

The Uppsala University Doctoral Education Survey 2019

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The doctoral board of Uppsala University



This is a report on the survey of doctoral candidates at Uppsala University that was carried out for the Doctoral Board (*Doktorandnämnden*, DN) in May–June 2019. The survey addressed topics of current relevance to doctoral candidates: work environment, supervision, funding, language barriers, workload etc.

The Doctoral Board decided at its meeting on 18 December 2018 to form a working group for the purpose of this survey. Members for this group were sought among all doctoral candidates at Uppsala University, and are listed in this report.

This report is presented to DN at its meeting on 24 March 2020. The survey and this report are the property of the Doctoral Board, which is a part of the Uppsala Student Unions.

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List of abbreviations

Respondent subsets	
UU	Uppsala University
HS HumSam	Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences
MF MedFarm	Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy
TN TekNat	Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology = Faculty of Science and Technology
FA	Faculty of Arts
FE	Faculty of Educational Sciences
FG	Faculty of Languages
FC	Faculty of Social Sciences
FM	Faculty of Medicine
FP	Faculty of Pharmacy
DED	Department of Education
DNR	Department of Neuroscience
DFB	Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences
DEA	Department of Earth Sciences
DEG	Department of Ecology and Genetics
DOB	Department of Organismal Biology
DPA	Department of Physics and Astronomy
DEN	Department of Engineering Sciences
DIT	Department of Information Technology
AK	Persons whose primary workplace is "Akademiska hospital, or other clinical location in Sweden"
Y1, Y2 Y3, Y4	PhD completion corresponding to first year (0-25%), second year (25-50%) etc., full-time equivalent

Responses	
SA	Strongly agree
A	Agree
N	Neither agree nor disagree
D	Disagree
SD	Strongly disagree
A%	Percentage who agree, incl. strongly agree
D%	Percentage who disagree, incl. strongly disagree

General abbreviations	
ALF	<i>Avtalet om läkarutbildning och forskning</i> , a mechanism of government funding to county councils for medical education and research
DN	<i>Doktorandnämnden</i> , The Doctoral Board
ECTS	European Credit Transfer Scheme
FoI	Freedom of Information
hp	<i>Högskolepoäng</i> , corresponds to one ECTS credit
ISP	Individual Study Plan
KI	Karolinska institutet
<i>n</i>	Number of persons or responses
SSE	Stockholm School of Economics
SU	Stockholm University
SULF	<i>Sveriges universitetslärare och forskare</i> , The Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers
SWAC	Swedish for Academics (a language course)
TNDR	<i>Teknisk-naturvetenskapliga doktorandrådet</i> , The PhD Students Council of the Faculty of Science and Technology
UKÄ	<i>Universitetskanslersämbetet</i> , the Swedish Higher Education Authority
UPE	Unit for Professional English
WSO	Workplace Safety Officers (<i>skyddsombud</i>)

For the full tree of faculties and departments at Uppsala University, see [→Appendix I](#).

Key findings

The survey was emailed to all doctoral candidates at Uppsala University and answered by 304 (a response rate of 15%). Of these, 264 answers were complete. The response rate was uniformly >15% for all faculties, except the Faculty of Medicine (6%).

Work environment

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Responses are generally positive about the physical work environment: 68% agree the building is comfortable, 90% agree good office facilities are available. However, 24% of respondents based on campus find that their **workplace is too crowded**, making it difficult to concentrate, and this is cited as a reason for working on evenings and weekends. When asked what incidents occurred in their workplace in the past year, respondents indicated that **theft and non-physical violence are widespread**. Reports of workplace discrimination are somewhat more common at HumSam (39%) than MedFarm (28%) or TekNat (27%), with sex and ethnicity being the most common grounds.

Only 88% ticked the item "I feel safe at my workplace", only 75% ticked "I would not be afraid to report [an incident]", and only 60% ticked "I know whom to talk to if there is an incident" - this indicates that **alarming numbers of doctoral candidates are not confident in the University's ability to handle workplace incidents**. Of those respondents who indicated that they personally experienced an incident such as inappropriate intimacy, sexual harassment, non-physical violence or discrimination, only 14 (61%) reported the incident, and half of those felt that the University did not adequately handle the incident (note that this is based on a small sample: 23 respondents). Free-text responses indicate strongly that departmental politics and power relationships give senior colleagues cover for abusive behaviour, and there is **fear of retribution** against doctoral candidates who dare to speak up.

Relationship with supervisors and mentors

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Most respondents (76%) indicate that their official main supervisor is also the person who effectively supervises their day-to-day work. **One in ten respondents indicate they have no supervision**, and it is unclear why that is the case.

Ratings of the relationship with supervisors are positive by a large majority: 88% agree they "get along well" with the supervisor, and 86% agree the supervisor "cares about my doctoral education". The question however referred to the *current* supervisor, and free-text responses describe **severely disruptive conflicts** that led to changes of supervision. When asked, later in the survey, which current issues should be prioritised in the work of the Doctoral Board, the relationship between doctoral candidates and their supervisors emerged clearly as the top priority.

Free-text comments on supervision describe sadly familiar themes: supervisors have unreasonable power over candidates, for example regarding career advancement and access to funding and infrastructure; working conditions can vary sharply within departments depending on which supervisor or research group a candidate belongs to; departmental politics and "unwritten rules" can have destructive consequences for candidates' progression.

On a positive note: annual review meetings, at which the **individual study plan** is revised and updated, have become part of supervision routine. University-wide, 84% of respondents have such annual meetings, with MedFarm performing somewhat worse, at 73%.

This report provides some of the first data on the known discrepancies between the formal process for recruitment to doctoral studies, which is supposedly transparent and objective, and an informal process of pre-arranged recruitment. We estimate that **between 11% and 42% of doctoral appointments are agreed informally before the position is publicly advertised**. This differs sharply by disciplinary domain: 52% of respondents in the Faculty of Medicine indicate their recruitment was pre-arranged, versus none in HumSam. Of those respondents who indicate their recruitment was pre-arranged, 77% are funded by supervisors' individual budgets, while none have department funding. This clearly shows that candidates financed with departmental resources are more likely to be recruited in a genuinely transparent and competitive selection process.

Workload

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Unpaid overtime and weekend work are widespread: **54% of respondents answered that they work more than their officially contracted working hours**, and 29% work at least a quarter more (For example, 50 h/wk on a 40 h/wk contract). Overtime of 35% or more is more common at MedFarm (22%) than elsewhere (9%).

Most respondents (65%) work at least some weekends, while 13% work most weekends. Reasons for weekend work vary by disciplinary domains: TekNat and MedFarm candidates commonly cite technical reasons, such as access to lab equipment, servers etc. **In 86% of these cases no compensation is given** (weekend pay or additional time off) though the candidates are entitled to this. HumSam candidates are more likely to work on weekends because it is the only way to finish all their work.

Free-text comments indicate that many respondents feel **overtime is normally expected from doctoral candidates as an inevitable aspect of work in academia**.

Funding

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While most respondents (85%) have an employment contract with the University, **5% are funded by stipends**, and therefore might be excluded from social security benefits.

At HumSam, department funding account for 62% of doctoral candidates, whereas MedFarm and TekNat candidates are more often funded externally or through competitive funding awarded to individual supervisors.

Respondents commented very positively on "**rucksack money**", which is a personal allocation of funds for work expenses. Not all departments and faculties allocate such funding. Respondents describe disagreement on funding priorities as a source of conflict with supervisors, and appreciate the autonomy that "rucksack money" gives. There are clear indications that when no other funding is available, candidates are sometimes forced to **use their personal savings to pay for work expenses** (particularly in HumSam – 29% of respondents reported using their own money for some of their work expenses, compared to 5% at MedFarm and TekNat).

Responses indicate that some departments have started **charging overhead**, effectively a "tax", on external scholarships and funding received by doctoral candidates. This has problematic consequences for candidates' financial autonomy, and for equal conditions between departments.

PhD courses

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The component of taught courses varies between 1/8 (MedFarm) and almost half (Faculty of Social Sciences) of the doctoral programme. Conversely, then, the **net research time varies from little more than two years for some HumSam candidates to 3.5 years for most MedFarm candidates.**

A narrow majority of respondents are satisfied with the quality and usefulness of courses, but substantial numbers are dissatisfied. Most respondents are **dissatisfied with the range of courses to choose from, and are especially dissatisfied with the ease of finding information** about available courses.

Holidays and leave of absence

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While 79% of respondents take holidays at other times than the summer, only 17% have exemption from the *schablonsemester* mechanism. Only 26% report their holidays in Primula. It is clear, then, that **for most doctoral candidates the actual holidays are not properly recorded.** One in six respondents claim to take fewer holidays than the official allowance.

Around half of the respondents reported that they are still involved in work while on holiday. When asked about a hypothetical 60-day sick leave, substantial proportions of respondents indicated their work cannot simply wait until they get back (23%), that their absence will create a lot of extra work for colleagues (17%), or that the absence can adversely affect their career (41%), for example because of funding applications and publication deadlines. Most (62%) indicated that they "might try to keep working despite being ill".

Taken together, these findings show that **candidates perceive doctoral education as a year-round commitment from which they can never fully disengage**, even while officially on holiday or leave.

It is also worrying that a clear majority of respondents (72%) **lack confidence in getting prolongation for periods of leave.** Rules and procedures are perceived as unclear, and are applied inconsistently across departments.

Languages

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Nearly all respondents (95%) had at least intermediate (B1) level English at the start of their PhD; 45% are native Swedish speakers, while 30% have less than elementary (A2) level Swedish. 10% started their PhD with neither Swedish nor English above upper intermediate (B2) level.

Nearly all (97%) aim for at least advanced (C1) level English, and 81% aim for at least upper intermediate (B2) level Swedish by the end of their PhD. A clear majority (73%) of respondents intend to improve at least one language during the course of their PhD, and 21% intend to improve both. Responses from final-year candidates suggest that these ambitions are, in most cases, achieved.

In all faculties and departments, respondents answered that both English and Swedish are used, both for work and social interaction. TekNat leans to a predominance of English, while MedFarm and HumSam are more evenly bilingual.

One-third of respondents are currently studying a language, and time spent on this typically ranges from 1 to 6 hours per week. Supervisors and departments are generally not cooperative in allowing work time to be used for language learning, and even when this is permitted, candidates find that they are expected to compensate for "lost" time - in other words, **supervisors or departments do not generally permit that doctoral candidates allocate part of their net study time to language learning.**

Despite the clear wish - and in many cases, need - for language learning, there are **evident gaps in language course offering.** Half of respondents find they don't have time or opportunity for courses. There is an unmet need for advanced-level Swedish courses, and particularly courses in Swedish for speakers of other Nordic languages.

Teaching and career

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A large majority (86%) of respondents teach, and even more (90%) agree that teaching experience should be part of doctoral education. Some (10% overall, but over 25% in some faculties) find that there is a shortage of teaching opportunities. There is **evident dissatisfaction with prolongation and compensation for teaching:** only 43% find that compensation "is fair, in proportion to the actual amount of work", and a quarter find that doctoral candidates "are exploited as cheap teachers" in their department.

After completing the PhD, 80% of respondents expect to continue doing research, 58% expect to teach, and 55% expect to remain in academia. **There is a demand for career guidance,** access to which seems to differ sharply between departments.

Persons of Swedish background are likely to consider a PhD an **economic sacrifice** in the short run, whereas persons of foreign background are more likely to take the opposite view. Respondents overwhelmingly (90%) **expect doctoral education to make their careers more meaningful or more intrinsically rewarding** (non-economic rewards).

Focus areas for the Doctoral Board

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When respondents rated eleven suggested focus areas for importance, the most popular were:

1. The working relationship between PhD candidates and their supervisor(s)
2. Better routines for compensation and prolongation for teaching/representations
3. Gender equality and workplace diversity
4. Non-Swedish-speakers should be able to participate in committees and boards

A further focus area emerging from comments is that DN should work with the University to improve the offering of PhD courses, and especially to improve the information about courses, for example with a university-wide database of courses for doctoral candidates.

Introduction

Aims

The primary aim of the survey was to collect robust information about current issues and concerns facing doctoral candidates at Uppsala University. This information can support the work of the Doctoral Board in representing the interests of doctoral candidates. A secondary aim was to create an evidence basis for issues already known.

The Working Group selected question topics in consultation with the Doctoral Board.

Format and advertisement

The survey was implemented as a web form, suitable for desktop or mobile browsers. It was advertised by repeated bulk emailing from the Doctoral Board to all registered doctoral candidates at the University.

Software

The survey was implemented in LimeSurvey, on a web server that was available to one of the authors (HdG). LimeSurvey is a web-based free software questionnaire tool that allows considerable flexibility in question design, and produces surveys that can be accessed both on desktop and mobile browsers.

Raw data were extracted as a comma-separated text file and further processed in spreadsheet applications and in RStudio.

Question design

Questions were of four main types:

- **Multiple choice.** This is the familiar closed-response question where the respondent must select one out of several presented options. Where appropriate, an "Other, please specify:" option was included.
- **Agree-Disagree scale.** These consisted of a statement, with six response options: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't know / not applicable. This is known as a Likert-like scale. In keeping with best practice for this type of question we included a "not applicable" response option, and we had an odd number of response levels, i.e., there was a neutral midpoint for the scale ("neither agree nor disagree").
- **Tick all that apply.** These consist of a series of statements, unticked by default, that the respondent may tick if appropriate. Caution should be taken in interpreting these conversely: if 40% of respondents select a statement as applying to them, then the remaining 60% includes both those to whom the statement does not apply, and those who skipped the question. It then cannot be generally assumed that for 60% of respondents the statement does not apply.

- **Open (free text) questions.** These were used sparingly. At the end of each page was a large question box for "any other comments on [page topic]". All responses are quoted in this report, edited only for grammar correction and standardised spelling.

Some questions were implemented as required questions, meaning that the survey software would refuse to go to the next page until these questions were answered. These are marked in the survey and in this report by a red asterisk *.

Freedom of Information (Fol) data

This report integrates information obtained directly from the University under a Freedom of Information (Fol) request. The request was recorded by the University under reference UFV 2019/1222. A copy of these data can be obtained from the University by quoting that reference.

Information in the Fol data includes: registered doctoral candidates at each department, which of these have an employment contract with the University, and which are working full-time versus part-time.

The time point for the Fol data is 2019-06-18 for employment records, 2019-07-01 for enrolment records. This is within a month of the survey closing.

Other recent surveys

The University's Quality Advisory Board (*Kvalitetsrådet*) carried out similarly broad surveys, known as "*Doktorandstudie*", in 2002, 2008 and 2015. These surveys were bilingual and distributed in paper form, resulting in high response rates (over 50%). In 2015, supervisors and alumni were also surveyed. The topics in the 2015 survey for doctoral candidates were: the selection and admission process; work and research environment; supervision; courses and seminars; the individual study plan; learning outcomes; teaching and teacher education.

Additional surveys are carried out from time to time at faculty and department level. The disciplinary domain of Medicine and Pharmacy carried out a survey in 2013 about research time for clinical candidates. The PhD Students Council of the Faculty of Science and Technology (TNDR) carried out a survey about doctoral candidates' teaching in 2017–2018¹. A separate DN survey about prolongation in relation to teaching is ongoing.

Questionnaires, data and reports from the University's past surveys have been released by the University under an Fol request, recorded under reference UFV 2019/1444.

1 TNDR Teaching Survey: <http://tndr.se/tndr/sites/default/files/teaching-survey-final-report.pdf>



Author contributions

The working group for this survey consisted of Elisa Savelli and Joanna Asia Kulig in addition to the authors of this report.

The questionnaire was designed and written by GB, CC, HdG and ES. HdG managed the LimeSurvey software. Preliminary results were presented to DN at its meeting on 11 June 2019 by GB, CC, HdG and ES. In-depth data analyses were carried out by GB, HdG and MS, with input from JAK on the Language section. HdG wrote the initial draft of this report. The four authors together revised and finalised this report. Authors are listed alphabetically and without implication of seniority.

We are grateful for comments and feedback at various stages from members of the Doctoral Board.

Interpretation of results

The findings of the survey are described below on a topic by topic basis, corresponding to the pages (sections) of the survey. Full question text is included.

Responses are shown university-wide as well as broken down by organisational units: disciplinary domain, and in some cases faculty and department. There is considerable variation in size for departments and faculties at Uppsala University. Results are reported for those units that had at least 10 respondents. For example, the faculties of Law and Theology fall below the threshold, and are therefore not shown in response tables. Respondents from these faculties are nevertheless included in the disciplinary domain and University totals. When a particular question received fewer than 10 responses for any unit, then these are not reported in tables, and a dash (-) is entered instead.

Abbreviations used for faculties and disciplinary domains are listed at the start of this report. The total number of responses may be greater than the sum of responses by department, for example because of respondents who skipped the question about which department they are in.

Table rows are highlighted as follows: blue for University totals, green for disciplinary domain totals, grey for faculties and departments, yellow for any other subgroups (for example: clinic-based candidates). Summary tables are provided for all questions, and the report text includes additional statistics, such as between-groups comparisons.

A brief evaluation of the questionnaire, which is intended to be helpful in the design of future questionnaires, is included in [→Appendix II](#).

Response description by question type

Responses to multiple choice questions are reported as either number of responses (n) or percentage (%) for each response option. The percentage is computed relatively to the number of respondents who answered the question.

Responses to "tick all that apply" statements are reported as either number of responses (n) or percentage (%) for each statement. The percentage is computed relatively to the number of respondents who completed and submitted that page of the questionnaire. Keep in mind that the remainder – the percentage of respondents who did not tick the statement – includes both those who decided that the statement does not apply to them, and those who simply skipped the question.

Responses to agree-disagree questions are reported as five response counts, one for each response category from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree". Also reported are percentages who agreed or disagreed, computed as: the sum of those strongly and otherwise (dis)agreeing, divided by the total number of respondents in these five response categories. Responses "don't know / not applicable" are disregarded. Agree and disagree percentages do not sum to 100% because there is the intermediate category of "neither agree nor disagree".

Abbreviations used for response categories are listed at the start of this report.

Demographics and recruitment bias

The questionnaire was sent by email to all doctoral candidates at the University, approximately $n = 2\,071$ based on [→Fol data](#). In total 304 responses were received (a response rate of 15%), of which 264 were complete.

Table 1 summarises response rates university-wide and by domain, faculty and department.

The response rate was uniformly $>15\%$ for all faculties (highest: Faculty of Pharmacy, 21%) with the exception of the Faculty of Medicine (6%). It is a well-known issue that many doctoral candidates in the Faculty of Medicine are difficult to engage in university activities since they primarily work as hospital clinicians, while completing their doctoral education on a part-time basis. The number of such candidates at any point in time is difficult to quantify, but it is known that approximately three-fifths of newly admitted doctoral candidates in the Faculty of Medicine are clinicians². Of 57 survey respondents in the Faculty of Medicine, only 14 (25%) indicated that they work in a clinical setting (see [→Work environment](#)). This clearly shows that clinical candidates in Medicine are under-represented in this survey. One possible reason for this is that the survey was advertised through University email addresses, while clinical candidates mainly use hospital email addresses in their daily work.

A further bias that emerged during analysis was an over-recruitment of respondents who are active in representation, board or committee work (see [→Teaching and career](#)). This can be explained by greater awareness and interest in the survey among such candidates. Possible response biases include a greater familiarity with University regulations and procedures, and greater exposure to issues and conflicts in relation to doctoral education, whether personally or indirectly.

Respondents uniformly covered candidates from first to fourth year (between 22–27% each), expressed in the question as percentage completion, to allow for part-time candidates, leave of absence etc. A small share (5%) of respondents indicated that they have exhausted the four years of the PhD, but have not yet defended their thesis – most commonly at HumSam, followed by TekNat.

Table 1

Response rates and respondent demographics

	Registered candidates	Respondents	Response rate (%)	Males	Females	Swedes	Non-Swedes
UU	2071	304	15	90	152	123	129
HS	532	86	16	29	51	46	32
MF	753	57	8	17	40	32	22
TN	786	114	15	43	60	41	72
FA	98	21	21	9	11	9	9
FE	71	12	17	3	8	9	2
FG	70	11	16	2	7	6	5
FC	192	30	16	11	18	14	13
FM	667	39	6	13	26	21	17
FP	86	18	21	4	14	11	5
DED	69	10	14	3	6	7	2
DNR	100	11	11	3	8	4	7
DFB	44	10	23	1	9	6	3
DEA	63	11	17	6	5	2	9
DEG	57	11	19	4	6	2	8
DOB	36	12	33	4	7	3	9
DPA	118	16	14	11	4	5	11
DEN	155	17	11	6	10	9	8
DIT	113	18	16	6	9	6	12

Total number of registered doctoral candidates as of 2019-07-01, per Fol data.

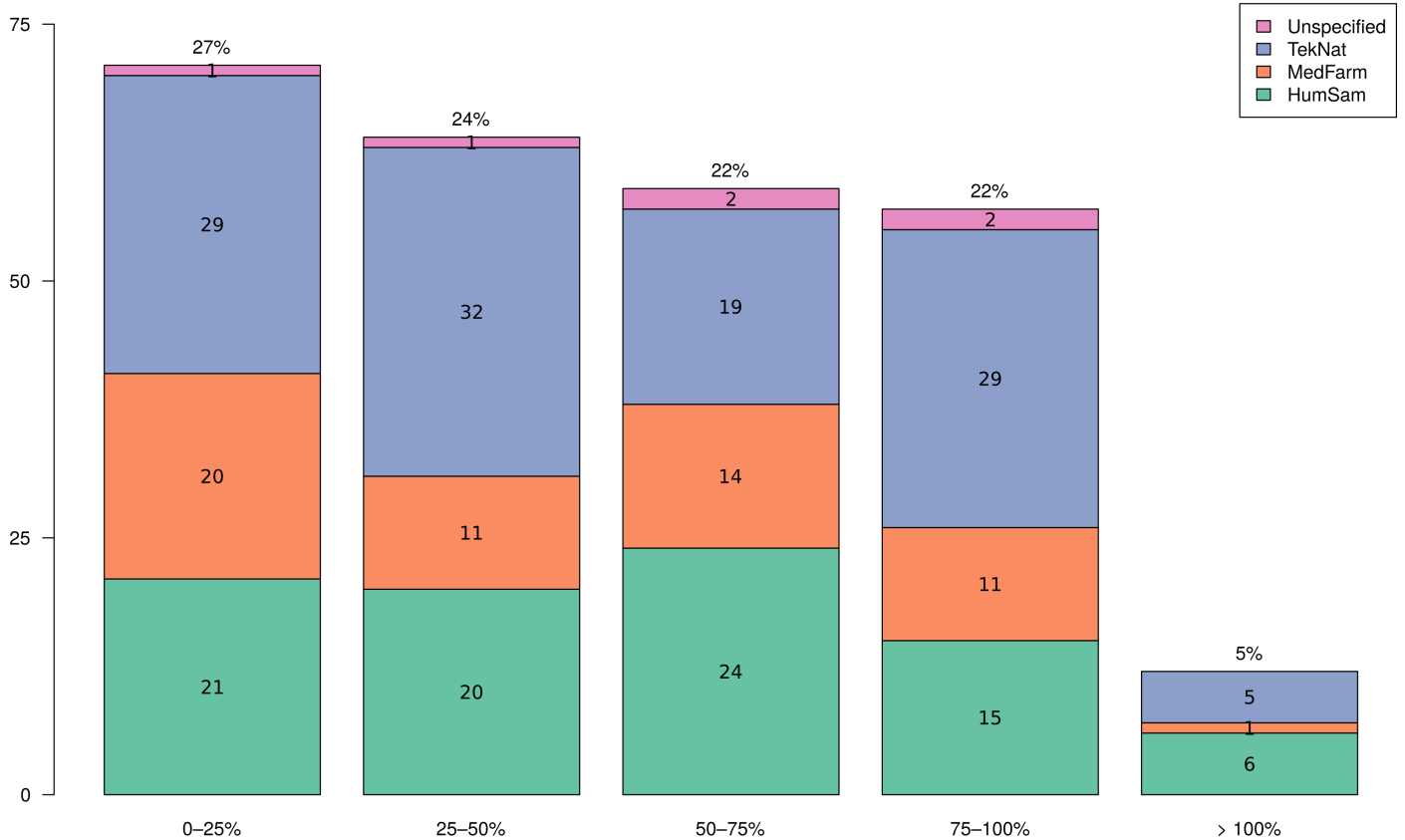
Number of respondents includes partial (incomplete) submissions.

Two respondents indicated their gender as "Non-binary", and 60 skipped the question.

Male/female and Swede/Non-Swede numbers refer to respondents, not registered candidates.

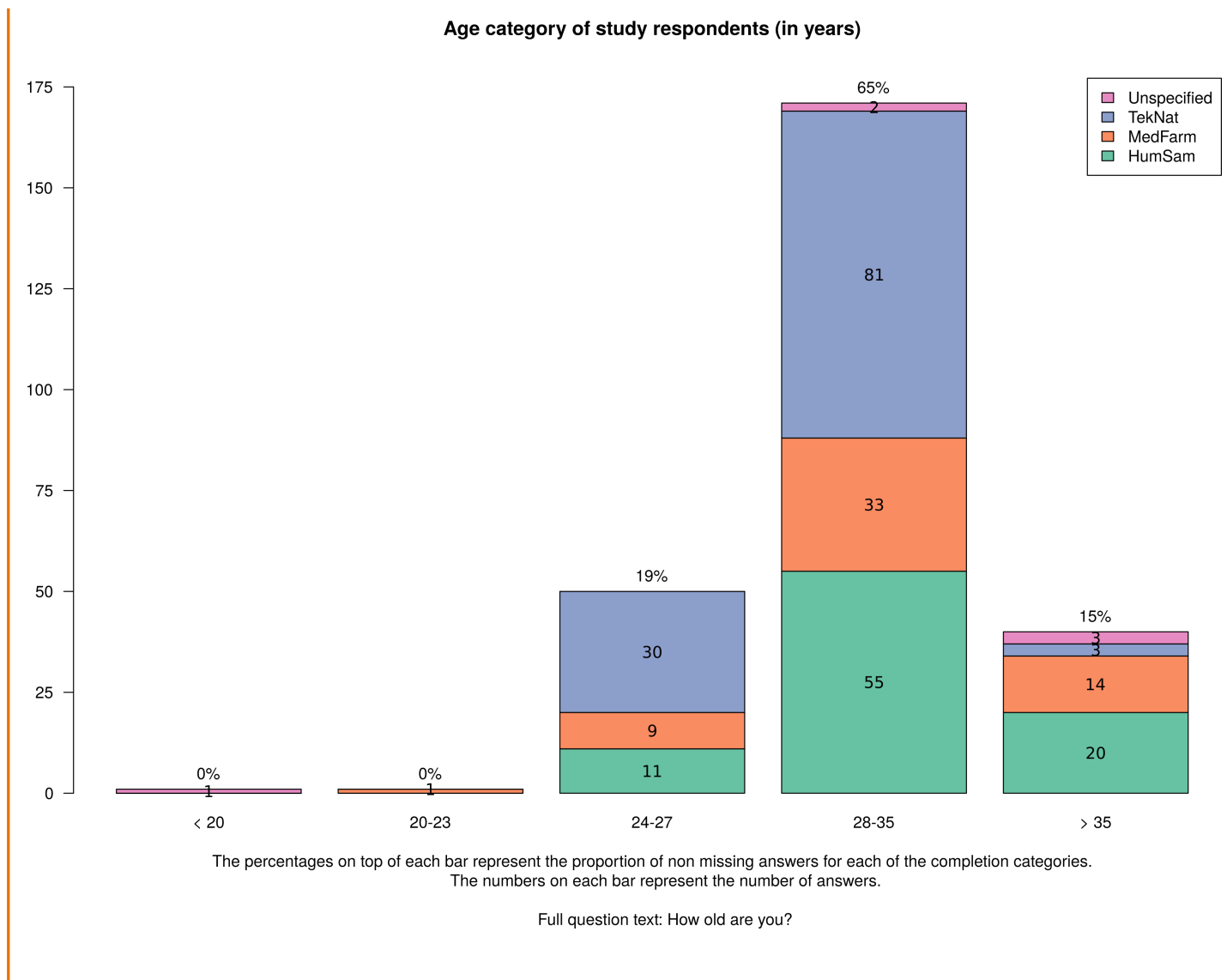
Data about age were intentionally collected in broad spans (e.g. 24-27; 28-35) to protect anonymity. The most notable finding here is that the age pyramid for TekNat is younger than for other domains: most under-28 respondents are at TekNat, and almost none of the over-35s. Fol data confirm that this is representative for doctoral candidates employed by the University.

PhD completion stage of study respondents (in percent of 48 months of full-time studies)



The percentages on top of each bar represent the proportion of non missing answers for each of the completion categories.
The numbers on each bar represent the number of answers.

Full question text: How far have you got in your doctoral education? Doctoral education at Uppsala University normally takes four years full-time. If you have just started, select 0-25%. If you are almost half-way, select 25-50%, and so on. If you have already exhausted the 48 months, but are still not finished, then select the option > 100%. Do not count any time you spent on leave, for example sick leave or parental leave.



Swedes versus non-Swedes

An often-discussed juxtaposition in doctoral education is that of "Swedes" versus "non-Swedes". The everyday experience of this contrast can take various forms: language barriers, different workplace cultures, different educational and professional backgrounds, different career prospects, different family / legal / housing / economic circumstances, and so forth.

While stressing that these differences are by no means universal and are not always inherently problematic, we note that work environments at Uppsala University vary from overwhelmingly Swedish-speaking with a clear majority of persons with Swedish background, for example in the Faculty of Educational Sciences, to overwhelmingly English-speaking with a majority of persons with foreign background, for example in some TekNat departments.

The phenomenon of "Swedes versus non-Swedes" may thus be worth analysing in hope of better understanding the different challenges faced by doctoral candidates depending on their own background in relation to their surrounding environment.



It is difficult to formally define the two groups, as there is no single variable that will reliably distinguish between the two categories: nationality, country of birth etc. Furthermore, the "Swede" and "non-Swede" prototypes will not fit nicely for every individual: consider for example persons born in Sweden in immigrant communities, or Swedes born abroad, etc.

For the purpose of comparing these two groups, we define a "Swede" as someone who meets at least two of the following criteria: born in Sweden, native speaker of Swedish, prior university education in Sweden. We define a "non-Swede" as someone who meets zero of these criteria, having answered all the relevant questions. This leaves out of consideration those who meet only one criterion, and those who cannot be classified due to missing responses (skipped questions).

Work environment

Main workplace

The overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents are campus-based (Table 2). The next largest groups are those based in clinical settings in Sweden (5%) and those working from home (3%).

"Other" responses included two candidates based at other universities, one with a mixed arrangement for working from home and on campus, and one vague answer perhaps for anonymity.

Results reported for subsequent questions in this section (Work environment) refer only to those respondents who selected "University campus in Uppsala" as their workplace. An additional row labelled "AK" describes respondents working at clinical locations in Sweden - these are not included in the totals per faculty, disciplinary domain, etc.

Table 2

Which of the following is your primary workplace (the place where you spend most of your working time)? * (n)

	Campus Uppsala	Campus Gotland	Clinical Sweden	Clinical abroad	Industry Sweden	Industry abroad	Work from home	Other
UU	274	1	16	0	1	0	8	4
HS	82	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
MF	40	0	14	0	0	0	3	0
TN	110	1	0	0	1	0	1	1
FA	19	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
FE	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FG	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FC	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
FM	22	0	14	0	0	0	3	0
FP	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DED	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DNR	6	0	4	0	0	0	1	0
DFB	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEA	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEG	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DOB	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
DPA	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEN	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DIT	16	0	0	0	1	0	1	0

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- University campus in Uppsala (such as: BMC, Ekonomikum, Ångström etc.)
- Campus Gotland
- Akademiska hospital, or other clinical location in Sweden
- Clinical location outside Sweden
- Business / industry in Sweden
- Business / industry outside Sweden
- Work from home
- Other, please describe

Workplace quality and comfort

Building comfort does not emerge as a widespread concern, but **18% of campus-based respondents disagree that they work in a comfortable building** (Table 3). This figure rises to 38% among hospital-based respondents, and to 50% among respondents in the Faculty of Pharmacy. The BMC building is nearing the end of its service life, and this is reflected in the [→Free-text responses](#).

Feedback on office facilities on campus ("internet access, printing, mail delivery etc.") was strongly positive across all departments, and likewise regarding access to courses and seminars. Most respondents (75%) agree they have access to people with whom they can exchange ideas about their research; disagreeing responses are more common in HumSam (15%) than TekNat (10%) or MedFarm (5%), perhaps reflecting the more individual nature of research in the humanities and social sciences, compared to laboratory or clinical research.

Almost a quarter (24%) of campus-based respondents agreed that "there are too many people around, it is difficult to concentrate". The issue is distributed over all faculties, but is most prominent at the faculties of Medicine and Educational Sciences (both 33%). Overcrowded work environments and difficulty concentrating are issues to be addressed in relation to the mental health risks of doctoral education. In the section on workload (below) we report on doctoral candidates who choose to work on weekends "because there is less distraction" or "because it is the only way to finish all the work".

Table 3

Thinking of the primary workplace that you selected above, how much do you agree with the following statements:

The building is comfortable: heating, ventilation, coffee room etc.

Good office facilities are available: internet access, printing, mail delivery etc.

I have access to relevant events: seminars, courses etc.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	61	125	38	33	15	68	18
HS	24	33	13	10	2	70	15
MF	2	18	7	6	6	51	31
TN	28	56	10	12	4	76	15
AK	3	5	2	4	2	50	38
FA	7	5	4	3	0	63	16
FE	7	5	0	0	0	100	0
FG	2	7	1	1	0	82	9
FC	4	14	4	5	2	62	24
FM	2	12	4	1	2	67	14
FP	0	6	3	5	4	33	50
DED	6	4	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	0	5	0	0	1	83	17
DFB	0	3	2	3	2	30	50
DEA	5	3	1	0	1	80	10
DEG	4	7	0	0	0	100	0
DOB	2	6	0	3	0	73	27
DPA	5	9	0	2	0	88	12
DEN	6	8	1	1	1	82	12
DIT	2	8	3	3	0	62	19

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	131	111	17	10	1	90	4
HS	44	32	4	2	0	93	2
MF	12	21	4	2	0	85	5
TN	60	40	5	3	1	92	4
AK	4	9	1	2	0	81	12
FA	11	8	0	0	0	100	0
FE	8	3	1	0	0	92	0
FG	7	4	0	0	0	100	0
FC	12	13	3	1	0	86	3
FM	8	9	4	0	0	81	0
FP	4	12	0	2	0	89	11
DED	6	3	1	0	0	90	0
DNR	2	3	1	0	0	83	0
DFB	3	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEA	7	3	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	7	4	0	0	0	100	0
DOB	9	2	0	0	0	100	0
DPA	9	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEN	9	6	0	1	0	94	6
DIT	4	8	3	1	0	75	6

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	88	136	27	17	2	83	7
HS	34	39	5	4	0	89	5
MF	5	25	5	3	0	79	8
TN	39	56	6	7	1	87	7
AK	4	6	2	1	0	77	8
FA	8	11	0	0	0	100	0
FE	8	3	1	0	0	92	0
FG	2	8	1	0	0	91	0
FC	10	13	2	4	0	79	14
FM	5	14	0	1	0	95	5
FP	0	11	5	2	0	61	11
DED	8	2	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	0	6	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	0	7	1	2	0	70	20
DEA	3	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	5	4	0	1	1	82	18
DOB	5	4	1	1	0	82	9
DPA	6	9	0	1	0	94	6
DEN	7	8	1	0	0	94	0
DIT	6	6	1	3	0	75	19

There are too many people around, it is difficult to concentrate.

There are people with whom I can exchange ideas about my research.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	19	46	57	91	55	24	54
HS	6	12	18	24	21	22	56
MF	2	8	8	16	4	26	53
TN	7	19	19	42	21	24	58
AK	1	1	4	5	3	14	57
FA	1	4	3	4	7	26	58
FE	1	3	2	4	2	33	50
FG	0	1	3	5	1	10	60
FC	3	4	7	8	7	24	52
FM	1	6	3	8	3	33	52
FP	1	2	5	8	1	18	53
DED	1	2	1	4	2	30	60
DNR	0	0	1	5	0	0	83
DFB	1	1	2	5	0	22	56
DEA	1	2	0	3	4	30	70
DEG	0	1	3	5	2	9	64
DOB	0	4	2	4	1	36	45
DPA	1	2	2	8	3	19	69
DEN	1	1	3	8	3	12	69
DIT	0	2	5	3	6	12	56

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	87	115	40	23	6	75	11
HS	28	32	10	10	2	73	15
MF	10	23	4	2	0	85	5
TN	39	46	13	8	3	78	10
AK	7	3	4	1	1	62	12
FA	4	9	4	2	0	68	11
FE	5	7	0	0	0	100	0
FG	3	5	1	2	0	73	18
FC	10	9	4	4	2	66	21
FM	6	13	2	0	0	90	0
FP	4	10	2	2	0	78	11
DED	5	5	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	0	5	1	0	0	83	0
DFB	2	6	1	1	0	80	10
DEA	5	5	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	4	4	2	1	0	73	9
DOB	2	5	3	1	0	64	9
DPA	7	8	0	0	1	94	6
DEN	5	9	1	1	0	88	6
DIT	4	6	3	2	1	62	19

Workplace safety

One-third of campus-based respondents report that thefts have occurred in their workplace in the past year (table 4). The figure rises to 42% at MedFarm and 44% at TekNat. Some of the larger campuses have been circulating information about theft occurrences, with advice on reasonable precautions. It follows that, with the question formulated as "did this happen in your workplace", anyone who received information about theft might tick the box on the questionnaire. Therefore, higher scores on this item might indicate greater awareness, rather than more frequent occurrences.

Nevertheless, **it is evident that a theft problem exists and is widespread.** Common knowledge suggests that laptops, smartphones and bicycles are among the items at highest risk. It is worth noting that in many cases these are personal property, not university property, therefore the economic damage of theft befalls the candidate.

In total, three respondents reported physical violence in the workplace. One was hospital-based; physical attacks can occur in hospitals, for example in emergency or psychiatric care. Another was a likely unserious respondent, who claims to be experiencing theft, harassment, violence and ethnic discrimination in their workplace, all while working from home. There remains one credible report from a campus-based candidate at TekNat. The desirable number of reports would be zero, but <1% is a good result here.

The category of "inappropriate intimacy / sexual harassment" was intentionally phrased broadly. The word "harassment" can be perceived as strong, and therefore discourage reporting (as in: "it wasn't harassment, they were just fooling around"). It is difficult to draw lines between inappropriate behaviour, harassment, assault and rape without going into much more detailed questions. This category was intended to catch a wide range of sexual or intimate behaviour that at least one person involved did not consent to.

Reporting rates for inappropriate intimacy / sexual harassment were <10% in all faculties. The question stated "think of things that happened to yourself or to others in your workplace", so an incident reported by two or three people in the same department may well be the same incident. Again, however, the desirable number of reports would be zero.

Table 4

For this question, think of things that happened to yourself or to others in your workplace. Do not consider rumours or gossip.

Thinking of the primary workplace that you chose above, did any of the following things happen in the past year: (%)

	Theft	Physical violence	Sexual harassment	Non-physical violence	Injury	n
UU	33	0	5	15	6	274
HS	21	0	5	13	0	82
MF	42	0	5	18	18	40
TN	44	1	8	15	5	110
FA	0	0	5	5	0	19
FE	42	0	8	8	0	12
FG	0	0	9	27	0	11
FC	31	0	0	10	0	29
FM	32	0	9	27	14	22
FP	56	0	0	6	22	18
DED	50	0	10	10	0	10
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	50	0	0	0	30	10
DEA	20	0	10	10	0	10
DEG	36	0	9	9	0	11
DOB	9	0	0	9	0	11
DPA	50	0	6	12	6	16
DEN	41	6	18	29	0	17
DIT	25	0	0	6	6	16

Some response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of these response options in the questionnaire was:

- Inappropriate intimacy / sexual harassment
- Non-physical violence (such as bullying, stalking or intimidation)
- Work-related injury, for example when using machinery or handling chemicals

Of greater concern is the finding that **"Non-physical violence (such as bullying, stalking or intimidation)" is widespread**. University-wide, 15% of campus-based respondents ticked this item. Numbers differ sharply by faculty, with the highest reporting rates at Medicine and Languages (both 27%). The category is broad, and to some extent subject to cultural interpretation, yet responses from Swedes and non-Swedes are very similar. The sharp differences between faculties suggest that there is an element of workplace culture at play: some faculties or departments may be more tolerant of bullish behaviour than others.

Reports of work-related injuries ("for example when using machinery or handling chemicals") are rare at TekNat (5%) and non-existent at HumSam. At MedFarm, 18% of respondents were aware of at least one case of work-related injury in their workplace in the past year (Faculty of Pharmacy: 22%). This may simply reflect a high proportion of laboratory work, compared to other faculties. It may also reflect a culture in medical and pharmaceutical practice of reporting and documenting every incident, however small. Either way, it is important that doctoral candidates affected by workplace accidents know whom to turn to for proper support and follow-up. Responses to the following questions will show that this is seldom the case.

The next question presented a block of five statements about workplace safety, asking to select which statements are true (Table 5).

The item "I feel safe at my workplace" was ticked by 88% of respondents. As mentioned above, because of the "tick all that apply" format, if 88% ticked that they feel safe at work, then the remaining 12% include both those who do not feel safe at work, and those who simply skipped the question. However, more than half of those who did not tick the first item did tick at least one other item in this block. Indeed, only five respondents whose department is known ticked none of the statements in this block. It is clear, then, that there are doctoral candidates on campus at Uppsala who do not feel safe at work. The issue appears evenly spread over the disciplinary domains, but with some faculties performing better than others.

While 88% may appear as a solid majority, the only reasonable response rate for the item "I feel safe at my workplace" should be 100%. There is no good reason why anyone should feel unsafe at their workplace on campus.

Table 5

Thinking of the primary workplace that you chose above, please select which of the following statements are true: (%)

	Feel safe	Know whom to talk to	Not afraid to report	Know my WSO	Never heard of WSO	n
UU	88	60	75	40	28	274
HS	91	71	77	51	20	82
MF	90	62	75	40	30	40
TN	90	58	77	33	35	110
FA	84	63	74	53	26	19
FE	100	92	83	50	0	12
FG	100	73	73	45	27	11
FC	90	69	76	66	14	29
FM	86	73	68	45	36	22
FP	94	50	83	33	22	18
DED	100	90	80	40	0	10
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	100	60	80	40	20	10
DEA	100	70	60	20	50	10
DEG	82	73	82	64	9	11
DOB	91	82	100	91	0	11
DPA	100	56	88	25	50	16
DEN	88	41	71	6	53	17
DIT	94	62	62	12	44	16

Statements are shortened in the table header. The full text of the statements in the questionnaire was:

- I feel safe at my workplace.
- I know whom to talk to if there is an incident (like those above).
- If there is an incident, I would not be afraid to report it.
- I know who the Workplace Safety Officers (Swedish: "skyddsombud") are for my workplace, and how to contact them.
- I have never heard of Workplace Safety Officers (skyddsombud).

Only 60% of respondents claim to know whom to talk to if an incident occurs. The question concerns incidents "like those above", referring to the previous question block: theft, violence, sexual harassment, non-physical violence and work-related injury. It is alarming that up to 40% of doctoral candidates would not know whom to talk to. The issue is most severe at the faculty of Pharmacy (50% know whom to talk to) and at TekNat (58%).

Evenly spread across the departments, **around 20% of respondents did not tick the box that they would not be afraid to report an incident.** University-wide that means there may be some 400 doctoral candidates who, if they were for example bullied or sexually harassed, would not report it, out of fear. This is also alarming.

One useful point of contact for all workplace-related incidents are the Workplace Safety Officers (WSOs, *skyddsombud* in Swedish). These are persons appointed by the University's employees, through the trade unions. The WSOs are a first point of contact for workplace safety issues and incidents, and have a duty of confidentiality (*tystnadsplikt*). The WSO system has its historical roots in the handling of physical accidents and safety issues in factories, but in more recent years the focus of WSO work has shifted toward work environment and mental health. **More than a quarter (28%) of campus-based respondents have never heard of WSOs, and only 40% claim to know who the WSOs are for their workplace.** Among non-Swede respondents, the figures are 43% and 32%, respectively. One part of the reason for this may be that some doctoral candidates perceive themselves as students rather than employees (and indeed not all have an employment contract). In many cases, doctoral employment may be a person's first job, or their first job in Sweden, therefore doctoral candidates in general may not be familiar with the rules and mechanisms of a Swedish workplace. Raising awareness of the WSO system may help to increase perceived safety as well as increase the likelihood that any incidents will be reported and followed up.

The findings in this section are even more alarming when one considers the response bias favouring "engaged" doctoral candidates, i.e., persons active in boards and committees. These are more likely to be familiar with procedures and reporting structures within the University.

Discrimination

Of all campus-based respondents, 31% ticked at least one type of discrimination as occurring in their workplace, with HumSam performing worse (39%) than the other disciplinary domains (Table 6).

The two most widely reported forms of discrimination are by sex (20%) and by ethnicity (13%). Some faculties have reports of ageism (Arts 11%, Pharmacy 11%, Social Sciences 14%).

Reports of discrimination on a basis of sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression, religious belief or conviction, or disability are rare ($\leq 4\%$ for each of these categories). Note however that a low number of reports can be explained by lack of applicability: if there is no transgender person in a department, then nobody will report incidents of discrimination – but discriminatory beliefs or attitudes may nevertheless exist.

There is a visible pattern in the data that differences between faculties are consistent across the different grounds for discrimination. For example, where discrimination by sex is more common, discrimination by age and by ethnicity are also more common.

HumSam generally has the highest rate of reports of discrimination, and MedFarm the lowest. The faculty of Medicine performs best, while the faculty of Social Sciences performs worst. Note however that these figures may reflect either more frequent occurrence of incidents, or differences in reporting and awareness.

This question had an "Other:" box. Twelve respondents mentioned Swedish language as a discriminatory issue in various forms, for example when information is provided in Swedish only, or feeling excluded from conversations when colleagues refuse to switch to English (see [→Languages](#)). Two respondents mention "being Swedish" as a discrimination ground in their workplace. Other responses included: personality, mental health, pregnancy, internal departmental politics, and prior education (especially: Uppsala or not).

Table 6

Swedish law defines seven grounds of discrimination, listed below. In this question, think of things that happened to yourself or to others in your workplace. Do not consider rumours or gossip.

In your workplace, do you think anyone is put at a disadvantage because of: (%)

	Sex	Transgender	Ethnicity	Religion	Disability	Sexual orientation	Age	at least one	n
UU	20	2	13	3	4	1	8	31	274
HS	26	4	16	1	5	1	11	39	82
MF	15	0	10	2	5	0	5	28	40
TN	18	2	13	3	5	2	8	27	110
FA	16	5	11	0	0	0	11	16	19
FE	25	0	17	0	8	0	8	42	12
FG	18	9	18	0	9	0	9	36	11
FC	34	3	21	0	7	3	14	52	29
FM	9	0	9	5	0	0	0	18	22
FP	22	0	11	0	11	0	11	39	18
DED	20	0	20	0	10	0	0	30	10
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	10	0	10	0	20	0	20	30	10
DEA	0	0	0	0	10	0	10	10	10
DEG	27	9	18	9	9	0	9	36	11
DOB	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9	11
DPA	19	0	6	0	0	0	6	25	16
DEN	12	0	18	6	6	0	0	24	17
DIT	31	6	19	6	6	6	12	38	16

Some response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of these response options in the questionnaire was:

- Transgender identity or expression
- Religious belief or conviction

Note: The questionnaire included an item "None of the above". However, several respondents ticked "No" on all items, including "None of the above", which is contradictory. We are therefore not reporting responses on that item. Instead, the eighth column in the table reports the percentage of respondents who ticked at least one of the preceding seven items.

University handling of incidents

Of 23 persons who experienced inappropriate intimacy, sexual harassment, non-physical violence or discrimination, only 14 (61%) reported this within the university, and only half of those are satisfied that the situation was adequately handled (Table 7). These findings are strongly disappointing.

The free-text responses in this section give some insight into how incidents are handled.

Note that the table shows numbers of respondents, not percentages.

Table 7

Please skip this question unless you have personally experienced in your workplace: inappropriate intimacy, sexual harassment, non-physical violence or discrimination.

If you have experienced any of these issues, we would like to know whether you reported it, and whether you feel that the issue was adequately handled.

This question is about reporting and follow-up within the University only, not for example reports to the police or to other external authorities. (n)

	Experienced	Reported	Satisfied
UU	23	14	7
HS	6	3	1
MF	5	4	2
TN	9	5	2

Statements are shortened in the table header. The full text of the statements in the questionnaire was:

- I experienced one or more of these issues.
- I reported this within the University.
- I am satisfied that the situation was adequately handled.

Free-text responses

About the physical work environment:

The building itself is a "sick house", with poor ventilation and fungal growth. It is renovated over and over, but its not enjoyable to have to let your smell sensation go numb so you can work in certain rooms. [Faculty of Medicine, clinic-based]

The offices are very poorly ventilated at BMC; this is particularly bothersome in the summer. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The facilities, although generally good, are quite worn out. The building needs a refurbishment and new furniture. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

You ask if there are too many people around but for me, it is the opposite. In fact, I rarely see any of my so-called colleagues. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

About general workplace "culture", discrimination and bullying:

I have not had a good experience with my time at the department. The situation got so bad that I had to be on sick leave because I could not function, the department did nothing. I did not know about any of the rights or support options I was entitled to until my health became so bad because of the work situation (bullying by senior researchers, isolation and a lack of access to resources needed to do my work) that I needed high levels of health support. I am still recovering from these issues and it is only now, in the recovery process, that the department is finally stepping up. I feel that even though I notified the department and SULF of these issues, nothing was done in time. It is difficult to have trust in a system where the tendency is to bury issues so they do not reflect badly on the organization, and no action is taken until the problem is extreme. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

My work place is a social mess. Discrimination, bullying and academic intrigues are a part of daily life and make people sick. [Faculty of Arts]

Work environment issues that are not crossing the line whereby it becomes discrimination, are denied, ignored or individualized and that there is a lack of incentives for an individual to ask for support in such cases. I believe that negative social consequences of voicing negative experiences weigh heavier than the potential of something positive coming out of it. I think it would be more progressive for UU to work with prevention and take "less serious issues" seriously, e.g., have an annual department or faculty day where commonly reported work environment themes are worked with in a preventive manner. It could also be about identifying what factors create a good working environment and that there are leadership incentives to do preventive work (which we all know takes away their research time...). [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I am happy with the support I have been receiving to do my research at the centre. [Faculty of Arts]

There is intimidating behaviour from seniors. But since it may not seem intimidating enough to be considered "serious", it goes unreported. It also happens from PhD students too. Far from being constructive feedback, it almost feels like a personal attack. Unfortunately, nobody in the group reacts. This is of course much worse when a senior does it. How does one report this? People from different cultural background are listened to less or just never asked, etc. Again, nothing so blatant that can be directly reported. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I was nominated to our department board. Most people didn't know me and some requested I withdraw during the elections, even sending a secretary to pressure me. Instead I offered to speak with them, but they refused to communicate with me. [—]

I get the sense that these questions all vary within the institution, different departments have different "cultures". [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I think it is a problem that the work environment representative work that doctoral representatives might do is not replaced by prolongation as other representative work, in the department board for example. In addition it seems to me that work environment is somehow sidetracked real influence because there is no decision-making power in the work environment group. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

There is inequality in access to lab assistants. Lab assistants paid by the whole department (supervisors' overhead) are helping to some PhDs but not others. They should work evenly for everyone but some students get hours of help every day while others (with same or bigger work load) do not. The Head of Department admits it's a problem but will not do anything about it as PhDs with the advantage belong also to his group. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

About the reporting and follow-up of incidents:

I told the person myself to stop or I would move it further. It was a mid-age man that always commented on my body. I told him to stop after every time but I had to get really mad at him and had to give him an angry tell-off before he stopped. [—]

I did not report because I felt nothing good would come out of it - it would just make things worse for me. I do not feel like I have any support from the department. [—]

I did not report since I felt it could be a misunderstanding from my side. I just felt uncomfortable, but it doesn't mean it was the other person's intention. [—]

I took the issue to the Head of Department. Even though the department and the Head are actively and explicitly working to counter discrimination, I am not sure that they recognise the discriminatory practices they themselves are engaged in as discriminatory. Or perhaps just because they are explicitly against it, they don't think that they do it. The Head of Department asked me "what I wanted him to do about it", at which point I gave up, because that is really his job. [Faculty of Arts]

The person I turned to the first time I got mistreated is responsible for PhD studies at our department. This person agreed that I have been treated wrong by a senior, but that we didn't have to write or say anything more about it, and 5 minutes later that person went out for lunch with the senior that has mistreated me. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

I think that departments are slow in their response to bad behaviour by narcissistic professors. If these professors have large funding, the question seems to be even more difficult. Such personalities seem to prosper at universities and they are generally very bad leaders, because they don't have any real interest in supporting PhD students. Even if and when we report problems, it's very seldom that there are any real consequences for the professor/supervisor/perpetrator. Sometimes I feel that normal Swedish working environmental laws and regulations do not apply in academia. Instead we should all be so grateful that we have been admitted to PhD studies that we should accept this type of behaviour. [Faculty of Medicine]

Bullying and discrimination is hard to report and follow up if the ones bullying people are the ones in charge of your future career. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

Notice the recurring theme of borderline or sub-threshold incidents: where a person feels uncomfortable about something that happened, but the relatively low severity of the situation means that they do not get help, or do not expect to get help.

Relationship with supervisors and mentors

Who is the actual supervisor?

It is a legal requirement that each doctoral candidate must have one main supervisor and at least one co-supervisor³. Faculties may specify further formal requirements for supervision, and it is often required that at least one of the supervisors must have the title of *docent* (sometimes translated to English as "Reader"), or have completed advanced training in supervision.

In the past, it was more commonly the case that the main supervisor was a professor or senior lecturer who had little personal involvement in day-to-day supervision. Instead, doctoral candidates were supervised by a co-supervisor or mentor – typically a more junior member of the professor's team, such as a postdoctoral fellow.

The majority of respondents (76%) stated that their official main supervisor is also the person who effectively supervises their work (Table 8). For the remaining respondents, either one of the co-supervisors is the effective supervisor (12% overall; most common at MedFarm, 21%) or there is no regular supervision (10% overall; most common at HumSam, 13%).

By the same paragraph of Högskoleförordningen, all doctoral candidates are entitled to regular supervision, except in cases where supervision has been withdrawn by the Vice-Chancellor due to failure to progress. It is cause for concern, then, that **10% of respondents say they have no regular supervision**. These 30 respondents are spread over various departments; most are campus-based and have an employment contract with the University; approximately half are Swedes; they are anywhere between year 1 and year 4. There is no evident pattern in their responses that could hint at an explanation for their lack of supervision.

Table 8

Who supervises your daily work? * (%)

This means: the person you have regular contact with, with whom you talk about your work assignments, deadlines, performance etc., and whom you can talk to if you need help. If several people supervise you regularly, please choose one as your main/primary supervisor for the questions on this page.

	Primary	Co-supervisor	Other staff	Nobody	n
UU	76	12	1	10	290
HS	76	10	1	13	86
MF	67	21	2	11	57
TN	81	11	1	7	114
FA	71	14	5	10	21
FE	58	17	0	25	12
FG	82	9	0	9	11
FC	80	10	0	10	30
FM	67	21	3	10	39
FP	67	22	0	11	18
DED	60	10	0	30	10
DNR	91	0	0	9	11
DFB	70	30	0	0	10
DEA	73	27	0	0	11
DEG	91	0	0	9	11
DOB	75	25	0	0	12
DPA	88	6	0	6	16
DEN	82	6	0	12	17
DIT	89	6	0	6	18

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- My official primary supervisor
- One of my co-supervisors
- Another staff member, who is not officially one of my supervisors (sometimes called a "mentor")
- I do not have regular supervision

3 [Högskoleförordning 1993:100, 6 kap., 28 §](#)

Relationship with the supervisor

A block of ten agree-disagree questions (Tables 9 and 10) addressed the relationship between the doctoral candidate and the supervisor (as identified in the previous question).

Table 9

In the following statements, the word "supervisor" refers to the person you just chose in the previous question: your regular supervisor. **Please select how much you agree with the following statements:**

I get along well with my supervisor.

My supervisor lets me organise my work as I want.

My supervisor decides what my research is about.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	165	86	22	7	6	88	5
HS	51	27	6	0	1	92	1
MF	34	17	4	0	1	91	2
TN	66	30	10	5	3	84	7
FA	10	9	1	0	1	90	5
FE	11	0	1	0	0	92	0
FG	5	3	3	0	0	73	0
FC	15	13	1	0	0	97	0
FM	27	9	1	0	1	95	3
FP	7	8	3	0	0	83	0
DED	9	0	1	0	0	90	0
DNR	9	1	1	0	0	91	0
DFB	5	4	1	0	0	90	0
DEA	8	3	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	7	2	1	0	1	82	9
DOB	5	4	2	1	0	75	8
DPA	11	3	2	0	0	88	0
DEN	13	2	1	0	1	88	6
DIT	7	6	3	1	1	72	11

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	172	81	23	6	3	89	3
HS	61	20	3	0	1	95	1
MF	36	13	6	1	0	88	2
TN	61	40	9	1	2	89	3
FA	15	5	1	0	0	95	0
FE	9	3	0	0	0	100	0
FG	5	5	1	0	0	91	0
FC	22	6	0	0	1	97	3
FM	27	5	5	1	0	84	3
FP	9	8	1	0	0	94	0
DED	7	3	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	10	1	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	5	4	1	0	0	90	0
DEA	4	6	1	0	0	91	0
DEG	6	4	1	0	0	91	0
DOB	7	3	1	1	0	83	8
DPA	7	6	2	0	0	87	0
DEN	12	4	0	0	1	94	6
DIT	9	7	1	0	1	89	6

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	15	63	86	59	56	28	41
HS	0	5	15	29	34	6	76
MF	4	19	16	10	7	41	30
TN	7	36	43	18	7	39	23
FA	0	1	3	5	11	5	80
FE	0	1	4	4	3	8	58
FG	0	1	1	5	4	9	82
FC	0	2	5	12	9	7	75
FM	4	11	9	8	6	39	37
FP	0	8	7	2	1	44	17
DED	0	1	3	4	2	10	60
DNR	2	4	2	1	2	55	27
DFB	0	3	5	1	1	30	20
DEA	0	5	4	1	1	45	18
DEG	1	4	5	1	0	45	9
DOB	2	4	4	2	0	50	17
DPA	0	8	4	2	1	53	20
DEN	1	4	6	2	3	31	31
DIT	1	2	8	5	1	18	35

My supervisor decides what research methods or techniques I should use.

My supervisor cares about my doctoral education.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	16	51	93	72	50	24	43
HS	3	8	19	24	31	13	65
MF	3	13	17	19	4	29	41
TN	6	25	48	22	9	28	28
FA	0	2	3	6	10	10	76
FE	0	2	5	3	2	17	42
FG	1	2	3	2	3	27	45
FC	2	1	5	10	11	10	72
FM	3	8	10	14	3	29	45
FP	0	5	7	5	1	28	33
DED	0	2	4	3	1	20	40
DNR	1	2	2	6	0	27	55
DFB	0	3	4	2	1	30	30
DEA	0	6	4	1	0	55	9
DEG	1	1	5	3	0	20	30
DOB	2	4	4	2	0	50	17
DPA	0	5	7	1	2	33	20
DEN	1	0	9	3	3	6	38
DIT	1	2	6	7	1	18	47

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	161	82	19	12	10	86	8
HS	52	23	5	2	3	88	6
MF	29	19	4	1	2	87	5
TN	64	31	8	7	2	85	8
FA	11	5	3	0	2	76	10
FE	11	1	0	0	0	100	0
FG	5	5	0	1	0	91	9
FC	16	10	1	1	1	90	7
FM	24	11	2	0	1	92	3
FP	5	8	2	1	1	76	12
DED	9	1	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	8	3	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	3	4	1	1	0	78	11
DEA	8	2	1	0	0	91	0
DEG	6	3	0	1	0	90	10
DOB	4	4	3	0	0	73	0
DPA	11	4	1	0	0	94	0
DEN	11	4	0	1	1	88	12
DIT	10	5	0	2	1	83	17

Table 10

In the following statements, the word "supervisor" refers to the person you just chose in the previous question: your regular supervisor. **Please select how much you agree with the following statements:**

My supervisor has no interest in my career after my PhD.

My supervisor lets me talk freely to others about my data and my research.

I have annual study plan revision meetings (with my supervisor and/or others) to discuss my progress.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	19	13	53	78	95	12	67
HS	3	5	15	26	33	10	72
MF	2	2	10	16	19	8	71
TN	9	5	23	32	31	14	63
FA	2	1	3	8	5	16	68
FE	0	0	1	4	7	0	92
FG	0	1	1	3	5	10	80
FC	1	2	9	8	9	10	59
FM	1	1	6	10	18	6	78
FP	1	1	4	6	1	15	54
DED	0	0	1	3	6	0	90
DNR	0	0	2	3	5	0	80
DFB	0	1	3	2	0	17	33
DEA	0	0	2	5	4	0	82
DEG	2	0	3	2	3	20	50
DOB	1	1	3	3	1	22	44
DPA	0	1	2	5	7	7	80
DEN	2	0	2	6	5	13	73
DIT	1	2	3	5	3	21	57

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	136	100	25	6	5	87	4
HS	53	21	6	1	1	90	2
MF	18	20	7	2	1	79	6
TN	54	45	7	3	1	90	4
FA	14	6	0	0	0	100	0
FE	6	4	2	0	0	83	0
FG	6	2	2	1	0	73	9
FC	20	5	2	0	1	89	4
FM	13	14	4	2	0	82	6
FP	5	6	3	0	1	73	7
DED	5	3	2	0	0	80	0
DNR	2	6	0	1	0	89	11
DFB	2	4	1	0	1	75	12
DEA	4	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	6	3	2	0	0	82	0
DOB	4	3	2	2	1	58	25
DPA	9	6	0	1	0	94	6
DEN	12	4	1	0	0	94	0
DIT	7	7	1	0	0	93	0

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	144	88	17	18	8	84	9
HS	46	29	3	4	1	90	6
MF	21	17	6	5	3	73	15
TN	63	31	5	8	3	85	10
FA	11	8	0	2	0	90	10
FE	7	4	1	0	0	92	0
FG	6	3	1	1	0	82	9
FC	14	12	1	0	1	93	4
FM	17	8	6	2	2	71	11
FP	4	9	0	3	1	76	24
DED	6	3	1	0	0	90	0
DNR	5	3	2	0	0	80	0
DFB	2	4	0	2	1	67	33
DEA	7	4	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	8	3	0	0	0	100	0
DOB	10	2	0	0	0	100	0
DPA	10	3	1	2	0	81	12
DEN	8	4	2	1	1	75	12
DIT	6	7	1	1	1	81	12

I feel comfortable talking to my supervisor if I have any problems.

My supervisor doesn't have time for me.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	128	104	30	14	7	82	7
HS	38	31	10	3	1	83	5
MF	25	23	5	1	2	86	5
TN	49	41	12	7	3	80	9
FA	8	9	2	0	0	89	0
FE	6	5	1	0	0	92	0
FG	5	3	1	2	0	73	18
FC	9	14	4	1	1	79	7
FM	21	13	3	0	1	89	3
FP	4	10	2	1	1	78	11
DED	5	4	1	0	0	90	0
DNR	9	1	1	0	0	91	0
DFB	1	8	1	0	0	90	0
DEA	9	2	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	6	3	0	1	0	90	10
DOB	3	4	3	2	0	58	17
DPA	7	6	2	0	1	81	6
DEN	8	6	2	1	0	82	6
DIT	6	8	1	1	1	82	12

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	11	20	49	81	120	11	72
HS	0	5	10	25	43	6	82
MF	1	2	11	21	20	5	75
TN	9	9	21	25	48	16	65
FA	0	1	4	7	8	5	75
FE	0	1	2	3	6	8	75
FG	0	0	1	2	8	0	91
FC	0	3	3	9	14	10	79
FM	0	0	7	11	19	0	81
FP	1	2	4	10	1	17	61
DED	0	1	2	3	4	10	70
DNR	0	0	2	2	7	0	82
DFB	1	1	3	4	1	20	50
DEA	0	0	2	2	7	0	82
DEG	0	0	2	4	5	0	82
DOB	0	1	4	3	4	8	58
DPA	0	2	2	3	8	13	73
DEN	2	1	2	3	9	18	71
DIT	3	3	3	4	4	35	47

From our experience of assisting doctoral candidates who experience difficulties, we were surprised by the high proportion of positive responses regarding supervision. High rates of agreement were found for "I get along well with my supervisor" (88% agree, university-wide), "My supervisor cares about my doctoral education" (86%) and "I feel comfortable talking to my supervisor if I have any problems" (82%). Likewise, high rates of disagreement were found for "My

supervisor has no interest in my career after my PhD" (67% disagree) and "My supervisor doesn't have time for me" (72% disagree). It seems, then, that **the large majority of doctoral candidates enjoy positive, healthy working relationships with their supervisors.**

The generally positive responses in this section should not distract from the known fact that issues with supervision do occur. Such issues can be devastating for a candidate's progression, and are among the most common reasons for doctoral candidates to seek help, e.g. from ombudsmen and student representatives. Our data suggest that such cases are not indicative of an overall failing culture, but rather are the exceptions in an overall healthy culture. Still, when respondents were asked to select the issues that the Doctoral Board *→should prioritise*, the candidate-supervisor relationship was easily the most popular. Respondents who have had a change of supervisor pointed out in free-text comments that the question refers to the *current* supervisor, and therefore does not capture their previous situation. Similarly, it was pointed out that the questions referred to the "regular supervisor", which is not always the main supervisor, so conflicts with the main supervisor could have been missed.

Four items addressed the candidate's autonomy, with an interest in the differences between disciplinary domains. The extent to which supervisors decide "what my research is about" and "what research methods or techniques I should use" varied strongly between faculties. In HumSam, clear majorities of respondents stated that they, not their supervisors, make these decisions. In MedFarm and TekNat, responses are spread over the full range from strongly agreeing to strongly disagreeing. Our data, then, support our expectations of culture differences between disciplinary domains, with HumSam candidates typically being more autonomous than MedFarm/TekNat candidates. The surprise finding is that there are also considerable differences in autonomy within the MedFarm and TekNat domains, and within single departments.

A large majority of respondents agreed that "My supervisor lets me organise my work as I want" (89% university-wide). The autonomy discussion above thus refers to the content and methods of research, not to the management of daily routines.

The item "My supervisor lets me talk freely to others about my data and my research" was included due to reports of supervisors who are abnormally protective of research findings, and therefore discourage their candidates from even speaking about their results to other doctoral candidates in the same department, until after the results are published. While this may serve to protect intellectual property or publication credit, it severely limits the candidate's opportunities for meaningful scientific discussion with peers. Fortunately, only 4% overall disagreed with the statement, indicating that this issue is confined to a small number of cases.

We were pleased to find that **annual review meetings, at which the individual study plan is revised and updated, have become part of supervision routine.** University-wide, 84% of respondents have such annual meetings, with MedFarm performing slightly worse (at 73%) than the other disciplinary domains.

Recruitment

The ordinary process of recruiting doctoral candidates starts when one or more positions are publicly advertised through the University's recruitment portal. A selection is then made among those who apply, and a final decision is publicly announced. The process is intended to be fair and transparent. Uppsala University as an employer is a Swedish government authority, primarily funded by the taxpayer. Therefore, the same legal requirements apply as for other public sector employers.

It is a well-known fact within the Swedish academic community that pre-arranged recruitments occur at universities. In 2018, SULF published a report⁴ analysing the recruitment process for 268 vacancies advertised at three universities – one of these was Uppsala. Their analysis covered all kinds of employment at university, not only doctoral positions. They found that 71% of vacancies had fewer than 5 applicants, and 37% had only one applicant; 57% of vacancies had an application time window of less than three weeks, 9% less than one week; 73% of vacancies were filled with an applicant from within the same university. These figures suggest a culture of pre-selecting applicants before the official recruitment process even begins. Vacancies that receive very few applicants are typically advertised with unnecessarily specific requirements: "the applicant must have X degree, have experience of Y methods and be familiar with Z software". Such advertisements are tailored to match a pre-selected individual and discourage applications from qualified external candidates, who might perform equally well in the role. This practice is known in Swedish as *skonummerutlysning* (roughly translated: vacancy advertisement by shoe size).

The recruitment process described above applies to candidates who will be employed by Uppsala University, and therefore does not apply to candidates with their own funding, industry candidates and most clinical candidates. (The latter typically apply through their healthcare employer, and get an allocation of research time within their clinical employment instead of being employed by the University.) Due to these exceptions, the following analysis was restricted to survey respondents who indicated that they have an employment contract with Uppsala University.

Respondents were asked to tick which of the following three statements applied in their case:

- I studied or worked with this supervisor/team before I started my PhD (for example as a thesis student or laboratory assistant).
- When I officially applied for this position as a doctoral candidate, it was already agreed that I would get it.
- I found out about this position after it was advertised.

Responses indicate that pre-arranged recruitment is widespread, with considerable differences between faculties. University-wide, 38% of respondents had worked with their supervisor or team prior to their recruitment as doctoral candidates, and 11% state that their recruitment was agreed prior to application.

Table 11

We are interested in how recruitment of doctoral candidates works. Which of the following apply in your case:

	Prior collaboration	Agreed before application	Found out after advertisement
UU	89 (38%)	26 (11%)	135 (58%)
HS	24 (33%)	0 (0%)	45 (62%)
MF	24 (59%)	15 (37%)	12 (29%)
TN	36 (34%)	11 (10%)	68 (64%)
FA	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	15 (88%)
FE	4 (36%)	0 (0%)	7 (64%)
FG	5 (45%)	0 (0%)	4 (36%)
FC	8 (36%)	0 (0%)	14 (64%)
FM	14 (61%)	12 (52%)	4 (17%)
FP	10 (56%)	3 (17%)	8 (44%)
DED	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-
DFB	7 (70%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)
DEA	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	7 (64%)
DEG	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	8 (80%)
DOB	7 (58%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)
DPA	6 (40%)	1 (7%)	11 (73%)
DEN	4 (25%)	1 (6%)	12 (75%)
DIT	2 (12%)	0 (0%)	14 (88%)

Statements are shortened in the table header. The full text of the statements in the questionnaire is quoted on the left.

Responses from candidates employed by Uppsala University only.

4 <https://sulf.se/rapport/rapport-ett-spel-for-galleriet/>
<https://universitetslararen.se/2018/05/03/riggade-utlysningar-vid-larosatena-strider-mot-grundlagen/>
(Swedish)

These numbers likely underestimate the true number of persons concerned: ticking these items on the questionnaire, however anonymous, implies an admission of a morally and legally dubious circumstance. The third item conversely states that the candidate did not know about the vacancy until after it was advertised, and this was ticked by 58% - leaving 42% who either skipped or disagreed with this item. We can then reasonably infer that the true number of pre-selected candidates lies somewhere between 11% and 42% university-wide.

Our results show that recruitment cultures vary widely between faculties and departments. Among the more virtuous are the Faculty of Arts, the Department of Engineering Sciences and the Department of Information Technology, all with not more than 25% of respondents reporting prior collaboration with the same supervisor/team, and at least 75% of respondents reporting that they were unaware of the vacancy before it was advertised. On the opposite end, some medical and biological departments stand out with prior collaboration rates over 50% (as high as 70% for the Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences). The most extreme results came from **the Faculty of Medicine: 52% of respondents acknowledge that their recruitment was agreed prior to application, and only 17% report that they were unaware of the vacancy prior to advertisement.** Recall that this refers to respondents employed by Uppsala University only, which excludes most clinical candidates.

It should be obvious that pre-arranged recruitment is detrimental to the quality and reputation of the University. It is particularly harmful from the point of view of mobility and internationalisation, if internal applicants are unfairly preferred over external ones. It is apparent that every year, hundreds of persons waste their time applying for a doctoral position at Uppsala University that was always intended for someone else. This is a talent pool from which we are failing to recruit. Furthermore, a culture of pre-arranged recruitment can create unfair power relationships within the affected departments, that persist after a person has been recruited - the phenomenon that "if you want to keep working here, you have to be nice to the right people".

At the same time, doctoral candidates are recruited for a four-year period, which is a long-term commitment both for the candidate and for the supervisor. The performance of doctoral candidates has consequences for the supervisor's own career advancement, and employing a doctoral candidate can be among the most expensive undertakings for any researcher, if the position is funded by their individual research funds. Therefore, **a preference to hire somebody with whom a good working relationship already exists should not necessarily be viewed as malicious.** Departments are aware that a wider discussion is needed on the process of recruiting doctoral candidates and matching them to projects and supervisors. For example, this was one of the focus areas of the Graduate Education Board of TekNat in 2019, which included a meeting in January 2020 for staff members in charge of graduate education to discuss best practice.

In the Funding section (see below), respondents were asked what the main source of funding is for their doctoral salary. Of the 26 respondents who indicated that their doctoral position had been agreed prior to formal application, none (0%) selected "Department funding" and 20 (77%) selected "My supervisor's research funds". The remaining six (23%) selected either "A mix of the above" or "I don't know where the money comes from". When looking at all 304 respondents, 95 (31%) have departmental funding, and 98 (32%) are funded by their supervisors' funds. It is evident, then, that **doctoral candidates financed with departmental resources are much more likely to be recruited in a transparent and competitive selection process than candidates financed by their supervisors' funds.** It can be noted that departmentally funded positions are often advertised in bulk, e.g. "eight doctoral candidates in Mathematics", whereas supervisor-funded positions are usually advertised individually, which also affects the dynamics of the recruitment process.

Among the ideas frequently heard to improve the fairness and transparency of doctoral recruitment is a more centralised recruitment processes: at department or faculty level, rather than managed by the supervisor, regardless of who funds the position. It is sometimes suggested that supervisors themselves should play no role in the selection process, as they are inherently biased. While these suggestions have merit, it is important to also consider the supervisors' position, particularly when they themselves are in early career stages. An overall more collegiate approach to doctoral education may be desirable, where departments rather than individual supervisors share in the responsibility and the credit – for the selection process, for the delivery of doctoral education and for the candidate's progression.

Free-text responses

The questionnaire did not ask about changes of supervisor, but nine respondents spontaneously indicated that they had had such a change (see below). The questions about supervisor relationship referred to the person *currently* supervising the respondent's work. This means that the positive picture about supervisor relationships in the above agree–disagree questions is not capturing any issues that may have arisen with a previous supervisor, prior to a change.

About supervision in general:

I think it creates a bad supervision relationship if discussions about wage lifts have to be taken with the supervisor. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

In general, I don't understand why officially we have three supervisors. I never heard of anyone being actually supervised by three people. It would be really great for us to have the support of three persons, but two are normally just names on the papers. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I very rarely see or have any contact with my supervisor. My impression is that they forget about me from time to time. [Department of Information Technology]

In six years of being supervised, I have certainly experienced occasions when my supervisor did not have time to consider my questions. However, this has not generally been the case, so I "disagree" with the statement above. [—]

I also get a lot of help and discussion from my fellow (more experienced) PhD students and postdocs, as these are more generally available, but I would not say that they supervise me. [Faculty of Medicine]

In the question "My supervisor cares about my doctoral education." I replied "Don't know" because I really don't know if my supervisor cares about my actual education or just cares for the papers and work I will produce... [Department of Organismal Biology]

Having three different supervisors, it is a little hard to answer the above questions as all three are involved in my supervision in very different ways. But I do very much appreciate my supervision and the possibility of deciding who to reach for when I encounter problems with my research. [Faculty of Arts]

It's one of my co-supervisors who does daily supervision. I would prefer to have that person as my main supervisor because my main supervisor clearly doesn't have time for me. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I do not think that my main supervisor has enough experience to be main supervisor (young and lacks docent competence). I have noticed this since my PhD project has changed direction many times and I have not been able to get the resources needed (in terms of e.g. lab equipment), this has been quite stressful. I notice a large difference compared to other more senior supervisors in my group who provide resources for lab equipment, research exchange etc. This complicates the relations between PhD students in the group. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

In general my supervisors do listen to me and care about my project as well as my career as a whole. At the same time, I could sometimes experience that I could get more support when it comes to an introduction to the research culture as an interdisciplinary student who, before her PhD, has moved from natural sciences to humanities. One of my supervisors is only employed 5% at my department and therefore seldom present, which makes it even more difficult to discuss spontaneously arising issues. [Faculty of Arts]

Since I have a lot of co-supervisors (three), we decided to have 3-4 meetings with everyone (similar to the ISP-evaluations [Individual Study Plan]) per year, so that everyone can be up-to-date on my work. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

The Faculty has been criticised for having a decentralised approach to the programme. It would benefit PhD students more if there was more structure in the programme as such, rather than everything/most things being the prerogative of the supervisor. [Faculty of Law]

I usually have good contact with my supervisor. Then they suddenly disappear for a period of time because of other duties. This not being aware of when I can get support and when I can't affects planning. While in theory they give me a lot of freedom in choosing which direction I want to take, in practice they really push towards directions that are closer to their own research (to then not really help me with these lines of work and drop their own parts in them). [Department of Information Technology]

My supervisor practises the "freedom under responsibility" strategy. It's frustrating at times but in the long run I'm happy with it because I get to be flexible and follow research paths not directly related to the main project. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Unfortunately my supervisors have limited influence on how the Uppsala University Hospital and ward managers work around part-time PhD students who also do clinical work. [Faculty of Medicine]

My supervisor has only studied at Uppsala and seems to find it uncomfortable to work with me as I am "new" here and I don't follow all of the unwritten rules. [—]

I feel highly dependent on my supervisor and exposed to my supervisors mood swings and the not always great side tracks. [Department of Organismal Biology]

Nobody supervises my daily work. I have two supervisors who are usually available if I require assistance. Otherwise, I have a lot of freedom to implement most parts of the research process. [—]

About conflicts and changes of supervisor:

I had to change both my main and assistant supervisors. The change of main supervisor was smooth and simply due to the fact they left the department early in my PhD, but when I had a bad conflict with my assistant supervisor, I think it could have been handled much better by the department. In general, even though I am completely satisfied with my new supervisors, I think there should be a better and more formal system for assessing how supervision is going, reporting problems with supervisors, and resolving conflicts with supervisors. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

The relationship with the supervisor has improved since I was on sick leave and the department was forced to step in. However, the bullying and isolation through supervision and the lack of care or concern shown by the department over a period of a few years before the impact of the toxic work environment affected my health in a severe manner that required me to go on sick leave is still very disturbing. It has reduced my trust in this university system and work environment, and the impact of this situation on my health is something I am still dealing with. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I had to change supervision after four years due to harassment and other problems. My answers apply to my new supervisor. [Faculty of Languages]

Earlier in my PhD, my main supervisor and co-supervisor switched roles. This was done as a peaceful settlement after I indicated that there were problems with supervision and I intended to request a change of supervisor. With my original main supervisor (now co-supervisor) there were issues of unreasonable workload, unfair criticism and generally a very bad atmosphere in the group. These issues affected not just me, but everyone in the group, to the point where it was not uncommon to see people crying in the office and we had periodic "support" meetings to help each other through the worst crises. [Department of Neuroscience]

I have severe problems with my supervision. My main supervisor has been on long term sick leave and my co-supervisor who also happens to be PI [Principal Investigator] in the project has been awful to me. It has now been decided that I should change supervisors (upon my demand, but also because I felt forced to by the professor's behaviour). My department is trying to find new supervisors and project for me, but the process is slow... and my PhD months are ticking... [—]

I changed supervisors after my first year because the communication between me and my former supervisor did not work at all. [Department of Information Technology]

The first years as a PhD student were quite different: I did have regular supervision, twice a term, but no one who answered questions in-between. Actually, they did not answer my questions when we had supervision either, all time was spent on telling me that my work proceeded too slowly. I felt terribly alone. What I couldn't find on Google (or the library), I never got. I tried to help my supervisors to supervise me, by sending them actual detailed reports with the problems I wanted to discuss at least one week before the supervision. I attached all they may need: the questionnaires I used, articles, links to books on the university library, scanned copies from books (i.e., a short summary of the statistical method). I spent almost a week to create these reports, to make the text clear, short and pedagogic, with each problem described as clearly as I could. But I did not get anything that helped me in my work. I do not think that they actually read any of the reports before the supervision. One of the supervisors had printed it out at several occasions, but most often, the first hour was spent letting the other supervisors read my report. The discussion afterwards were mostly about the text in the report (it was not a draft to an article, it was just an explanation of what I was doing, a background and descriptions of the problems I had; such as "when I am working with this questions in the questionnaire, I see that the answers are distributed like this which is not in line with this question, which is about almost the same topic, and my results will differ depending on which one I use, what is the best solution?"). Instead of discussing my problems (e.g., how to interpret the answers in the questionnaire, select the best question or how to combine them), the time was spent on how I had worded the report and my questions to the supervisors (here you have used bold text in describing the problem No. 1, but not in problem No. 2), and mostly reprimands that my work did not proceed as it should. The week after the supervision I usually spent on crying. [Faculty of Medicine]

My current supervisor is the best. My former supervisor was terrible. It feels like a lottery. [—]

I am not working in the project/PhD I applied for as after needing to change supervisor due to harassment and bullying I was not allowed to continue work on my project as the funding was theirs. I now have a supervisor who has no interest in my work or career or anything as I am not working on any of their projects as I had to secure my own funding. [—]

My main supervisor was changed by the department without my knowledge or approval. I found out a year after when filling in the ISP. [—]

I feel my supervisor is not very understanding and flexible regarding my work. If/when they are unhappy with me, they just stop responding to me, sometimes not even telling me that they will be away for several weeks, during which they do not respond to any of my e-mails. I feel like their expectations are very high and whenever they feel that I cannot reach them, then they "freeze" me out, which I think is very disheartening and unprofessional. There was also an incident regarding a previous PhD student, where the relationship between them became so bad that the supervisor was bullying the student. At the end the PhD student had to switch supervisors. It was a very difficult period for the student. I'm afraid this will happen to me too. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

For my 1st year I was registered under one supervisor but I really worked predominantly with another (who was not originally allowed to be main, because of lacking docent competence). After one year we were able to switch that person from assistant to main supervisor. [Faculty of Medicine]

About recruitment:

I had my research project and looked for a supervisor at UU. I was referred to my supervisor by a friend working at Akademiska. [Department of Neuroscience]

Although it was agreed that I would get it, I might not have gotten it if someone more qualified had applied for it, since there is still a public/open competition. [Faculty of Medicine]

Workload

It is common knowledge that doctoral candidates often work more hours than officially contracted, and often work weekends, generally without receiving any additional pay.

Overtime

To attempt a quantification of overtime work, we asked respondents how many hours per week they officially work, and how many hours they actually work (see Table 12 for the exact question text).

Table 12

How many hours per week do you officially work on your PhD?

This includes research, teaching and administrative duties. Full-time = 100% = 40 hours per week.

How many hours per week do you actually work on your PhD? (Again, this includes research, teaching and administrative duties.)

If this is a lot more than your answer to the previous question, please tell us why! Use the "Any other comments" box at the bottom of the page.

	< 20	20	21-39	40	n
UU	2%	6%	6%	86%	252
HS	2%	1%	9%	88%	80
MF	4%	20%	2%	73%	49
TN	0%	4%	6%	90%	104
FA	0%	0%	0%	100%	20
FE	0%	0%	27%	73%	11
FG	9%	0%	9%	82%	11
FC	0%	3%	10%	86%	29
FM	6%	29%	3%	62%	34
FP	0%	0%	0%	100%	15
DED	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	0%	18%	9%	73%	11
DFB	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	0%	0%	0%	100%	10
DPA	0%	0%	20%	80%	15
DEN	0%	0%	0%	100%	17
DIT	0%	0%	18%	82%	17

	< 20	20	21-39	40	41-50	> 50	n
UU	2%	3%	16%	35%	35%	8%	236
HS	3%	0%	20%	35%	33%	9%	75
MF	2%	10%	17%	31%	27%	12%	48
TN	0%	3%	14%	37%	41%	5%	98
FA	0%	0%	0%	44%	50%	6%	18
FE	0%	0%	27%	45%	27%	0%	11
FG	9%	0%	36%	45%	9%	0%	11
FC	0%	0%	19%	19%	41%	22%	27
FM	3%	15%	21%	27%	30%	3%	33
FP	0%	0%	7%	40%	20%	33%	15
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	0%	10%	30%	10%	40%	10%	10
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	0%	0%	10%	30%	60%	0%	10
DPA	0%	0%	23%	23%	54%	0%	13
DEN	0%	0%	19%	44%	31%	6%	16
DIT	0%	0%	12%	44%	38%	6%	16

Responses were collected as whole numbers, and are grouped in ranges in these tables. Official working hours of 0, or greater than 40, are excluded.

The majority (86%) of all respondents report officially working 40 hours per week, i.e. full-time. Part-time PhDs are most common at the Faculty of Medicine (27% of respondents; note that clinical candidates are under-represented in this survey, so the true proportion of part-time PhDs is likely to be even higher).

Several respondents had lower values for the actual hours than the official hours, and free-text comments showed that they interpreted the question in a different way than we intended: official hours as the contracted working hours (e.g. 40 h/wk for full-time) and actual hours as official hours minus partial absence, such as for parental leave or sick leave. These responses are excluded from the following analysis on overtime.

Overall, **54% of respondents indicate they work more in practice than their officially contracted working hours, and 29% work at least a quarter more** (for example, at least 50 h/wk on a 40 h/wk contract). Responses are uniform across disciplinary domains, although **overtime of 35% or more is more common at MedFarm (22%)** than elsewhere (9%).

Free-text comments indicate that many respondents feel **overtime is normally expected from doctoral candidates as an inevitable aspect of work in academia**. Others describe overwork as a voluntary choice to achieve a higher standard of work or accumulate additional merits. It could however be argued that this is not genuinely voluntary: working to a high standard and accumulating the merits necessary for career progression ought to be possible within ordinary working hours.

Table 13
Overtime as a percentage of official employment rate

	0%	2-10%	11-20%	25%	35-50%	60-90%	100%	<i>n</i>
UU	46%	6%	18%	18%	9%	1%	1%	214
HS	46%	1%	21%	19%	7%	3%	1%	67
MF	43%	4%	17%	13%	17%	2%	2%	46
TN	45%	11%	17%	19%	7%	0%	0%	88
FA	44%	0%	28%	22%	0%	0%	6%	18
FE	64%	0%	18%	18%	0%	0%	0%	11
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	20%	4%	24%	24%	20%	8%	3%	25
FM	44%	6%	16%	19%	12%	0%	0%	32
FP	43%	0%	21%	0%	29%	7%	0%	14
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	36%	27%	18%	18%	0%	0%	0%	11
DEN	54%	8%	15%	15%	8%	0%	0%	13
DIT	44%	19%	25%	6%	6%	0%	0%	16

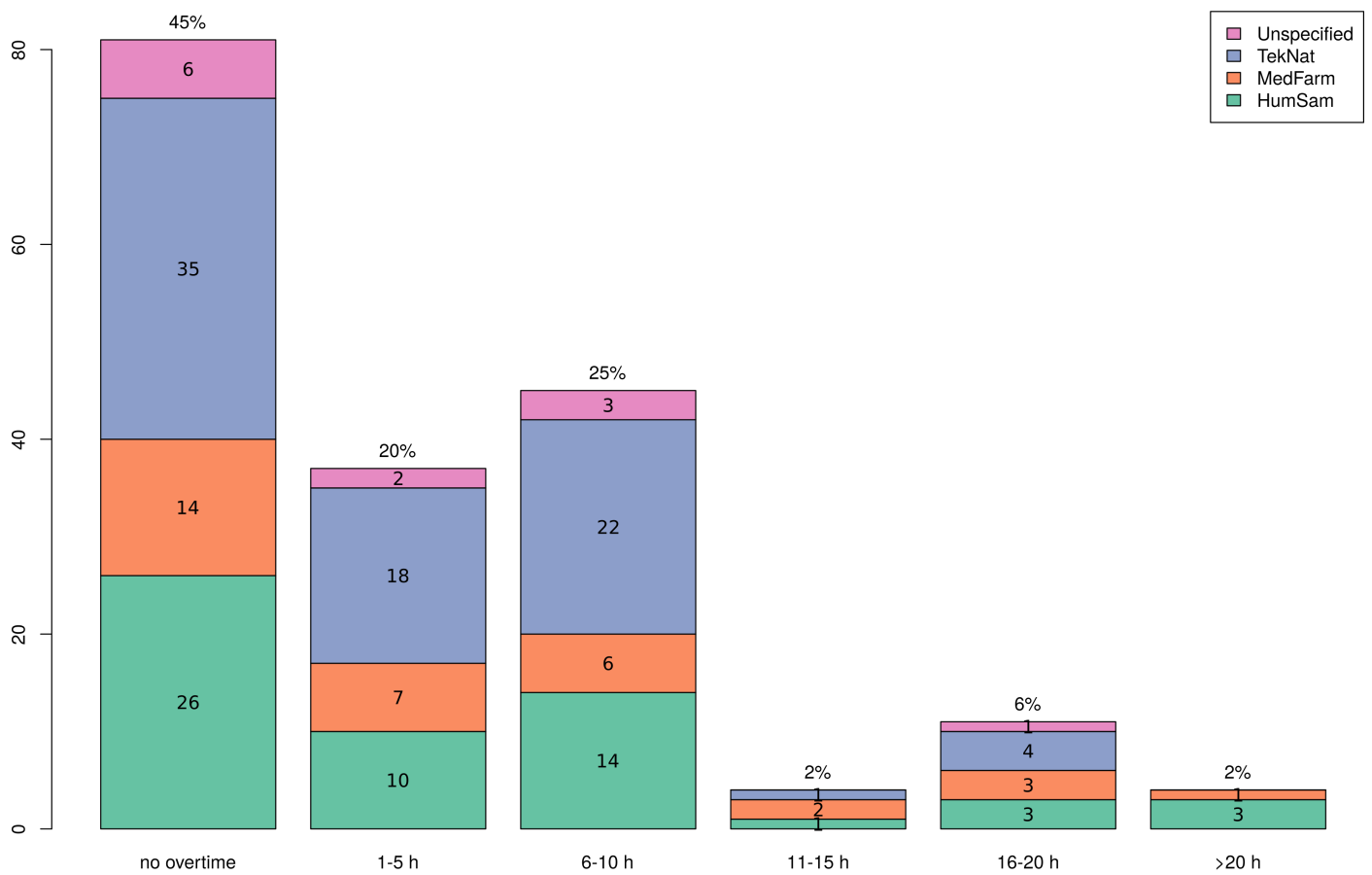
Overtime percentages computed from responses to the questions in Table 12: $((\text{actual} / \text{official}) - 1)$.

The ranges shown include all responses (for example, there were no responses over 25% but below 35%).

Responses where actual < official are excluded.

The table above shows overtime in relative terms (as percentage of official working time). The graph below shows overtime in absolute terms (number of hours of overtime), including only those respondents who work 40h/wk officially, i.e., full-time.

Number of overwork hours for PhD students employed full-time (40 hours / week)



The percentages on top of each bar represent the proportion of non NA answers for each of the overtime categories.
The numbers on each bar represent the number of answers.

Weekend work

To better understand work during weekends, we asked respondents "Do you work on weekends?", with seven possible answers describing different circumstances (Table 14). It was possible to select more than one of these.

Table 14

Do you work on weekends?

	No	Sometimes - only way	Sometimes - technical reasons	Sometimes - by choice	Most weekends	Supervisor's urging	Compensated
UU	97 (35%)	124 (44%)	49 (17%)	123 (44%)	37 (13%)	8 (3%)	14 (5%)
HS	25 (29%)	44 (51%)	2 (2%)	38 (44%)	18 (21%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)
MF	21 (37%)	19 (33%)	22 (39%)	29 (51%)	5 (9%)	3 (5%)	4 (7%)
TN	46 (40%)	48 (42%)	24 (21%)	47 (41%)	10 (9%)	2 (2%)	8 (7%)
FA	5 (24%)	11 (52%)	0 (0%)	12 (57%)	7 (33%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
FE	5 (42%)	5 (42%)	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
FG	7 (64%)	5 (45%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
FC	6 (20%)	18 (60%)	1 (3%)	11 (37%)	9 (30%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)
FM	14 (36%)	11 (28%)	13 (33%)	21 (54%)	4 (10%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)
FP	7 (39%)	8 (44%)	9 (50%)	8 (44%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	3 (17%)
DED	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DNR	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
DFB	3 (30%)	5 (50%)	8 (80%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (30%)
DEA	7 (64%)	5 (45%)	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEG	3 (27%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	3 (27%)
DOB	3 (25%)	8 (67%)	5 (42%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
DPA	10 (62%)	3 (19%)	4 (25%)	5 (31%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)
DEN	9 (53%)	5 (29%)	2 (12%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)
DIT	4 (22%)	11 (61%)	0 (0%)	9 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- No, except maybe if there are very exceptional circumstances.
- Sometimes I have to work on weekends, because it is the only way to finish all the work.
- Sometimes I have to work on weekends for technical reasons (for example: because of laboratory equipment that needs continuous supervision).
- Sometimes I choose to work on weekends (for example: because there is less distraction).
- I work most weekends.
- My supervisor sometimes tells me (or strongly "suggests") that I should work on the weekend.
- When I work weekends, I get extra pay or extra time off as compensation.

Working during weekends is common: **65% of respondents work at least some weekends, and 13% work most weekends** (most common at HumSam, 21%). Of those who work at least some weekends, **only 5% receive compensation** in the form of extra pay or extra time off.

The most commonly cited reasons for working weekends are that it is the only way to finish the work (44%) or by choice (44%; "for example: because there is less distraction"). For some, there are technical reasons ("for example ... equipment that needs continuous supervision"): 39% of MedFarm respondents and 21% of TekNat respondents work weekends for this reason.

It is not frequent that work during weekends is requested or urged by the supervisor (only 3%). This is positive, and suggests that any pressure to do additional work is coming from the candidates themselves, not from their supervisors. Recall, however, that 24% of campus-based respondents indicated that it is difficult to concentrate in their workplace (see [→Workplace quality and comfort](#)), and it should cause concern that this appears to be a reason for weekend work.

Collective agreements leave some room for interpretation regarding entitlement to additional compensation for doctoral candidates who have to work during weekends. The agreements expressly state that scheduled *teaching* in the evenings (after 18:00) and on Saturdays and Sundays is grounds for additional compensation (150 kr per teaching hour)⁵. Regarding *research* work, it is generally accepted that voluntary weekend work is not compensated, but that *obekvämtidstillägg* (a.k.a. "ob-tillägg" – additional compensation for uncomfortable working hours) should be paid out if the work is mandated (*beordrat*), that is, the work is required by the supervisor or is made necessary by unavoidable circumstances for which the candidate is not responsible. The 49 respondents university-wide who indicate that they sometimes work weekends "for technical reasons (for example: because of laboratory equipment that needs continuous supervision)" **should all be entitled to compensation, however, in the majority of cases (86%) no compensation is paid.**

Comparing disciplinary domains, weekend work is most common at HumSam (71%), and the same domain has the highest fraction of respondents working most weekends (21%, compared to 9% in the other two disciplinary domains). Very few respondents in this domain have technical reasons for working on weekends. **More than half of all HumSam respondents indicate that weekend work is the only way to finish all the work** (51%).

Workload: focus on clinical PhDs

We included five items specifically addressed to PhD students with clinical employment, as we suspected that these students might have specific issues, for example incompatibilities between their clinical employment and attendance at research seminars. The questionnaire stated: "This question is only for those of you who have clinical employment (doctor, nurse etc.) while simultaneously doing a PhD. Everybody else, please skip this question." The question included five agree-disagree items.

These questions were answered by 31 respondents. We expected these would be overwhelmingly from the Faculty of Medicine. Surprisingly, 10 were from HumSam, 5 from TekNat and only 9 from MedFarm, of whom only 4 from the Faculty of Medicine. Of all 31 respondents, 13 report their main workplace as "Akademiska hospital, or other clinical location in Sweden" – this includes 7 HumSam respondents, and 2 Faculty of Medicine respondents. Note that it is not unheard of for clinical researchers at Akademiska to also have a workplace in a university campus setting, typically at BMC or at the Rudbeck laboratory. Respondents may have selected "University campus" as their main workplace *for doctoral education*, even though they spend more of their time working as clinicians in hospital.

The unexpected demographic of respondents here may indicate a surprisingly large number of interdisciplinary PhDs in clinical settings, or some unserious respondents who should have skipped these questions. Either way, the total number of respondents is so small that it is difficult to draw any conclusions here. For these reasons we are not reporting response numbers.

5 [Lokalt kollektivavtal om arbetstid och arbetstidsberoende ersättningar för lärare](#) (Local collective agreement on working time and compensation in relation to working time for teaching staff), 3.2 §

Considering all 31 respondents, the general pattern of responses is as follows:

- "My clinical work schedule allows sufficient time for me to do my PhD." Responses are scattered from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.
- "Sometimes I have to miss interesting PhD events, such as seminars or conferences, due to my clinical work schedule." Responses generally agree with the statement.
- "I expect to continue doing clinical work after I finish my PhD." Responses overwhelmingly agree with the statement.
- "I expect to continue doing research after I finish my PhD." Responses are scattered from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.
- "I am doing a PhD mainly because it is required for progression in my clinical career." Responses overwhelmingly disagree with the statement.

Part of the intention of these questions was to specifically reach out to clinical candidates within the Faculty of Medicine. It is clear that we obtained very few responses from that group (see [→Demographics and recruitment bias](#)).

Free-text responses

Some recurring themes were: it is difficult to estimate how much you work; it is expected (from the supervisor, from your colleagues etc.) to work overtime, or it is impossible to manage everything without working overtime; work schedules are often irregular/flexible, which many respondents view positively.

One take-home message might be that not many keep track of the time spent at work and on different activities (teaching, administration, representation etc.) which might be a first step towards a good work-life balance – not an impossible goal according to some of the respondents.

One interesting comment on evening/weekend work describes a situation in a group project, where some colleagues voluntarily work on evenings and weekends, and therefore it becomes necessary for the respondent to be present at those times, if they want to remain involved and up-to-date on the project.

About combining PhD and clinical work:

I rely on ALF to pay for my salary when I have time for research. The ALF funding is distributed equally to all researchers in the group by FoU-rådet [Forsknings- och utvecklingsrådet, Research and development board]. Usually 2 weeks time per year. [—] [Note: ALF funding (Avtal om läkarutbildning och forskning, Agreement on medical education and research) is paid by the Swedish government to local county councils to finance teaching and research time for clinical staff.⁶]

It does not work well to work shifts on the side of PhD work, seminars, conferences and deadlines. Exhaustion from clinical work affects PhD Project. Clinical schedule is determined 1–6 months in advance. [Faculty of Medicine]

I have to work on my PhD in the periods I am working full time at the clinic as well, but when I get research time I try to compensate myself a bit, maybe finishing at 3 pm on Fridays instead to make it closer to 40 hours per week in total. My supervisors do not tell me to work a lot with the PhD when I am working at the clinic, just to do things that are necessary but sometimes that requires weekends. Next year I will only have maybe 25% of research, and not 50% as I have right now. [Faculty of Medicine]

6 <https://sahlgrenska.gu.se/om-fakulteten/alf-medel/vad-ar-alf> (Swedish)
<https://www.medfarm.uu.se/samverkan/alf/> (Swedish)

Two half-time jobs is more than one full time job. It is never enough on either job. There are always comments about the fact that I am not as available as I should be. I am often told that I should work less on my other job (my supervisors think I am at the clinic too much, and my clinical boss tells me I should spend more time at the clinic and less on research). And my family tells me I should spend more time with my family and less with work... [Faculty of Medicine]

About the difficult of estimating workload:

It is difficult to assess the real number of hours worked. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is difficult to estimate working hours. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is hard to specify the actual workload. It can vary a lot from week to week. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

About expected / imposed overtime work:

There is no way to avoid the extra work. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I actually work 48 hours per week. This is because I am working 100% on my PhD, and have additional 20% of teaching. Since I am on a scholarship, the 20% of teaching are added on top of my 100% PhD work, i.e. I get payment for teaching, but no prolongation. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I work more than 40 hours per week, because this is clearly expected. Everyone else works more than 40 hours, my supervisor expects it, and even by working 55 hours per week, I still barely have enough time to finish what I have to do. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The Academic Teacher Training Course, which is mandatory in our department, has a very inflexible schedule with mandatory attendance. This is very stressful because we cannot stop the research world just to take a course for a couple of months. We still have deadlines, conferences, teaching etc. This means that (unpaid) overtime is often necessary. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

There is no way 40 hours are enough especially if you are involved in more activities within the University such as working groups and student councils. To be able to maintain your research going towards publication and catching up on literature read in your field the extra hours add up quickly. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

I am mainly working more during time of teaching. I am teaching quite a lot half days, but need more than half a day to perform experiments. To get at least some progress during teaching times (almost half a year), I am working more hours and on weekends during these periods. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Teaching or administration takes a lot more time than what you are officially awarded. Deadlines often tend to group up. There is no time for 'thinking' - only for producing (in my case) text. [—]

I work more than 40 hours each week because things need to get done. Teaching usually takes up more time than it is supposed to (i.e. than what we are compensated for). [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I have too many comments. The following ought to suffice: At the moment of completing this survey I am supervising approximately 20 students on advanced level (master degree level students). As I am a researcher in a non-life science discipline there is admittedly more flexibility in organising work since supervision does not occur in a lab etc. Nevertheless, 20 students is ten times more than two students. [Faculty of Law]

I can choose when I work (if it's not teaching) and that means I can choose not to work on weekends, or take a day off during the week and work one in the weekend instead. I may work extra one particular weekend if we have a deadline, but always taking a day off later. However, it really affects work-life balance that other colleagues don't work for said deadline until the weekend. Then I can't participate in the work unless I work during the weekend myself, and if I'm first author I have to be checking that nobody gets sick or stops working for other reasons in which case I need to step in for them (during the weekend as well). The same happens with evenings and late nights. So while nobody forces us to work during weekends, finding the balance to make our schedule work with other people's schedule can be quite hard sometimes. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is expected that a PhD student works more than 40 hours per week. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Sometimes to keep up with courses and research you have to work more than eight hours per day and also on weekend. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Sometimes teaching and administrative duties consume most of my time. Sometimes, this doesn't allow me to focus properly on my research. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I take on extra duties of administrative work, and I also teach in periods, as well as doing other career-related activity, such as working on publications, papers and applications. This takes a lot of time which comes in addition to the work I am expected to do as a PhD, that is, my actual thesis and the seminars, plus studies. [Faculty of Arts]

About irregular / flexible work schedules:

I'm a relatively chaotic person with a chaotic work schedule. Many times I will just work 15 hours Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, then take it easy the rest of the week. Sometimes I have weeks when I'm at work almost all the time, then others even when I'm at the office but just hang out with my workmates and relax. For me the inspiration to do my work, motivation, instrument availability, other things to do... all of it varies, and I enjoy going with the flow. I just check-in with myself every few months to see if there has been progress. PhDs have non-linear progressions, and that is fine by me. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I work slightly more than 40 hours per week (it depends on the week). Sometimes I just have a lot of energy or a good idea and work a bit in the weekend. [Faculty of Medicine]

I'm a single parent of two kids, when they are at the other parent's place, I work up to 12 hours/day and on at least one weekend day to compensate for working around five hours the weeks I have my kids at my place. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Previous years I've worked rather 42 hours/week. Since I got pregnant I don't have as much energy, and then my head of division has said that I can unofficially work slightly less, instead of getting part-time sick leave. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Some weeks I work more than 40 hours, some weeks less. I have a very flexible schedule... I come and go as I want. No one checks. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The amount of time available for work on dissertation varies a lot from week to week. [—]

It is difficult to estimate the actual number of hours put into work when I'm in the late stages of writing up my dissertation. It may vary quite a lot from week to week depending on the circumstances. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I work less than 40 hours per week now because I have just started my PhD and am still waiting for deliveries etc. I expect to work around 40 hours after they arrive. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

If I have extraordinary work hours, I usually compensate that later (e.g. by taking a day off during the week), in order to stick to a 40 hour week. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I come early and leave late as it is less busy, and hence less distracting, during those times of the day, owing to how crowded it is around here. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Working most weekends is a way to ensure I work the hours needed. Sometimes I only work 35 hours on the weekdays, then I make up for it in the weekend. Or sometimes I take a full day off on a weekday, and then work on a Saturday or Sunday. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I would say I work 35-45 hours per week. If I work overtime one week I always balance it out on other weeks. I've realised I'm not in this to win a Nobel Prize so I quite enjoy doing "good enough" and having a flexible work schedule. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

If I have to work weekends for particular reasons with my PhD project, I later compensate that extra time with time off during the week. [Faculty of Medicine]

Self-imposed overtime:

A considerable part of my workload is self-imposed. I could have gone to fewer conferences and published fewer papers. [—]

I work a lot of weekends, but it is completely by choice. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I work a bit more than the official 100% because I feel like I wouldn't get everything done otherwise, and I want to use the time I have as a salaried PhD student to do as many things as possible. I don't do it because of pressure from my supervision or my department, it is rather my choice to spend more time on research. [Faculty of Arts]

Sometimes I work more hours because I am excited about my project. [Faculty of Medicine]

I work on weekends mostly because I am not very efficient. I get easily distracted and this is the best way for me to do things. [Faculty of Medicine]

I take out part time salary while working more than full time due to fear of running out of funding before I finish my PhD. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Due to the negative social experiences that generally permeate this country, my partner and I wish to leave as soon as possible. Therefore, I am doing everything I can to finish sooner. [—]

I want to put in more work than planned and because I am industrial PhD student and my company is supportive, it works out fine. [—]

About work-life balance:

I feel that although my department has high standards and high expectations, there is also a clear understanding that work life balance is important, and I do not feel under pressure to adhere to an excessive extra work schedule. [—]

In many cases, not working on weekends is a choice. I see PhD colleagues who work all weekends because they decided to procrastinate/not work full eight hours work days during the week. While I am fully aware that there are many projects - specifically in the natural sciences and medicine - where the nature of the work (experiments, etc.) leaves no option but to work on weekends as well, there are also many students who choose a lifestyle of working everyday of the week - albeit not efficiently - and do not set boundaries between their personal and professional life. [—]

As a second year student I am strongly sticking to a 40 hours work schedule because I believe it is best for my mental and physical health - and also I believe the quality of my work decreases if I work more than this. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Others comments:

Last year, I was on sick leave due to a burnout. Officially, I now work full time, but I actually work less than 40 hours per week, often 30-35 hours per week, which my supervisors knows. A few years ago, I worked most weekends, but nowadays I rarely work on weekends. [—]

I am currently working 10 hours due to sick-leave (burnout). Before my sick leave I officially worked 40 hours/week but in reality much more. [—]

I am on stipend so officially I have no working hours nor days off. [—]

The following comment was given in the section on [→Language](#), but is relevant here to illustrate the different cultures concerning working hours:

Talking about "paid working hours" is very difficult for many doctoral students. I think those terms are most relevant for TekNat candidates working in projects. My work description is "we like your idea; here you have five years, a room and a computer; write us a really good dissertation about it, or about something else if you get a better idea along the way". No-one defines my working hours more than that, so it is not relevant whether my superiors regards any of my time as working hours or not. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

Funding

Employment status and sources of funding

Doctoral candidates at Uppsala university are generally paid in one of three different ways: either employed by the University, or employed elsewhere with an allocation of paid working time to pursue doctoral education, or receiving a stipend or bursary. The latter group are typically paid less, and are excluded from the social security benefits normally available to people working in Sweden: sick pay, paid parental leave, unemployment insurance (*A-kassa*), pension credit. This creates a situation where two doctoral candidates may be working side by side on the same project but under very different economic conditions. For these reasons, there has been a pushback in recent years against stipend/bursary funding, with trade unions and student organisations calling for all doctoral candidates to have employment contracts.

The majority (85%) of respondents in our survey report being employed by Uppsala University. Other organisations or companies employ 5% of respondents; a further **5% depend on stipends or bursaries**; 4% report other types of employment, which includes co-funding by Uppsala University and another organisation; 1% have exhausted their funding, but have not completed their doctoral education yet (Table 15).

External employment was most common among respondents in the Faculty of Medicine. Stipends and bursaries were most common in HumSam, and least common in TekNat.

Bearing in mind that the response rate from clinically employed candidates was very low (see [→Interpretation of results](#)), the true proportion of externally employed candidates is probably higher. The majority of these would be employed as clinicians by Uppsala County Council, with an allocation of research time within their clinical employment.

Table 15

How are you currently being paid for your work as a doctoral candidate? *

	Employed by UU	Employed by other organisation	Stipend / bursary	Funding exhausted	Other
UU	234 (85%)	13 (5%)	14 (5%)	4 (1%)	10 (4%)
HS	72 (84%)	1 (1%)	8 (9%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)
MF	41 (72%)	9 (16%)	3 (5%)	0 (0%)	4 (7%)
TN	106 (93%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)
FA	17 (81%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)
FE	11 (92%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
FG	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
FC	22 (73%)	0 (0%)	5 (17%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)
FM	23 (59%)	9 (23%)	3 (8%)	0 (0%)	4 (10%)
FP	18 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DED	9 (90%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)
DNR	7 (64%)	4 (36%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DFB	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEA	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEG	10 (91%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DOB	12 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DPA	15 (94%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)
DEN	16 (94%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DIT	16 (89%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- Employed by Uppsala University
- Employed by another organisation or company
- Stipend or bursary (no employment contract)
- I have exhausted my funding, but am still not finished
- Other

Table 16

What is the main source of funding for your salary or bursary? *

	Department	Supervisor	External	Mixed	Don't know	Funding exhausted	Other
UU	95 (35%)	98 (36%)	18 (7%)	29 (11%)	22 (8%)	4 (1%)	9 (3%)
HS	53 (62%)	11 (13%)	7 (8%)	5 (6%)	3 (3%)	3 (3%)	4 (5%)
MF	9 (16%)	25 (44%)	7 (12%)	8 (14%)	6 (11%)	0 (0%)	2 (4%)
TN	21 (18%)	61 (54%)	4 (4%)	13 (11%)	11 (10%)	1 (1%)	3 (3%)
FA	14 (67%)	1 (5%)	3 (14%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
FE	10 (83%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (17%)
FG	9 (82%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
FC	11 (37%)	9 (30%)	2 (7%)	3 (10%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)
FM	4 (10%)	17 (44%)	6 (15%)	7 (18%)	3 (8%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)
FP	5 (28%)	8 (44%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DED	8 (80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)
DNR	1 (9%)	5 (45%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DFB	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEA	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEG	0 (0%)	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DOB	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DPA	2 (13%)	9 (56%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEN	4 (24%)	11 (65%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DIT	4 (22%)	8 (44%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	3 (17%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- Department funding
- My supervisor's research funds
- I have my own external funding, for example industry funding or a scholarship awarded to me
- A mix of the above
- I don't know where the money comes from
- I have exhausted my funding
- Other

Doctoral positions paid by the University are typically funded in one of two ways: either from the departmental budget, which is funded by so-called basic grants (*basanslag*), or through competitive funding awarded to the supervisor. The proportion between these two sources of funding is a central question in Swedish higher education politics, as it affects security of employment, academic freedom and research quality⁷.

Department funding accounts for 62% of respondents in HumSam but <20% of respondents in both MedFarm and TekNat (Table 16).

From the doctoral candidate's point of view, the funding source affects the relationship (balance of power) with the supervisor, starting from recruitment – see [→Relationship with supervisors and mentors](#).

7 <https://campi.kth.se/en/nyheter/mer-basanslag-ger-bast-forskning-1.809969> (English)
<https://sulf.se/ledare-i-universitetslararen/akademisk-frihet-och-starkt-kollegialitet-maste-fa-ta-tid/> (Swedish)

Work expenses

The overwhelming majority (92%) of doctoral candidates receive at least some funding from their department or supervisor toward work expenses such as computer equipment, travel and publication charges.

Up to a point, such expenses are a necessary and unavoidable part of doctoral education, for example travel to conferences and thesis printing. Additional expenses can become an issue of negotiation between the candidate and the supervisor: a new computer, book purchases, or travel to conferences that the supervisor considers non-essential. The free-text comments cited below include examples of how disagreement on funding priorities can escalate conflicts with supervisors.

Some departments give their doctoral candidates a small expenses budget of their own. This can be a one-off block grant, known as "rucksack money" (*ryggsäckspengar*; one respondent quoted the amount of 50 000 kr). The Faculty of Medicine distributes a non-competitive yearly bursary (*ograduerade medel*) in amounts that vary between 6 000–18 000 kr depending on research field. Free-text comments suggest that respondents appreciate the autonomy that these grants provide. It is unclear how many departments offer this type of funding, and this could be an area for future investigation.

External scholarships and bursaries include, for example, travel grants from learned societies and charities. Use of such funding was reported by 40% of respondents, consistently across all disciplinary domains. It is unclear whether the remaining 60% do not apply for such funding, or are unsuccessful.

In principle, doctoral candidates should not ever have to pay for work expenses with their own money. Of course, candidates cannot be prevented from attending additional conferences or buying a new computer out of personal funds. It is important, then, to establish that these purchases are genuinely voluntary, rather than supplementing inadequate funding for essential expenses. **Of our respondents, 15% report paying at least some expenses with their own money.** This is most common at HumSam (29%, compared to only 5% at TekNat and MedFarm).

Table 17

Who pays for your work expenses? *

This includes things like: computer, other equipment, travel to conferences/fieldwork, publication charges etc.

Please choose all that apply.

	Supervisor / department	External	Bursaries	Own money
UU	252 (92%)	11 (4%)	111 (40%)	7 (15%)
HS	75 (87%)	4 (5%)	37 (43%)	25 (29%)
MF	52 (91%)	3 (5%)	22 (39%)	3 (5%)
TN	108 (95%)	3 (3%)	42 (37%)	6 (5%)
FA	17 (81%)	1 (5%)	8 (38%)	8 (38%)
FE	10 (83%)	1 (8%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)
FG	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	5 (45%)	2 (18%)
FC	28 (93%)	1 (3%)	12 (40%)	8 (27%)
FM	35 (90%)	2 (5%)	16 (41%)	3 (8%)
FP	17 (94%)	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	0 (0%)
DED	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	2 (20%)
DNR	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)
DFB	10 (100%)	0 (0%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)
DEA	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)
DEG	8 (73%)	0 (0%)	9 (82%)	2 (18%)
DOB	12 (100%)	0 (0%)	8 (67%)	1 (8%)
DPA	16 (100%)	0 (0%)	7 (44%)	0 (0%)
DEN	17 (100%)	0 (0%)	5 (29%)	0 (0%)
DIT	17 (94%)	1 (6%)	6 (33%)	1 (6%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- Funding from my supervisor or department
- Contracted external financing, such as an industry employer
- Scholarships, bursaries etc. that I apply for
- I pay with my own money

See also the free-text comments, below.

HumSam respondents are also the least likely to receive funds from a department or supervisor (13% did not tick this option), which suggests that some candidates may be having to invest their own money to cover essential work expenses.

Free-text responses

Two important issues emerge in the free-text comments that were not covered by our questions: overhead and *traktamente*.

Charging **overhead expenses on external grants** can be thought of as a "tax" charged by the department or faculty. For example, if a 30% overhead is charged, then a person who is awarded a 100 000 kr grant will receive 70 000 kr, while 30 000 kr go into the department or faculty budget. Overhead charges are normal practice in many departments for external project grants awarded to faculty staff, but are not usually applied to grants or bursaries that doctoral candidates receive for such things as travel expenses, as reported by one of our respondents. One reason this can be problematic is that travel grants are often paid in block amounts (*schablonbelopp*) suitable for their stated purpose: for example, a grant for attending a conference in Europe may be 6 000 kr, which reasonably covers air travel and hotel accommodation for most destinations. If overhead expenses are deducted from such a grant, then the amount is no longer suitable for the intended purpose, and the grant becomes ineffective unless it is supplemented with other funding. This issue merits further investigation.

Persons employed by the university **receive *traktamente* when travelling for work**⁸. This is a reimbursement for the additional personal expenses that inevitably arise when someone has to be away from home. It is a known issue at the University that departments formally or informally have different policies on *traktamente*, despite contractual obligations. One respondent reported receiving nothing at all, and another reported that the department deducts the expense from the individual's personal research budget. The economic effect is very small for most doctoral candidates, who only travel a few days per year. Candidates whose research requires longer journeys (field trips etc.) can be more severely affected.

About salary:

Fun fact: Marie Curie fellowship PhDs are paid less at Uppsala University than candidates paid according to doktorandstegen [the doctoral salary ladder]. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

0:- income. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Not entirely clear where my funding comes from, technically my salary has been booked against various external grants over the years although my project does not correspond to the stated goal of any of these. This is just a technical manoeuvre that has no effect on me or my projects, however. [Faculty of Medicine]

My salary funding comes 2/3rds from research grants that I applied for under my supervisor's name and is supported partially by my supervisor's own research funding. [Faculty of Medicine]

About funding for work expenses:

During the first years of my PhD, I paid for conferences with my own money because my supervisor forbade me from going, even though it was in the best interests of my research development to go. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

⁸ Villkorsavtal-T 10 kap.

<https://www.arbetsgivarverket.se/globalassets/avtal-skrifter/centralaavtal/villkorsavtal-t/villkorsavtal-t-saco-s-3.1-.pdf>

The funding is available, but only if you have strong supervisor support. In an unhealthy work environment, this is not always guaranteed. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Research grants that I have applied for under my supervisors name. [Faculty of Medicine]

Computers / lab equipment come from my supervisors' funding, office supplies from the division, and travel / conference fees from scholarships. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I work abroad about two months per year but my supervisor does not pay me any utlandstraktamente [expenses allowance for foreign travel]. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The department funding for expenses is only available twice a year, which makes it difficult when calls for papers arrive at inconvenient times. [—]

Very hard to get funding in my group, only VR [Swedish Research Council] money possible which hasn't been granted to anyone in the group within the last 4(?) years. [Department of Physics and Astronomy]

We get funding from the department, which is great. All doctoral students have "ryggsäckspengar" ["rucksack money"], a total amount of 50 000 SEK. I have also applied for scholarships, and sometimes I pay some equipment with my own money. [Faculty of Languages]

Our department is lacking money so they cut the PhD candidates travel fund - if we need to travel for work we either need to spend time applying for scholarships/stipends or pay ourselves. I don't think the same rule applies to senior staff. [—]

My department now charges students 'overhead' which is currently set at around 50% of a grant. The department instituted this post-hoc, i.e., they took 50% of grant moneys that had been planned and awarded prior to the change in policy, so that grants that did not have an overhead budget (because it wasn't required at the time) were retroactively charged half their value. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

I always get the funding from stipends or supervisors research money. That's the best part about my PhD! [Faculty of Pharmacy]

No equipment funding. [Faculty of Medicine]

Throughout my entire PhD, I have been working on my private laptop as I was only provided with a stationary computer in a very noisy office environment (no options were given, even though I know that people who are funded as part of a project at my unit could choose a laptop, and PhD students at other departments were asked and had a say). A stationary PC is not helpful at all, as it doesn't allow me to do my work - especially if I have to attend PhD courses or present at conferences outside the department. But there was no room for discussion or any other options to choose from for me. For conference trips abroad that are paid for by department scholarships (which you have to apply for) or from a fund provided by the department to all PhD students in the beginning (a fixed sum to be used over the course of the PhD), we are DIScouraged to take out traktamente (if we do, it comes from our individual budget allocated for travel throughout the entirety of the PhD and reduces the remaining amount that is available for travel). [—]

The money allocated for conferences, fieldwork and equipment is very small. Only enough for one international conference. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

PhD courses

Required course credits

The proportion of taught content versus research time in doctoral education differs by subject area. Intending to map this out, we asked the respondents: "*According to your Individual Study Plan, how many ECTS credits of courses do you have to do? This includes seminars, conferences, reading and other activities that your department gives you ECTS credits for.*" (Table 18).

To our knowledge, there is no comprehensive listing of the number of credits required for each programme at UU. When researching that information, we noticed that some doctoral programme syllabi (*ämnestudieplan*) state a required amount of course content, while others are less clear.

Responses in the survey included substantial variation even within departments, and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Some respondents could simply be confused about course credits. The question referred to the ISP, not the syllabus, which means that responses may include courses that are not compulsory in terms of the syllabus, but were required by the supervisor for the specific project, or even were chosen freely by the candidate. For example, one respondent from the Department of Organismal Biology reported 60 credits, while the syllabus for Biology requires 40 credits.

After removing ranges (three respondents) and answers like "I do not know" (eight respondents), many answers remained that seemed unlikely, such as numbers with half credits (e.g. 66.5). We decided to further clean the data in order to improve readability. Outlying answers ($n < 3$) were removed if the respondents were from different departments. Responses inconsistent with programme syllabi were also removed, where syllabi with clear information were available to us.

Recall that 60 ECTS credits correspond to one year full-time. Respondents in MedFarm do 30 credits of courses, corresponding to 1/8 of the PhD. Most TekNat respondents do between 40 and 60 credits (1/6 to 1/4 of the PhD). HumSam respondents have the largest component of taught courses, over 60 credits in most cases. The highest responses were from the Faculty of Social Sciences, where five respondents answered 105 credits, almost half of the PhD.

The net research time, then, conversely varies from little more than two years for some HumSam candidates to 3.5 years for most MedFarm candidates.

Table 18

According to your Individual Study Plan, how many ECTS credits of courses do you have to do?

This includes seminars, conferences, reading and other activities that your department gives you ECTS credits for.

	30	40	50	60	75	80	90	105	<i>n</i>
UU	43 (20%)	47 (21%)	3 (1%)	65 (30%)	14 (6%)	5 (2%)	37 (17%)	5 (2%)	219
HS	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	32 (42%)	13 (17%)	0 (0%)	25 (33%)	5 (7%)	76
MF	41 (98%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	42
TN	1 (1%)	45 (51%)	3 (3%)	26 (30%)	0 (0%)	5 (6%)	8 (9%)	0 (0%)	88
FA	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16
FE	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11
FG	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (73%)	0 (0%)	11
FC	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (39%)	2 (7%)	0 (0%)	10 (36%)	5 (18%)	28
FM	26 (96%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	27
FP	15 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15
DED	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9
DNR	6 (86%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7
DFB	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8
DEA	0 (0%)	5 (63%)	0 (0%)	3 (38%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8
DEG	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7
DOB	0 (0%)	8 (89%)	0 (0%)	1 (11%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9
DPA	0 (0%)	7 (47%)	0 (0%)	8 (53%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	15
DEN	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	3 (20%)	8 (53%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	15
DIT	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	2 (17%)	7 (58%)	0 (0%)	12

Unlikely and outlying responses have been excluded. Percentages and number of respondents (*n*) by row.

Course content and relevance

Overall, the majority of respondents (70%) agree with the statement "The courses I take (or will take) are relevant to my research" (Table 19). They also agree (62%) that "the courses will be valuable for my future career". The same tendencies are seen at the level of the disciplinary domains, with the most positive responses - both for research and future career - at MedFarm (respectively 82% and 71%).

About half of the respondents (49%) agree with "Courses for doctoral candidates here at Uppsala University are of high quality" while 20% disagree. Again, the largest proportion of positive answers is at MedFarm (62% agree).

One worrying result is that only 24% of respondents agree to the statement "It is easy to find information about available courses", and this does not improve with progression through the PhD: 32% and 27% of first- and fourth-years respectively agree with the statement, while 48% and 53% respectively disagree.

Over half of respondents (56%) disagree with the statement "There is a wide range of courses to choose from". 24% agree with that statement. For that question, TekNat is the disciplinary domain with the most positive answers (32% agree that there is a wide range of courses and 47% disagree). However, there seem to be department variations. MedFarm has the lowest proportion of respondents agreeing there is a wide range of courses to choose from (13%).

Finally, we asked whether respondents agreed with "To reach my required ECTS credits, I am free to choose courses that interest me". At university level, 60% agreed and 19% disagreed. The highest proportion of respondents agreeing to the statement is for MedFarm (72%).

In general, then, **a narrow majority of respondents are satisfied with the quality and usefulness of courses, but substantial numbers are dissatisfied.** The free-text comments below provide more detail. **Most respondents are dissatisfied with the range of courses to choose from, and are especially dissatisfied with the ease of finding information about available courses.**

Table 19

Please select whether you agree with the following statements:

The courses I take (or will take) are relevant to my research.

The courses will be valuable for my future career.

Courses for doctoral candidates here at Uppsala University are of high quality.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	68	120	52	20	9	70	11
HS	19	41	15	7	4	70	13
MF	20	26	7	2	1	82	5
TN	27	47	27	8	4	65	11
FA	3	10	5	1	2	62	14
FE	6	5	1	0	0	92	0
FG	1	5	4	1	0	55	9
FC	5	16	2	5	2	70	23
FM	17	15	3	2	1	84	8
FP	3	11	4	0	0	78	0
DED	5	5	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	6	5	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	1	7	2	0	0	80	0
DEA	4	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	4	3	1	1	2	64	27
DOB	3	2	7	0	0	42	0
DPA	3	7	5	1	0	62	6
DEN	3	10	2	1	1	76	12
DIT	1	11	6	0	0	67	0

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	64	100	65	26	9	62	13
HS	19	34	18	11	3	62	16
MF	18	21	11	4	1	71	9
TN	25	43	31	8	4	61	11
FA	3	7	7	2	2	48	19
FE	4	7	0	1	0	92	8
FG	2	8	1	0	0	91	0
FC	5	9	10	5	1	47	20
FM	16	11	7	3	1	71	11
FP	2	10	4	1	0	71	6
DED	3	6	0	1	0	90	10
DNR	7	3	1	0	0	91	0
DFB	1	7	1	0	0	89	0
DEA	5	5	1	0	0	91	0
DEG	4	1	3	1	2	45	27
DOB	2	7	2	1	0	75	8
DPA	2	7	5	2	0	56	12
DEN	3	8	3	1	1	69	12
DIT	2	7	8	0	0	53	0

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	22	98	77	36	14	49	20
HS	9	32	24	11	6	50	21
MF	4	25	11	4	3	62	15
TN	8	41	35	18	3	47	20
FA	2	5	7	3	2	37	26
FE	1	7	3	0	0	73	0
FG	2	2	5	2	0	36	18
FC	0	13	8	5	3	45	28
FM	4	17	6	1	3	68	13
FP	0	8	5	3	0	50	19
DED	1	6	2	0	0	78	0
DNR	1	6	1	0	0	88	0
DFB	0	6	2	1	0	67	11
DEA	2	4	2	1	0	67	11
DEG	2	3	4	1	0	50	10
DOB	0	6	6	0	0	50	0
DPA	2	5	5	4	0	44	25
DEN	0	8	6	2	0	50	12
DIT	2	4	7	2	1	38	19

It is easy to find information about available courses.

There is a wide range of courses to choose from.

To reach my required ECTS credits, I am free to choose courses that interest me.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	10	54	58	87	56	24	54
HS	4	16	12	29	23	24	62
MF	4	13	19	12	8	30	36
TN	2	24	23	40	23	23	56
FA	1	0	5	7	8	5	71
FE	1	3	2	4	2	33	50
FG	0	3	0	6	2	27	73
FC	1	9	1	9	8	36	61
FM	3	10	16	6	3	34	24
FP	1	3	3	6	5	22	61
DED	1	3	2	3	1	40	40
DNR	1	2	3	4	1	27	45
DFB	1	1	2	4	2	20	60
DEA	1	2	3	2	2	30	40
DEG	0	2	3	4	2	18	55
DOB	1	3	2	6	0	33	50
DPA	0	6	3	5	2	38	44
DEN	0	3	2	8	4	18	71
DIT	0	3	3	10	2	17	67

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	13	48	53	92	51	24	56
HS	6	11	14	33	19	20	63
MF	1	6	12	25	9	13	64
TN	6	28	23	30	20	32	47
FA	1	4	4	10	2	24	57
FE	2	2	0	5	2	36	64
FG	1	1	3	1	4	20	50
FC	1	4	3	11	10	17	72
FM	1	5	10	16	4	17	56
FP	0	1	2	9	5	6	82
DED	2	2	0	4	1	44	56
DNR	1	2	3	2	1	33	33
DFB	0	0	1	5	3	0	89
DEA	1	2	2	5	0	30	50
DEG	0	1	2	4	2	11	67
DOB	1	2	2	6	1	25	58
DPA	1	5	5	4	1	38	31
DEN	1	5	2	5	3	38	50
DIT	0	6	3	3	6	33	50

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	57	99	55	36	15	60	19
HS	16	30	15	15	8	55	27
MF	15	24	10	4	1	72	9
TN	26	38	28	15	4	58	17
FA	6	10	1	3	1	76	19
FE	3	4	3	1	0	64	9
FG	0	2	5	2	2	18	36
FC	5	11	6	5	3	53	27
FM	12	17	5	2	1	78	8
FP	3	7	5	2	0	59	12
DED	3	2	3	1	0	56	11
DNR	4	5	1	0	0	90	0
DFB	2	3	3	1	0	56	11
DEA	4	6	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	2	4	3	2	0	55	18
DOB	3	5	3	1	0	67	8
DPA	4	3	4	5	0	44	31
DEN	5	6	5	1	0	65	6
DIT	1	7	6	3	1	44	22

Free-text responses

Some respondents provided further detail about how many credits come from mandatory courses versus elective courses. Some comments discuss administrative issues around PhD courses, for example difficulty finding information about courses, or scheduling issues, such as only receiving confirmation of a place on the course just before the course starts.

A number of respondents expressed themselves unfavourably about the quality, relevance and range of available courses at UU. Mandatory courses are often found to be irrelevant because they are pitched to a very broad audience of persons working in different fields. Respondents who have taken courses at other universities generally find that these compare favourably to Uppsala University, also at the organisational/administrative level.

Regarding course credits, it emerges from the comments that some departments are more generous than others in assigning course credits for conference attendance, seminar participation, attending thesis defences or simply reading books (*läskurser* - individual reading courses). This means that some candidates can fill a considerable share of their course credits with activities that are naturally a part of the PhD, while other candidates must search for and attend actual taught courses to achieve the same number of credits.

About course credits and mandatory versus free-choice courses:

52.5 ECTS are assigned obligatory courses, 22.5 ECTS can be chosen by the PhD student (but need approval from the supervisor). [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I have to take 90 hp. 15 hp are of my own choosing, the rest is obligatory. [Faculty of Theology] [Note: 1 hp (högskolepoäng) is equivalent to 1 ECTS credit.]

I will get most of my credits from attending seminars and conferences, the rest mostly from mandatory courses such as the ethics course. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I am partly free to choose courses, but some are mandatory. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Some courses are mandatory, some are free to choose. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

The faculty does not award ECTS for conferences nor for "other activities". I need to complete in total 45 ECTS of courses (four courses, two of which are mandatory and offered by the faculty, two of which can be selected, either at the faculty or following a successful application to the board, outside the faculty/university) + 15 ECTS of seminars. [Faculty of Law]

There is a core package of 8.5 hp that is compulsory for all. These courses are of poor quality and generally perceived as being at masters level, not PhD level. For the remainder, we get points for: attending seminars, presenting at conferences, attending thesis defences, reading books... In practice, we get points for many things that we would do anyway. That means we don't really need to do any courses except the compulsory ones. [Faculty of Medicine]

About administrative issues around courses:

I have been on the waiting list for mandatory courses for two years now. [Faculty of Medicine]

The UU webpage is probably the worst interface I have ever seen to find courses and schedules ever: time-edit, studentportalen, and the overall structure is very bad in my opinion. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I think it is hard to find information on the PhD courses, including: when and how to apply, when you will get information about being accepted, what are the time periods that the courses are open for application in the spring/fall term etc. The webpage for the medicine faculty is archaic, there is no good course catalogue (unlike at KI and Umeå University), and it is frustrating that you only get answers about being accepted a few weeks before the course where at other universities this happens almost immediately. [Faculty of Medicine]

I was trying to apply to the introduction course where you apply by email (I missed the deadline on the other one and also most people at my institution take the email-applicable course) and I have received no reply. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It should be one place with all PhD courses available and open for all PhD - not restricted down to what faculty you belong to. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

It would be very helpful if it were possible to arrange some kind of web page gathering PhD courses, at least at UU. It is very difficult to find information about courses. Some courses are advertised with a few days notice prior to course start on the campus email list, but then how should I be able to plan for them in my ISP? Finding courses at another campus is even more difficult, as is finding courses at other universities. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Not enough advertisement. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

We need a better way (like a website) to list all available PhD courses. Right now, in our department, you just get sent e-mails and it's very difficult to keep track of what courses are on, what are they about, who is teaching, start date, end date, etc. It's very messy. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

There is always the issue that PhD students are unable to register (officially) to regular university courses (like master courses). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The scheduling of PhD courses is a real mess! There is a huge lack of order. It is simply impossible to know in advance what courses are going to be taught each time of the year. As a result, it is impossible to plan in advance what courses to take. This is wrong! I consider that this is a serious deficiency of the graduate Studies at Uppsala University and I hope that it can be improved soon. Furthermore, it is impossible to find an official collection of the PhD course syllabuses, everything is very informal. Again, this is a severe deficiency of the graduate Studies at Uppsala University. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

There are many interesting courses at other departments/faculties (e.g. on statistics, R, programming), but it is very hard to find those. It would be good if there was a general website where we could find all of them on one page. [Faculty of Medicine]

Uppsala University has a very bad system when it comes to PhD courses. A system more like KI where all courses are collected together and all PhD students are allowed to apply would be better. Now the Medical and Faculty of Science and Technology have their own PhD courses and for the rest it's up to every single department. It is also very hard to get an overview. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

It is not easy to find all available PhD courses and it would help if each program had a recommended list for the students. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Comments about course offering and (ir)relevance:

I need 20 ECTS from courses in the Marie Curie network; they are relevant. I need to take 10 ECTS from mandatory UU courses; they are not relevant. [Faculty of Medicine]

Being an interdisciplinary student, I take courses from both disciplines. To meet requirements, the courses I have to take are fairly restricted. For the leftover credits it is then tricky to find courses that are relevant to my work. [Faculty of Arts]

It is difficult to find courses relevant to my research. My main supervisor wants to have an opinion about which courses I take, but since he's seldom around I sometimes just take a course because I can no longer wait for him to say if I should or not. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I am free to choose courses that interest me and are super relevant to my research, but I am not allowed from my supervisor to choose courses that I actually like and I would like to learn something more beyond my PhD subject. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I find there is wide variation in availability of courses between the three main areas in my department. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

I had to take several courses at other universities since Uppsala didn't offer anything suitable for me on PhD level (fluid dynamics). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I have only attended one course from UU since there are not so many to choose from. [Faculty of Medicine]

I mostly look outside of UU for relevant courses - there are no standard PhD courses in our department (at least not regular) and I have not found it easy to find out about courses in other departments (in time). [Faculty of Arts]

I think compulsory courses are too long, outdated and not always relevant to my studies. The department of medicine and pharmacy courses fail to acknowledge mental health difficulties (the main focus of my study) and instead have compulsory courses on lab protocols for working with animals. Whilst I can see these would be extremely relevant for pharmacy students it does not feel like the broad spectrum of doctoral candidates within medicine has been considered when planning these courses, which would not be such a problem if they were not compulsory. [Faculty of Medicine]

I think that Uppsala University have too few courses within my field (medicine/public health) and often we have to go to other universities to take courses. [Faculty of Medicine]

I would like to focus more on research rather than following medium level (sometimes master) courses. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is difficult to find in-depth courses. But autodidactic learning with discussions helps. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is hard to find relevant courses if you have taken the bachelor and master at UU. You have to take several small credit doctoral courses which is time wasting and annoying... and you don't learn that much. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It is quite difficult to find courses for PhD students in the humanities that are taught in English. [Faculty of Arts]

It is very hard to find relevant courses! [Faculty of Languages]

The courses are part of undergraduate programmes, are at a very low level and are irrelevant. [Faculty of Arts]

Most courses that I've taken have been at other universities/colleges in Sweden and abroad. The courses at UU either don't match my research or are of poor quality (adapted primarily for Master students). Unfortunately I've been forced to take some at UU and they were not good. [—]

Not enough choice. No communication between similar departments. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Some courses are more important for the PhD education than others (and here I am talking about the mandatory courses). Although I understand why the mandatory courses are mandatory, because they have to be taught to such a broad range of PhD students, from different fields, it is inevitable that part of these courses is not really important for someone's PhD studies or future education. [Faculty of Medicine]

Some of the mandatory courses are not relevant at all to my research but most of them are. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The offer of PhD courses is way too limited. It should also be considered that in the absence of PhD courses one has to take master courses instead to earn the credits. But sometime as PhD student it is not easy to follow a regular master course (in terms of schedule, deadlines etc..) due to different kind of working loads such as teaching, research... It happened that I had to drop off from regular master courses because I couldn't meet all the deadlines and homework (which of course is different when you are a regular student than a PhD student). It is not easy to match the PhD work with 'regular master courses' work. That is why it would be better to have specific courses for PhD students (with different content and for practical reasons). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The selection of courses available for PhD students in Uppsala University is clear, list is short. I have the knowledge that I can apply to courses in other universities such as KI, but I believe many people do not know this. Their selection is wider and more suitable. [Faculty of Medicine]

There are very few courses offered at the doctoral level within Humanities. This is problematic especially for mandatory course work which is not always offered. However, we are allowed to take Master level courses instead. [Faculty of Arts]

There is a very small and often irrelevant selection of courses for us in the IT department. People often compensate by doing reading courses with their supervisors. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The answers to these questions differ for different courses. Some courses are relevant and high quality, some are not relevant and some are relatively low quality. Topic-relevant courses in my field are not given by Uppsala university. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Uppsala University does not have courses that are of relevance for my subject so most courses I've taken are given by other universities or are so called reading courses that I've put together myself. I'm allowed to choose whichever course I want, as long as there is no fee. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Very few courses available, almost only "läskurser" ("reading courses"), individual courses taken without actual lessons. I would have wanted to take more courses with other people. [Faculty of Languages]

We do not have PhD courses in my subject, and we also do not get credits for conferences or other activities. That means that a lot of the course work are reading courses that are very demanding in that they expect us to read around 1000 pages of philosophy, and write at least 20-page essays. [Faculty of Arts]

We take individual reading courses. It would be much more interesting if we had a group to discuss with or if there were more group options for courses. [Faculty of Languages]

Comments about the quality of courses:

Courses are varying greatly in quality, most are very good but there are also some really low quality ones (luckily I did not have to take any of them so far). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The introduction to doctoral studies compulsory course is very outdated (on the website it says that they are aware it is outdated and that it will be updated shortly, but has not been updated in the year that I have been here). [Faculty of Medicine]

At UU so far I have only taken the introduction to doctoral studies 1 ECTS course and I think that is very outdated and should be re-made. [Faculty of Medicine]

It is great! There are so many fantastic course for PhD students out there. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Many teachers here do not seem to want to teach. Assignments are so vague that many students cannot complete them. Certain courses give assignments that take no time at all for 10 credits, whereas others take away 20 credits worth of your time for only 5 credits. The timing of such exercises is also questionable: one course puts all of the exercises at the end of the course to be completed during the Christmas holidays. As an employee with a small child, this completely took away my rare holidays with my family. On top of this, the exercises were tedious and did not include anything that the students would not have been able to complete at the beginning of that course. [—]

The courses I have been taking at TekNat are of varying quality, some were really good but others were quite bad. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The basic courses in the first year are of varying quality. The second-year and beyond courses are generally good, but there are few of them in Uppsala. This is OK, though, as we can (and are expected to) take courses at SU [Stockholm University] and SSE [Stockholm School of Economics]. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Very poor quality and difficult to find anything in English that would complete my education. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

About the questionnaire itself:

I cannot answer the question "Courses for doctoral candidates here at Uppsala University are of high quality" because I have only taken one course here. Moreover I haven't taken this course elsewhere so it's hard to compare the quality. [Faculty of Medicine]

I have started two weeks ago so all of these answers are my impression within that time frame. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Other comments:

When I started my PhD my main supervisor at the time (who is now an assistant supervisor) said to me: "You should get started with applying for funding for your project and get started with your work. Don't worry about the courses because you have four years to do those so you have plenty of time." I think this is bad advice as the courses teach you things that you need for your PhD work and they should be

prioritised. Maybe for some it is ok to wait, but a proper discussion with information about the courses and how you apply etc. and what is best for each individual student should be had with each supervisor/PhD student at the beginning of the PhD training.” [Faculty of Medicine]

It would be really useful to have some guidance on courses and to have greater freedom to choose relevant courses (with guidance). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I would strongly advise/recommend students to complete these courses as early as possible. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

My supervisors force me to take a course by writing it in the ISP (while I do not want to take the course). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

The work I have to do for my 90 ECTS credits exceeds what can be done in 40 hours/week for 60 weeks ($60 \times 1.5 = 90$). [—]

The workload of PhD courses is too heavy. I think that one credit = 30 hours workload. But even if I have some background in a course I need more time than that. I cannot imagine how much effort I would need if I would go to a course for which I don't have much background. I don't ask to reduce the difficulty of the PhD courses, but at least more credits should be given for these courses. [—]

There is a lot of room for improvement here. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Why have so many credits required when there is no clear picture at the department level as to what they actually want to achieve with their PhD programme? [Faculty of Social Sciences]

More courses across disciplines would be great for PhD students who would like to broaden their scope of knowledge. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Holidays and leave of absence

Holidays

The following informative text was included in the questionnaire:

As a doctoral candidate you are entitled to 28–35 days of holiday per year, depending on your age. These are normally scheduled as a single long break during the summer, a mechanism known as "schablonsemester" in Swedish.

Note that only weekdays count as holidays: if you take 14 consecutive days off, then you have used 10 days of holiday allowance (the Saturdays and Sundays are not counted, because they are not working days).

After this information, respondents were asked to tick which statements describe their holidays.

Table 20

Which of the following statements describe your holidays?

Please choose all that apply.

	During summer	Other times of year	Agree with supervisor	Report in Primula	Exemption from schablonsemester	Work while on holiday	Less than entitled
UU	205 (76%)	213 (79%)	148 (55%)	70 (26%)	46 (17%)	129 (48%)	48 (18%)
HS	66 (77%)	66 (77%)	23 (27%)	31 (36%)	25 (29%)	47 (55%)	20 (23%)
MF	44 (77%)	44 (77%)	38 (67%)	12 (21%)	7 (12%)	22 (39%)	5 (9%)
TN	85 (75%)	95 (83%)	84 (74%)	22 (19%)	9 (8%)	51 (45%)	20 (18%)
FA	14 (67%)	15 (71%)	4 (19%)	8 (38%)	3 (14%)	11 (52%)	10 (48%)
FE	10 (83%)	9 (75%)	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	1 (8%)
FG	10 (91%)	10 (91%)	5 (45%)	7 (64%)	5 (45%)	4 (36%)	1 (9%)
FC	23 (77%)	24 (80%)	10 (33%)	7 (23%)	8 (27%)	22 (73%)	8 (27%)
FM	29 (74%)	29 (74%)	23 (59%)	8 (21%)	4 (10%)	15 (38%)	3 (8%)
FP	15 (83%)	15 (83%)	15 (83%)	4 (22%)	3 (17%)	7 (39%)	2 (11%)
DED	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	1 (10%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	4 (40%)	0 (0%)
DNR	5 (45%)	9 (82%)	9 (82%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	4 (36%)	0 (0%)
DFB	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	10 (100%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	0 (0%)
DEA	9 (82%)	10 (91%)	9 (82%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)
DEG	6 (55%)	9 (82%)	10 (91%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (73%)	3 (27%)
DOB	10 (83%)	10 (83%)	8 (67%)	1 (8%)	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	3 (25%)
DPA	12 (75%)	15 (94%)	10 (62%)	5 (31%)	3 (19%)	5 (31%)	2 (12%)
DEN	11 (65%)	12 (71%)	15 (88%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)	4 (24%)	2 (12%)
DIT	13 (72%)	12 (67%)	12 (67%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)	8 (44%)	2 (11%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- I take holidays during the summer.
- I take holidays at other times of the year, for example around Christmas.
- I agree my holidays with my supervisor.
- I report my holidays in Primula.
- I have applied for exemption from "schablonsemester".
- When on holiday, I am still involved in work, for example via email.
- My actual holidays are less than what I'm officially entitled to.

Primula is the human resources web portal.

The majority of respondents (66%) report taking holidays both during the summer and at other times of the year (Table 20). The remainder report taking holidays either during the summer only (10%), at other times only (13%) or taking no holidays at all (11%). These proportions are consistent across disciplinary domains.

While 79% of respondents take holidays at other times than the summer, only 17% have applied for exemption from *schablonsemester*, and only 26% report their holidays in Primula. This shows clearly that there is a disconnect between the holidays officially registered, and the holidays taken in practice. Candidates may not be covered by the university's workplace accident insurance while they are on holiday, which can become problematic if accidents happen while working during the summer. Another risk with not recording actual holidays is that they may be less in practice than the official allowance.

Respondents at HumSam are least likely to agree their holidays with their supervisors (27%), most likely to report their holidays in Primula (36%) and most likely to have applied for exemption from *schablonsemester* (29%). These results suggest a greater autonomy, which is consistent with the generally more individual nature of HumSam work, compared to laboratory science.

Free-text responses suggest that both the **holiday regulations and the Primula interface are perceived as confusing, and that not all candidates are even aware of Primula.**

One in six respondents claim to take fewer holidays than the official allowance. Figures differ sharply between departments, ranging from 0% in three cases to 48% at the Faculty of Arts. Overall, respondents who agree their holidays with their supervisors are less likely to take fewer holidays than allowed compared to those who do not agree their holidays with their supervisors (11% vs 26%), suggesting that the pressure to overwork typically comes from the candidate, not from the supervisor. Clearer regulations and more widespread use of Primula may help to ensure that people effectively take the holidays to which they are entitled.

Around half of respondents report that they are still involved in work while on holiday, for example keeping in touch via email. This is fairly uniform across departments, though with peaks at the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Department of Ecology and Genetics (both 73%). The following subsections of this report will show that candidates similarly tend to remain involved with work while on sick leave. **Taken together, these findings show that many candidates perceive doctoral education as a year-round commitment from which they can never fully disengage,** even while officially on holiday or on leave. This issue merits consideration in a mental health perspective.

Prolongation

Respondents were given the following informative text on prolongation, and were then asked to describe their experience of leave and prolongation.

You are entitled to prolongation for any sick leave and parental leave you take as a doctoral candidate. For example, if your employment would normally last four years and you are sick for ten days, then your employment will be extended to four years plus ten days.

A substantial share of respondents (39% overall, 46% at TekNat) state that they do not report all their sick leave in Primula. If sick leave is not reported, then it becomes difficult to subsequently apply for prolongation. Only 6% report that their department "does not always grant prolongation", therefore it is unclear why so many would choose to not report their absence. Only very few respondents (1%) indicate that there is any hostility from the supervisor. The free-text responses (see below) indicate that the under-reporting of sick leave may be due to confusion over rules and procedures.

The statement "I always report sick leave in Primula and I know I will get prolongation for this" was ticked by 28% of respondents overall, with considerable differences between faculties. Ideally, all candidates should have the confidence to tick this item. It may be that some skipped it simply because they have not been sick, and therefore feel that it does not apply to them. However, in that case we would expect uniform numbers across faculties. Instead, HumSam respondents were most likely to tick this item (47%, rising to 82% in the Faculty of Languages), and MedFarm least likely (14%; notably 0% in the Faculty of Pharmacy).

Overall, it is clear that **different departments or faculties have different norms regarding sick leave and prolongation. Rules are confusing and are not uniform, and many respondents do not feel confident that they will get the correct prolongation for a period of absence.**

Table 21

Please select which of the following best describe your experience of sick leave and/or parental leave.

Please choose all that apply.

	Don't report all sick leave in Primula	Prolongation not always granted	Hostile supervisor	Confident I will get prolongation
UU	106 (39%)	15 (6%)	4 (1%)	77 (28%)
HS	33 (38%)	4 (5%)	2 (2%)	40 (47%)
MF	19 (33%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	8 (14%)
TN	52 (46%)	8 (7%)	2 (2%)	25 (22%)
FA	9 (43%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	10 (48%)
FE	3 (25%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	7 (58%)
FG	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (82%)
FC	15 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (33%)
FM	11 (28%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	8 (21%)
FP	8 (44%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DED	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (60%)
DNR	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	2 (18%)
DFB	5 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
DEA	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (45%)
DEG	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	2 (18%)
DOB	6 (50%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)	2 (17%)
DPA	11 (69%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2 (12%)
DEN	5 (29%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	5 (29%)
DIT	5 (28%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	5 (28%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- Sometimes I am away due to illness, but I do not report it in Primula.
- My department does not always grant prolongation (for example for short periods of sickness).
- My supervisor is hostile or un-cooperative regarding longer periods of absence, such as parental leave.
- I always report sick leave in Primula and I know I will get prolongation for this.

Impact of a 60-day absence

To further investigate the implications of a period of absence, respondents were asked to give an agree-disagree response to four statements in the hypothetical scenario of a 60-day sick leave.

Table 22

Being away for some time, for example due to illness or parental leave, can be disruptive to your work.

Imagine that you unexpectedly become ill today, and you will have to be away on sick leave for the next 60 days. Which of the following would be the case for you?

Most of my work can simply wait until I get back.

My absence will create a lot of extra work for my colleagues.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	53	115	28	42	17	66	23
HS	17	35	10	13	7	63	24
MF	9	26	5	10	4	65	26
TN	25	49	13	15	4	70	18
FA	3	11	1	3	2	70	25
FE	3	4	2	2	0	64	18
FG	2	4	4	1	0	55	9
FC	5	12	3	5	3	61	29
FM	8	15	3	8	3	62	30
FP	1	11	2	2	1	71	18
DED	2	4	2	1	0	67	11
DNR	2	4	0	5	0	55	45
DFB	0	7	0	1	1	78	22
DEA	1	3	3	1	1	44	22
DEG	2	5	1	1	2	64	27
DOB	1	6	1	2	0	70	20
DPA	5	9	1	1	0	88	6
DEN	5	4	1	4	0	64	29
DIT	6	8	2	2	0	78	11

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	9	32	38	95	74	17	68
HS	2	9	13	27	26	14	69
MF	3	7	8	21	13	19	65
TN	4	13	15	43	31	16	70
FA	0	1	3	9	4	6	76
FE	0	2	2	4	3	18	64
FG	0	1	1	3	5	10	80
FC	0	4	5	7	12	14	68
FM	3	5	3	14	10	23	69
FP	0	2	5	7	3	12	59
DED	0	2	1	4	2	22	67
DNR	1	2	0	7	1	27	73
DFB	0	1	4	3	1	11	44
DEA	1	2	2	4	1	30	50
DEG	1	2	2	1	4	30	50
DOB	0	1	1	6	2	10	80
DPA	0	3	2	8	3	19	69
DEN	0	0	3	6	5	0	79
DIT	0	1	4	7	6	6	72

A long absence like this can adversely affect my career (for example because of funding applications and publication deadlines).

If at all possible, I might try to keep working despite being ill.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	28	69	48	58	31	41	38
HS	7	18	19	24	10	32	44
MF	6	16	8	12	7	45	39
TN	12	28	21	20	13	43	35
FA	2	7	2	6	2	47	42
FE	0	0	4	3	4	0	64
FG	0	3	4	3	1	27	36
FC	5	6	8	8	1	39	32
FM	4	11	7	8	5	43	37
FP	2	5	1	4	2	50	43
DED	0	0	3	3	3	0	67
DNR	1	3	2	4	1	36	45
DFB	0	3	0	2	1	50	50
DEA	1	3	4	1	1	40	20
DEG	2	2	2	1	1	50	25
DOB	0	4	1	3	1	44	44
DPA	1	5	5	2	1	43	21
DEN	1	3	2	5	4	27	60
DIT	4	6	2	2	2	62	25

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	42	115	31	38	29	62	26
HS	13	41	7	14	9	64	27
MF	10	22	9	5	6	62	21
TN	16	48	13	17	12	60	27
FA	4	9	1	5	2	62	33
FE	1	4	0	3	3	45	55
FG	1	5	1	2	2	55	36
FC	6	15	4	4	1	70	17
FM	7	15	4	5	3	65	24
FP	3	7	5	0	3	56	17
DED	1	2	0	3	3	33	67
DNR	3	4	3	1	0	64	9
DFB	1	4	3	0	2	50	20
DEA	0	3	2	3	1	33	44
DEG	4	5	0	1	1	82	18
DOB	2	4	3	0	1	60	10
DPA	1	7	2	4	2	50	38
DEN	2	7	0	3	3	60	40
DIT	3	8	1	3	2	65	29

Two-thirds of candidates agree that most work "can simply wait until I get back", while 23% disagree (Table 22). This is uniform across departments. However, responses cover the full range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", with 17 respondents (7%) strongly disagreeing.

Again a two-thirds majority finds that absence would not "create a lot of extra work for my colleagues". Slightly more respondents indicated the contrary at MedFarm (19%) than TekNat (16%) or HumSam (14%), which may reflect practical and scheduling issues in clinical research.

As to whether a long absence "can adversely affect my career", responses were distributed evenly from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Respondents at MedFarm were most likely to agree, and at HumSam most likely to disagree, though a full range of responses was received from most faculties. Objectively, it seems improbable that a two-month sick leave at some point in the course of a four-year PhD would do much harm to the candidate's career in the long term. Rather, the response to this item illustrates the pressure that candidates feel in that regard.

A majority of respondents agree that "if at all possible, I might try to keep working despite being ill". This relates to the findings (above) on candidates not reporting sick leave and not expecting prolongation. Candidates may try to work while on sick leave regardless of their answer on the items about career consequences, and despite a majority indicating that their work can simply wait until they get back.

Overall, it is clear that doctoral candidates feel considerable pressure to keep performing despite illness, and that a prolonged sick leave is disruptive to the cycle of conducting and publishing research, even if full prolongation is granted. More specific examples can be found in the free-text responses (below).

Free-text responses

About reporting sick leave and prolongation:

We should have been encouraged to report illnesses in Primula, but we were not. I have only reported more extended sick leave absences, but not absences of up to 1-2 weeks. I wish I could get back this time as prolongation, but I did not know this was an option until I had a more extended sick leave absence. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Primula is tedious. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It took me three years to realise I should take sick days and report them on Primula to get prolongation. I only recently found out that I can get reimbursed for many health expenses. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

It is a very confusing system. [Department of Education]

Even though I got prolongation, the prolongation does not include weekends/holidays. It means, if I miss 60 working days, I will get 60 days prolongation, which of course includes weekends. So the prolongation in working days is much shorter. [Department of Physics and Astronomy]

I report all my leave, but I am not sure if how or if I get prolongation. [Department of Physics and Astronomy]

I have been on shorter sick leaves as well as parental leave, neither one of these has given prolongation. I tried to bring it up with the director of studies; the person did not want to answer. After a while I sent an email with a direct question about this, I have not received an answer for 12 months. [—]

I almost always report sick leave in Primula, and I am uncertain whether I'll get prolongation for that or not. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

It seems to be common practice in my work environment to report sick leave (understood as that paid by Försäkringskassan) but not a regular illness. Even if we are aware that we are entitled to prolongation, in some cases, the loss of salary, considering that we may work extra at some other points, does not seem to be worth the reporting. [Department of Information Technology]

I did not know that we get extensions when sick short amounts of time. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Two comments addressed the known issue that prolongation does not extend to cover its own holiday entitlement:

One of the biggest problems with prolongation is that prolongation days are workdays, and as such generate new holiday/vacation days. The prolongation includes these days. Nevertheless, the final date for the termination of employment does not adapt to the holiday days. I had to choose to take about 20 holiday days or workdays in the end. Moreover, as such, I also lost about 20 days of prolongation as the termination day could not be moved forward to accommodate the new holiday days. A lot of workdays and salaries lost that way. [Faculty of Arts]

If one is ill for a more extended period, holidays become a problem, because holidays are not a cause for prolongation. If one is ill for say two years in total, the time as a doctoral student is two years longer, and one gets maybe ten weeks more holiday time. However, in reality, this means ten weeks less time to work on a doctoral thesis since one gets no prolongation for holidays. These extra ten weeks of holiday is in effect taken from research time. [Department of Education]

About the consequences of absence:

This would mostly cost me opportunities due to missing publication deadlines. For some of my projects, however, colleagues would have to pick up the work that I have done and try to figure out how to complete it before upcoming deadlines. [—]

My supervisor is fine with me working from home in case of non-serious illness, to avoid infecting others. If I were to become ill for a more extended period, fellow PhD colleagues would get some extra work for a while, and their own projects would slow down. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

I think I would be too impatient not to keep working, so I would do some low-key work, like checking and sending emails. But no "real work". [Department of Neuroscience]

I am now at a point where I have produced most of my data, I read and write my manuscripts. However, I would not have been able to just let the work wait before. [Faculty of Medicine]

The "imagine that you become ill" question comes at a hard time of the year for me. My field campaign that I have been planning for the last year is beginning the week after next and lasts for 2 weeks. If this was not the case then it would not matter so much if I was away. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I check e-mails while sick, and respond to the urgent ones. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

No problems with leave of absence such as parental leave, or taking out holidays and being away. But I have no idea how NOT TO respond to emails. (I cannot say that colleagues are pressuring me to respond. Maybe because I do respond?) [—]

I have had a more extended sick leave on part-time: I kept teaching but postponed all research. In that particular case, it worked fine. [—]

For biology students that need to collect data in the field, taking long periods off can be quite hard. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

During the first part of sick leave, I taught, which made it hard actually to be absent. During that time, I had to work despite being ill. [Faculty of Languages]

Due to a crisis with my former supervisors two years ago, together with illness and parental leave, the department has now requested me to submit the doctor certificate from the first day of my sick leave, and has submitted a request to withdraw resources to the Vice-Chancellor. [—]

I have been course leader for a 10 credit course this past semester (and will continue next semester). Thus, it would create a lot of extra work for some colleagues if I became unexpectedly ill, but it is not like my department is dependent on me in any way. [—]

About holidays:

The automatic distribution of all holidays to the summer is quite inconvenient for those that need to take holidays at other times of the year. In my case, it leads to taking fewer holidays than I am entitled to, and I am not sure how to fix this. [Faculty of Arts]

We are not allowed to report holidays on Primula as PhDs in our department. [Faculty of Medicine]

There are always deadlines, which means there is never a good time to take holidays. In the first year, I had ten days left at the end of the year and on the second even more. [Department of Information Technology]

I take ten days of holiday per year (not counting public holidays like December 24-26). [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I plan to apply for schablonsemester. The system for holidays is confusing. My doctoral colleagues say to not apply for any holidays because no one does it, but instead, they take July off. They do still work during that time (occasionally) but do not have a clean and clear 'holiday time'. Furthermore, they said that no one is at university in August because people work from home. I want to have a holiday, not work, but I do not want it in July. [Faculty of Arts]

I am very grateful that my department allows being flexible with holidays. [—]

I have not applied for exemption from schablonsemester yet, but I hope to do so soon. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Exemption from schablonsemester is not welcome in my division. [Department of Physics and Astronomy]

Other:

I only had one sick day (when I stayed at home the entire day) in four years. However, sometimes I might leave earlier or work at a slower tempo than usual due to slight illness. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I have a disability and chronic illness, and the university has not been helpful but instead has been somewhat hostile. The system for reporting absences and how to best protect the job and income is unclear. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Have not been sick yet. [Department of Neuroscience]

Even if I know about the right to get prolongation for sick leave and parental leave and other duties, e.g. committee-member, etc, I do not report it because I want to finish within a time-frame. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Languages

The University is a bilingual environment, and the use of Swedish and English is a recurrent theme at various levels of University life – there is hardly a meeting of the DN Board that does not touch upon this topic in some context or other. One recurring issue is the fact that numerous boards and committees operate in Swedish, making it difficult for foreign staff to participate; however, the University being a public authority, there are situations where the use of Swedish language is mandated by law. Given the high percentage of foreign doctoral candidates at the University, language policy is a particularly relevant topic for DN.

In the section on [→Work environment](#), 12 respondents stated language was a form of discrimination in their departments. This was not one of the answer options provided in the survey: respondents ticked "Other" and wrote it in. The fact that so many respondents took the time to expressly mention language as a discrimination ground – next to ethnicity, religion etc. – underlines the feeling of exclusion and disadvantage experienced by persons who struggle with language barriers in their workplace.

In this survey, we intended to collect a broad quantitative evidence base on language use among doctoral candidates. Questions focused on candidates' levels of English and Swedish; ambitions to improve their language skills during their doctoral studies; which languages they commonly use in the workplace; experience of language courses within and outwith the University.

Entry level

Respondents were asked to describe their level of English and Swedish at three time points: "when you started your PhD", "now" and "your aim at the end of your PhD" (Table 23). The response scale was based on the Common European framework levels A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, with additional response options for "Nil" and "Native". The questionnaire included examples of skills at each level.

University-wide, 95% claim they had at least intermediate (B1) English at the start of their PhD, and 75% at least advanced (C1) English. For Swedish: 30% had less than elementary (A2) Swedish at the start of their PhD, 45% are native speakers, and the remaining 25% are scattered in between. TekNat stands out for a very large proportion of entrants with little or no Swedish: 50% of respondents were below A2 level at the start of their PhDs.

Spread equally over disciplinary domains, 10% of respondents ($n = 27$) started their PhD with neither English nor Swedish above B2 (upper intermediate) level.

Table 23

What was your level of English / Swedish when you started your PhD: * (%)

	ENGLISH								SWEDISH									
	Nil	A1 - beginner	A2 - elementary	B1 - intermediate	B2 - upper intermediate	C1 - advanced	C2 - proficient	Native	n	Nil	A1 - beginner	A2 - elementary	B1 - intermediate	B2 - upper intermediate	C1 - advanced	C2 - proficient	Native	n
UU	0	0	0	5	20	39	27	9	270	22	8	7	4	6	3	5	45	270
HS	0	1	0	6	22	36	26	9	86	8	5	6	6	9	5	9	52	86
MF	0	0	0	9	16	37	35	4	57	7	7	11	4	7	5	4	56	57
TN	0	0	0	4	19	42	25	11	114	39	11	5	4	3	2	3	34	114
FA	0	5	0	0	24	43	19	10	21	19	5	10	5	10	0	10	43	21
FE	0	0	0	8	8	58	8	17	12	0	0	0	0	8	8	8	75	12
FG	0	0	0	9	55	9	18	9	11	9	0	0	9	9	9	9	55	11
FC	0	0	0	7	20	27	40	7	30	7	10	3	10	13	7	7	43	30
FM	0	0	0	5	18	28	44	5	39	8	10	8	5	8	5	3	54	39
FP	0	0	0	17	11	56	17	0	18	6	0	17	0	6	6	6	61	18
DED	0	0	0	0	10	60	10	20	10	0	0	0	0	10	10	10	70	10
DNR	0	0	0	0	18	18	55	9	11	18	18	0	9	9	9	0	36	11
DFB	0	0	0	30	10	60	0	0	10	10	0	20	0	10	0	0	60	10
DEA	0	0	0	9	27	18	18	27	11	64	18	0	0	0	0	0	18	11
DEG	0	0	0	0	0	36	45	18	11	36	27	0	0	0	9	0	27	11
DOB	0	0	0	8	50	17	8	17	12	33	17	17	0	8	0	0	25	12
DPA	0	0	0	0	19	38	38	6	16	44	6	6	12	0	0	0	31	16
DEN	0	0	0	0	18	65	18	0	17	41	0	0	6	0	0	12	41	17
DIT	0	0	0	6	28	44	17	6	18	44	6	6	0	11	0	0	33	18

Ambition

With the exception of a single respondent in the Faculty of Arts, **all respondents intend to improve their English** to at least upper intermediate (B2) level by the end of their PhD, and **97% aim for at least advanced (C1) level** (Table 24).

For Swedish, disregarding native speakers, **81% of respondents aim for at least upper intermediate (B2) level**, and 56% aim for at least advanced (C2) level. It is notable that the ambition profile for TekNat is not much lower than in the other disciplinary domains, despite the larger percentage of complete beginners at TekNat (see above).

University-wide, 57 respondents (21% of the total, including native speakers) intend to improve both their English and their Swedish in the course of their doctoral education, while **198 (73%) intend to improve at least one language**. These results are uniform across disciplinary domains.

Table 24

What level of English / Swedish is your aim at the end of your PhD: * (%)

	ENGLISH								SWEDISH										
	Nil	A1 - beginner	A2 - elementary	B1 - Intermediate	B2 - upper Intermediate	C1 - advanced	C2 - proficient	Native	n	Nil	A1 - beginner	A2 - elementary	B1 - Intermediate	B2 - upper Intermediate	C1 - advanced	C2 - proficient	Native	n	
UU	0	0	0	0	2	26	60	11	270	UU	1	1	3	5	13	14	15	47	270
HS	0	1	0	0	3	20	63	13	86	HS	1	0	2	2	3	14	23	53	86
MF	0	0	0	0	2	25	65	9	57	MF	0	5	0	4	11	9	14	58	57
TN	0	0	0	0	2	27	60	11	114	TN	2	1	5	6	24	16	11	36	114
FA	0	5	0	0	5	29	43	19	21	FA	5	0	5	5	5	19	19	43	21
FE	0	0	0	0	0	17	67	17	12	FE	0	0	0	0	0	0	25	75	12
FG	0	0	0	0	18	27	45	9	11	FG	0	0	0	0	0	27	18	55	11
FC	0	0	0	0	0	10	83	7	30	FC	0	0	3	3	3	17	27	47	30
FM	0	0	0	0	3	23	67	8	39	FM	0	8	0	3	10	10	15	54	39
FP	0	0	0	0	0	28	61	11	18	FP	0	0	0	6	11	6	11	67	18
DED	0	0	0	0	0	10	70	20	10	DED	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	70	10
DNR	0	0	0	0	0	0	82	18	11	DNR	0	9	0	0	9	18	27	36	11
DFB	0	0	0	0	0	40	60	0	10	DFB	0	0	0	10	10	10	10	60	10
DEA	0	0	0	0	0	9	64	27	11	DEA	0	0	9	9	27	27	9	18	11
DEG	0	0	0	0	0	0	82	18	11	DEG	9	9	0	9	36	0	9	27	11
DOB	0	0	0	0	17	25	42	17	12	DOB	0	0	17	0	17	25	8	33	12
DPA	0	0	0	0	0	31	62	6	16	DPA	0	0	0	6	12	38	12	31	16
DEN	0	0	0	0	0	47	53	0	17	DEN	0	0	12	6	18	12	12	41	17
DIT	0	0	0	0	0	33	56	11	18	DIT	0	0	6	6	33	11	6	39	18

Achievement - method of analysis

This subsection describes how the data were analysed for language learning achievement. The next subsection will describe the results.

This analysis focuses on language levels "now" and "your aim at the end of your PhD", compared to the entry levels that were summarised above. Comparisons will be made between respondents in various years of their PhD, referred to as Y1, Y2, Y3 and Y4 in Table 25.

For the purpose of subtraction and averaging, steps on the scale of language skill were converted to numbers: Nil=0, A1=1, A2=2, B1=3 and so forth. Native was considered equivalent to C2. Ambition and achievement were calculated by subtraction, corresponding to number of steps on the skill scale. For example: a respondent who started their PhD with nil Swedish, currently has A2 level, and aims for C1 by the end of their PhD has achieved +2 (two steps, from nil to A2) and has the ambition of advancing a further +3 (three steps, from A2 to C1).

Values in Table 25 are averages. Numbers without a plus sign indicate a level, for example "2.5" means an average level between A2 and B1. Numbers with a plus sign indicate a level difference, for example "+2.5" means an average improvement of two and a half steps on the scale.

Native speakers are disregarded in this analysis. Note that this affects the reported average levels of language skill.

The "Entry level" column summarises average language skill at the start of the PhD, which was presented more in detail above. The "Current level" columns show the average current level for respondents in a particular year of their PhD. Note that this is a cross-sectional, not a longitudinal comparison: the Y1 responses come from different individuals than the Y2 respondents, and so on, therefore differences between one year and the next can be caused simply by random differences between respondents. The "Goal" column summarises the objective by the end of the PhD, which was also presented in more detail above.

The "Ambition (Y1)" column describes how much the first-year respondents expect their language skills will improve, from current level to end of PhD. The "Achievement (Y4)" column describes how much the fourth-year respondents report that their language skills have actually improved, from entry level to current level.

The "Intend to improve (Y1, %)" column indicates the percentage of first-year respondents who intend that their language skills will improve by at least one step by the end of their PhD. The "Have improved (Y4, %)" column indicates the percentage of fourth-year respondents who report that their language skills have improved by at least one step since the start of their PhD. Be reminded that native speakers are not included in this calculation.

Achievement - results

Results for English are surprisingly uniform (Table 25). Starting levels are around advanced (C1) on average. First-year doctoral candidates report that they intend to improve by approximately half a level on average, and fourth-year candidates indeed report an improvement of the same magnitude. Overall, there are slightly more first-years reporting that they wish to improve their English (48%) than there are fourth-years reporting that they have improved their English (40%). This difference is most pronounced at HumSam and TekNat.

For Swedish, the starting levels are typically lower and the goals are more ambitious. The average entry level is around elementary (A2; recall that native speakers are disregarded), and even lower at TekNat. The average goal by the end of the PhD is between upper intermediate (B2) and advanced (C1). First-years expect to improve by more than two levels (+2.2 university-wide, +2.4 at TekNat) and indeed fourth-years report similar achievement (+1.9 university-wide, +2.5 at TekNat).

Of non-native Swedish speakers, 87% indicate in their first year that they intend to learn or improve their Swedish by at least one level. Among fourth-year respondents, 77% indicate that they have indeed improved their Swedish by at least that much.

It seems, then, that **language learning achievement over the course of the PhD is in line with the ambitions and expectations that candidates have at the start of their doctoral education - for both English and Swedish.**

Table 25

Language learning achievement

See text for details on the calculation and interpretation of these values.

Dashes indicate groups with fewer than 10 respondents. Native speakers are not included.

	ENGLISH										SWEDISH										
	Entry level	Current level (Y1)	Current level (Y2)	Current level (Y3)	Current level (Y4)	Goal	Ambition (Y1)	Achievement (Y4)	Intend to improve (Y1, %)	Have improved (Y4, %)	Entry level	Current level (Y1)	Current level (Y2)	Current level (Y3)	Current level (Y4)	Goal	Ambition (Y1)	Achievement (Y4)	Intend to improve (Y1, %)	Have improved (Y4, %)	
UU	4.9	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.4	5.7	+0.5	+0.5	48	40	UU	1.9	2.2	3	3.3	3.9	4.5	+2.2	+1.9	87	77
HS	4.9	5	4.9	5.5	5.6	5.6	+0.5	+0.6	53	38	HS	3.1	-	-	4.3	-	5.2	-	-	-	-
MF	5	5.3	5.6	5.1	5.5	5.7	+0.4	+0.5	37	45	MF	2.6	-	-	-	-	4.5	-	-	-	-
TN	5	5.2	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.7	+0.6	+0.4	56	37	TN	1	1.8	2.6	2.4	3.2	4.2	+2.4	+2.5	95	88
FA	4.7	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	-	-	-	FA	2.3	-	-	-	-	4.9	-	-	-	-
FE	4.8	-	-	-	-	5.8	-	-	-	-	FE	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
FG	4.4	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	-	-	-	FG	-	-	-	-	-	5.4	-	-	-	-
FC	5.1	-	-	5.5	-	5.9	-	-	-	-	FC	3.1	-	-	-	-	5.2	-	-	-	-
FM	5.2	5.4	-	5.3	-	5.7	+0.3	-	29	-	FM	2.4	-	-	-	-	4.3	-	-	-	-
FP	4.7	-	-	-	-	5.7	-	-	-	-	FP	-	-	-	-	-	4.9	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	DED	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-
DNR	5.4	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	DNR	-	-	-	-	-	4.7	-	-	-	-
DFB	4.3	-	-	-	-	5.6	-	-	-	-	DFB	-	-	-	-	-	4.5	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	DEA	-	-	-	-	-	4.2	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	DEG	-	-	-	-	-	3.2	-	-	-	-
DOB	4.3	-	-	-	-	5.3	-	-	-	-	DOB	-	-	-	-	-	4.3	-	-	-	-
DPA	5.2	-	-	-	-	5.7	-	-	-	-	DPA	0.8	-	-	-	-	4.8	-	-	-	-
DEN	5	-	-	-	-	5.5	-	-	-	-	DEN	1.5	-	-	-	-	4.1	-	-	-	-
DIT	4.8	-	-	-	-	5.6	-	-	-	-	DIT	0.9	-	-	-	-	4.2	-	-	-	-

Everyday language use

We asked a block of four multiple choices questions about language use in different situations at work. The four options were: Mainly English; Mainly Swedish; Swedish and English; Other. They are abbreviated as English, Swedish, Both, and Other in Table 26.

As expected, nearly all respondents do their "Reading and writing" in English: 77% as the only main language, plus 20% alongside Swedish. English is also most used for "Speaking and listening", although just over half (51%) also use Swedish here (73% at HumSam). For "Social interactions at work", majorities of HumSam and MedFarm respondents use both languages, whereas TekNat respondents are more likely to use English only.

For the "Teaching and administrative duties" item, respondents split about equally between the three main answers - mainly English, mainly Swedish, and a mix of both (respectively 35%, 33% and 30%). Again there are disparities between disciplinary domains, with Swedish being more common at HumSam and MedFarm (49% and 42%).

Table 26

In your daily activities as a doctoral candidate, which languages do you use: * (%)

Speaking and listening

	English	Swedish	Both	Other	n
UU	49	17	34	0	270
HS	27	30	43	0	86
MF	40	21	39	0	57
TN	70	5	24	1	114
FA	24	24	52	0	21
FE	0	95	8	0	12
FG	27	55	18	0	11
FC	43	0	57	0	30
FM	46	26	28	0	39
FP	28	11	61	0	18
DED	0	90	10	0	10
DNR	55	18	27	0	11
DFB	30	20	50	0	10
DEA	100	0	0	0	11
DEG	82	0	18	0	11
DOB	75	0	25	0	12
DPA	75	6	12	6	16
DEN	69	24	18	0	17
DIT	61	0	39	0	18

Reading and writing

	English	Swedish	Both	Other	n
UU	77	1	20	2	270
HS	56	3	35	6	86
MF	82	2	16	0	57
TN	89	0	11	0	114
FA	57	5	33	5	21
FE	25	17	58	0	12
FG	36	0	36	27	11
FC	83	0	17	0	30
FM	85	3	13	0	39
FP	78	0	22	0	18
DED	30	20	50	0	10
DNR	91	0	9	0	11
DFB	90	0	10	0	10
DEA	100	0	0	0	11
DEG	91	0	9	0	11
DOB	100	0	0	0	12
DPA	88	0	12	0	16
DEN	76	0	24	0	17
DIT	78	0	22	0	18

Social interactions at work (with colleagues, etc.)

	English	Swedish	Both	Other	n
UU	37	16	47	0	270
HS	14	31	55	0	86
MF	28	18	54	0	57
TN	59	3	38	1	114
FA	14	19	67	0	21
FE	0	83	17	0	12
FG	27	55	18	0	11
FC	17	3	80	0	30
FM	28	23	49	0	39
FP	28	6	67	0	18
DED	0	80	20	0	10
DNR	36	27	36	0	11
DFB	30	10	60	0	10
DEA	73	0	27	0	11
DEG	82	0	18	0	11
DOB	58	8	33	0	12
DPA	44	0	50	6	16
DEN	47	12	41	0	17
DIT	50	0	50	0	18

Teaching and/or administrative duties

	English	Swedish	Both	Other	n
UU	35	33	30	2	270
HS	22	49	28	1	86
MF	26	42	28	4	57
TN	48	17	34	1	114
FA	24	52	24	0	21
FE	8	83	8	0	12
FG	27	55	9	9	11
FC	30	30	40	0	30
FM	31	31	33	5	39
FP	17	67	17	0	18
DED	10	80	10	0	10
DNR	36	18	45	0	11
DFB	20	60	20	0	10
DEA	73	9	9	9	11
DEG	64	0	36	0	11
DOB	42	8	50	0	12
DPA	19	31	50	0	16
DEN	47	24	29	0	17
DIT	50	11	39	0	18

Comparing disciplinary domains, **TekNat respondents mainly use English as their main language for work and social interaction, while HumSam and MedFarm are more evenly bilingual.** This somewhat reflects the proportion of Swedish native speakers in the three domains. **In all faculties and departments, both languages are used** at least to some extent.

The proportion of respondents who replied "Mainly Swedish" is higher for those who replied that they were native Swedish speakers. For example, 59% of native Swedish speakers reported using "mostly Swedish" for administrative and teaching duties, versus 11% of non-native speakers. Native Swedish speakers are also less likely to use "Mainly English" in their social interaction at work (15%) than other colleagues (55%). Similar tendencies are observed for the two other items.

Very few respondents chose the answer "Other", and it is unclear which language(s) this refers to.

Language learning - English

We asked a series of five agree-disagree questions concerning opportunities to study English and Swedish, respectively. Respondents were prompted to skip the questions if not applicable (e.g. native speakers). This section and Table 27 describe the answers for English, and the next section and Table 28 describe the corresponding answers for Swedish.

The questions about opportunities for English courses were answered by 133 to 208 respondents (depending on the question). Most respondents find that they have access to courses "at the right level for me" (42% disagree). **Almost half (47%) find that they "don't have the time or opportunity"** to take English courses. At MedFarm, the proportion of respondents agreeing with that statement rises to 64%.

Again almost half (49%) of respondents would take English courses "only if [they] get ECTS credits for them". These proportions are quite even at the different units, except at the Department of Information Technology where 73% agreed and only 9% disagreed. Rules on which courses grant ECTS credits vary by department (see [→PhD courses](#)), but these responses suggest that awarding credits for language courses may encourage more candidates to invest time in language learning.

Most supervisors are supportive of their candidates taking English courses, but 13% of respondents indicated that their supervisors were "uncooperative or hostile". That proportion is quite stable across disciplinary domains.

Finally, university-wide, about equal numbers of respondents agreed and disagreed with "I would get more out of my doctoral education if my English were better" (37 respectively 43%). However, there are disparities across disciplinary domains and faculties. In particular, 64% of TekNat respondents disagreed with that statement, while 42% of HumSam respondents agreed, rising to 50% of respondents from the Faculty of Education. This partly reflects greater numbers of native Swedish speakers.

In conclusion, while results in the previous section ([→Achievement - results](#)) indicate that candidates are generally successful at improving their English to the desired level over the course of their doctoral education, **a substantial share of respondents find that either no courses at the right level are available to them, or time and opportunity do not permit that they take these.** Awarding ECTS course credits for language learning may encourage more doctoral candidates to take advantage of language courses.

Table 27

There are various opportunities to study English during your PhD, including: PhD courses in Scientific English, UPE (Unit for Professional English) courses and more.

Please select how much you agree with the following statements about ENGLISH courses:

You may skip this question if it is not relevant for you.

These courses are not at the right level for me.

I don't think I have the time or opportunity to do this.

I would only take these courses if I get ECTS credits for them.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	6	11	21	22	5	26	42
HS	2	3	6	8	2	24	48
MF	1	2	6	4	1	21	36
TN	3	5	8	9	2	30	41
FA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	15	44	29	27	10	47	30
HS	2	12	12	5	5	39	28
MF	4	12	1	7	1	64	32
TN	7	15	14	15	4	40	35
FA	0	4	3	4	1	33	42
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	2	4	5	0	0	55	0
FM	2	6	0	4	1	62	38
FP	2	6	1	3	0	67	25
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	2	1	2	5	0	30	50
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	1	3	5	3	0	33	25

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	19	42	19	27	17	49	35
HS	5	13	7	10	6	44	39
MF	2	9	2	7	3	48	43
TN	9	18	9	9	7	52	31
FA	2	5	1	5	1	50	43
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	2	2	3	4	2	31	46
FM	2	5	0	2	2	64	36
FP	0	4	2	5	1	33	50
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	3	1	1	3	2	40	50
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	2	6	2	1	0	73	9

My supervisor is uncooperative / hostile to me spending time on this.

I would get more out of my doctoral education if my English were better.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	4	9	10	25	50	13	77
HS	0	4	2	5	18	14	79
MF	0	3	2	5	10	15	75
TN	3	2	5	13	21	11	77
FA	0	1	2	1	8	8	75
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FM	0	1	0	3	7	9	91
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	12	34	25	26	28	37	43
HS	6	11	14	5	4	42	22
MF	1	6	6	5	4	32	41
TN	2	13	5	16	19	27	64
FA	1	4	6	2	1	36	21
FE	1	3	2	1	1	50	25
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	2	2	3	2	2	36	36
FM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FP	1	4	4	2	2	38	31
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	0	1	0	7	3	9	91
DEN	1	2	0	2	5	30	70
DIT	1	3	1	1	5	36	55

Table 28

There are various opportunities to study Swedish during your PhD, including: SFI / KomVux, SWAC (Swedish for Academics) and more.

Please select how much you agree with the following statements about SWEDISH courses:

You may skip this question if it is not relevant for you.

These courses are not at the right level for me.

I don't think I have the time or opportunity to do this.

I would only take these courses if I get ECTS credits for them.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	6	14	11	31	17	25	61
HS	4	4	2	5	3	44	44
MF	1	3	0	5	2	36	64
TN	1	5	8	20	12	13	70
FA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	22	25	17	27	11	46	37
HS	6	8	5	4	2	56	24
MF	5	3	2	3	1	57	29
TN	8	13	10	19	7	37	46
FA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	3	5	3	0	0	73	0
FM	4	1	1	3	1	50	40
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	1	2	2	2	3	30	50
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	9	21	14	25	36	29	58
HS	3	6	8	5	6	32	39
MF	1	3	4	3	4	27	47
TN	3	12	2	16	23	27	70
FA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	1	2	5	2	2	25	33
FM	1	2	3	2	3	27	45
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

My supervisor is uncooperative / hostile to me spending time on this.

I would get more out of my doctoral education if my Swedish were better.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	5	8	5	24	41	16	78
HS	3	1	1	6	7	22	72
MF	0	2	0	3	6	18	82
TN	2	4	3	15	27	12	82
FA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	27	36	15	21	8	59	27
HS	11	10	2	2	4	72	21
MF	2	7	1	7	0	53	41
TN	12	18	11	12	4	53	28
FA	5	4	0	0	1	90	10
FE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FC	2	5	2	1	1	64	18
FM	2	5	1	6	0	50	43
FP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DPA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEN	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DIT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Language learning - Swedish

The questions focusing on opportunities to learn Swedish were answered by 79 to 107 persons.

While a majority of respondents agree that course opportunities are available at the right level for them (61%), this was substantially more common at TekNat (70%) and MedFarm (64%) than at HumSam (44%), where the entry level is typically higher. It seems, then, that **beginners' courses are available, but there is demand for more advanced courses.**

Similarly to English, almost half (46%) agreed that "I don't think I have the time or opportunity to do this", and again this was more common at HumSam and MedFarm. In other sections of this report (see [→Workload](#)) we saw that students from HumSam reported having less time than students from other disciplinary domains. A majority (58%) of respondents would take Swedish courses without getting ECTS credits for them. The proportion of supervisors "uncooperative / hostile" to their students taking Swedish courses is almost the same than for English (16%). However, the proportion rises to 22% at HumSam (from 16 respondents) and 18% at MedFarm (from 11 respondents).

Unlike for English, **a clear majority (59%) of respondents agreed that better knowledge of Swedish would be beneficial to their doctoral education.** The proportion is even higher (72%) at HumSam.

Overall, while results above ([→Achievement - results](#)) indicate that most candidates succeed at attaining at least an intermediate level of Swedish, **a substantial share of candidates are held back by lack of time or opportunity**, lack of courses at an appropriate level (particularly for advanced learners), and in some cases hostility from supervisors. More so than for English, Swedish learners agree that they would get more out of their doctoral education if their Swedish were better.

Language learning - general questions

In order to investigate reasons why PhD students do (or don't) take language courses, we prepared five statements to which they could reply yes or no.

One third (34%) of respondents ($n = 91$) have to take language courses during their free time. Only 12% ($n = 33$) said that their supervisors (or departments) agree to them taking courses during working hours, if the courses do not give ECTS credits. However, **respondents permitted to take language courses during work time are expected to work extra to compensate for working hours spent on language learning.** In other words, supervisors or departments do not generally permit that any part of doctoral candidates' net study time is allocated to language learning. These figures are quite similar across disciplinary domains.

Finally, we asked the following: "Thinking of where you currently are in your PhD: in a typical week, how many hours do you spend on language learning? This includes lessons and homework". 164 answers were received, of which 107 (65%) reported spending 0 hours on language learning. One respondent from HumSam reported spending 80 h/wk on language learning, probably meant to reflect continuous learning during everyday activities. **Overall, one third of respondents regularly spend time on language learning,** and this is typically somewhere between 1 and 6 hours per week.

Table 29

Please select all the statements that apply in your case. (%)

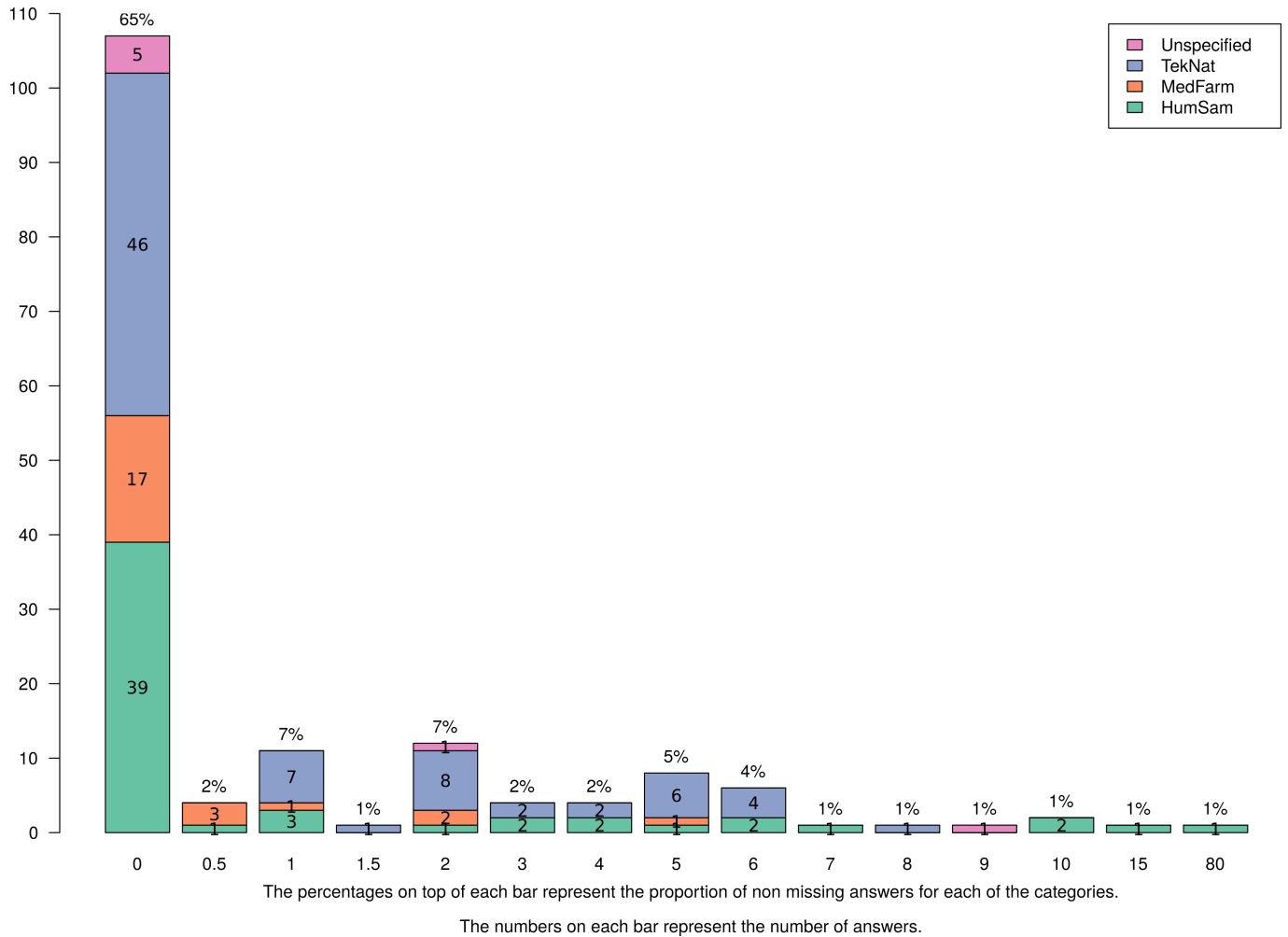
Skip this question if improving your English or Swedish is not of interest to you right now.

	In my free time	Working hours if ECTS	Working hours	Homework at work	Work extra to compensate
UU	34	4	12	6	20
HS	33	2	14	8	20
MF	23	7	5	4	14
TN	37	5	15	7	21
FA	38	5	33	24	14
FE	8	0	8	0	0
FG	36	0	18	0	36
FC	37	0	3	3	27
FM	21	8	5	3	13
FP	28	6	6	6	17
DED	0	0	0	0	0
DNR	18	0	0	0	18
DFB	30	10	10	10	10
DEA	64	0	27	9	27
DEG	36	0	18	0	27
DOB	42	0	25	17	25
DPA	31	19	12	6	25
DEN	41	0	12	6	18
DIT	17	11	17	11	22

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- If I want to take language courses, I have to do that in my free time.
- My supervisor / department lets me take language courses during paid working hours, but only if the courses give ECTS credits.
- My supervisor / department lets me take language courses during paid working hours, even if they don't give ECTS credits.
- My supervisor / department lets me do homework for language courses during paid working hours.
- If I take language courses during working hours then I have to work extra to compensate for the "lost" time, for example by staying later in the evenings.

Number of hours spent on language learning per week



Free-text responses

Responses here were numerous, and in some cases several paragraphs long, confirming that there is considerable strength of feeling on these issues.

Many learners of Swedish express a common sentiment that can be summarised as follows: we want to learn Swedish; many practical aspects of our work at Uppsala University require some understanding of Swedish, for example when information is emailed in Swedish only; our career prospects in Sweden would improve if we spoke Swedish; we are willing to invest time in learning Swedish, however, this is not credited as being part of our education, and therefore we must do it in our spare time; it seems unfair that the University intentionally recruits foreign doctoral candidates who do not speak Swedish, but then expects us to function in Swedish soon after arriving, and does not appropriately credit us for the time and effort we spend on our own language education.

It is worth recalling here that by law, doctoral candidates should primarily spend their time on their own education ("*ska främst ägna sig åt sin egen utbildning*")⁹. It is then an entirely reasonable view that language education should be a part of the doctoral education – and therefore should be scheduled within normal working hours and be credited as a component of the doctoral education, instead of being treated as an external activity that candidates are expected to pursue in their free time.

I wish that Swedish language courses were included as a part of the PhD programme for foreign PhD candidates. There is very little information or support on this for foreign PhD candidates, even today. And it is a huge disservice to any foreigner who is magically expected to start speaking fluent Swedish at the end of their PhD when they have been given little time, opportunity, or support to help them gain an understanding of the language. Not everyone has a Swedish family or spouse. Some people actually move here for the PhD itself, and they should be given the tools they need to become functional in the language if that is something the department expects (and it does). It is rather discriminatory to hire foreign PhD candidates and then issue most of the important information relevant to departmental activities in Swedish, with poor english translations (if any). [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Almost everyone in my department is fluent in Swedish. It is clear to me that they are not used to having non-Swedish speakers around and they regularly continue talking Swedish with each other when I am there. I have gott used to it, and now I can understand it better, but sometimes I feel a bit excluded. I am learning, but I feel like they have to high expectations (that I would have learned within 3 months and should be able to follow along). This is especially problematic when it regards "official things": meeting agendas, updates, questions etc. are all sent in Swedish over e-mail. I am now appointed to a board, but they are still deciding if I can do it because all documents are in Swedish. I feel like I spent a lot of time in the week to learn Swedish, but they don't see or recognise it. I have started talking Swedish in the breaks, but it is tiring and scary to do it. It frankly doesn't feel like I have a break when I do it. It is definitely not when there are smaller groups: people switch to English without a problem. But when almost everyone is in the lunch room it becomes harder to figure out whom to talk to. Sometimes it is asked if it is OK something is discussed in a meeting in Swedish instead of English before hand, but I don't feel comfortable saying "no, because I won't understand" and they don't wait for an answer. I am not from an English speaking country either, but in my country we are used to adjusting to the non-native speaker and talk English with each other. Especially in universities this is very common, normal and considered to be polite. I have understood this is just what it is like, though, and have accepted it. I just wanted to share it here, because I am wondering if this is commonplace and something others experience as well. [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

There are many foreign doctoral candidates who would actually like to put a lot of effort into learning Swedish. The problem is that we don't have time for that. For example, in the first 2 years of my PhD I followed SWAC (Level 1, 2 and 3), studying 22.5 credits that are not recognised for my PhD. It means 2 things: either I did that in my free time, or I lost 22.5 credit of time. I could have studied 22.5 credits useful for my PhD in those hours. Now, in the last couple of years, I need to rush to finish all the required PhD credits and there is absolutely no time for further learn Swedish, even though I would really love to do so. So, it doesn't matter if you are actually allowed to study Swedish during working hours. If the credits are not recognised, you will always have to make up for the lost time somehow. But I understand that recognise the language credit in a scientific PhD education might be wrong as well. Anyhow, I strongly believe it would be necessary to exit from PhD education and be able to master the Swedish language, as a big support to a new employment position outside the university too. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I would value more opportunities to write in Swedish, even as a non-native speaker. For example, as part of course assignments, but where there is recognition that part of the aim of such of a task is to develop Swedish skills rather than only present content. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

Learning Swedish is seen as something that should be do in our free time, as we have a majority of Swedes around us and they use their work time for other topics (obviously). But when having a family, going to Swedish courses 4 hours a week in the evenings is simply not possible, let alone doing homework. [Department of Information Technology]

I wish our department could have Swedish courses for PhD students, then we would learn much faster and better. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Learning Swedish is quite difficult and time consuming, and the ECTS cannot be counted, so I have to add them on top of my regular course load, teaching and research. Additionally, I took the Swedish for Academics 2 course (which was very good) but then the next level was not available due to too few students, which made it very difficult to keep up the language learning. In my department, not speaking Swedish is an issue, as all administration and many meetings and seminars are held in Swedish. But given the sometimes lack of availability of language courses, it is difficult for me to fix this problem. [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

Learning Swedish is extremely important because most of the daily communication at my department is in Swedish, as well as the staff meetings. [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

I think language and language learning are important issues. In particular, I think that it would be good to let non-Swedish speakers know from the beginning of their PhD that speaking Swedish will make a difference, for example for involvement in boards etc, but more particularly if they plan to stay in Sweden after their PhD and not work in academia. [Department of Organismal Biology]

As I have foreign degrees and conduct my research in English, I prefer to use English in daily interactions with colleagues. In a significant majority of situations this is not possible, partly because there are VERY few international colleagues (of all levels in the hierarchy), partly because communicating in English increases the risk of exclusion (this has not only to do with language, however). [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

I spent 1 hour a day on Swedish for two months before coming here and continued this for another two months after arriving. Administrative issues made it impossible for me to continue doing this. These include: finding a place so we would not be kicked out on the street, simply getting a bank account, getting health insurance for my non-EU family members. Currently, I either have the choice of spending time with my family or spending time learning Swedish. I choose to spend time with my family. However, I do not want to leave this country without having at least basic skills in Swedish. As for my choices regarding the English language: My abilities are above many of my co-workers. However, as I need to communicate effectively in writing for publications and grant applications, as well as in presentations and when networking, any improvements in my effectiveness in the English language will improve what I get out of my PhD education. [—]

Studying Swedish during working hours could be good for future career opportunities. I might want to consider that later in my PhD depending on how my project is progressing. Right now I don't think I can justify it. [Faculty of Medicine]

An interesting finding here is that there is no suitable offering of Swedish language education for speakers of other Scandinavian languages, such as Danish and Norwegian. These respondents describe the situation of coming to Sweden and understanding the Swedish they hear and read, but not being able to speak or write in Swedish – certainly not with the level of nuance required, for example, to conduct interviews or write funding applications. The Swedish language courses offered through SFI, SWAC etc. are not suited to this group, because they assume a much lower level of comprehension. In some cases, candidates are not permitted to access Swedish courses.

The Swedish course is not open to all students. I wish to learn Swedish, but people from other Scandinavian countries are not accepted in the Swedish courses. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

No Swedish support for Scandinavian people at UU, so understand 90%, but cannot say a single sentence. [Faculty of Medicine]

As a speaker of a Nordic language I can of course understand Swedish, but it is a lot of extra work for me preparing teaching or writing stuff in Swedish. And, even though they should be expected to understand my language equally well, the expectation is that I will do it in Swedish so that the burden is on me, even though I do not get compensated for this time. [Faculty of Arts]

I am Norwegian. My Swedish can never be fluent, which becomes a problem when funding applications need to be in Swedish. [Faculty of Medicine]

As a Nordic citizen I am not entitled to take Swedish lessons for free. I am too good for SFI, and Swedish for academics is for non-Nordics. I am self taught in Swedish, but I hardly ever get to practise. The research group I belong to is international and English is the common language. This means that the only time I really get to practise my Swedish is when I teach. I try to speak as much Swedish as possible when interacting with the students in the lab course, but I still do not feel confident enough to give lectures in Swedish. A Swedish course would have been helpful for me, offered by either the University or some other organisation to just give me some of the basics of e.g. grammar. I am not going to pay almost 3000kr out of my own pocket to take a Swedish course at Folkuniversitetet. Since it is apparently a well-known problem that there are too few Swedish-speaking PhD candidates to teach in Swedish, I think there could be more support from the University. It would only take a minor effort and support to upgrade someone like me to be able to teach entirely in Swedish. [Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences]

About the economics and practicalities of language courses:

Knowing that my department would have to pay for a SWAC course has put a lot of negative pressure on me, so I decided not to take the course. It was like "yes, you can take this course but REMEMBER THAT THE DEPARTMENT MUST PAY IT FOR YOU". [Faculty of Science and Technology] [Note: the SWAC courses previously charged a fee to the candidate's department, but this is no longer the case, as the University now provides central funding for these courses.]

I took a course in German during my time as a PhD student. I could do that during office hours, but could not count it towards my 90 ECTS credits, so it was basically in my free time. [—]

It would be nice to have credits out of UPE (Unit for Professional English) courses. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

I take a language course in my free time because I want to learn it (Swedish) myself and do not require it for my work. [Department of Neuroscience]

I no longer study Swedish, as I do not have the time. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

I would like to develop my Swedish skills and my supervisor is very supportive of this. I myself expect to learn this in my free time. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

All language learning so far has been in my free time. [Faculty of Medicine]

Talking about "paid working hours" is very difficult for many doctoral students. I think those terms are most relevant for TekNat candidates working in projects. My work description is "we like your idea; here you have five years, a room and a computer; write us a really good dissertation about it, or about something else if you get a better idea along the way". No-one defines my working hours more than that, so it is not relevant whether my superiors regards any of my time as working hours or not. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

There are now Swedish courses at my department offered by the University, which a lot of colleagues use and enjoy. I think that such university-courses are the best option for starting to learn, because the times are easier to incorporate and you don't have to wait as long as for an SFI course to get it. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

I would like more opportunity for language learning but my teaching and work schedule does not allow for this. [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

English courses are more supported (with ECTS credits, accepted to do this during work hours in case of PhD course for English learning). Learning Swedish is supposed to happen in free time, but I can get the course costs covered to some extent. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I took Swedish for Academics 3. It was scheduled on a Friday 9-12. I am teaching myself so I had to drop it. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I get a lesson each week from our "in house" Swedish tutor, which is paid for by the organisation that funds my employment. [Department of Earth Sciences]

Suggestions on how the course offering could be improved:

Would be great to have a chance to learn Swedish at our university online or partly online. [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

Would be great if there was an official Uppsala University stand-alone, self-paced learning course for the students, with videos and exercises. [Department of Earth Sciences]

When it comes to SWAC courses, it would be amazing if there were courses exceeding SWAC4! After SWAC4, there is hardly any course outside the actual language department courses for language university students, that have the level of Swedish needed! [Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences]

I am now taking SFI Swedish courses, but my priority is really English. Unfortunately, there are few courses offered for English proficiency, at least those that I am aware of. I have already tried to register for an academic writing and a speaking proficiency course, but I didn't manage to get a place in either of them because these courses often get full quite soon. [Faculty of Languages]

Personal experience and other comments:

My level of Swedish is advanced enough to continue learning by simply using the language in daily situations. [Faculty of Social Sciences; Swedish C1]

Are there any Uppsala University offered courses on learning Swedish? If there are, I'm not aware. [Faculty of Science and Technology] [Yes - the Swedish for Academics (SWAC) courses.]

I'm not actively working on learning languages, however, I believe that I cannot help but learn when reading and talking in English in my everyday activities at work. [Department of Information Technology]

I often note down words that I don't understand and will take time when possible to find their definition. Beyond that, I only learn more by constant usage. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I am learning languages by social interaction. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I did not know about SWAC, it sounds interesting for improving my written abilities in Swedish. [Department of Information Technology]

Our team is very international, Swedes is a minority, so Swedish is not really used. [Department of Information Technology]

I don't study the language separately, I learn it as it goes! [Faculty of Medicine]

I deem my English and Swedish good enough. [Faculty of Medicine; English C2; Swedish B2]

Not sure how much time I spend learning Swedish. I use it regularly at my workplace and thus "learn on the job". That's for me the most convenient and fast way of learning, but how to "count" that in hours I don't know. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Never took any Swedish course and still managed to speak fluently. [Department of Organismal Biology]

I wish I was more encouraged to learn Swedish and knew where to take courses. [Faculty of Languages]

I don't take Swedish classes any more, but in the beginning I took SWAC classes (levels 1-3) which was supported by my supervisor. [Department of Engineering Sciences]

I took a SWAC course in a previous semester, then I maybe spent 4-5 h per week on language learning. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Teaching and career

Non-research duties during the PhD

PhD students can spend up to 20% of their time on other activities than research or taking PhD courses: teaching, department duties (such as laboratory duties or administration), representation, and supervision of bachelor or master students. We asked specifically not to include things which correspond to a separate employment contract.

Many of the respondents are involved in other tasks than research - in fact, only 7% are not involved in any of the tasks that we listed, the percentage being highest at MedFarm (14%) and lowest at TekNat (4%).

The most common activity is teaching (86% of respondents). This is true for the three disciplinary domains, and the percentages of teaching PhD students are particularly high at TekNat (90%) and HumSam (87%). The lowest percentages of teaching respondents are at MedFarm (74%). There is some variation within the disciplinary domains, between the faculties and/or between the departments.

39% of respondents are involved in departmental duties. This is quite stable across the disciplinary domains: 35% at HumSam, 40% at MedFarm and 41% at TekNat. However when looking at faculties and departments level, there is more variation: from 11% at the department of IT to 59% at the department of Engineering Sciences (both belong to TekNat). It would be interesting to know what the departmental duties are for the different respondents, and whether they differ across departments.

49% of respondents report having (or having had) representative duties. We note that this is likely an over-representation and that the survey might have circulated more within PhD student representatives (see [→Demographics and recruitment bias](#)). In particular, 69% of HumSam respondents are involved in representation; the percentages for MedFarm and TekNat are lower (respectively 42% and 38%). It might also be that there are more representative positions at HumSam, reflecting a larger number of small faculties / departments. Within MedFarm, there are

Table 30

Which of the following are you doing (or have done, or will do) during your PhD? *

Do not include any work that is part of a separate employment contract, for example if you are doing a part-time PhD.

	Teaching	Department duty	Representation	Supervision	None of the above
UU	230 (86%)	106 (39%)	131 (49%)	149 (55%)	20 (7%)
HS	75 (87%)	30 (35%)	59 (69%)	42 (49%)	6 (7%)
MF	42 (74%)	23 (40%)	24 (42%)	39 (68%)	8 (14%)
TN	103 (90%)	47 (41%)	43 (38%)	63 (55%)	4 (4%)
FA	16 (76%)	10 (48%)	15 (71%)	10 (48%)	2 (10%)
FE	12 (100%)	2 (17%)	6 (50%)	9 (75%)	0 (0%)
FG	8 (73%)	4 (36%)	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)
FC	29 (97%)	10 (33%)	22 (73%)	14 (47%)	1 (3%)
FM	26 (67%)	14 (36%)	10 (26%)	23 (59%)	8 (21%)
FP	16 (89%)	9 (50%)	14 (78%)	16 (89%)	0 (0%)
DED	10 (100%)	2 (20%)	6 (60%)	9 (90%)	0 (0%)
DNR	9 (82%)	5 (45%)	3 (27%)	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
DFB	8 (80%)	2 (20%)	7 (70%)	10 (100%)	0 (0%)
DEA	11 (100%)	5 (45%)	3 (27%)	5 (45%)	0 (0%)
DEG	9 (82%)	2 (18%)	5 (45%)	8 (73%)	0 (0%)
DOB	12 (100%)	4 (33%)	6 (50%)	7 (58%)	0 (0%)
DPA	13 (81%)	8 (50%)	11 (69%)	10 (62%)	1 (6%)
DEN	16 (94%)	10 (59%)	5 (29%)	10 (59%)	0 (0%)
DIT	15 (83%)	2 (11%)	2 (11%)	7 (39%)	1 (6%)

Response options are shortened in the table header. The full text of the response options in the questionnaire was:

- Teaching
- Administration or laboratory duties at my department
- Representation, such as in boards and committees or in a trade union
- Supervision of bachelor or master students
- None of the above

fewer respondents involved in representation at the Faculty of Medicine (26%) than at the Faculty of Pharmacy (78%), reflecting the relative sizes and difficulty recruiting representatives in the two faculties. Within TekNat, the results are quite disparate between departments, from 11% at the department of IT to 69% at the department of Physics and Astronomy.

The last task was about supervision of bachelor and master students. This is a common occurrence, as 55% of respondents report it. It is most common at MedFarm (68%), followed by TekNat (55%) and finally HumSam (49%). At lower levels, two results stand out: the supervision of bachelor and master students is least frequent amongst the respondents from the Faculty of Languages (18%) (but notice the small sample size). On the contrary, it concerns 100% of the respondents from the departments of Neuroscience and of Pharmaceutical Biosciences (for a similar small sample of 10-11 respondents).

As a conclusion, the majority of respondents are involved in different activities beside research, the most common one being teaching. The next series of questions addresses different aspects of teaching as a PhD student.

Teaching opportunity

Table 31

For the following statements, please select whether you agree or disagree: *

I think some teaching experience should be part of doctoral training.

I have access to good teaching opportunities in my department.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	139	99	21	5	1	90	2
HS	52	29	4	0	0	95	0
MF	27	19	8	2	0	82	4
TN	53	47	9	2	1	89	3
FA	11	9	0	0	0	100	0
FE	8	3	1	0	0	92	0
FG	10	1	0	0	0	100	0
FC	16	13	1	0	0	97	0
FM	19	12	8	0	0	79	0
FP	8	7	0	2	0	88	12
DED	6	3	1	0	0	90	0
DNR	5	3	3	0	0	73	0
DFB	3	6	0	1	0	90	10
DEA	7	2	2	0	0	82	0
DEG	6	4	1	0	0	91	0
DOB	8	4	0	0	0	100	0
DPA	9	6	1	0	0	94	0
DEN	7	10	0	0	0	100	0
DIT	5	10	1	1	0	88	6

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	84	118	29	19	7	79	10
HS	34	30	9	9	3	75	14
MF	13	23	9	2	3	72	10
TN	35	56	10	8	1	83	8
FA	8	9	1	0	2	85	10
FE	6	5	0	1	0	92	8
FG	1	3	2	4	1	36	45
FC	11	11	4	4	0	73	13
FM	6	16	7	2	2	67	12
FP	7	7	2	0	1	82	6
DED	5	5	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	2	5	2	0	0	78	0
DFB	3	3	2	0	1	67	11
DEA	4	7	0	0	0	100	0
DEG	3	4	1	3	0	64	27
DOB	4	6	2	0	0	83	0
DPA	4	8	0	3	0	80	20
DEN	7	7	2	1	0	82	6
DIT	5	7	3	0	1	75	6

Language barriers prevent me from teaching.

My supervisor encourages me to teach and supports me in my teaching.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	8	16	33	69	130	9	78
HS	4	5	10	18	44	11	77
MF	2	1	4	15	32	6	87
TN	2	9	16	34	48	10	75
FA	2	2	3	4	9	20	65
FE	0	0	2	1	8	0	82
FG	0	1	1	3	6	9	82
FC	2	1	3	7	14	11	78
FM	1	1	4	10	20	6	83
FP	1	0	0	5	12	6	94
DED	0	0	2	1	6	0	78
DNR	1	0	1	2	6	10	80
DFB	1	0	0	3	6	10	90
DEA	0	1	2	3	4	10	70
DEG	1	2	3	3	2	27	45
DOB	0	2	0	5	5	17	83
DPA	0	2	2	5	6	13	73
DEN	0	0	2	4	9	0	87
DIT	0	0	4	9	5	0	78

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	64	104	54	15	10	68	10
HS	26	26	21	5	4	63	11
MF	7	19	12	5	3	57	17
TN	29	56	18	3	3	78	6
FA	6	7	5	0	2	65	10
FE	7	2	3	0	0	75	0
FG	3	3	2	3	0	55	27
FC	4	10	9	2	2	52	15
FM	5	14	8	1	2	63	10
FP	2	5	4	4	1	44	31
DED	7	1	2	0	0	80	0
DNR	3	4	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	2	3	2	2	0	56	22
DEA	5	5	1	0	0	91	0
DEG	5	4	1	0	1	82	9
DOB	1	9	2	0	0	83	0
DPA	5	5	3	1	0	71	7
DEN	3	11	3	0	0	82	0
DIT	4	6	2	2	1	67	20

The majority of respondents (90%) agree with "I think some teaching experience should be part of doctoral training" (Table 31). In some faculties and departments, up to 100% of respondents agree with the statement. At the scale of the University, only 2% disagree (but 12% disagree at the Faculty of Pharmacy).

79% of respondents agree with “I have access to good teaching opportunities in my department”. The lowest percentage is for MedFarm (72%) and the highest at TekNat (83%). Up to 100% of respondents agree at the department of Education and at the department of Earth Sciences. Concerning the respondents not satisfied with the teaching opportunities, the faculty of Languages stands out with 45% who do not agree (five respondents out of 11). The next highest percentage of respondents who disagree is at the department of Ecology and Genetics (three respondents out of 11). **It is apparent, then, that when doctoral candidates do not teach, this is more likely for lack of teaching opportunity than lack of interest.**

We wondered whether language barriers – in general, not speaking enough Swedish to be able to teach in Swedish – was an issue for teaching as a PhD student. It does not seem to be a large issue: only 9% of respondents agreed with the statement. There is some variation, from 0% of respondents who agreed at the faculty of Education, to 27% of respondents who agreed at the department of Ecology and Genetics.

Finally, we asked whether the respondents were encouraged and supported by their supervisor in their teaching activities. The majority of respondents agreed to that statement (68%). The most positive answer is for TekNat (78%) and the least for MedFarm (57%). There is some disparities within each disciplinary domain. At HumSam, the highest percentage of respondents who agreed was at the department of Education. At the faculty of Languages, the proportion of respondents who disagreed is larger than at the other faculties (27%). At MedFarm, the respondents seem to receive more support and encouragement at the faculty of Medicine than at the faculty of Pharmacy. Finally at TekNat, the department where the students receive least support and encouragement is the department of IT.

In conclusion, **a large majority of respondents do at least some teaching, and a large majority agree that this should be a part of doctoral education. There are some candidates who do not have access to teaching opportunities within their departments,** which is only partially explained by language barriers. Supervisors are generally supportive of candidates' teaching.

Compensation for teaching

Another concern that is often heard is that departments do not have clear rules about compensation and/or prolongation for teaching. Some departments apply *lektorstimme* (lecture hours), which means that the actual working time is calculated as classroom hours times a multiplier, to account for preparation and follow-up. Other departments only compensate the effective classroom hours. There are reports of departments that do not compensate for teaching at all, on the basis that this is an integral part of the doctoral education.

We asked whether respondents find that rules are clear and compensation is fair: **68% agreed that their department had clear rules for compensation**, while 21% disagreed with the statement. The regulations seems to be clearest at HumSam, followed by TekNat and finally MedFarm. However there are some disparities. In particular, 60% of respondents from the Department of Physics and Astronomy disagreed with the statement.

Asked whether they receive fair prolongation or compensation for teaching, 43% of respondents agreed and 33% disagreed. Looking at levels below the entire university, one faculty stands out: 50% of respondents at the Faculty of Social Sciences disagreed with the statement. **25% of respondents agreed that “Doctoral candidates are exploited as cheap teachers in my department” and 49% of respondents disagreed.** At the Department of Education, 45% of respondents agreed with the statement. This question highlights some

disparities within TekNat: at the Department of Organismal Biology, no respondent agreed with the statement, while 38% agreed at the Department of Information Technology (and only 31% disagreed).

Responses are similar in the three disciplinary domains, and are scattered even within most departments. It seems, then, that the different responses reflect different individual perceptions of what is fair, rather than differences between departments.

A specific survey by DN on prolongation for teaching duties is in progress and will be reported separately.

Table 32

For the following statements, please select whether you agree or disagree: *

My department has clear rules about compensation and/or prolongation for teaching.

The compensation and/or prolongation I get for my teaching is fair, in proportion to the actual amount of work.

Doctoral candidates are exploited as cheap teachers in my department.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	62	101	26	31	19	68	21
HS	30	33	6	11	3	76	17
MF	5	19	8	4	4	60	20
TN	25	45	11	13	11	67	23
FA	6	9	1	3	1	75	20
FE	4	6	0	1	0	91	9
FG	6	2	0	2	0	80	20
FC	6	14	5	3	2	67	17
FM	4	10	4	4	2	58	25
FP	1	9	4	0	2	62	12
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	4	6	0	1	0	91	9
DOB	5	7	0	0	0	100	0
DPA	1	3	2	3	6	27	60
DEN	3	5	3	2	2	53	27
DIT	4	7	2	1	2	69	19

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	27	70	56	38	37	43	33
HS	11	22	20	14	15	40	35
MF	5	13	7	5	6	50	31
TN	11	34	24	17	13	45	30
FA	2	6	4	3	3	44	33
FE	1	5	3	2	0	55	18
FG	2	4	2	1	2	55	27
FC	1	6	8	6	9	23	50
FM	3	6	4	3	4	45	35
FP	2	7	3	2	2	56	25
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	2	3	3	4	0	42	33
DPA	2	4	2	3	2	46	38
DEN	3	7	2	1	2	67	20
DIT	1	5	6	1	3	38	25

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	23	33	58	69	39	25	49
HS	10	12	22	24	13	27	46
MF	2	8	8	8	10	28	50
TN	10	13	23	34	16	24	52
FA	2	2	3	8	4	21	63
FE	1	4	3	1	2	45	27
FG	0	1	2	4	4	9	73
FC	4	4	11	9	0	29	32
FM	2	4	4	6	6	27	55
FP	0	4	4	2	4	29	43
DED	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DNR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DFB	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DEG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DOB	0	0	4	5	2	0	64
DPA	1	4	1	6	2	36	57
DEN	2	2	3	5	3	27	53
DIT	3	3	5	4	1	38	31

Career expectations

Respondents were asked whether they expected to continue teaching, to continue doing research and/or to remain in academia after completing their PhD. Responses differed considerably between faculties (Table 33).

Only in HumSam, a majority (80%) expects to teach after completing their PhD, and this was a full 100% in the Faculty of Language and Faculty of Educational Science. Only 5% at HumSam indicate that they expect *not* to teach. At MedFarm and TekNat, responses were more polarised, with just below half of respondents indicating they *do* expect to teach, and one-third indicating they expect *not* to.

Across subject areas, **large majorities expect to continue doing research after they complete their PhD**: 90% at HumSam, 81% at MedFarm and 72% at TekNat. Almost no respondents indicated that they definitely expect *not* to continue doing research (<10% in any domain or faculty).

Overall **half of respondents expect to stay in academia**, with the highest number in HumSam (75%) and the lowest in TekNat (41%, particularly the Department of Information Technology, 31%), which may reflect opportunities for research outside academia in the respective subject areas. In HumSam, 90% of first-years intend to remain in academia after completing their PhD, versus only 60% of fourth-years. In TekNat and MedFarm, the answers remain constant.

Half of all respondents agree they can get personalised career advice from their supervisor or a department, while 31% disagree; responses span the full range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" in most faculties. Agreeing responses by department range from 30% at the Department of Organismal Biology to 90% at the Department of Neuroscience, suggesting that **career guidance offerings differ sharply by department**.

Table 33

For the following statements, please select whether you agree or disagree: *

After I finish my PhD I expect to continue teaching, for example as a university lecturer or high school teacher.

After I finish my PhD I expect to continue doing research, for example at a university or in the research department of a private company.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	52	85	47	39	12	58	22
HS	28	35	12	3	1	80	5
MF	9	14	11	9	5	48	29
TN	14	31	21	26	5	46	32
FA	10	7	2	1	0	85	5
FE	7	4	0	0	0	100	0
FG	3	8	0	0	0	100	0
FC	5	10	9	2	1	56	11
FM	6	11	6	3	5	55	26
FP	3	3	5	6	0	35	35
DED	5	4	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	2	4	1	1	1	67	22
DFB	2	1	4	3	0	30	30
DEA	0	6	3	0	0	67	0
DEG	1	3	2	3	0	44	33
DOB	1	5	5	0	0	55	0
DPA	2	5	1	5	0	54	38
DEN	2	3	7	4	0	31	25
DIT	2	7	2	3	2	56	31

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	86	116	41	10	0	80	4
HS	28	47	7	1	0	90	1
MF	25	19	10	0	0	81	0
TN	30	46	21	8	0	72	8
FA	8	11	2	0	0	90	0
FE	4	6	0	1	0	91	9
FG	3	7	1	0	0	91	0
FC	10	15	4	0	0	86	0
FM	16	13	7	0	0	81	0
FP	9	6	3	0	0	83	0
DED	3	5	0	1	0	89	11
DNR	6	3	1	0	0	90	0
DFB	4	3	3	0	0	70	0
DEA	3	4	2	0	0	78	0
DEG	4	3	2	0	0	78	0
DOB	4	3	3	1	0	64	9
DPA	3	8	0	3	0	79	21
DEN	4	10	3	0	0	82	0
DIT	4	8	4	1	0	71	6

After I finish my PhD I expect to stay in academia.

I can get personalised career advice from my supervisor / department.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	51	81	61	30	15	55	19
HS	25	34	12	4	1	75	6
MF	11	15	16	6	1	53	14
TN	13	28	28	19	12	41	31
FA	8	8	4	0	0	80	0
FE	5	6	0	0	0	100	0
FG	3	7	0	0	0	100	0
FC	6	8	10	3	1	50	14
FM	10	9	10	4	0	58	12
FP	1	6	6	2	1	44	19
DED	4	5	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	3	5	2	0	0	80	0
DFB	1	3	4	1	0	44	11
DEA	1	4	3	0	0	62	0
DEG	3	3	2	2	0	60	20
DOB	1	6	2	0	2	64	18
DPA	1	4	3	4	1	38	38
DEN	2	5	6	3	1	41	24
DIT	2	3	7	3	1	31	25

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	37	75	42	42	28	50	31
HS	17	21	13	16	11	49	35
MF	6	22	9	6	3	61	20
TN	13	30	18	17	12	48	32
FA	5	5	2	6	2	50	40
FE	3	3	4	0	1	55	9
FG	1	5	1	2	1	60	30
FC	4	5	6	5	6	35	42
FM	6	19	5	2	2	74	12
FP	0	3	4	4	1	25	42
DED	2	2	4	0	1	44	11
DNR	2	7	0	0	1	90	10
DFB	0	3	2	1	0	50	17
DEA	0	6	4	0	0	60	0
DEG	3	1	0	0	3	57	43
DOB	1	2	2	3	2	30	50
DPA	2	5	4	2	1	50	21
DEN	0	7	3	3	2	47	33
DIT	2	4	1	4	1	50	42

Economic and non-economic rewards of doctoral education

Respondents were asked whether doctoral education was an economic sacrifice in the short run, whether they expect a higher income in the long run, and whether they expect doctoral education to make their career more meaningful or intrinsically rewarding (i.e., non-economic rewards).

When discussing income it is worth considering that many respondents come from other countries than Sweden, and may have come here specifically to do a PhD; therefore they may be comparing their economic opportunities in Sweden to the income that they would have otherwise had in a different country. See the subsection *Swedes vs non-Swedes*, above, for how these groups are defined in the analyses presented here.

On whether doctoral education is a financial sacrifice in the short run, responses are spread from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" at all faculties and indeed within most departments (Table 34). Of Swedes, 68% agree and 20% disagree. Of non-Swedes, 34% agree and 52% disagree. In general, then, **persons of Swedish background are likely to consider a PhD an economic sacrifice in the short run, whereas persons of foreign background are more likely to take the opposite view**. This is consistent with the fact that economic conditions for doctoral candidates in Sweden compare very favourably to most other countries. This pattern of Swedes vs non-Swedes is consistent across faculties and departments.

Similar results are found for the expectation of higher income in the long run, but with smaller differences between Swedes (46% agree, 30% disagree) and non-Swedes (54% agree, 16% disagree). Responses on this item show sharper contrasts between departments.

Respondents in the Faculty of Educational Sciences are most likely to consider a PhD an economic sacrifice in the short run (73% agree) but are also the most likely to expect a higher income in the long run (75% agree). Also agreeing on economic sacrifice are respondents in the Department of Physics and Astronomy (63%), Department of Information Technology (57%) and Faculty of Social Sciences (57%), however, these respondents are less likely than average to expect a higher income in the long run. Indeed, Department of Physics and Astronomy respondents are the most pessimistic of all about long-term higher income (36% agree, 46% disagree). Note that these numbers do not take into consideration the different proportions of national backgrounds in each department. Overall, TekNat respondents are most optimistic about the economic benefits of doing a PhD, but this is driven by a large proportion of non-Swedes.

An odd finding is that among Swedes, MedFarm respondents are *most* likely to expect a long-term higher income (59%, versus 42% at HumSam and TekNat), while among non-Swedes, MedFarm respondents are *least* likely to expect a long-term higher income (43%, versus 55% at HumSam and 58% at TekNat). This may relate to intentions of remaining in Sweden versus returning to other countries. However, it may also be indicative that career opportunities in these subject areas are difficult for non-Swedes to access. Possible reasons for this may include language barriers, hiring biases, and issues with recognition of foreign professional credentials.

The question of economic benefit has been investigated by UKÄ. Their report¹⁰ suggests that in most subject areas there is little or no income benefit from a PhD, except in medical / healthcare subjects. Interestingly, the UKÄ report suggests that women are more likely than men to benefit economically from doctoral education.

Across subject areas, **respondents overwhelmingly expect doctoral education to make their careers more meaningful or more intrinsically rewarding** (non-economic rewards): 90% agree, 2% disagree.

10 [UKÄ - Hur värderas en forskarutbildning?](#) (Swedish)

Table 34

For the following statements, please select whether you agree or disagree: *

In the short term, choosing doctoral education was an economic sacrifice.

In the long term, I expect doctoral education will increase my income.

In the long term, I expect doctoral education will make my career more meaningful or more intrinsically rewarding (i.e., non-economic rewards).

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	63	66	37	56	37	50	36
HS	21	24	14	11	13	54	29
MF	13	16	7	14	7	51	37
TN	24	26	11	29	17	47	43
FA	4	5	5	1	6	43	33
FE	6	2	2	0	1	73	9
FG	1	3	3	1	3	36	36
FC	6	10	3	7	2	57	32
FM	9	11	3	11	5	51	41
FP	4	5	4	3	2	50	28
DED	5	2	2	0	0	78	0
DNR	1	4	1	5	0	45	45
DFB	2	2	2	2	2	40	40
DEA	0	4	1	4	1	40	50
DEG	2	0	1	4	3	20	70
DOB	1	4	0	3	4	42	58
DPA	6	2	1	3	1	62	31
DEN	2	7	1	5	2	53	41
DIT	5	3	4	3	2	57	29

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	30	96	68	39	17	50	22
HS	15	24	24	16	3	48	23
MF	5	23	13	7	5	53	23
TN	9	45	28	14	9	51	22
FA	3	6	6	5	0	45	25
FE	4	5	3	0	0	75	0
FG	2	5	2	2	0	64	18
FC	5	8	9	3	2	48	19
FM	5	12	9	6	4	47	28
FP	0	11	4	1	1	65	12
DED	3	4	3	0	0	70	0
DNR	2	3	2	2	0	56	22
DFB	0	5	3	1	0	56	11
DEA	0	4	5	1	0	40	10
DEG	1	3	4	1	1	40	20
DOB	0	7	1	3	0	64	27
DPA	0	5	3	4	2	36	43
DEN	2	8	5	2	0	59	12
DIT	3	5	4	2	2	50	25

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	136	101	22	3	2	90	2
HS	55	27	4	0	0	95	0
MF	31	21	4	0	1	91	2
TN	46	47	14	2	1	85	3
FA	12	7	2	0	0	90	0
FE	9	3	0	0	0	100	0
FG	8	1	2	0	0	82	0
FC	19	11	0	0	0	100	0
FM	19	15	4	0	1	87	3
FP	12	6	0	0	0	100	0
DED	7	3	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	8	3	0	0	0	100	0
DFB	6	4	0	0	0	100	0
DEA	6	3	1	0	0	90	0
DEG	6	4	0	0	0	100	0
DOB	4	6	2	0	0	83	0
DPA	6	7	2	1	0	81	6
DEN	9	8	0	0	0	100	0
DIT	5	7	5	0	0	71	0

Free-text responses

About careers:

Why isn't there a career guidance service function for PhD-students at the University? [—]

Nursing research and clinical nursing in Sweden lack cooperation, which leaves career and payment possibilities low. [Faculty of Medicine]

I always tell people that you should do a PhD for fun, not as a career choice. You can get jobs in industry with an MSc degree that are both more relaxed and pay better than a PhD. [Department of Information Technology]

I am only a few months into my PhD. I plan to do teaching in years 3 & 4, but I do not know the details involved in that yet. [Department of Neuroscience]

The research is starting to bear fruit. After completing the first manuscript, I expect my supervisor to explain more about career opportunities and such. So far this has not really been relevant. [—]

A little too early for me to have outlooks after the PhD studies (only one year of five). [Faculty of Science and Technology]

About money:

The time to become a specialist doctor will be prolonged, therefore I would have earned more money if I started the PhD later. However, then I would not have been able to get as much research time as I do now as an internship doctor. [Faculty of Medicine]

It is impossible to assess any advantage financially of a PhD. However it is a huge sacrifice with regards to finance and time. I do hope it will open certain doors requiring a PhD schooling. But money was never the first reason for a PhD. It was interest in the subject. [Faculty of Medicine]

A Swedish PhD salary is the most financially comfortable I have been since leaving school and starting work 19 years ago. [Faculty of Science and Technology; born in Sweden]

About teaching:

The fact that teaching is compensated / results in prolongation does not resolve the problem of over-exhaustion and little time for research. It may, depending on the amount of teaching, result in bad or repetitive research. The PhD programme is, ought to be, about creating a researcher, not a teacher. I cannot escape the feeling that it is the latter that is the objective here. [—]

It's a university - we SHOULD embrace teaching! [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Since I requested to change supervisors, the department does not plan or assign any teaching to me so far, even though I regularly express that I want to teach. [—]

In my department PhDs might teach 1 or 2 lectures a year. I think we are being used to fill up empty places in the schedule and because our time is "free". I like to teach though and it is not that much time, so it is OK with me. But from the perspective of the students I am not sure that they are getting good quality of education from some of the PhD students. [Faculty of Medicine]

If I understand correctly, doctoral students are only compensated for the actual time needed to prepare for teaching if they manage to convince the director of studies to give them extra time (as opposed to the considerably less time in which an experienced teacher can do it). I have received such extra time on one occasion, but failed to receive it on another. [—]

I know that language might be a barrier to non-Swedish speakers as many courses are taught in Swedish, but as I speak Swedish, it does not apply to me. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

I am in my first year. I have not heard anything concrete about teaching opportunities. The language barrier is a problem, as the department only teaches Master programmes (in Swedish). I really want to teach, but the only information I have heard this far is that it should not be a problem to do an occasional lecture or seminar in English for the master students. I do feel that a more regular appointment - assisting with a full course - would be much better for my development, but no one has told me if this is or is not an option. [Faculty of Arts]

"The compensation and/or prolongation I get for my teaching is fair, in proportion to the actual amount of work". I don't know how to rate this statement, because there is no transparency in how the teaching hours relate to the prolongation, at least not in our unit. I teach 20%, but the amount of teaching differs. Comparing to how many hours people at other departments teach for 20%, I definitely teach less, but it would be nice and helpful to have access to some sort of guideline of how many hours you get to clock for this and that type of teaching and preparation. I would love to see the Excel sheet were this is calculated, but I do not think it exists. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

I have to spend a substantial amount of time on supervising masters students, but I am not compensated in any way. If only the students had time to produce good results that could be used in my project, but often they do not have the time to produce results that are good, because learning to master new techniques in the lab also takes time, and they only have 4 months to do their project. I do not dislike supervising masters students, but it takes so much time. I think it would only be fair if supervision of master students would count as teaching and would be compensated for with e.g. a fixed amount of hours per student. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

About prolongation:

Other duties (voluntary) as a PhD student are organising events at the department (for students or staff). It is really hard to find volunteers for this, or to volunteer oneself, since it is very unclear how this is counted as our work time. And if it is not, how are we supposed to gain experience in this area? [Department of Information Technology]

There are opportunities for representation in boards and committees that do not require enough time to qualify for compensation, yet they require enough time to affect workload significantly. It leads to frustration for not being able to participate in the board/committee work as one would like. [Department of Information Technology]

Compensation (specifically how prolongation is calculated) is not transparent at my unit. To my knowledge, there are no documents specifying how time spent in the class room relates to teaching hours awarded or prolongation. [—]

I have been part of the boards of academic organisations and fora, at UU as well as national. Although I do it as a representative for my department and university, and all the work takes place during office hours, I am still not sure I will receive prolongation. [—]

I do not have much information about prolongation. It seems there is no such a thing as a general rule, but rather they decide individually. I do not appreciate the lack of openness to the information about prolongation. [—]

Overall satisfaction

At the end of the survey, we asked respondents to reflect on their overall satisfaction with doctoral education. This was followed by a free-text question intended to capture any issues not covered by the questionnaire: *Did we miss anything? What other challenges do you face in your doctoral education?*

Table 35

How do you feel about your doctoral education overall?

I am happy with how my PhD is going.

Doctoral education is living up to my expectations.

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	83	114	38	18	13	74	12
HS	30	39	12	1	4	80	6
MF	18	27	5	4	2	80	11
TN	34	44	19	11	6	68	15
FA	8	10	1	1	1	86	10
FE	6	6	0	0	0	100	0
FG	4	5	1	0	1	82	9
FC	9	13	6	0	2	73	7
FM	16	14	3	3	2	79	13
FP	2	13	2	1	0	83	6
DED	6	4	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	7	3	1	0	0	91	0
DFB	2	6	1	1	0	80	10
DEA	7	3	1	0	0	91	0
DEG	5	4	1	0	1	82	9
DOB	3	4	4	1	0	58	8
DPA	5	8	1	2	0	81	12
DEN	7	8	1	0	1	88	6
DIT	3	6	5	3	1	50	22

	SA	A	N	D	SD	A%	D%
UU	66	110	46	23	14	68	14
HS	23	42	11	5	4	76	11
MF	16	25	8	4	1	76	9
TN	26	43	24	11	7	62	16
FA	6	8	4	1	2	67	14
FE	5	6	0	0	0	100	0
FG	5	4	1	1	0	82	9
FC	4	18	4	2	2	73	13
FM	14	16	5	1	1	81	5
FP	2	9	3	3	0	65	18
DED	5	4	0	0	0	100	0
DNR	5	4	1	0	0	90	0
DFB	1	6	0	2	0	78	22
DEA	5	3	3	0	0	80	0
DEG	5	5	0	1	0	91	9
DOB	1	5	4	2	0	50	17
DPA	5	6	2	3	0	69	19
DEN	4	9	2	0	2	76	12
DIT	2	7	5	3	1	50	22

Overall, 74% are "happy with how my PhD is going", and 68% agree that "doctoral education is living up to my expectations" – which leaves respectively one quarter and one third of respondents *not* agreeing with these statements. The Faculty of Educational Sciences scored 100% agreement on both questions. Disappointment with doctoral education was highest at the Department of Information Technology (22%), Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences (22%) and the Department of Physics and Astronomy (19%).

Respondents in the Faculty of Medicine are among the least satisfied with "how my PhD is going", while being among the most satisfied that "doctoral education is living up to my expectations". For the Faculty of Pharmacy, the pattern is opposite. Otherwise, responses to the two questions follow similar patterns.

Free-text responses

Many free-text comments refer back to issues raised elsewhere in the questionnaire, such as supervision, work environment and funding issues. Several respondents mentioned mental health issues. One noted that work at their department was becoming more politically directed. Some comments touched on the university's internal politics and power structures.

General comments about PhD life:

Writing a kappa is a challenge. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

There are many challenges... but in year 2 it still feels manageable. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Many routines regarding PhD education are not formalised transparently, including recruitment, courses, the cooperation between doctoral student and supervisor (for example, what should a supervisor do, to what degree does a doctoral student need to follow supervisors' suggestions, how should problems with supervisors be handled) and co-authoring. In many cases, it is difficult for PhD students to raise their concerns, since they are in a subordinate position to their supervisors and departments. Moreover, supervisors and departments may make decisions to their own advantage, rather than to the best interest of the PhD students. Formalised routines and regular discussions on such issues on a general level (i.e. organized by the doctoral boards) may help doctoral students who don't feel that they can raise these issues alone. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

Låg intellektuell och vetenskaplig nivå vid institutionen. Politisering av verksamheten. [Low intellectual and scientific level at the department. Work is becoming more politically directed.] [Faculty of Arts]

I am feeling a bit lonely after moving to Uppsala and leaving all the friends behind. It takes quite some time to build that social network up again, especially with people coming and going so frequently. [Department of Ecology and Genetics]

The system for applying to courses as a PhD is very messy; different courses are applied to in different ways, some by email which is not very good. A common page at Medarbetarportalen, preferably with an automated form to fill in, would be great. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Most senior staff cannot relate to doctoral education post-Tham-reform [the 1997-1998 higher education reforms]. Also, UU is an old university, and there are continuous clashes between reforms à la new public management contra unspoken traditions and hidden power structures. [—]

About funding and working hours:

A budget for a PhD should be known in advance to be able to plan research.

The coverage of operational costs for research, not only the salary. That has been a problem since I started my doctoral studies since it did not get budgeted properly and it's very hard to plan research when you never know if there is money to buy anything. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Discrepancies between what the university/faculty/department encourages us to do, and the (lack of) resources they hand us to fulfill those encouragements. They want us to write in English, on international subjects, be part of international networks, present papers at international conferences - but they refuse to pay for the extra costs associated with it. [—]

About work environment and working hours:

Many work environment issues relate to increasing internationalisation (e.g. language use and ethnic and cultural diversification of employees, which impacts on PhDs' participation and accessibility on both teaching, career, workplace policies and decision making as well as the performance of equal possibilities). Another issue is the marketisation of the university and research. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

There seems to be an expectation that PhD students (and not only, this applies all the way to professors) will work overtime for free because that's what having a career in academia demands. [Department of Information Technology]

There is a lot of variability in working hours / expectations to be present in the office for PhD students in different departments. My department is fairly inflexible as I am not allowed to work from home or from the library during work hours at any time. [—]

General working environment: noise, light, chairs, tables, fixed height, limit protection from freezer, machines → physical injury (see as a most general problem, that could be improved a lot, compared to my previous labs). Risk evaluation of chemicals vs economy by choosing cheap and more long-term risk full chemicals. [Faculty of Medicine]

Since I am a clinician, I will not get four years of research time to complete the PhD, meaning I have to either make it with a more reduced quality or work during evenings and weekends! [Faculty of Medicine]

About stress and mental health:

I would like to raise the topic of mental health in regards to doctoral education. Burn-outs and depressions are becoming more and more common and it is a worrisome trend that we are witnessing right now. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Stress and pressure are the main challenges. [Department of Organismal Biology]

It's the best, but at the same time, also the worst decision I have taken in my life. Too much stress, too much work... for what?! [Faculty of Science and Technology]

It would be useful to have some more avenues for info / support / advice / networking for PhD students who are also parents to young children. [Faculty of Educational Sciences]

About supervision:

Despite overall very good conditions to do a PhD in Sweden, I find it more difficult than I expected. In my case, many issues are related to the type of supervision I am receiving as well as the nature of the projects I am working with (very long term projects, which feel too big for myself, and the fact that I am quite isolated in what I do). I think more opportunities to discuss that, between PhD students and also with external people (psychologists? advisers?), in small groups or alone, could make it easier. (For example, I took a stress management course with Feelgood two years ago and that was somewhat useful). [Department of Organismal Biology]

The supervisor you get becomes very important for what your education will be like. I think supervisors need to be better matched to the interests or project of the PhD student. [—]

One of my assistant supervisors has not been engaged in my project and that has caused many struggles in my work because my project is based abroad and he is the supervisor from that location so his support and involvement is crucial to the success of the project. My other assistant supervisor who should be the most senior person makes it seem like he is supporting us but when asked for advice and concrete questions, he just returns the question or responsibility back to me to sort out. I no longer trust him as someone to go to for scientific advice, that is a shame because he is a professor and research group leader. [Faculty of Medicine]

My biggest challenge is to get supervision and support in some way. My supervisor isn't interested and he rarely has time anyway, and my colleagues are not interested in discussing research related issues. I feel very alone. [Department of Information Technology]

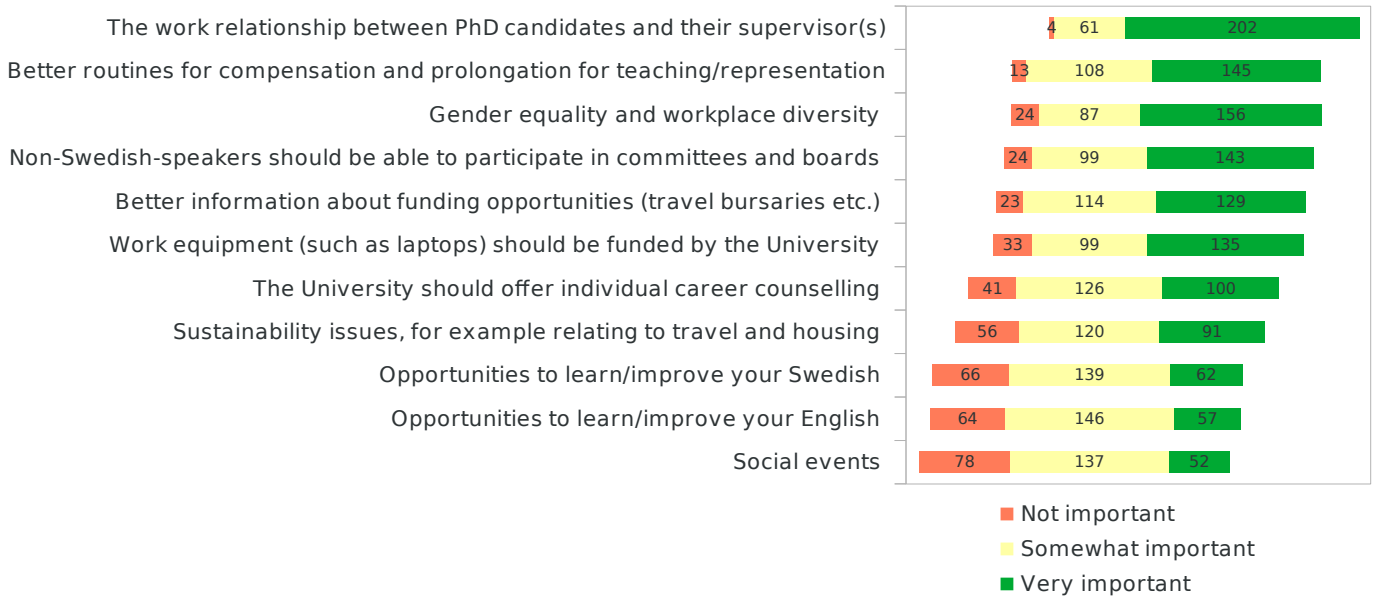
A lack of time on the part of the supervisors and preoccupation with their own research and teaching activities makes me as the PhD student feel like the part of their work with the least priority and I often have to "wait" and slow down my process for the supervisors to do their job (comment, supervise, guide and aid the progress of my work). This, together with a problematic relationship with my main supervisor stands in the way of / slows down my progress. Given the nature of the funding (limited to 4 years of full-time studies) this induces tremendous anxiety and emotional stress. [—]

Focus areas for the Doctoral Board

Respondents were asked to rate eleven suggested focus issues for the Doctoral Board as not important, somewhat important, or very important.

The Doctoral Board (DN) works to represent doctoral candidates and improve our working conditions.

Which of the following issues do you think deserve most attention? * (n)



Responses are relatively uniform across disciplinary domains.

A focus issue that we did not include, but that was repeatedly suggested in free-text responses, is that DN should work with the University to improve the offering of PhD courses, and especially to improve the information about courses, for example with a university-wide database of courses for PhD candidates.

Regarding funding, an issue that emerged as meriting further attention is the differences between departments in the availability of individual budgets for work expenses ("rucksack money") and charging overhead on external bursaries and grants for doctoral candidates (see [→Funding](#)).

Appendix I: Department tree

Uppsala University consists of 63 departments (or equivalent units) organised into nine faculties in three disciplinary domains. The table below shows number of registered doctoral candidates ([→Fol data](#)) and number of survey respondents in each of these units.

The Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology (TekNat) is organised as a single faculty: the Faculty of Science and Technology.

unit	registered candidates	respondents	response rate
Uppsala University	2071	304	15%
Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy (MedFarm)	753	57	8%
Faculty of Medicine	667	39	6%
Department of Immunology, Genetics and Pathology	100	7	7%
Department of Medical Biochemistry and Microbiology	40	3	8%
Department of Medical Cell Biology	27	2	7%
Department of Medical Sciences	89	2	2%
Department of Neuroscience	100	11	11%
Department of Public Health and Caring Sciences	59	2	3%
Department of Surgical Sciences	172	5	3%
Department of Women's and Children's Health	80	7	9%
Faculty of Pharmacy	86	18	21%
Department of Medicinal Chemistry	26	1	4%
Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences	44	10	23%
Department of Pharmacy	16	7	44%
Disciplinary Domain of Science and Technology (TekNat)	786	114	15%
Faculty of Science and Technology	786	114	15%
Biology Education Centre	2	0	0%
Botanical Garden	0	0	—
Department of Cell and Molecular Biology	76	8	11%
Department of Chemistry - BMC	36	6	17%
Department of Chemistry - Ångström Laboratory	97	9	9%
Department of Earth Sciences	63	11	17%
Department of Ecology and Genetics	57	11	19%
Department of Engineering Sciences	155	17	11%
Department of Information Technology	113	18	16%
Department of Mathematics	33	4	12%
Department of Organismal Biology	36	12	33%
Department of Physics and Astronomy	118	16	14 %
Swedish Biodiversity Centre	0	0	—

unit	registered candidates	respondents	response rate
Disciplinary Domain of Humanities and Social Sciences (HumSam)	532	86	16%
Faculty of Arts	98	21	21%
Centre for Gender Research	7	3	43%
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History	18	6	33%
Department of Archives, Libraries and Museums	1	0	0%
Department of Art History	9	1	11%
Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology	0	0	—
Department of Game Design	0	0	—
Department of History	20	1	5%
Department of History of Science and Ideas	13	4	31%
Department of Literature	13	2	15%
Department of Musicology	5	1	20%
Department of Philosophy	12	2	17%
Faculty of Educational Sciences	71	12	17%
Centre for Educational Management	2	0	0%
Department of Education	69	10	14%
Departments Involved in Education and Teaching Professions	0	0	—
Forum for Community Engagement	0	0	—
SWEDES - Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development	0	0	—
Faculty of Languages	70	11	16%
Department of English	12	2	17%
Department of Linguistics and Philology	32	3	9%
Department of Modern Languages	11	3	27%
Department of Scandinavian Languages	15	3	20%
Faculty of Law	54	4	7%
Center for Policy Research	0	0	—
Department of Law	54	4	7%
Real Estate Research Institute	0	0	—
Faculty of Social Sciences	192	30	16%
Department of Business Studies	42	9	21%
Department of Economic History	0	0	—
Department of Economics	14	6	43 %
Department of food studies, nutrition and dietetics	7	1	14%
Department of Government	1	0	0%
Department of Informatics and Media	15	2	13%
Department of Peace and Conflict Research	18	4	22%
Department of Psychology	31	4	13%
Department of Social and Economic Geography	24	1	4%
Department of Sociology	27	2	7%
Department of Statistics	13	1	8%
Institute for Housing and Urban Research	0	0	—
Institute for Russian and Eurasian Studies	0	0	—
Faculty of Theology	47	8	17%
Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism	0	0	—
Department of Theology	47	8	17%
Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre	0	0	—

Appendix II: Evaluation

This appendix briefly evaluates the questionnaire in terms of its success at collecting the intended information. This is mainly intended to be helpful in the design of future questionnaires.

We consider the survey was successful at collecting a broad range of data on issues of current interest.

The number of respondents (304) was sufficient for general conclusions and comparisons between disciplinary domains, but not for in-depth analyses at the department level. It is unlikely that a higher response rate can be obtained for a survey advertised by bulk emailing, unless some form of reward were included for completion. Advertising at department level may have helped to boost response rates.

A shorter survey may have achieved a higher response rate. The length of this survey also presented a challenge in the data analysis and writing of the report, which took considerable time. Future surveys may be more focused on single topics.

The format and technical implementation of the survey were successful. Questions of the tick-all-that-apply type should have always included a "none of the above" option.

Little information was available on previous surveys. The Doctoral Board may need to reflect on data storage policies to ensure that data and reports remain available for future use.

Additional topics that emerged in later discussion, and may be of interest for future surveys, include:

- *Skuggdoktorander*: persons who carry out substantially the same activities as doctoral candidates, without being officially admitted to doctoral education. In some departments, this phenomenon is a common entry route to doctoral education.
- "IT stress": the workload and stress caused by the plethora of web tools and portals that doctoral candidates (and other university staff) are required to use. These tools often replace administrative staff support, while no allowance is made for the working time spent on learning and using these tools.
- Work from home: rights and obligations in regard to work scheduling, availability of portable hardware, software for remote working etc.
- The role of "examinators" / "reviewers", in faculties where these exist. Typically this is a member of academic staff, separate from the supervisors, who is a neutral third party who checks that both the candidate and the supervisors are doing their job. In practice, there have been concerns about the effective independence of these persons from the main supervisors.
- Family circumstances: do respondents have children, have they worked in industry before, do they expect to remain in Sweden or not, and how does this affect their career choices, language learning, etc.
- Do you see yourself as a student or as an employee?

Software choice

The survey was intended to be run on KURT, which is an Uppsala University survey tool primarily used for course evaluations. Initial design attempts showed that KURT cannot handle multi-page surveys. This survey as intended would have been very long if presented on a single page, which may have made respondents more reluctant to complete it.

LimeSurvey was chosen on the basis of being free software, web-based, highly versatile and capable of automatically producing both desktop- and mobile-friendly surveys. It provides some basic analysis and graphs within its own web interface, but any more advanced analyses are best done "offline" i.e. by downloading a plain-text database file and then using statistics software.

Among the more advanced functions of LimeSurvey that we did not use are: multi-language surveys, randomised question or page orders, and dynamic presentation of questions (such as: displaying additional questions or pages depending on respondents' answers).

Installing and administrating LimeSurvey requires access to a web server and a basic level of web and database administration skills, such as: setting directory permissions, configuring PHP and creating a PostgreSQL database. Once LimeSurvey is running, the web interface allows any person to create a survey and handle the data – no particular technical skills are required for this.

Advertisement

The survey was primarily advertised by repeated bulk emailing, and this gave a good number of responses with a good distribution between departments. The only evident recruitment bias was a failure to reach clinical doctoral candidates. One possible reason for this is that these candidates are likely to use their Uppsala county council (i.e., hospital) email as their main day-to-day inbox. Future survey efforts should consider requesting a list of such candidates and their email addresses from Uppsala county council under Fol, so that the survey can be advertised directly to their hospital inboxes.

The survey was further advertised through routine internet and social media resources. Twelve respondents reached the questionnaire from Facebook, two from the DN website. The overwhelming majority had no referrer URL, which suggests they opened the questionnaire from an email link.

There was a slight bias to over-recruit respondents who are somehow involved with student representation and board/committee work. Such respondents may simply be more likely to open an email from DN and take an interest in this sort of survey. It is difficult to see how this bias could be avoided.

The University has carried out internal surveys sent in paper form by internal mail. These receive substantially higher response rates, although obviously at a greater logistical expense.

Work environment

Due to response numbers, only the categories "University campus in Uppsala" and "Akademiska hospital, or other clinical location in Sweden" could be analysed for workplace conditions. The questions on access to relevant events (seminars, courses) and access to "people with whom I can exchange ideas about my research" were partly intended to probe whether these were issues for those doctoral candidates who are not based on campus in Uppsala. Unfortunately, the low response numbers made it difficult to draw any conclusions.

It was not asked which particular campus respondents work at (Ekonomikum, Blåsenhus, Ångström etc.). To an extent this can be inferred from faculty or department. If this question were included, it should allow for persons with more than one regular workplace.

Theft and non-physical violence emerged as the two most common types of incident, out of the categories considered. Future questionnaires may investigate these incidents further: theft of what, non-physical violence of what type, by whom, against whom? Some free-text comments describe bullying of doctoral candidates by their supervisors, which could have been a question in either the Work environment or the Supervision section.

It emerged clearly that although most doctoral candidates feel safe in their workplace, not all would know whom to turn to if an incident occurs, and not all would feel safe reporting an incident. It also emerged that University follow-up on reported incidents is often unsatisfactory. These issues could be a topic for a more focused questionnaire in the future. Whom would you talk to? How would you expect that person to handle the situation? Whom would you be afraid to talk to? What are you afraid will happen if that person finds out?

Another relevant topic for future investigations is the threshold for something to be considered an incident, or to be considered worth reporting and following up. This could look like: would you report it if someone, repeatedly and uninvitedly... (1) makes comments about your body, (2) puts their arm around your shoulders or waist, (3) puts their hand on your knee or thigh, (4) etc. ... Would you consider this harassment? Whom would you report it to? What action would you expect the University to take, if you report it? What if the person is (1) a colleague, (2) your supervisor, (3) the Head of Department? Etc. Similar questions could be asked for bullying and discrimination.

Relationship with supervisors and mentors

The multiple-choice questions in this section functioned as intended, capturing an overview of candidate-supervisor relationships. The free-text responses added more concrete and detailed examples for illustration.

Our questions focused on the "regular supervisor" as identified by the respondent, due to the many possible arrangements with main supervisors, co-supervisors etc. This functioned well for nearly all respondents, leaving out those few who are either genuinely supervised by two or more persons, or have no supervision at all.

We did not ask about previous supervisors, if a change of supervisor occurred. This may produce an overly optimistic picture about supervisor relationships. Future surveys might include questions about changes of supervisor: did you have a change of supervisor, what was the reason, who requested the change, how did it affect your project, your funding etc. The LimeSurvey software has features to repeat and adapt a question interactively, so that the questions about supervisor relationship could be asked more than once: your current supervisor, your previous supervisor, your co-supervisor, etc., as applicable in each case.

We did not ask about the supervisor's title or job position. Some of the free-text comments indicated that candidates have greater resources at their disposal if the supervisor is a well-established faculty member, rather than a junior researcher. Conversely, other comments suggest that more senior supervisors may have less time for their doctoral candidates. Future surveys may include a question like "What is your supervisor's job title?" - professor, lecturer, researcher etc.

Some free-text responses note how often the candidate meets the supervisor, for example: twice per term. It may be interesting to compare the amount of actual contact / supervision time, and we expect this may vary considerably between faculties. The analysis is complicated by the many

different ways in which supervision can occur: informally face-to-face, formal meetings, email, video meetings, have lunch together, etc. We expect that some candidates see their supervisors almost daily, due to the vicinity of offices, while others may only see their supervisor once a year.

The question of harassment was not specifically included in this section, as it was addressed under Work Environment. There, we found that 15% of campus-based respondents reported "Non-physical violence (such as bullying, stalking or intimidation)" in their workplace. It would have been interesting to determine what proportion of candidates feel that they are bullied by their supervisors, as reported in some of the free-text responses here.

Workload

On questions about working hours, respondents gave different interpretations of the official/contracted working hours versus actual working hours. This made quantification of overtime work difficult, but we were nevertheless able to establish that overtime work is widespread.

A section with questions addressed specifically to doctoral candidates with clinical employment was very difficult to interpret, due to the surprising fact that these questions were answered mostly by respondents *not* from the Faculty of Medicine and *not* indicating a clinical setting as their primary workplace. At the same time, most of those respondents who do indicate that they are clinic-based doctoral candidates in the Faculty of Medicine did *not* answer the questions in this section. In future surveys, perhaps a software configuration should be used to ensure that such questions are only shown to the persons whose responses are of interest. A specific survey for this group may be useful, and may then be advertised through other channels (such as hospital email addresses).

Funding

The questions functioned as intended to identify broad patterns in funding circumstances. Substantial free-text comments highlighted that the issue of work expenses is complex and can be a driver of candidate-supervisor conflicts. It may be useful to map out the different regulations that apply in different departments, especially regarding "rucksack money", overhead and traktamente; a survey may not be the most effective way to collate this information.

PhD courses

It was difficult to collate an overview of the number of credits of courses required per degree subject (*ämne*). A survey might not be the best tool to collate this information. Programme syllabi were available for some programmes, and varied in clarity on this issue. It may be necessary to communicate with individual departments to collate exact requirements per programme.

The main limitation of this set of questions was for respondents who had started their PhD recently and thus did not have much experience of the courses. Additional questions that we could have asked is how easy it is to validate courses taken outside of UU, or other activities like book reading, attending conferences etc. – it is clear that there are differences between departments in which activities are recognised as giving credits.

A few comments concern the quality of courses, the feeling that the number of credits awarded for a given course does not correspond to the work which has to be put in the course, and lack of guidance and information in the choice of courses. It is difficult to generalise from such comments, and this may be investigated in the future by a more specific survey.

Holidays and leave of absence

Responses on sick leave and prolongation are conditioned by the fact that not all candidates have incurred these circumstances. More specific questions could have been asked by structuring the survey dynamically, i.e., the answer to one question determines which subsequent questions are shown: "have you ever taken sick leave?" → "did you report it in Primula?" → "did you receive prolongation?" etc.

The free-text responses show that there are other areas of confusion around sick leave, such as dealing with the Social Insurance Agency (*Försäkringskassan*) or reimbursement of medical expenses. It is clear that there is confusion about rules and procedures. Future surveys could include questions such as "where would you look for information?", "whom would you ask for help?".

Languages

Questions in this section successfully provided broad data on patterns of language skill, language use and language learning.

Teaching and career

In general, questions in this section successfully addressed the issues of interest.

Missing from this section was a question on the overall amount of teaching in each department: some report that there is a lot of teaching and not enough doctoral candidates to do it, while in other departments there is not enough teaching opportunity for all candidates.

One question on career asked about whether candidates expect to "continue teaching" – this formulation is incorrect for those who are not currently teaching.

Questions on career expectations discussed income, but not employment security, or employment circumstances more broadly.

Career expectations may differ markedly for persons who have a professional degree (doctor, engineer etc.). A question could have been asked to identify these persons.

Free-text feedback

The very last question in the survey asked for "Any comments or feedback on this questionnaire".

Comments or suggestions on specific questions:

The question about doctoral education living up to expectations ought to expressly concern Uppsala University, or "at your department". Having visited a number of places during my PhD, abroad as well as in Sweden, it appears to me that there are significant differences in how things are organised at the equivalent department/faculty, to the detriment of UU. [—]

The survey misses the question: "Hur ofta har du allvarligt övervägt att hoppa av dina doktorandstudier? [How often have you seriously considered quitting your doctoral studies?]" [Faculty of Medicine]

More questions about clinically driven PhDs and the cooperation between the university with supervisors and the hospital management! [Faculty of Medicine]

Some commented on anonymity, pointing out (correctly) that combinations of questions such as age, country of birth and department can be sufficient to identify many respondents. Not all of these questions had an "Other" or "Prefer not to say" option.

Asking for the department and place of birth in combination probably impairs the anonymity of this survey, given that some departments are rather small and/or not very diverse. [Faculty of Social Sciences]

I think it is a bit problematic especially for smaller departments to keep this survey anonymous (with all the information given in the end) and, I am working at two departments - and some answers apply to one, some to the other. It would be great to have an option in the next survey to tick several departments. [Faculty of Arts]

Anyone in my department will know who I am if you reveal the information in this last page! [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Three respondents commented on the survey being long (although they did complete it, having reached this last question). For context: of 304 people who answered the first page, 264 completed the whole questionnaire (a 13% drop-out rate).

This is too long and I do not know how you expect people to give you information when you write such a long survey full with some really useless questions. [Department of Neuroscience]

Too long. [Faculty of Medicine]

Nice, but quite long! [Faculty of Pharmacy]

One respondent commented on the distinction of Swedes versus non-Swedes. This was not mentioned expressly in the survey text, but the respondent correctly anticipated that this would be analysed. See the main report on how we used multiple variables to categorise respondents for that purpose.

Please note that neither the country of birth (which you have not made optional for some reason) nor the place of obtaining the first degree provides, at least in my case, adequate support for qualifying my responses as coming from an international, foreign PhD. [—]

Some respondents expressed appreciation for individual questions, or for the survey effort overall:

I think, judging purely by this form (as I am a very new PhD student) that you seem to be doing a good job! [Faculty of Science and Technology]

This was a surprisingly good questionnaire, touching on a lot of common issues that PhD students face. [Department of Information Technology]

Hope you get many answers! Will be fun to see the summary after. [Faculty of Pharmacy]

Nice inclusion of 'non-binary' as an actual option in the gender identification question, that should be a standard. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Great initiative! [Faculty of Arts]

It was such an unexpected but pleasant surprise to find USSR on the list of where someone is born. Thank you for that. It made my day. [Faculty of Science and Technology]

Good that you had a section specific for clinicians, we are sometimes "forgotten" and sometimes we have the poorest working conditions as we don't even get research time to do our PhD. [Faculty of Medicine]

I appreciate you doing this! [Faculty of Social Sciences]

Great questionnaire. It would be wonderful if you could provide the results back to the individual departments. [Faculty of Medicine]