



Guidelines for managing conflicts between doctoral students and supervisors at the Faculty of Science

As a general rule, conflicts shall be resolved at the lowest possible level, and it should be stressed that it is important to try to identify and resolve the problem at the earliest possible stage. Both the doctoral student and the supervisor can and should consult the department's representative on the supervisory committee¹ if friction or uncertainties arise concerning the project or expectations.

It is the responsibility of the departmental representative to act if problems are raised or occur in connection with the follow up. "Conflict" refers hereafter to a disagreement between the doctoral student and the supervisor that cannot be solved within the supervisory committee. If a conflict arises, the matter is to be managed by the Director of Studies for Research Studies according to the guidelines below.

Managing conflicts

The Director of Studies shall obtain information on, and mediate in, the conflict through meetings with those involved, individually and/or in groups. In particular, the doctoral student shall be informed about the possibilities of receiving support from the Doctoral Students' Ombudsman, union representatives or equivalent. The Director of Studies shall record and file notes from all the meetings. The notes shall be taken in such a way that they only give an account of the discussion that has taken place, and they are to be approved by all participants.² Any agreements or directives shall be formulated in documents separate from the notes. The Director of Studies shall inform the doctoral student about any applicable regulations.

If the conflict is in part rooted in disagreements that concern rights or obligations, i.e. circumstances that are governed by policy documents, the Director of Studies shall carry out an investigation to determine whether the education project concerned complies with the Higher Education Ordinance and internal regulations for the programme. The findings of the investigation are to be approved by the Head of Department. If aspects of labour law are involved, these are to be managed by the faculty's HR unit.

¹ "Supervisory committee" refers to the constellation that handles and follows up the individual study plan i.e. all the doctoral student's supervisors and the department representative.

² Approval of the minutes, for example by the doctoral student, does not mean that the doctoral student shares the views that were presented or the conclusions that were drawn by others at the meeting, only that the minutes reflect the discussions that took place.

If the investigation finds deficiencies regarding obligations towards the doctoral student, it is the responsibility of the principal supervisor and ultimately the Head of Department to take measures so that the study plan and applicable laws, regulations or guidelines are harmonised and followed.

If the doctoral student neglects his or her obligations and does not follow the set study plan, the department can request the withdrawal of the doctoral student's resources for research studies.

If cooperation or communication problems prevail/remain, the Director of Studies shall act in order to resolve the conflict, if necessary with support from the faculty's HR team. This team includes people with experience of managing conflict situations, who can either become involved personally or contribute by providing contacts to further resources available within LU. If the HR team becomes involved, the division of roles in the processing of the matter is to be defined between the HR team and the Director of Studies. A last resort to resolve the conflict is a change of supervisor, but it is recommended that all the conflict management assistance options mentioned above are exhausted first. The doctoral student has the right to request a change of supervisor, which is assessed by the department in accordance with the applicable guidelines for changing supervisor.

The conflict, and any measures that are decided, shall be followed up at frequent intervals (at least once a month). The Director of Studies is responsible for this. The individual study plan shall also be followed up at more frequent intervals and be revised, if necessary.

If the Director of Studies has a conflict of interest, the Head of Department is to appoint someone else, in writing, who is independent with regard to the project and the people involved to handle the matter. If the Head of Department has a conflict of interest, the Pro-Dean for Research and Research Studies is to take over the role of the Head of Department in the matter.

These guidelines were approved by the Faculty Board after a briefing by Tobias Nilsson and consultation with the faculty's Research Programmes Board and the Presiding Committee.

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