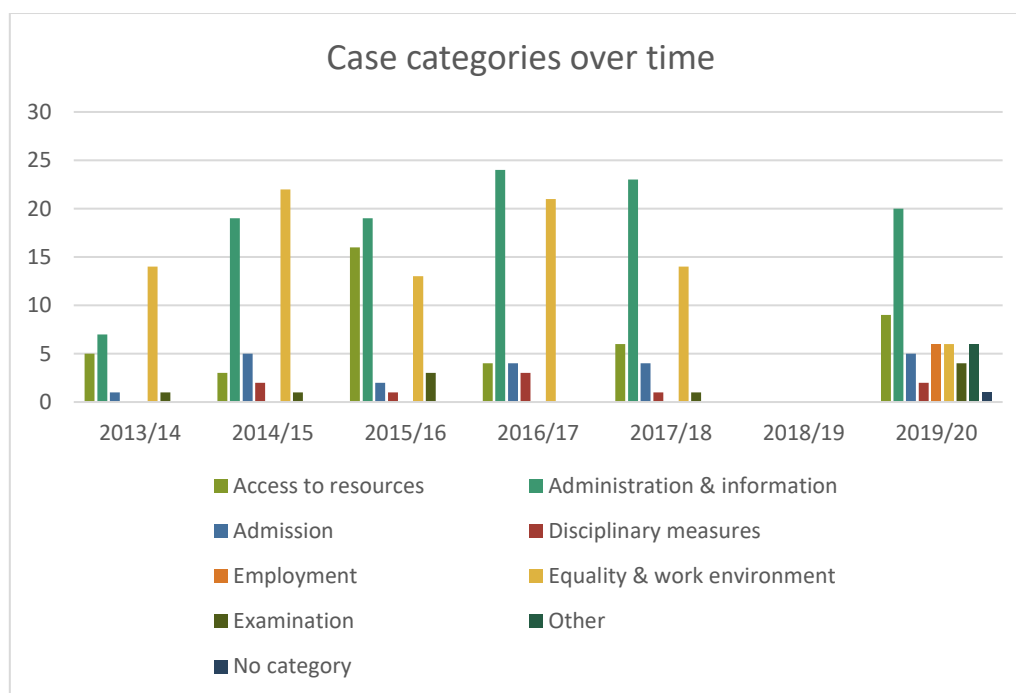
Category	Cases
Access to resources	9
Administration & information	20
Admission	5
Disciplinary measures	2
Employment	6
Equality & work environment	6
Examination	4
Other	6
No category	1
Total	59



¹⁴ All the data from previous years were taken from Popovic, *DOMB Case Report 2017/18*. No data from 2018/19 has been available. The DOMB position was vacant for large parts of 2018/2019. I have not had access to any records from that year, if any were made.

¹⁵ See section 1.1.1.

Administration & information was the largest category by far with 20 cases, followed by Access to resources. Then Employment, Equality & work environment and Other shared third place. Disciplinary measures was the smallest category with only two registered cases.



Over time we can see that Administration and information has been one of the biggest categories consistently, although somewhat lower this year. Access to resources had a big drop between 2015/16 and 2016/17 but since then it seems to be on the rise again. Disciplinary measures, Admission and Examination are on a consistent low level. The thing that stands out the most is that Equality & work environment had an all-time low this year, which is a good sign.

2.1.2 Access to Resources

Nine cases were reported in this category, making it the second to largest category. The majority of the cases included complaints about insufficient supervision, both when it came to quality aspects and quantity aspects. In several cases, the doctoral students felt they were not getting enough support and feedback from their supervisor and that they had a hard time communicating with them. There were also complaints about supervisors not having sufficient subject knowledge, and being too busy to supervise their doctoral students – in one case the supervisor did not even always respond to contact from the doctoral student. One case concerned a case where LU initiated a change of supervisor against the supervisor's doctoral students' will. There were also cases concerning removal and reinstatement of resources.

2.1.3 Administration & information

In the category of Administration & information, 20 cases were registered, which is 40% of the cases, the largest group by far. In 2017/2018, this category included 47% of the cases from that year. Then, Popovic wrote that the fact that this category was so large was “a sign that many problems could have been avoided if the university had fulfilled their administrative duties, such as planning, documenting and following due procedure when making decisions.”¹⁶ I would like to add that a lot of problems could be avoided if policies were clear and unambiguous, and if everyone were made aware of who has responsibility and power over what, and then only acted within their own mandate. Describing all the cases in this category would be too lengthy and might also reveal more details than what would be appropriate with regards to confidentiality. Instead, the following description brings up aspects that were raised in more than one case.

Several doctoral students reported facing difficulties when wanting to exercise their right to change supervisor in accordance with chapter 6 section 28 of the HEO. Some had been told that they would not be able to continue with their research project if they requested a change of supervisor. Some had been told that the university can't provide any other supervisor who would have subject competence. Some had been told that they would lose their funding if they change supervisor. While it might be true in some cases that there are practical difficulties making it very hard to realize this right for a specific doctoral student, it is problematic if the law stipulates a right and the university does not plan for that right being exercised.

Four cases in this category concerned unclarity in the rules for granting prolongation of the doctoral student's employment. The vice-chancellor has issued guidelines on how prolongation should be granted.¹⁷ In some places the practice contradicts those guidelines even when they are clear. In general, the interpretation of the guidelines differs from faculty to faculty and department to department. The result is that the scope of the right to prolongation in practice is not the same for all doctoral students.

Two cases raised another problem which touches upon the topic of prolongation. In both cases, the doctoral students had suffered from mental illness during their studies, and had in the beginning both had quite long periods where they were suffering from the symptoms, but did not have insight that what they were experiencing was illness that they could take sick leave for. Because of this, both doctoral students had continued trying to work and had not reported sick, while their symptoms were making them less effective, and their mental health was deteriorating because of lack of rest and treatment.

Since a doctoral student cannot receive prolongation for sickness if they have not been on sick leave, the two doctoral students in these cases lost important time. There is a need for awareness raising about when one can (and should!) take sick leave due to symptoms of bad mental health. There has been a historical stigma around mental illness, and I believe there is less social consensus about which mental illness symptoms one could report sick for than for

¹⁶ Popovic, ii.

¹⁷ *Guidelines for the extension of doctoral studentships etc.* (STYR 2015/1170); *Guidelines on the extension of employment as a doctoral student due to duties within student organisations and as an elected student representative at Lund University* (STYR 2017/1715).

physical illness symptoms. That type of awareness raising could perhaps both mitigate this prolongation problem, and if people took sick leave for mental health problems at an earlier stage it could also prevent people from becoming as seriously ill in the first place.

Another hot topic was the legal significance of the individual study plan – there were questions about how binding it is, if the doctoral student must sign it in order for it to be valid, who can change it when, etc. It could be good with more clear and unambiguous information about this to everyone involved.

Overall, I want to advise university officials, maybe in particular supervisors, not to make promises that they are not sure that they can follow through on. There have been several cases when doctoral students have approached me, saying that they have been given promises that have later been taken back. Some examples are that doctoral students have been promised extra prolongation outside of what the law and university regulations give them a right to, supplementary funding for stipend students, and in some cases, persons have been promised to get to do a PhD by a person who wants to be their supervisor¹⁸. In some of these cases university officials have made promises about things that are not within their mandate, and sometimes about things that are within their mandate, but in all the cases the promises were taken back, which is of course very problematic if the person at the other end have counted on the promises being realized.

2.1.4 Admission

There were five cases in the Admission category. One person had been wrongly admitted to continuation of third-cycle education after finishing a licentiate degree even though the licentiate degree was in another subject. Two of the cases were questions about the admissions procedure and about whether doctoral students who have had their resources removed can apply for other PhD positions.

Two cases were “skuggdoktorand” cases, where two people had been working on their PhD projects without being formally admitted to PhD studies at LU. One of them was not admitted at all and had been told that the admissions procedure was just a formality, and the other one had been admitted to do a licentiate degree and promised that it would be extended to a doctoral degree. In both cases the university officials had taken back their promises, and the persons who had counted on those promises stood without any formal rights.

2.1.5 Disciplinary measures

There were two cases in the Disciplinary measures category. One person was reported to the discipline board because they were suspected of cheating on a course, and the other person had been reported for research misconduct and other deviations from good research practice.

2.1.6 Employment

The six cases in the Employment category were mostly questions and concerns about vacation, working hours and salary negotiation rights. One case was redirected to the labor

¹⁸ See the “skuggdoktorand” cases in section 2.1.4.

union which the doctoral student was a member of. The rest were not members, and therefore the cases were handled by the DOMB.

2.1.7 Equality & work environment

There were six cases in the Equality & work environment category. Half of the cases came from the Faculty of Science. Four of the cases concerned doctoral students' relationships to their supervisors, and the other two were situations where the doctoral students' felt victimized by another co-worker than their supervisors. In all of the supervisor-related cases, the doctoral students felt their supervisors were acting in an aggressive and victimizing way. In two of the cases, it had affected the doctoral students' mental health to such a degree that they had needed to go on sick leave because of it.

Doctoral students are very dependent on their supervisors, and are thus very vulnerable to if that relationship is malfunctioning. Several times when doctoral students have approached me with supervisor problems, they have also told me that they have heard that the supervisors' previous doctoral students also had problems. While I welcome that Lund University is working on improving supervisor education, I think it should be considered whether there also should be a mechanism for how to handle if doctoral students continuously report problems with a certain supervisor, or if the doctoral students of the same supervisor continuously apply for a change of supervisor.

2.1.8 Examination

In the Examination category, there was one case where the PhD student and supervisor disagreed about whether the PhD student had accomplished enough to finish, and one case where a PhD student was concerned about how important the novelty of the research is. Another doctoral student wanted to know if there was a right to ask for a licentiate degree instead of a PhD when they were running out of time, and another one wondered if it is possible to ask for a PhD if one has been admitted to a licentiate degree but has accomplished enough to amount to a doctoral degree during that time.

2.1.9 Other

In the Other category, there were questions concerning migration law, about the Swedish social benefits system, and about labor unions and a-kassa. There was also a question about who owns the material resources that have been provided to the doctoral student during their education when the PhD is finished.

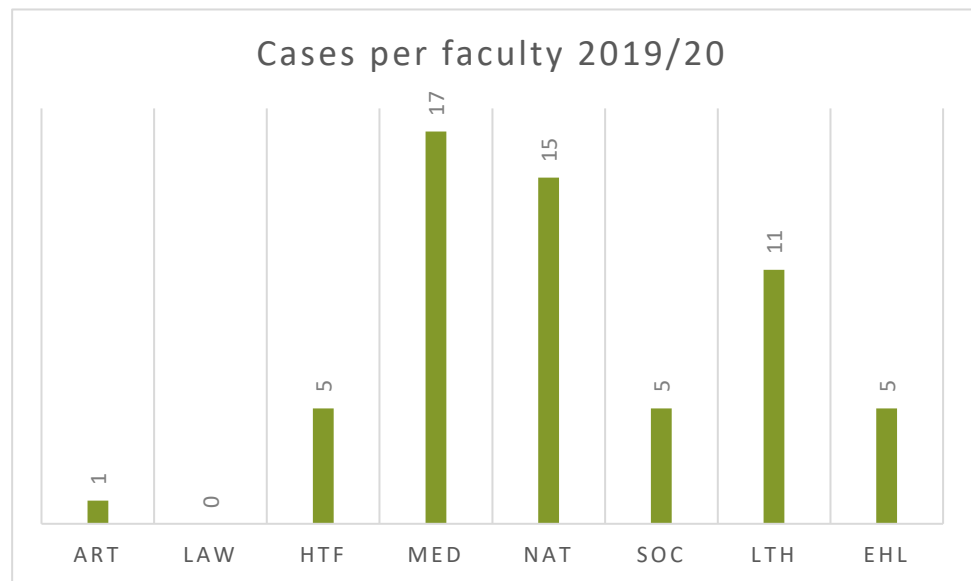
2.1.10 No category

One person contacted the DOMB, but stopped answering before explaining the problem enough for the case to be categorized. The case was still included as the data about the persons gender, faculty and nationality still adds something to the statistics about who has problems and who contacts the DOMB.

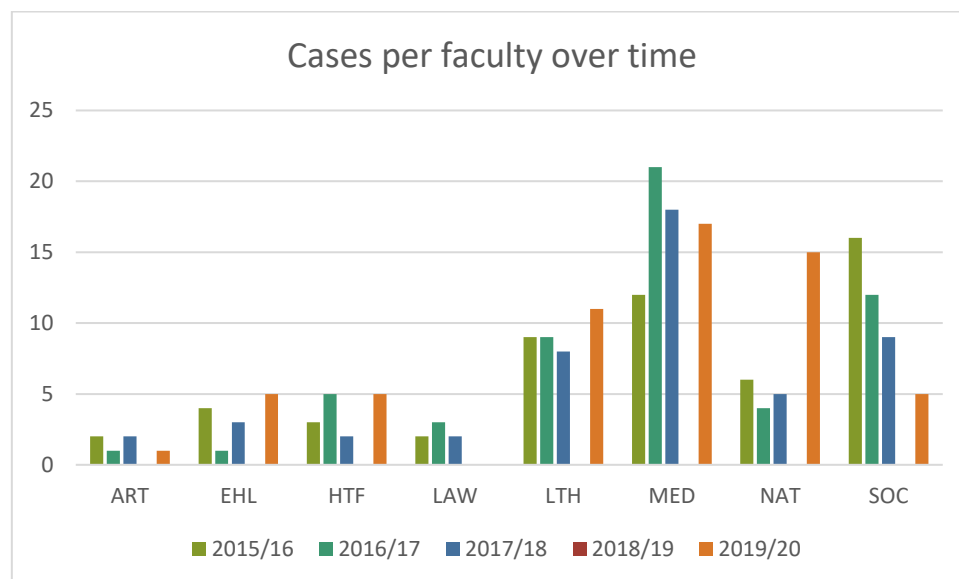
2.2 THE FACULTIES

2.2.1 General overview

Faculty	Cases
ART	1
LAW	0
HTF	5
MED	17
NAT	15
SOC	5
LTH	11
EHL	5
Total	59



The largest number of cases was found at the Faculty of Medicine, closely followed by the Faculty of Science. LTH was third largest, then the Faculties of Humanities and Theology, the Faculty of Social Science and LUSEM School of Economics and Management all had five cases each. There was only one case from the Faculty of Performing Arts, and no cases at all from the Faculty of Law.

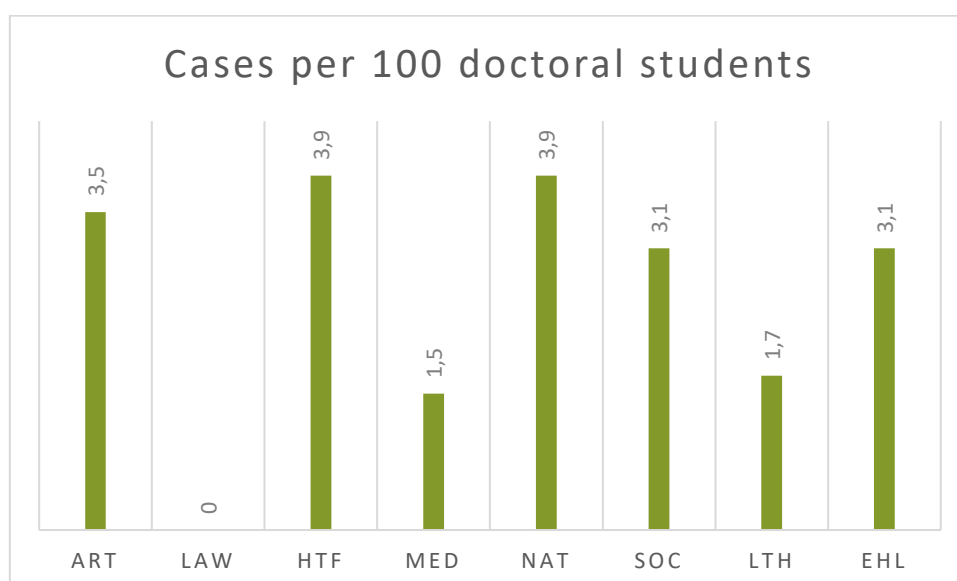


If we look at the number of cases over time, most of the faculties were on levels similar to what they have had before. The Faculty of Law had their first year with no cases at all, but they have been on a low level previously as well. The faculties with the biggest changes this year is the Faculty of Science, which has had more than double the number of cases than they have had in any earlier records, and the Faculty of Social Sciences which shows a steady, quite steep decrease in cases since 2015/16.

Faculty	Average no of doctoral students fall 2019/spring 2020	Cases	Cases per 100 doctoral students
ART	28	1	3,5
LAW	32	0	0
HTF	128	5	3,9
MED	1075	17	1,5
NAT	382,5	15	3,9
SOC	160	5	3,1
LTH	623,5	11	1,7
EHL	160,5	5	3,1
Total	2589,5	59	2,2

If we look at the number of cases per 100 doctoral students, we get an image of how many cases that have reached the DOMB in proportion to how many doctoral students each faculty has. This provides a different picture than when we just look at the number of cases.

The numbers might be somewhat off as there were a few group complaints. Those were only registered as one case, even though several doctoral students were complaining. So, the total average should be a little bit higher. The numbers for how many doctoral students there were during 2019/20 are based on numbers received from faculty administrators when I asked about how many doctoral students were registered in Ladok for the two semesters. The Ladok numbers should correspond roughly to how many doctoral students who are currently active, which makes that number more relevant to use compared to the number of doctoral students who are admitted at the moment, as there is a large number of inactive doctoral students who have been registered for decades.



2.2.2 Faculty of Fine and Performing Arts (ART)

There was only one case at the Faculty of Fine and Performing arts. They had 25 doctoral students during the fall term, and 31 during the spring. This means that for this year, their average was 3,5 cases per 100 students. The case there concerned Equality & work environment.

2.2.3 Faculty of Law (LAW)

There were no cases from the Faculty of Law during 2019/20. They have had numbers below five in all available records, but this is the first time there were none at all. The faculty had 32 doctoral students during both the fall and the spring. The faculty's average for this year was 0 cases per 100 students.

2.2.4 Faculties of Humanities and Theology (HTF)

There were five cases at the Faculties of Humanities and Theology. Because of the relatively small size of the faculty with their 128 active doctoral students during 19/20, this small number still gave the faculty an average of 3,9 cases per 100 students, making it the faculty with the highest average together with the Faculty of Science. Two cases were in the Admission category, one in Disciplinary measures, one in Employment and one in Other.

2.2.5 Faculty of Medicine (MED)

The Faculty of Medicine had the largest number of cases: 17. But as they had 1075 active PhD students during 19/20 - the faculty with the largest number by far - their average was still only 1,5 cases per 100 students. The Faculty of Medicine had cases in all categories except Disciplinary measures: two in Access to resources, six in Administration & information, two in Admission, one in Employment, one in Equality & work environment, three in Examination and two in Other. The Faculty of Medicine stood for three out of four cases in the Examination category.

2.2.6 Faculty of Science (NAT)

There were 15 cases at the Faculty of Science. With their average of 382,5 active PhD students during the spring and fall term of 19/20, this means they had the highest average of cases together with the Faculties of Humanities and Theology, 3,9 cases per 100 students. The Faculty of Science had cases in all categories except Examination: four in Access to resources, four in Administration & information, one in Admission, one in Disciplinary measures, one in Employment, three in Equality & work environment, and one in Other. As mentioned, the Faculty of Science stood for half of the cases in the Equality & work environment category.

2.2.7 Faculty of Social Sciences (SOC)

The Faculty of Social Sciences had five cases, with 159 registered doctoral students during the fall and 161 during the spring. Their average was 5 out of 160, 3,1%. There were two cases in Administration & information, one in Access to resources, and one that was placed

into the Other category. There was also the one case that was never categorized as the person stopped replying.

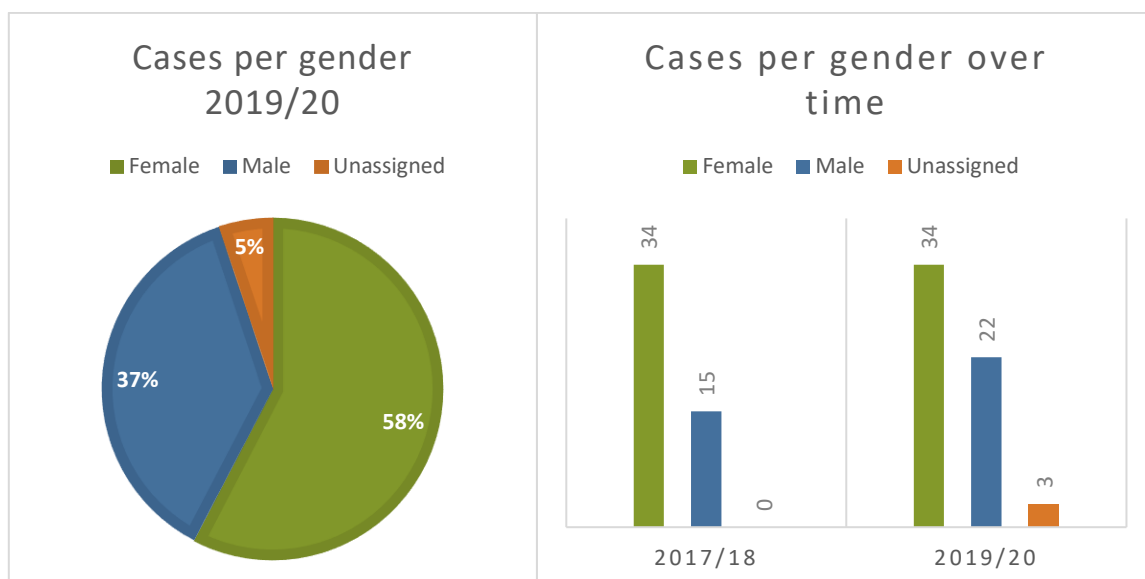
2.2.8 Faculty of Engineering (LTH)

There were 11 cases for the average of 623,5 active PhD students at LTH, giving them an average of 1,7 cases per 100 doctoral students. It was the faculty that was closest to the common average of 2,2. There were two cases in the Access to resources-category, three cases in Administration & information, three in Employment, one in Equality & work environment, one in Examination, and one in Other.

2.2.9 LUSEM School of Economics and Management (EHL)

LUSEM School of Economics and Management had 165 doctoral students during the fall, and 156 during the spring. There were 5 cases, making their average 5 out of 160,5, 3,1%. All of the cases were in the category Administration & information.

2.3 GENDER



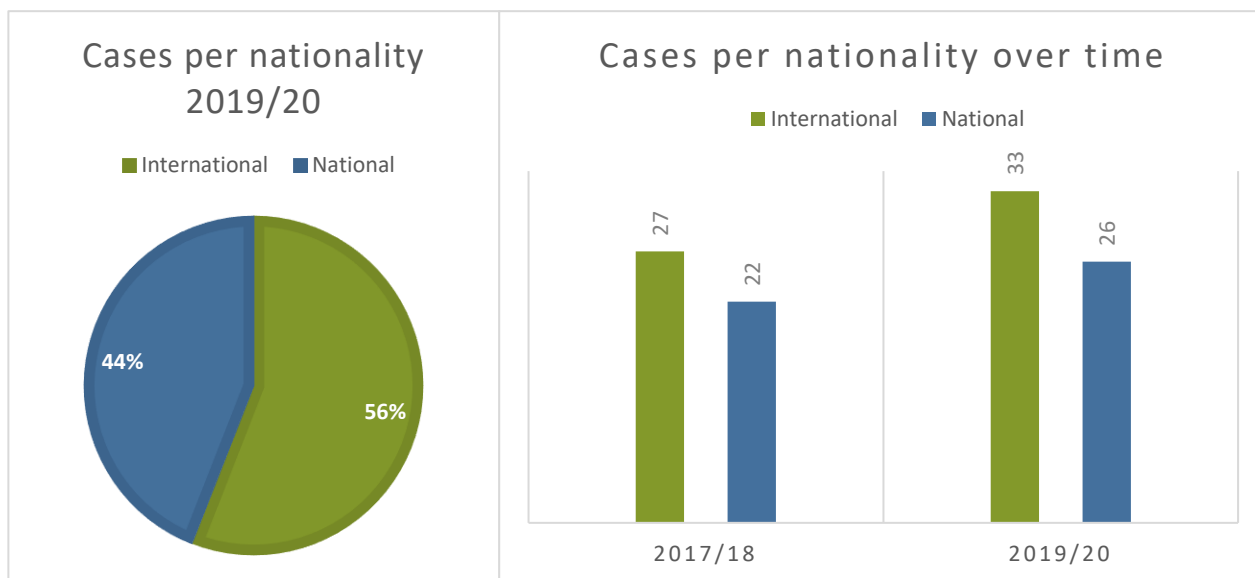
34 of the doctoral students were registered as female, 22 as male, and 3 cases were unassigned. Out of the unassigned cases one of them was a group, and two were cases where all the communication was done via email and I was unable to draw any conclusions about the persons' genders based on how they were presenting.

In 2017/18 there were 34 cases registered as female, and 15 cases registered as male. No cases were unassigned. This means that the number of cases for females has been unchanged, but the number of Domb cases concerning males has increased significantly. It is difficult to draw any conclusions about any trends without having data over longer time.

The number of cases concerning females is still significantly higher than for men. It is not possible to say whether that means that women have more problems, or if they are more likely to ask for help. Looking at gender distribution over the case categories, the biggest difference was that there were only men in the Disciplinary measures category, and only

women in the Other category. For the rest of the categories there were no big differences in distribution.

2.4 NATIONALITY



There were 33 international cases and 26 national cases, which means that 56% of the cases concerned international PhD students, and 44% national PhD students. We can compare this with statistics provided by the Swedish Higher Education Authority about how many PhD students of Swedish and foreign origin¹⁹ Lund University had for the fall of 2019. According to those numbers, the proportion for the total number of doctoral students was 33% international and 67 % national.²⁰ The difference in the proportions suggests either that international doctoral students have more problems than doctoral students of Swedish origin, or that they for some reason are more likely to turn to the DOMB for assistance.

In 2017/18, the DOMB had 27 international and 22 national cases. In 2017/18 the proportions were 55% international and 45% national. For 19/20, the proportions were 56% were international and 44% were national. In other words, while the number of cases has increased, the distribution between international and national cases is almost identical.

¹⁹ The term “doctoral students of foreign origin” was defined as doctoral students who either had been granted a residence permit less than two years before starting their PhD studies, or who had been born outside Sweden and had immigrated less than two years before starting their PhD studies, see UKÄ, Statistikdatabas: Högskolan i siffror, ”Utbildning på forskarnivå”, <<https://www.uka.se/statistik--analys/statistikdatabas-hogskolan-i-siffror/beskrivningar-av-statistiken-i-databasen-hogskolan-i-siffror/utbildning-pa-forskarniva.html#h-utlandskadoktorander-enligt-forskningsamnesindelning>>, accessed 30/9/2020.

²⁰ There were 786 doctoral students of foreign origin at LU for the fall of 2019, and there were 2401 doctoral students in total. See UKÄ, Statistikdatabas: Högskolan i siffror, ”Utländska doktorander enl. forskningsämnesindelning” <<https://www.uka.se/statistik--analys/statistikdatabas-hogskolan-i-siffror/statistikomrade.html?statq=https://statistik-api.uka.se/api/totals/48>>, accessed 30/9/2020; UKÄ, Statistikdatabas: Högskolan i siffror, “Doktorander enl. forskningsämnesindelning och försörjningsform” <<https://www.uka.se/statistik--analys/statistikdatabas-hogskolan-i-siffror/statistikomrade.html?statq=https://statistik-api.uka.se/api/totals/46>>, accessed 30/9/2020.

3 LOOKING AHEAD

3.1 EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the spring of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, with drastic consequences for most parts of society, including for the doctoral students at Lund University. Some of the effects have been accounted for in reports on surveys made by Lund's Doctoral Student Union and the Dokt Guild Board within TLTH.

In my view, there has so far been surprisingly few DOMB-cases relating to the pandemic. The number of incoming cases went down for a while during March and April, and then there was an unusually large influx of cases during May, which was probably due to doctoral students postponing contacting me because society went on pause for a while, and everyone was busy adjusting. When cases started flowing in again, my impression is that the topics did not differ significantly from before. Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has not been the main theme of any DOMB case so far. However, I believe more cases related to Covid-19 in the future are to be expected, specifically cases concerning prolongation.

The surveys made by LDK and the Dokt Guild Board show how doctoral students have been delayed in many ways. The university has issued a statement that delays caused by the pandemic can be viewed as "special grounds" for prolongation according to chapter 5 section 7 of the HEO. When granting prolongation for consequences of the pandemic, an individual assessment is to be made for each PhD student. The main supervisor has a responsibility to discuss with the PhD students if prolongation will be needed for delays in the PhD student's education caused by the pandemic. If there is a need for prolongation, that should be documented in the doctoral student's ISP.²¹

I expect questions will arise about the details of how documentation in the ISP should be done. Also, some are worried that persuading supervisors and heads of departments to document Covid-19-related delays in the ISP will be more difficult for PhD students working in environments where money is scarce. I expect that ensuring an equal right to prolongation due to delays caused by the pandemic is something that both the DOMB and the student unions will need to work on during the coming year.

3.2 THE FUTURE CASE HANDLING SYSTEM

After an initiative from the LUS studentombud, I have been included in a group of student ombudsmen and doctoral student ombudsmen from six different student unions at different institutions for higher education in Sweden who are working on designing a case handling system for student ombudsmen. The idea is to both create a secure and user-friendly system for handling cases, but also to streamline the case handling at different institutions of higher education, enabling comparison between different institutions for higher education, and possibly enabling nation-wide statistics on the cases that reach student ombudsmen. Right now, the prognosis is that testing of the system will start during this year, and the new system will be in place for the activity year of 2021/22.

²¹ *Förlängning av doktoranders anställning med anledning av covid-19 som ett "särskilt skäl"* (STYR 2020/1001).

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