



PhD Student Handbook

for PhD students at the Faculty of Forest Sciences, SLU

S-fak PhD Student Council, May 2018

Based on

“VH-faculty PhD student handbook” (updated Dec 2016),

“NJ-faculty PhD student handbook” (updated Feb 2016), and

“Arranging your PhD and Defense” (Dept. of Wildlife, Fish, and Environmental Studies, updated Oct 2017)

“Guidelines for PhD student-supervisor discussions at the beginning of PhD Education at SLU” (Dept. of Forest Ecology and Management)

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Rules, policies, and webpages are in a constant state of change at SLU. We do our best to keep this handbook updated, but there may be some information (such as names of the ombudsman, the directors of graduate study, and the PhD administrators) may change between successive updates. This handbook is not a binding document of SLU and serves primarily for your assistance in navigating PhD student life at SLU. Please let us know if you find updated rules, regulations, names, and working links that we should update in the next edition of the handbook.

Welcome

Particularly for those of you coming from outside of Sweden, it is important to understand that SLU's structures, processes, and procedures might differ in key regards to other universities you have attended. This handbook is intended to give you an overview of what is likely to happen, what you need to know, and who can help you during your time as a PhD student at the Forest Faculty. We give useful tips to Swedish and non-Swedish PhD students, however Swedish PhD students can easily skip the first two sections and start reading at page 10. Have a look at page 5 if you are in need of housing.

You are welcome to suggest changes that you think may be of value for other PhD students. Please send your suggestions or comments to shs_doktorandradet@slu.se.

The PhD Student Council of the Faculty of Forest Sciences

This handbook is organized and presented by the PhD Student Council of the Faculty of Forest Sciences (fakulteten för skogsvetenskap or S-fak for short). The S-fak PhD Student Council is connected to the SHS Student Union for undergraduates (skogshögskolans studentkår) and handles issues concerning research and post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Forest Sciences. The Council's purpose is to support PhD students in the Forest Faculty at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. Each department is encouraged to send at least one representative, preferably more, to be in the council. The PhD Student Council has representatives on various boards and committees in the University administration and is the main way by which PhD students can influence PhD studies at the faculty level.

Besides working for the rights and working conditions of PhD students, the Council often arranges social events and workshops that have included topics ranging from poster-making and Photoshop to how to make better research presentations. The PhD Student Council is also a great place to get information about what is going on and how things work at the University. Get in touch with someone of the PhD Student Council or e-mail the following address for more information: shs_doktorandradet@slu.se – we are happy to talk with you or let you drop into one of our meetings to see what we do.

S-fak PhD Student Council:

<https://internt.slu.se/en/support-services/education/doctoral-education1/phd-student-councils/phd-council-for-shs/>

Current event information:

<http://skogisstudentkar.se/om-karen/foreningar/doktorandraderet/>

1) Getting Started

Moving to Sweden

Many students at the Faculty of Forest Sciences do their studies in Umeå; however, significant numbers of us are also based in Alnarp, Uppsala (Campus Ultuna), Grimsö and Skinnskatteberg.

While it is not the University's responsibility to find housing for you, it is advisable to contact your department explicitly about a place to live. In the past, some departments have been able to help students (particularly those coming from non-EU countries) with housing, but there is no guarantee your department will be able to help you finding accommodation. Check out [SLU's webpage](#) for some useful tips and a list of all renting companies by location! If you have a personal connection in the city where you are moving to or the surrounding area, it is worth contacting them to see if they or someone they know has a property or a room they can rent to you in the short or long term.

In general, the major apartment rental companies have a rigid queue system to determine who can rent an apartment. When you are registered in a housing queue of a private company, you will collect so called 'queue days'. The more you have, the higher your chance in obtaining a room/apartment when you apply for it. The accommodation will always be granted to the person who has waited longest in the queue. Depending on the apartment you apply for, it is often the case that one needs to be in a housing queue for many years to get a non-student, one or two-person apartment for rent. That being said, people with more time in the housing queue can and do succeed in getting apartments with the major rental companies. Student apartments (normally consisting of one room and a bathroom with a shared kitchen and common facilities) generally take less time to become available for those in the queue.

It is extremely important that you register in these housing queues immediately and check the homepages for available rental apartments on a regular basis. There are often between 20 -150 people applying for one room/apartment, so you will have to be patient and not give up if your first attempts are unsuccessful. Please note that each of these companies/ organizations have different requirements to keep your registration active. Some need a small fee in advance and almost all need you to renew your queue days on a regular basis (i.e. once a year by logging in, applying for a room or sending an email to the secretary of the housing provider). If you fail to do so, you will lose all of your queuing points.

Here is a short list of apartment rental companies in Sweden, for more details see [here!](#)

- [Rikshem](#) (Swedish personal number needed)
- [Heimstaden](#) (Swedish personal number needed)

Umeå:

- [Bostaden](#) (by far the largest in Umeå)
- [Lerstene](#) (in Swedish)
- [Balticgruppen](#) (Swedish personal number needed)

Uppsala:

- [Uppsala Bostadsförening](#) (Swedish personal number needed, yearly fee of 290 SEK)
- [Studentboet](#) (both private companies with queues and second hand)
- The [VH PhD student handbook](#) and the [NJ PhD student handbook](#) also provide some useful information about searching for housing in Uppsala.

Alnarp:

- SLU – Alnarp housing [website](#). E-mail: housing@slu.se
- Alnarp student union provides a good [website](#) with useful information (in Swedish)
- Note that many PhD students studying in Alnarp live in Malmö, Lund or other cities closed by. Have a look at the biggest [housing queue](#) that covers southern Sweden, Skåne (in Swedish, yearly fee of 300 SEK).
- At [Akelius](#), and [LM bygg](#) you are not dependent on queuing days.

The second hand market for rental housing may be a good place to check as well. The website [blocket.se](#) is the main place where people post all over Sweden ads of properties or rooms they want to rent out. You can also set up your own ad as someone searching for an apartment. Of course, be careful to protect yourself from scams. For an example of some of the basic things to watch out for when renting a property on the second hand market, see: <https://toughnickel.com/real-estate/How-to-Avoid-Apartment-and-House-Rental-Scams-on-Craigslist>

Searching for housing on the second hand market via [blocket.se](#) is an experience that can be vastly different for different people at different times. It is common that those posting an apartment or room to sublet get upwards of 50 responses or more to their ads within the same day they post the ad. Other times, few people respond to an advertisement for several days. It is important to be persistent checking new postings on a daily basis, or even multiple times per day, and apply to multiple ads if you are searching on the second hand market. The length of the second hand contract offered can vary from a few months to a year or two. Some students and post-Docs have had relatively quick success by posting an advertisement as a person seeking an apartment.

Residence permit and personal number

Citizens of an EU country will follow a different process than non-EU citizens for entering Sweden, attaining a residence status, and acquiring a personal number. First, the **process for non-EU citizens** will be described. Before you arrive in Sweden, you should make arrangements for your residence permit. If you are not a resident in a European country, the first thing that needs to be taken care of is your visa or residence permit. This process requires a passport, which is also required for entry into Sweden. Since the process of issuing the permit can be long and time consuming, you are strongly advised to begin this as soon as possible. You need to have an acceptance letter (that includes the time of your employment as a PhD student), fill out the application online or in paper form, and then the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) will process the application. If you need an entry visa to travel to Sweden (see list [here](#)) you will need to visit a Swedish embassy or consulate general to be photographed and fingerprinted as soon as you have been granted a visa (more information at <http://www.government.se/government-policy/migration-and-asylum/information-on-visas/>). If you do not need an entry visa, your student residence permit must still be granted before you travel to Sweden and you must be able to show the decision on your residence permit from the Swedish Migration Agency when you enter the country.

You hand in the documentation for a physical residence permit card to the Swedish Migration Agency once you have arrived in Sweden. To clarify: a student residence permit must be granted to non-EU citizens before you travel to Sweden, but the actual card verifying your residence permit must be issued by the Swedish Migration Office after you have arrived in Sweden. Detailed instructions for the entire process can be found [here](#).

You may have to wait in line for some time at the Migration Office for your residence card to be issued. From January 2017 The Swedish Migration Agency has a new praxis: PhD students can now get a residence permit valid for 2 years. To get the two-years residence permit, all requirements have to be fulfilled, e.g. financing. See the news release [here](#) (only in Swedish). If you are not entering Sweden on a student residence permit due to immediate family in Sweden or marriage/domestic partnership with a Swedish or Nordic citizen living in Sweden, the [Migrationsverket website](#) will instruct you how to proceed.

European citizens need an official ID card to enter Sweden. But note that you will also need your passport for other things, such as applying for a Swedish ID card. Students who are residents of an EU country will have to register their 'Right of residence' once they have entered Sweden within the first three months of their stay. It is highly recommended to do this online at the [homepage of Migrationverket](#). Citizens of the Nordic countries do not need a residence permit but do need to register at the Tax Office (*Skatteverket*).

2) After you arrived in Sweden

Personal number

The Swedish personal number (*personnummer*) is the key to accessing most services from the state, setting up a bank account, and even creating customer accounts with private companies. Accordingly, getting your Swedish *personnummer* is a top priority. The Swedish *personnummer* consist of 10 digits with 6 of them corresponding to your birthday and usually a hyphen followed by a four digit number. The number will make you part of the Swedish civil system which will link your personal information (birthday, address etc.) with authorities in healthcare, universities and the social insurance system.

Only people who will stay in Sweden **longer than one year** are entitled to a Swedish personal number. In order to get one assigned, you have to visit the Swedish Tax Office (*Skatteverket*), fill out a form they provide, and bring the following documents:

- Your passport with residence permits for identification;
- Your rental contract with your current address in Sweden (even if you are staying in a temporary housing arrangement); and,
- Your letter of acceptance which contains a statement on your funding, your insurance status as well as how long you will be in Sweden. In addition you can also bring a written contract with SLU if already available.

Confirm the tax office opening hours before you plan your trip. An employee of Skatteverket will likely greet you when you walk in and ask you what particular task you are there to complete. Be prepared to wait in line by taking a slip of paper with a number on it indicating your place in line. The Swedes often have a numbered queue system at public buildings and even some retail stores, so check if you need to take a number before sitting down to wait. There will be multiple electronic displays over various desks showing what number in the queue a particular desk is serving. Like Migrationsverket, Skatteverket can help you in English. While you are there, ask about applying for a Swedish ID card for reasons explained in the next section. See the [Skatteverket website](#) for more information (click “other languages” at the top).

After you have submitted all your papers it can take up to 8 weeks until you receive your number. Outside of August/September when the school year starts, a wait of more than a couple of weeks is often due to some kind of clerical error. If you have not received your letter in the mail with your personnummer after two weeks or so, it is a good idea to contact the tax office to check if everything is in order with your application. If you move during your stay in Sweden, you will have to contact Skatteverket within a week of your move and let them know your new address. You can update your address with Skatteverket online.

As soon as you received your personal number, you are covered by the Swedish health insurance (*Försäkringskassa*). For more information please see [here](#). However, in single previous cases your information was not directly submitted from Skatteverket to

Försäkringskassan. We recommend to check with your local insurance office or give them a call in order to make sure that you are insured properly!

Bank Account

After you have obtained your *personnummer*, you can get a bank account. While different banks have different policies, **you will probably need a Swedish ID card to open a bank account**. An identity card can be obtained from the Swedish tax office after you received your *personnummer*. Identity cards from another EU member state will not be accepted as a substitute. There are a number of banks you can choose from, such as: Nordea, Handelsbanken, SEB, and Swedbank, among others. Particularly if you are coming from outside Sweden, ask your non-Swedish colleagues which bank they use and how easy it was to create an account as a newly arrived foreigner.

Sweden is not a cashless society, but it is well on its way to becoming one. Accordingly, having an ATM card connected to your bank account is highly recommended. Ask the bank that you are considering if they can issue you a card that can make purchases on the internet (that will require a card reader or an electronic “bankID”). This also allows you to pay bills electronically. Some bank officers follow a strict 1 year-customer policy, which means that you first need to have an account with them for a year until your card will be extended for further use in the World Wide Web. If not, it is a good idea to see if there is another bank that will. Additionally, creating an account that allows you to do online banking is recommended. There is often a small fee (at Nordea about 12 sek per month), but online banking is more than worth that sum.

Be advised that most banks have restricted hours for in-person customer service, often between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., so check the bank’s opening hours before you visit.

Driver’s license

If you do have a driver’s license from a non-EEA country, then you will only be able to drive using that license for one year after you have been issued your residence card. After that point you will need to take the test for a Swedish driver’s license.

This does not apply to people who received their driver’s license in EEA countries. Those can drive as usual as in their home country. If you are from an EU country, it is advisable to ensure that you switch from a paper to the modern plastic card license. It could otherwise be problematic when renting cars, as many rental companies do not accept the older paper license.

Most people find the Swedish driver’s license exam to be quite difficult and it normally requires taking a preparatory course and multiple preparatory driving lessons. This is an expensive process and can be rather lengthy.

However, it is easy to get around in most University cities by walking, bikes, or bus if you live in or close to the city.

3) Administration

Apply to become PhD student

After you have formally been accepted a PhD position, there are several steps to be completed before you can officially start. Note that it takes several weeks or months for the entire admission process to be completed, as you first need to be **admitted** as a PhD student and depending on financial support, PhD students need to go through the process to gain **employment** as a PhD Student. Note also that PhD students are often employed as something else in the beginning (e.g. research assistant) before being accepted as PhD student. If you need a residence permit to move to Sweden then you will have already gone through part or perhaps all of this process. Admission occurs in several stages. Here's how:

- **Evaluation of Documents**

The department or individual hiring you should collect and send the following documents to the Division of Education Affairs in Uppsala to be verified. Some of these documents will be included in your application, so hopefully you will have them available still. Check with your advisor or department to be sure all of the following documents are sent:

- [Certified copies](#) of master diploma, master transcript, bachelor diploma and bachelor transcript
- Proof that the candidate meets the requirement of English 6
- [Application form](#), signed by the applicant
- Information about contact person and department (usually included in the application form)
- SLU ID-number (usually included in the application form)
- Copy of passport

Ensure that you meet **all** of the requirements, including language, and that all of the certificates are certified. If the documents are not in English, get them translated. It is always nice to send a cover letter listing the documents included. Also, read the information in the link below to get forms and specific mailing addresses. This step (granted that all of the documents are in order) can take up to ten days.

The documents will be returned, along with the report, to your Supervisor.

- **Admission process**

Now your supervisor needs to send these documents, along with an application form and a copy of your preliminary Individual Study Plan (ISP), first to the Head of Department for a signature. The department administration sends a "recommendation

on admission” to the Faculty Board for you to be admitted into the PhD program. This should include copies of the official application from the top candidate (same documents sent for evaluation and the preliminary ISP). The preliminary ISP requires some thinking, but you shouldn't place too much emphasis on getting it perfect, as the final ISP needs to be submitted after 3 months. Most important now, is to get your admission process running.

- **Employment process**

The decision and documents need to be sent to Division of Human Resources, as part of a proposal for employment. This would lead to your employment as a PhD student at SLU. You will receive a letter from the Faculty at your home address.

You will find more specific admission information on this [website](#).

As soon as you are accepted as PhD student it is recommended to have a detailed discussion with your supervisor. We attached in the appendix a document which can be used as guidelines for a PhD student - supervisor discussion (p. 23).

PhD mailing list

After admission into the PhD education programme, you should be added to the faculty's PhD student mailing list (doktorand-sfak@slu.se). Very useful emails about courses, stipends and other general information for PhD students is sent to this mailing list. If you are not added to this list, you can contact the person responsible for PhD students at your department to ensure that you get added or contact one of the PhD administrators at S-fak (at the time of writing this document: eva.andersson@slu.se or charlotta.bergstrom@slu.se).

Director of postgraduate studies at the department

Within the first weeks of employment, you should meet with the Director of Postgraduate Studies at your department as part of your orientation. If this does not occur, it would be useful to find out who this person is and to arrange a meeting. Usually any questions regarding PhD studies or issues can be directed to this designated person. As a general rule concerning who to contact with questions or problematic issues at the university, follow this ascending list of contacts in the following order: first seek out your advisor, then the director of graduate studies at your department, then the head of the department, then the director of graduate studies at the faculty. The Director of Studies at the Faculty (at the time of writing this document: Göran Spong in Umeå and Petra Fransson in Ultuna) could be contacted in case there are questions or issues that cannot be resolved by someone at the department level.

Office equipment

Office space is covered for by the project that you are employed to work with. How prepared your office space is depends on your department and supervisor. At the bare minimum, there is usually a desk and chair. However, you might most likely need to order your computer on the first day of employment from the IT department. This process is normally very fast, then you would need to indicate which programs you will like installed and make sure that you have administrator status that will allow you to install other useful programs in the future.

Your supervisor will introduce you to the administrators at your department who will assist you in getting keys, a letter to take to the IT department for email access with login details and information on where to uplift your SLU access card – most likely at the service centre. If you require something that is not available, please contact your admin staff or supervisor.

If you are using a computer at the department you can see all your information from any computer that you log in to. However, if you wish to work at home you will need a “VPN connection.” Ask your IT department for help with this.

PhD Student Rights

[The doctoral student support webpage](#) provides a detailed description of all guidelines related to working hours, salaries and general employment issues.

- **Salaries**

Salary is paid the 25th day of every month to your Swedish bank account. In addition to your start-up salary, there is a “salary-ladder” which is merit-based and salary increases are received after the student has passed various milestones. For more information see [here](#). (BE PROACTIVE asking your advisor and head of graduate studies at your department about having your yearly review done promptly. If you are several months late with your annual review and/or required seminars then you will not be able to recover the lost increase in salary from the time you were eligible for it to the time you passed your review)

- **Vacation and Working Hours**

In general, PhD students do not have regular working hours, as depending on your project, it might be necessary to work some evenings or on weekends. Instead, there is a system of total annual working hours. The number of vacation days and working hours are age-based and as follows:

- 1700 hours for employees with 35 days vacation (from 40 years of age)
- 1732 hours for employees with 31 days vacation (from 30 years of age)
- 1756 hours for employees with 28 days vacation (up to 29 years of age)

Within the first few days at your department you should begin to get familiar with the main staff page: <https://internt.slu.se/en/>. From the main page you will be able to apply for vacation by logging in to Primula.

- **Teaching**

If you are involved in teaching or other administrative duties at your department, you will not be paid at that time. Instead, you will receive the number of hours as paid extension at the end of your PhD (so-called “prolongation”). This includes time served for some positions on the PhD Student Council if you are on the board. Therefore, this time should be accounted for. It is imperative that any such teaching and additional duties be planned in agreement with your supervisor and section head. New rules also stipulate that all teaching activities must be reported biannually. See guidelines concerning net study time (<https://internt.slu.se/stod-service/utbildning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/kurser-avhandlingsarbete-omfattning-innehall/planering-och-uppfoljning/nettostudietid/>)

In addition to the guidelines available at the faculty-level, each department has an intranet for internal information, discussions and documents at <http://www.slu.se/en/about-slu/organisation/departments-and-faculties/>.

Ombudsman

The doctoral student *ombudsman* at SLU monitors doctoral students' work situation and can give individual support and counseling, and try to find solutions to problems that may arise. Discussions you have with the ombudsman are confidential, and no information you give will be passed on without your approval.

Hopefully you will not need an *ombudsman*, but in case conflicts occur that cannot be resolved at the department-level do not hesitate to contact the ombudsman, at the time of writing this document: Monika Appel (phone: 018-671164; email: monika.appel@slu.se).

Student Union

Become a member of the student union! As part of the union, you will be able to get access to student discounts. The fee for PhD students is 150 SEK per semester. You can become a member by entering the information and paying the fee at the following website: <https://unicore.mecenat.com/student-area/studentpayment/union/10>

You can get more information about membership and benefits at: <http://skogisstudentkar.se/medlemskap/?lang=en>

The PhD Council of the faculty has one representative that will be able to assist you in case there are issues related to membership in the student union. You can find contact details of the membership responsible, as well as all PhD Council members at <http://skogisstudentkar.se/om-karen/foreningar/doktorandradet/>

Labor Union and A-kassa

Everyone working in Sweden is eligible for basic unemployment insurance at a low rate. However, it is usually recommended to pay an unemployment insurance during the course of your PhD, which entitles you to 80% of your last salary for 300 days after your unemployment started. Note that there is a minimum requirement of **one year** of monthly payments before the end of your PhD contractual period. You should therefore join the AEA (unemployment agency for academics) as early as possible during your PhD. For information on joining, click on the following link: <https://www.aea.se/in-english>

In addition to contribution towards unemployment insurance, it is usually beneficial to join a union. There are two options for academics: Sveriges universitetslärare och forskare (SULF) and Statens fackförbund (ST). Membership on a union increases your unemployment payment percentage to as high as 80-93% of your last salary. For more information, check the websites of [SULF](#) and [ST](#). There are many labor unions you can join, so ask your colleagues what they recommend. For instance, some members of S-fak are in the Naturvetarna union (<https://www.naturvetarna.se/>).

Note that in order to receive unemployment payments you will need to register as unemployed at the Swedish Unemployment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) the day your contract ends. For more information on the registration process and other details, kindly visit their website:

<https://www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Globalmeny/Otherlanguages/Languages/English-engelska.html>

4) Transportation

Depending on your campus, the transportation options vary. Be familiar with the transportation company in your city. You will not be able to pay with cash on the bus. Only credit cards are an acceptable form of payment on public transportation. The telephone apps of Umeå Ultra, tabussen.nu, Uppsala UL, and Skånetrafiken.se (depending on which campus you are based) are highly recommended for ticket purchases as well. In addition, pre-purchased tickets are usually cheaper if you purchase a bus/train card that you can load with a number of trips. As a member of the student union you will also be able to obtain discounts when purchasing train tickets.

In Sweden, the bicycle is one of the most popular modes of transportation. Each city is different, but used bikes are often sold on [blocket.se](#). You can adjust your search by changing to the appropriate county and city. Several other facebook groups usually provide the interface for selling bikes and other items.

5) Additional Information

Sick leave

If you became ill, you have to give a notice to the personnel administrator as soon as possible. It is important that you actually take sick leave if you are unable to work or significantly less productive due to poor health. Most departments will exclude your sick days from your net study time and it is mandatory to exclude longer periods of sick leave from your net study time (see official guidelines to details). The Swedish employment system is built so that it is beneficial for both you and your employer to take sick leave when you need it. You or the personnel administrator registers the notice in [Primula](#) (click on 'Primula'). If you are sick for more than seven consecutive days, you are required to submit a doctor's certificate starting from the 8th day. The certificate shall be sent to the Personnel Unit. Under certain circumstances a doctor's certificate can be required for shorter periods of illness. When you are ill, SLU will pay you an "illness-salary" (sjuklön), which is the normal salary with some reductions:

- the first day: 100% reduction (i.e. no salary)
- day 2-14: 20% reduction (i.e. 80% of your salary)
- day 15-364: 90% reduction (i.e. 10% of your salary).

The salary will then depend on Försäkringskassan where you have to apply for the salary during that extended period. This will usually take 4 - 6 weeks or even longer for them to decide, so be aware of some shortage in your budget.

If you are a PhD student on stipend you can get help through [Kammarkollegiet](#).

Parental leave and child supervision

If you want parental leave for a long-term period you must apply two months in advance. You shall always make the application directly to the National Insurance Office (Försäkringskassan) for maternity allowance, parents' allowance, parents' temporary cash benefit, and paternity leave. Contact your department or the Payroll Unit if you have questions regarding paternity leave. You can find more information [here](#).

If you are a PhD student on stipend you can get help through [Kammarkollegiet](#)

Psychological issues

SLU is generally responsible for creating a healthy work environment for all staff. During PhD studies it is not unusual for persons to become highly stressed or even suffer from depression. For this reason, SLU provides support to staff members that have psychological issues related to the work environment. These services are provided from 2018 on through *Anonova*. For more information, see:

<https://internt.slu.se/en/support-services/administrative-support/human-resources/halsa-och-arbetsmiljo/occupational-healthcare/>

In addition, find out about FOCUS talks, which provides an opportunity for staff to have personal time with an expert to talk about ongoing situations at work during different stages of your PhD studies.

Statistical consultation

PhD projects are often quite statistically challenging. The [Centre of Statistics at SLU](#) offers free statistical consultation. Every person has 20 hours of free support per year.

6) Progress check-ups yearly and half-time check points.

As a part of your study program AND for purposes of your employment as a PhD student, you need to have planning and follow-up checks documented in your ISP (Individual Study Plan) and filed with your department. SLU is currently building an electronic and automated ISP system, so check to see if the electronic system is available when it is time for you to write or update your ISP. You are entitled to a salary increase each year upon completion of your annual follow-up review, so make it easy on your supervisors to get the paperwork done!

The ISP is used as the outline by which you will be assessed each year, but the ISP is also something you will revise on a regular basis. Some supervisors make use of the ISP as an advising tool and some less so, but all students will need to submit an ISP revision each year. The follow up should address: your progress, what changes to make in the plan to improve on your work or catch up if you are behind, and what your plans are for the coming year. Some departments may require additional activities, such as a seminar, for each yearly progress check-up.

The halftime seminar is an important checkpoint that should come after two years of net study time. Students should hold a seminar in which they orally present their work in a seminar style setting. The presentation must be assessed by a docent (or faculty member of higher status) and may not be someone in your supervisor group. A critical part of this review is to assess your prospects for completing your thesis within the next two years. Official guidelines are to have a representative appointed by the faculty board to assist the department in deciding if the student is on track to complete the thesis on time or what adjustments should be made to help the student finish in time.

Pre-thesis evaluation/seminar: departments vary a great deal in what they require in terms of a thesis pre-exam before applying for thesis defence and/or defending a thesis. At a

minimum, your principal supervisor must decide if your thesis and other academic work meet the formal requirements to apply for thesis defence at the forest faculty. If the supervisor believes you have not met the minimum requirements then you must have an external pre-examination (this is a rare occurrence.) Some departments have a routine procedure for pre-examination. Forest Economics, for example, requires students to have an external reviewer act as opponent in a preparation seminar before the final defence to give feedback before the thesis goes to print. Ask the person responsible for doctoral studies what your department requires for pre-evaluation of your thesis.

Below is a figure from the Guidelines for third-cycle education for 2015 that gives a timeline for required reviews, seminars, and thesis defence application.

Figure 2. Timeline illustrating the compulsory steps



7) Postgraduate Courses

SLU requirements

As a PhD student at SLU you are required to take general basic courses and subject courses. When finishing your degree you have to have at least:

- 30 credits in the form of courses for a degree of Doctor;
- 15 credits in the form of courses for a degree of Licentiate.

However, it is possible to require up to 120 credits for a degree of Doctor, and up to 60 credits for a degree of Licentiate.

Credits for previously completed courses

There are some instances in which you can transfer credits for courses you have previously completed towards your PhD degree credit hour requirement. See section 5.1.6 of the [University guidelines for doctoral education](#) for details. Credits can only be awarded for courses that have not been included in previous degrees. This means if you have a course from your master's program that fulfils a requirement for your PhD study program then you will not be able to get credit for it (double check the most current guidelines to confirm this). Some departments may consider their requirement for a specific course to be fulfilled based on your previous coursework even though you cannot be awarded credit for that course towards your PhD degree. These situations must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with your supervisors and department's study program director. You will have to find other courses to make up the difference in terms of overall credit hours.

SLU and NOVA courses

Our university offers a variety of [SLU courses](#) on each campus. Additionally, PhD students at SLU have the opportunity to participate in [NOVA courses](#). NOVA is a cooperation between agricultural universities in northern Europe. The participation at SLU and NOVA courses is **free of charge** for PhD students at SLU, apart from travel expenses. Travel costs can be rewarded via <https://internt.slu.se/en/support-services/education/doctoral-education1/courses-thesis-work-scope-of-the-education/rights-and-obligations/travel-grants-and-stipends/>.

You can also take courses at other Swedish universities, which can be found on the respective university's webpage. But then you need to apply for separate funding.

Mandatory credit-awarding courses are in Research Ethics and Philosophy of Science. These can be two or one joint course depending on the campus, e.g. Campus Umeå offers annually one joint course *Philosophy and Ethics in Science*. Individual departments may have additional mandatory courses. Talk to other PhD students, your supervisor or Head of postgraduate studies to be informed about any such courses.

It is recommended to participate in the pedagogics courses for university teachers if you are going to lecture but also for your future career, for example *Teaching in Higher Education* at SLU. Further, SLU offers a variety of statistics courses.

Registration of credits

Courses (examinations) are assessed with the grades *pass* or *fail*. Roughly one week of work equals 1.5 credits (ECTS). Credits vary between courses.

Passed courses need to be registered in LADOK. After each completed course you will get a course certificate. You are then responsible for registering the credits in the system by

handing a copy of the course certificate to the person responsible for LADOK at your department.

General information

Get acquainted with the [research schools](#). They organize courses, seminars and excursions related to the specific topic of the research school. You can become a member of any research school by sending them an email. Usually, you will need to indicate which research school you are affiliated with on your ISP.

Take the opportunity to take as many basic courses as possible when you have a low workload, for example before your experiments have started. Courses add to your professional profile – let your future plans impact on your choice of courses.

More information is available in the [University guidelines for doctoral education](#), point 5.6.

8) Congresses and conferences

Participation in conferences is a good way to acquire subject-specific knowledge. For you to be able to participate, your supervisor often demands that you present your results in some form, e.g. as a poster or giving an oral presentation. Funding of these trips can be included in the project budget, but if not, you will have to apply for a travel stipend, which should include all expenses associated to the trip. General scholarships will be announced through the e-mail list for PhD students at S-fak and more information can be found at <https://internt.slu.se/stod-service/utbildning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/resebidrag-och-stipendier/>

The trip should be booked through the [travel bureau](#) SLU cooperates with. A personal reference is needed for this. Costs you had during your travel (e.g. bus tickets, taxi, etc.) can be claimed via [Primula](#). If you need any assistance you can contact the administrator at your department.

9) Approaching the end

Registration of published articles

All published articles and conference contributions should be registered at <https://internt.slu.se/verktyg/slupub/>. Ask for help from your supervisor!

Arranging your defence

Several months in advance, you should think about your defence date. There is a preliminary [calendar](#) where people can register their intended dates (If you have troubles opening the link, try to open it with 'Internet Explorer').

To register your date, send an email to the graduate study administrator. Note that you cannot defend during summer or at the exact same time as someone else at the faculty.

Also check the availability of the lecture halls: <https://internet.slu.se/stod-service/admin-stod/lokaler/>.

Check that all courses that have been taken are registered in LADOK (ask for a certificate from the person at your department who is responsible for LADOK) before submitting the application for the PhD defence.

An opponent and an examination committee need to be appointed for a PhD defence. Officially this is your supervisor's task but hopefully it can be arranged through a joint discussion. Regarding who they can be, there are a number of restrictions and more info is available [here](#). In general: The examination committee should consist of 5 or 3 members (if 3, a stand-in must be appointed) and both sexes must be represented. The opponent and at least 3 of the examination committee should be at least associate professors, and all should have a doctor's degree. Both the opponent and at least one member of the examination committee must come from another faculty. Furthermore, at least one member may come from your Faculty. At a licentiate seminar an examination committee is appointed consisting of 3 members, all with a doctor's degree. At licentiate seminars there is no external examiner. The respondent always presents her/his research, and it is the job of the examination committee to review the work and discuss it with the respondent.

Neither the opponent, nor the committee members are allowed to have a co-authorship with the PhD student or its main supervisor during the last 5 years.

There should be a chairperson both at a PhD defence and licentiate seminar.

If your supervisor seems uninformed regarding this whole procedure, [here](#) is a link where all information aimed for supervisors can be found.

When everything is set, the [application form](#) for the PhD defence shall be completed and signed by the student, supervisor and head of department. This may take slightly more time than you think to get everything sorted, **start early**.

You will also need all committee members and the opponent to sign the declaration of conflicts of interest which you can find [here](#).

Any committee member that is not docent or professor at a Swedish University will also need to send their CV.

Send all the forms to the faculty administration, at the time of writing this document: eva.andersson@slu.se and charlotta.bergstrom@slu.se. This should be with them **at least 3 months before** your proposed defence date.

Don't forget to mention your plans of a dissertation to the rest of the department, especially to the director of postgraduate studies and the head of department.

Writing your Thesis

See the [Universities guidelines for doctoral education](#) and read section 5.5.1 about what your thesis must contain.

Based on those guidelines (latest revision 18th November 2016), the following minimum requirements must be met by a compilation thesis:

<u>Degree of Doctor</u>	<u>Degree of Licentiate</u>
1) The thesis must include at least three papers.	1) The thesis must include at least one paper.
2) The doctoral student must be first author or equivalent of at least two of the papers.	2) The doctoral student must be the corresponding author or equivalent of at least one of the papers.
3) At least one of the papers must have been accepted for publication or have been published in an international scientific journal.	

Get an ISBN-number for the thesis and a part-number in the Acta-series. Order those [here](#) or at bib-isbn@slu.se.

Remember to contact the journals concerned to get permission for the printed articles to be included in your thesis.

It is recommend that you start writing your thesis in the [template](#) from the start. Double check that you have the correct version of word for the template you are using. Read the instruction carefully, it is helpful and will probably save you time in the long run. If you have problems with the template contact ulla.eklund@slu.se (at the time of writing this document). Remember to save it as a .docm file so that you can use all the embedded macros. Don't forget about your back cover (separate file in the templates). Have a look at previous theses and decide how you want your unpublished manuscripts formatted. There are no rules on what they should look like, you decide. It is always helpful to discuss with a few different people if you are unsure on what to include, how to write the kappa, what to include in the methods etc., this seems to be rather personal and can vary a lot between theses.

Printing and “Spikning”

[Here](#) you will find information on how to format your thesis, print it and publish it in SLUs open archive Epsilon. Double check where you have located the page numbers in your manuscripts.

When the summary is ready for conversion to a Pdf file it is common that the Pdf and Word versions are not fully compatible. Certain paragraphs can have been slightly shifted, and you may need some advice from an IT specialist, a recent PhD graduate or the SLU Printing unit to get the Pdf version into the form you want.

Last arrangements for your defence

It may be good to make sure that your supervisor attaches [this document](#) as he/she e-mails the opponent so that she/he gets clear instructions for the defence.

Before the defence, go talk to the janitor regarding technical support on your defence day. Make sure that you have gone through your presentation in the room your defence will take place beforehand. If you decide to use the computer that is already in the room, remember that it takes a while to start up the first time you log on to a new computer with your AD. Check things like microphone, pointer, etc.

In case your supervisor is unaware, [this form](#) is needed for the committee members after your defence.

Apply for your degree and celebrate!

<https://internt.slu.se/en/support-services/education/doctoral-education1/degrees/>

10) Language

If you plan to stay in Sweden, Swedish skills will be needed for your career purposes. But also during your time as a PhD student it might be very helpful to know already some basic communication skills. One option might be to visit the **SFI** courses (*Svenska för invandrare* = Swedish for immigrants) if this fits your working schedule. These courses are offered in most University cities in Sweden and are free. Some general information can be found on this [webpage](#).

Further, **Folkuniversitetet** offers several Swedish courses per semester at different levels. You can check their [webpage](#), but keep in mind that course fees are rather high. If Swedish is needed for your work as a PhD student, you might ask your project leader/supervisor if parts of the course fee (or the whole) can be covered via the project you're working in. But this is not a guarantee.

If you're a PhD student in Umeå, it is good to know that Umeå University offers courses in basic Swedish. EEU citizens can study for free in Sweden and can apply for courses at antagning.se where you first need to register. Select the semester ('termin') you want to study Swedish and search for 'Svenska för internationella studenter'.

On some occasions SLU might also offer courses in Swedish for employees. You can ask the head of your department if a course is currently offered or planned to be offered in the future. If not, ask among your colleagues that might be interested and push for a course to be organized. This might need some effort but has happened already in the past on campus and department level. Are you located in Umeå? Then you can also contact jenni.vahlstrom@slu.se (at the time of writing this document). Often courses are offered in collaboration with Umeå University.

11) Culture – The Swedes

If you arrive in a foreign country, you might realize that certain habits or social roles appear strange to you in the beginning. Understanding the reaction of people you live with can be a key feature to your well-being while living abroad. We provide in the following a summary of typical Swedish habits. For more information see <http://www.studyinsweden.se/>.

The Swedes are very nice people, with a great sense for family and equality. They also have a sense for technical innovations and have sophisticated systems for online identification (BankID), booking washing machines and transferring money to bank accounts (Swish). It is said that the Swedes are rather shy and reclusive. This might be true but they are also very friendly and helpful as well as respectful to other people, rules and laws. Punctuality is one of their main characteristics. So always make sure you are in time when you have an appointment or meeting.

The most Swedish habit you will probably experience during your stay in Sweden is the Swedish 'fika'. Fika can be translated as coffee or tea break. Usually every department has fixed times: one fika during the morning and one during the afternoon. Occasionally, some cake or sweets might be offered. Ask your colleagues for the fika times at your department and join them! It is a good opportunity to get to know people and learn/improve your Swedish.

Swedes also love queuing up. No matter if you are at *Skatteverket*, agencies, health care centres, as well as shops and services, you will have to pick a number and wait for it to be called. A digital display indicates when you can step forward to make your request. So as soon as you enter a shop, check if this system exists and pick a number. Be patient and respectful while waiting. NEVER cut the line when queuing for something! ☺

Another basic rule in Sweden is to take off your shoes, when you enter a Swedish household.

The Swedes might also appear to you as a very healthy nation. No weather is too bad or too cold for sports. So don't be surprised if you see people running outside with -20°C. Families and friends also like to gather especially during the weekends to meet for outdoor activities or BBQs at nice spots. Note that at most public BBQ places (in Umeå) fire wood is available for free ☺ Also note that the Swedish *Allemansrätten* gives you the right to access, walk, cycle, ride, ski, and camp on any land in Sweden – with the exception of private gardens, the immediate vicinity of a dwelling house and land under cultivation. Restrictions apply for nature reserves and other protected areas. It also gives you the right to pick wild flowers, mushrooms

and berries (provided one knows they are not legally protected), but not to hunt in any way. Swimming in any lake and putting an unpowered boat on any water is permitted, unless explicitly forbidden. Visiting beaches and walking by a shoreline is permitted, providing it is not a part of a garden or within the immediate vicinity of a residence. However – with the rights come responsibilities; that is, an obligation neither to harm, disturb, litter, nor to damage wildlife or crops. The maxim is "do not disturb, do not destroy".

Appendix: Guidelines for PhD student – supervisor discussions

This document has been prepared by the PhD students and the PhD student education responsible at the Department of Forest Ecology and Management at SLU, Umeå.

Good discussions and an open atmosphere between the PhD student and supervisor is a prerequisite for good work during PhD studies. The following items are intended to be a starting point and a help in a first general discussion between the PhD student and the supervisor(s). This discussion should take place within the first month of employment and should be a separate (undisturbed) discussion during 1-3 hours. It is important that both the supervisor and PhD student talk, ask questions and listen to each other during the discussion. Prepare for the meeting (both the PhD student and the supervisor) by reading through this document before the meeting.

General discussion on relationships, supervision and conduct

The roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the project

- Role/responsibility of the main supervisor
- Role/responsibility of the PhD student
- Role/responsibility of the co-supervisors

Key-words: main task for each person, changing roles/responsibilities over time

Authorship of papers

- Should the order of authors be stated out already at the beginning?
- Should the PhD student be first author on all papers?

Key-words: importance of authorship for PhD student and supervisor, general problems with authorship

Expectations

- Expectations of the supervisor on the PhD student and vice versa
- Expectations of both parties on the project.

Key-words: What are the most important expectations on each part? Independency vs close collaboration, progress/changes over time?

Economy

- What funds are available? What will they cover and how will expenses be handled?

Key-words: Who buys equipment? When is there a need to tell or ask about this?

Communication

- What is the preferred mode of communication?

Key-words: time available, when and how to meet, schedules, holidays, conference, feedback on private issues when it affects ones work, writing process/strategy with expected feedbacks.

Teaching

- What are the expectations on teaching?

Key-words: Does the PhD student want to teach? Does the supervisor want the PhD student to teach?

Career perspectives

- Advice on scientific career.

Key-words: After the degree? Desirable things to do during the PhD time for a future career? How do you (PhD student) believe the PhD education can be beneficial for your own future career?

NOTE: Many PhD holders build a career outside of academia. It is highly recommended that you initiate an open and honest discussion with not only your advisor, but with others at SLU who can give you advice on different possible career paths. Be on the lookout for a document the forest faculty is planning to publish providing a roadmap for supervisors and students to discuss career prospects early during PhD studies.

PhD Courses

Key-words: Which courses are you (PhD student) expected to take? Which courses, what direction do you (PhD student) want to take?

Expectations on the research project

What are your (PhD student/supervisor) expectations regarding responsibility for:

- Making progress within the research project
- Setting up experiments/field work/ lab work
- Conducting/executing field work or lab work
- What kind of working strategy do we like?

Degree of freedom in the research project

Key words: influence over the project (student and supervisor), design of the project and deciding on the direction of the project

Writing process

- When and in what form does the supervisor want to have a manuscript?
- What kind of feedback do we appreciate/not appreciate?
- Who decides about collaboration?

Key words: How should the writing process be done ideally?

If things go wrong

- What happens if things don't work as we like/expect?

Discuss some scenarios of possible problems and how to solve them.