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## **Doctoral Student Survey 2025**

### Doktorandenkät 2025

Summary report

A part of the quality assurance work at Mid Sweden University

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## About the survey and the report

The survey is divided into ten sections with a series of questions for each. In the following summary the survey results are presented under these main headings.

Respondents were reached through compilation lists with email addresses provided by the two faculty offices at Mid Sweden University (MIUN). 214 doctoral students received the survey, 100 at the Faculty of Human Sciences (HUV) and 114 at the Faculty of Science, Technology and Media (NMT). 45 responses (45% of respondents) came from doctoral students at the HUV faculty, 39 (34%) from the NMT faculty. One respondent did not indicate a faculty. Separate summaries for each respective faculty are available but are not presented systematically here. The survey was open from September 1 to 21.

## Section 1: Background

The section includes information about formalities and private circumstances.

The proportion of women and men corresponds to the overall distribution at MIUN.

A considerable portion of the responses is likely from international students. The majority of those who say they reside in Sweden only during their doctoral studies, or primarily speak English, are within the NMT faculty (15 and 20 individuals, respectively).

The indicated home country illustrates the breadth of MIUN's recruitment for doctoral studies. Grouped by region: Europe 12 (various countries), Middle East 8 (Iran most common), other Asian countries 8.

Regarding estimated working hours, it appears that doctoral students at the HUV faculty spend less time on average than those at the NMT faculty. The HUV doctoral students who responded have on average indicated 34 hours per week with a median of 35 hours; for NMT doctoral students the number is 40 hours in both cases.

## Section 2: Recruitment and admission

The section addresses information linked to the beginning of the doctoral studies at MIUN.

Advertising is important but not the only path to a doctoral education at MIUN.

With the exception of library services, the responses show that the information about the doctoral education was not comprehensive or sufficient for all doctoral students. Critical comments in open-ended responses mostly concerned either administrative shortcomings or specific difficulties for foreign/newly admitted doctoral students.

### Section 3. The doctoral education

The section addresses practical elements in doctoral education (doctoral courses, communication and presentation, joint arrangements, study director functions). The answers are partly favorable, but in some cases there is quite broad dissatisfaction. Doctoral students at NMT seem to be less satisfied than at HUV.

Doctoral students within the HUV faculty have to a higher degree chosen their subjects themselves.

MIUN's doctoral courses receive poorer ratings than external courses. Course availability also seems to be a problem. Conditions regarding research communication and presentation of research receive favorable assessments.

The study director role is not well known, and a significant number say they are not comfortable with that contact.

In the free-text responses, the assessments are mixed, but a number of answers highlight important specific difficulties, e.g. slowness regarding visa, salary, and bank accounts. Lack of support from the university is highlighted in some responses.

### Section 4: Supervision and supervisors

The section deals with the actual supervision. The outcome is relatively mixed. The scientific support appears generally satisfactory.

Favorable comments are made regarding the supervisors' inclination to provide constructive criticism, less so regarding career opportunities and research ethics, as well as how supervisors clarify expectations.

Changing supervisors seems to be a problematic area. Changes do occur (more common within the HUV faculty, where knowledge of how a change is made also is greater) and a change has been considered by almost one third. Nearly half say that they are unfamiliar with the procedure for changing supervisor.

The exchange between doctoral student and supervisor at scheduled meetings appears to be limited (the majority report 1-3 meetings or 1-5 supervision hours per month). The responses from doctoral students at the HUV faculty are more positive than those from the NMT faculty regarding support from supervisors and the extent of supervision.

In free-text responses, many express great satisfaction with their supervisors. Some criticism is highlighted: primarily perhaps the lack of time for supervision, but also unclear roles and unclear responsibility or gaps in subject expertise.

## Section 5: Research environment

The section addresses different aspects of the environment that a doctoral student is part of. The size of the environment is not defined, so the answers can relate to contexts that are quite different. The answers indicate that most doctoral students generally enjoy their environment. No significant difference in this respect is seen between the faculties.

The answers in the free-text question are varied. Notably, several within the NMT faculty perceive a lack of interest in others' work within the environment they belong to.

## Section 6: Workload and discrimination

The section mainly addresses the psychological work environment and various factors that can burden the individual. Relationships with others are highlighted in questions concerning direct discrimination.

Many indicate that they have worked while being unwell and that they have had to work outside regular working hours. Quite a few indicate that they feel mentally or physically exhausted after work, or when thinking about work. The situation in this regard seems to be somewhat better at the HUV faculty than at NMT. At the NMT faculty, difficulty concentrating and restlessness are also reported to be more common than at the HUV faculty.

In over 30% of the responses, it is indicated that negative consequences due to stress or workload to a large degree has been experienced. At the NMT faculty, the figure is slightly higher than at the HUV faculty. Many however indicate that they are able to manage the stress.

Doctoral students at the HUV faculty consider themselves to have influence in their department to a greater extent than NMT doctoral students.

On the question of participation on equal terms, the majority indicate that they agree that this is largely possible for everyone. The figure is higher within the HUV faculty. A certain number indicate that they have personally experienced discrimination. The reasons stated vary: ethnicity followed by gender are the most common (7 and 4 responses, respectively).

It is generally considered that women and men have equal opportunity to conduct research studies at MIUN. A few assess that one gender (men) has better conditions. Most assess that gender equality between men and women is given due consideration at MIUN.

There is a clear view that international doctoral students at MIUN are disadvantaged in various ways compared to Swedish students. This is repeated in several survey questions and in free-text responses. Such responses mostly come from the NMT faculty. Language and information dissemination are indicated as problems.

Workload is highlighted as a difficulty in free-text responses. Both the extent and periodic concentration of work are mentioned as problematic.

## **Section 7: Opportunity to influence education and study situation**

The section addresses the evaluation of the educational component and includes comments on doctoral courses.

The responses generally indicate limited opportunity to assert influence. The possibility of influence through conversation or dialogue is perceived to be slightly greater within the HUV faculty than within the NMT faculty. Course evaluations do not seem to be a particularly prioritized activity. Within the NMT faculty, a slightly larger proportion stated that they were informed about outcomes than within the HUV faculty.

In the responses, examples are given of important doctoral courses but also of those perceived as poorly conducted or weak in their content. Courses in quantitative methods, scientific writing, philosophy of science, and research philosophy receive this criticism in more than one response.

## **Section 8: Individual study plan (ISP)**

The question area covers questions about ISP and the learning outcome matrix. Participation and follow-up of the ISP seem to work quite well. The learning outcome matrix as a support for learning, as well as the ISP as a planning support, is considered to work unevenly.

Critical opinions that appear in free-text responses include that ISP follow-up is merely a bureaucratic requirement, that the system is not used properly, or that the technical format is an obstacle.

## **Section 9: Service and infrastructure**

The section covers issues regarding administrative and technical support in various forms. The outcomes are mixed. A number of concrete problems are mentioned, including certain technical limitations or missing features. Doctoral students at the NMT faculty more often report lacking access to equipment.

The technical aspects (IT, literature, library) receive fairly good evaluations. MIUN's ability to support during stress appears to be a problem. Assistance regarding future careers receives rather negative evaluations, and information about rules and guidelines is perceived as insufficient by many. In free-text responses, some dissatisfaction is expressed with, for example, IT support and the organisation of websites.

## Section 10: Final questions

The section includes some overarching, summarising questions. The answers provide a relatively favourable picture considering the dissatisfaction that has appeared earlier in the survey. However, the picture is not clear-cut. At the HUV faculty, the favorable responses are higher than at the NMT faculty: more seem to be satisfied with their choice to pursue a doctorate, more say they would recommend the program, and a larger proportion say they want to continue working at MIUN. It seems relatively common for doctoral students to consider taking a break from their doctoral studies, primarily at the NMT faculty.

In the free-text responses, the comments vary greatly in content. They are not always things that can be easily implemented in the research environments. Often the remarks are related to a lack of resources in time, personnel, or money. A specific detail mentioned by several is the introduction and information about doctoral education at MIUN.

## Summary

- 40% of those who received the survey responded (45% of the doctoral students at the HUV faculty, 39% at the NMT faculty)
- Reported working hours for doctoral studies: at the HUV faculty on average 34 hours/week, at the NMT faculty 40 hours/week
- Mixed reviews are given, but in most questions positive responses prevail
- Doctoral students usually enjoy their research environments and the scientific support in supervision is rated highly
- Information before admission is criticised, especially for international doctoral students
- MIUN's own doctoral courses are considered less successful; course availability in general also seems to be a problem
- Changing supervisors is considered by a significant number, but knowledge of the procedure is lacking
- Time for planned supervision is limited, often only a few hours per month
- Perceived stress and fatigue are relatively common
- In questions about support from supervisors, workload, and pressure, the reviews are better among doctoral students at the HUV faculty
- Conditions for men and women are perceived as largely equivalent, and it is assessed that gender equality is duly considered at MIUN

- The majority assesses that participation in doctoral studies occurs on equal terms
- Foreign doctoral students are perceived to be disadvantaged compared to Swedish students, primarily at the NMT faculty; information and language difficulties are the most common reasons
- The possibility to influence one's doctoral education is generally considered limited
- Individual study plans receive varying evaluations
- In matters of service and infrastructure, good evaluations are given for e.g. library and IT, less positive for e.g. information about regulations and support during stress