

SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates Management Report 2019-2020

The Board of the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates present the following Management Report for financial year 2019 (up to 15 May 2020).

The Board

During the year the Board has consisted of:

Asreen Rostami	Stockholm University
Erik Bergenholtz	Blekinge Institute of Technology
Magne Torbjörnsson	Lund University
Malin Podlevskikh Carlström	Göteborg University
Megha Bendre	Uppsala University
Rebecca Gmoser	Borås University
Sharmin Ahmed	Umeå University
Somayeh Aghanavesi	Dalarna University
Tim Roberts	Karlstad University
Amineh Ghaderi	KI University
Asif M Huq	Dalarna University
Jacob Sommer	Stockholm University
Tohidul Islam	Umeå University

Other participants in the board's activities are:

Maria Mattiasson	SULF
Haro de Grauw	SULF

Nomination Committee:

Per Boström (Committee Convener)
Parisa Aasi
Benny Borghei

Introduction

The SULF operational focus for 2019-2020 focused on the priority area of employment and career paths through the chosen theme which was Health and Social Security. With this theme, the Board has chosen to focus, in the 2019-2020, on making doctoral candidates and their supervisors aware of their rights with regard to sick leave and highlighting the mental health issues of doctoral candidates.

This Management Report will be presented based on the four operational objectives and concludes with a financial overview as follows:

Board operations
Membership activities
Recruitment
Advocacy and opinion building
Finances

Board operations

Board meetings and training of Board members

This year's board consisted of five returning members who will not be eligible or available to continue on the board in 2020-21 and eight new members. During the 2019-2020, the association held nine board meetings. A brief description of the meetings is presented below.

1. 17th December 2018: The first board meeting was held online and all 13 board members were present. The board focused on getting to know one another and planning the work for the year ahead.
2. 31st January 2019: The second board meeting was held in Stockholm and 12 of the board members were present. The working group structure was discussed and decided upon. Planning began for the upcoming Contact Day. Maria Mattiasson participated in the meeting and gave an educational presentation on SULF organisational structure and its place in the union landscape.
3. 25th February 2019: This board meeting was held online and nine board members were present. The starter Kit was approved by the board. The theme for the Contact Day was decided and the Contact Day was planned.
4. 25th May 2019: The fourth board meeting was held in Stockholm following the Contact Day and 10 board members were present in this meeting. The board reflected on the Contact Day, and planned working group activities for after summer.
5. 29th August 2019: The fifth board meeting was held online and eight board members were present. The working groups regrouped after the summer break. The union representative Haro de Grauw was invited and he provided an educational presentation on förbundsstyrelse meetings. Plans for the SULF day were discussed.
6. 26th September 2019: The sixth board meeting was held online prior to the SULF day and eight board members were present. Board training was discussed and planned.
7. 25th November 2019: The seventh board meeting was held and 12 board members participated. The first draft of the language article was presented by Tim. The first complete version of the survey was presented by Sharmin. Maria Mattiasson participated in the meeting and together with the board the new name and budget considerations were discussed. The board also reflected on the outcomes of different activities and seminars held during the SULF day.
8. 12th January 2020: This meeting was held in Stockholm and eight board members participated in the meeting. Plans for the AGM were discussed and it was decided that the spring retreat would be held in Växjö.
9. 2nd -3rd April 2020: The retreat was cancelled due to the spread of Covid-19 virus but the board meeting was held online and nine board members were present. The board reviewed the final version of the survey regarding sick leave and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and approved it. The AGM was planned in detail, plan of operation for the next board and the management report drafted collectively.
10. 14th May 2020: The last board meeting will be held online prior to the AGM.

Revision of Statute

In 2019 Board reviewed the statutes of the association and suggested multiple revisions. The revised statute was approved during the working committee, arbetsutskott (AU), meeting on May 28, 2019.

Language:

Tim designed a language survey with the aim of understanding what are the main language problems faced by our members. The survey was advertised on the Facebook page and spread via the newsletter. We received 30 responses which were used as a main data for an article on the topic. Tim has written the article with inputs from Megha, Malin and Asreen. The article is sent to Universitetslärares and will be published soon.

Sick leave and social benefits

The working group developing survey on sick leave and social benefits, led by Sharmin, developed the survey to explore the conditions for PhD candidates in Sweden in relation to Försäkringskassan. The survey is reviewed and approved by the board and is sent to be reviewed and operationalised by SULF.

Starter Kit

In 2019, Jacob and Erik reviewed and revised the starter kit that was initiated by the previous boards in 2017. The board approved the document and its content and it is available in print and pdf format. The document is sent to several universities, is distributed among participants during the lunch seminars, SULF day activities, contact day. Additionally SULF has sent this document, among other union documents, to newly enrolled PhD students in Göteborg in 2019. The document is available on the SULF website¹. The starter kit provides useful information for newly- registered doctoral candidates, local or foreign students.

Sick leave for doctoral candidates

Rebecca drafted a document containing information on sick leave for doctoral candidates. The document includes information on how and where to register the sick leave, what rights and social benefits are expected, as well as additional information on regulations around research funds. Next step is to review the document within the board, and send it to be reviewed by SULF before publishing and disturbing the document.

Handover to the 2020-2021 Board

The Board plans to make a brief evaluation of Board operations in 2019-2020 in connection with the final Board meeting to see what can be improved prior to the handover to the new Board. Asreen updated the internal document to be handed over to the next Chair on the basis of her one year and half experience in the position.

¹ <https://sulf.se/en/work-salary-and-benefits/doctoral-studies/starter-kit-for-doctoral-candidates/>

Membership activities

Doctoral Candidate Contact Day

On May 24, the annual contact day for doctoral candidates interested in union work was organized, planned by Asreen and Sharmin. In addition to eleven board members, participants included Benny Borghei from the Nominations Committee, Marcus Bäcklund and Tage Mohammadat representatives from SFS-DK, Haro de Grauw and Megan Case from SULF, and 40 doctoral candidates from Blekinge Tekniska Högskola, Chalmers University of Technology, Dalarna University, Göteborgs Universitet, Högskolan i Skövde, Institutet för Rymdfysik, Karolinska Institutet, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Linköpings universitet, Lulea University of Technology, Lund University, Malmö University, Jönköping University, Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet, Stockholm University, Umeå university, University of Gävle and Uppsala University.

The theme of the contact year of 2019 was health and social security, with a glimpse into life after PhD. Lectures were given by Asreen, Karin Åmossa SULF's Head of Research and International Affairs, Robert Andersson SULF's Negotiating Officer and Vice Chair of Saco-S and Sven Stafström Director General of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet) and member of Swedish Higher Education Authority's (UKÄ) advisory council. The day ended with a series of round table to discuss different challenges faced by doctoral candidates, followed by a social hour and exchange of experience.

Newsletters to members

In 2019-2020, newsletters were sent out in March 2019 (Asreen), May (Asreen & Sharmin), June (Asreen & Megha), October (Asreen), December (Asreen), April 2020 (Asreen) to all members with registered email addresses. The letters were written in English and included current information from the association, reminder of upcoming activities as well as information about the current viral pandemic and members rights in this situation.

SULF day

This year's SULF Day was held on October 3rd with the Mental health theme. Introductory and fika events were held in several universities by the board members, some in collaboration with the local SULF association, to recruit more PhD students and raise discussion and awareness around the PhD students' mental health. The following events were held on the SULF day or prior to this date: KI by Amineh, Dalarna by Somayeh and Asif, Department of computer and systems sciences at Stockholm University by Asreen, Blekinge Institute of Technology by Erik, Borås University by Rebecca, Uppsala University by Megha.

The association also held a competition on its Facebook page where members were asked to upload a photo of something/someone that makes them feel good when they feel stressed or upset about their work and study. One photo was selected by the popular vote and received a present from the association.

AGM

The SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates AGM will be held on May 15th and online due to Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to the association officials, representatives of the Nominations Committee and SULF board members and the SFS-DK Chair have been invited. Prior to the AGM, union official Karin Åmossa will give a lecture on the union's position on higher education and the recent developments at the national level regarding academic research.

We also had planned a training workshop for AGM participants on stress management, but this workshop was postponed due to the viral pandemic, and we were not able to hold it online upon request of Åsa Burman, the workshop tutor.

Facebook

All membership activities have been mentioned on the association Facebook page. Prior to the planned trip to Linnaeus University a marketing event was created on Facebook (this event was cancelled due to the viral pandemic). A marketing post to advertise the language survey was also marketed through the same channel.

Recruitment

During the operation time, board members have attended and presented in several meetings mentioned below:

- Somayeh attended an event in Dalarna university on 18th of February 2019 together with Christina Romlid and Catrine Folcker from Saco-s
- Megha attended an event in Uppsala University on 17th of May 2019 together
- Malin attended an event in Gothenburg university on 27th March 2019 together with Christina Romlid
- Magne attended an event in Lund university on 9th April 2019 together with local SULF.
- Megha attended an event in Umeå university on 8th May 2019 together with Robert Andersson
- Sharmin attended an event in Gävle on 24 of April 2019 together with local SULF and Saco-s
- Amineh attended an event in Linköping on 19th November 2019.
- Asreen attended an event in Stockholm University, DSV, on 12th March 2020.
- Asreen and Malin organised a lunch seminar for doctoral candidates in connection with the association Board meeting in Växjö on March 19, 2020. The event was cancelled due to the viral pandemic.

The work of the Nominations Committee

In 2019, the nominations committee consisted of Per Boström, Umeå University (convener), Behbood (Benny) Borghei, Linköping University and Parisa Aasi, Stockholm University. The committee was elected at the AGM of the doctoral association on November 24, 2018. During 2019, the statutes of the Doctoral association was revised

and the time for the AGM was moved from November to May. Thus, the nomination committee's working period was extended. During this 1 ½ year the committee have had a one day committee training with officials from SULF head quarters on September 12, 2019, as well as several online meetings and email conversations. The work of the nomination committee was advertised during the Contact day Benny attended the annual Contact day on May 24, 2019.

For the nomination process, the committee created an online nomination form that was spread through different channels (e.g. mailing lists and newsletters, social media and SULF homepage). The impact was immediate and the committee received a record number of 51 candidates.

The nominations committee has compiled a suggested list of candidates for the 2020-21 board, which will be sent to the representatives before the AGM.

Advocacy and opinion building

Since the last AGM, the association has been represented at several events organized by unions, government agencies, and other organizations concerned with higher education and research in Sweden.

- Malin attended a meeting with UKÄ on April 8th. The meeting was aimed at commenting on a suggestion regarding the new system of quality control for research in Swedish universities.
- On April 2019, Sharmin attended the Eurodoc AGM in Brussels as a representative from both the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates and SFS-DK.
- Asreen was invited by Henrik Viberg, a pedagogical developer in the Unit of Academic Teaching and Learning in Uppsala university to hold an educational seminar for supervisors in relation to PhD students and their mental health and sick leave. The aim of this workshop was to help supervisors to better understand challenges faced by PhD students, reasons behind PhD students mental unwellbeing and and PhD-student rights connected to this topic. Robert Andersson head of negotiations at SULF, Emilia Liljefrost form Partsrådet joined this seminar with Asreen. In this seminar Robert Andersson presented the current situation for doctoral candidates, some statistics over sick-leave and differences between faculties and between women and men. Asreen then presented some of the problems faced and reported by doctoral candidates followed by insights on the different stages of support a doctoral candidate may need. Finally, Emilia Liljefrost presented their work and the support they can provide in order to create a healthy workplace.
- Asreen, Malin and Megha drafted a series of suggestions to the political program of Saco Studentråd. Together with Marcus Bäcklund member of Saco Studentråd Asreen documented these suggestion as a motion and submitted to Saco Studentråd congress.
- Asreen was interviewed by Universitetslararen on the topic of well being of doctoral candidates. The article is published online under the heading "*Doktorandernas välfärd en fråga om hållbarhet*", 21 november, 2019 ²

² <https://universitetslararen.se/2019/11/21/doktorandernas-valfard-en-fraga-om-hallbarhet/>

- Magne attended the hearing on Riksdag about the new research proposition behalf of the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates as an observer. The guests were both invited speakers who held short presentations about their role, goals and responsibilities and observers. The presentations included a discussion on the importance of the economy of Sweden to be a world leading nation in research, and how Swedish research could contribute in solving important concerns, for example, related to global warming and medicine. The parliament has written a report on this event which can be found on 2019/20:RFR9³.
- Asreen contributed to a debate article “Replikskifte om svensk doktorandutbildning” published on 6 February, 2019⁴ as a response to a previously published article on SVD.
- Asreen contributed to a debate article and statement on climate change and union responsibility “Facken måste börja prioritera klimatomställning” published on 26 September, 2019⁵.

Online visibility & Videos

During the Contact day, talks presented by SULF officials Robert Andersson and Karin Åmossa were broadcasted live on Facebook page and remote participants could ask their questions in the comment section to be answered live during the Q&A session. At the time of finalising this report for AGM, these two videos have received 639 views since the Contact Day.

Saco Student Council

Asreen, Sharmin and Magne participated in Saco Student Council Congress in 2018. Due to language barriers or busy schedule none of the board members could attend the Saco Student Council activities and trainings. The language problem is communicated with the Saco Student Council in order to provide a mutually benefited event for all participants, however the Saco Student Council (until now) has decided to organise all their events in Swedish.

Asreen had a meeting with Mimmi Rönnqvist and Åsa Ström chair and vice-chair of Saco Student Council on April 21, 2020 and discussed the position of doctoral association within Saco and Saco Student council, particularly in relation to the upcoming Saco Student Council Congress. Asreen invited both Mimmi and Åsa to the AGM.

SFS-DK

Asreen and SFS-DK Chairs Tage Mohammadat (2018-2019) Pil Maria Saugmann (2019-2020) met in 2019 during February, April, June and November and discussed their boards' activities. Asreen invited Tage to the annual contact day.

Other activities

³ https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/?doktyp=rfr_dir&riksmote=2019/20

⁴ <https://www.svd.se/replikskifte-om-svensk-doktorandutbildning>

⁵ <https://www.arbetsvarlden.se/debatt/facken-maste-borja-prioritera-klimatomstallning/?fbclid=IwAR2F3dElJnWFx1pVgL-ea5yxGfYifSRSn1RrXkoD1txK7oInmGu159CBySM>

⁶ <https://www.saco.se/saco-studentrad/nyheter--debatt/aktuellt-fran-saco-studentrad/debatt/facken-maste-borja-prioritera-klimatomstallning/>

Asreen met with SNPA representatives and Gareth O'neill chair of the Eurodoc (2018-2019) in March and June 2019. In collaboration with SFS-DK, Tage Mohammadat registered Asreen as an Open Access ambassador in the training program provided by Eurodoc.

On April 2019, Sharmin attended the Eurodoc AGM in Brussels as a representative from both the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates and SFS-DK. She was then elected as the Treasurer for the board 2019-2020.

SULF

During the year, Asreen had a number of discussions with SULF staff, particularly Robert Andersson, Mats Ericson and Git Claesson Pipping and Karin Åmossa with respect to different topics related to doctoral candidates and their experience and interactions in Sweden.

Central cooperation

- Malin has been the association representative in the negotiation delegate since late 2018. She has attended all meetings including monthly phone meetings, all-day meetings and two-day meetings: January 16-17, February 12 and March 11. The delegate consists of experienced negotiators, and mainly discuss the rights university employers, including PhD students have in relation to the trade union agreement.
- As of 2020, Erik is representing the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates in the Central SULF board. In the board, Erik will speak for the association and highlight issues we think are important, such as the language issue. He will also report back to the association, to facilitate a closer connection between the association and Central SULF.
- As of 2020, Amineh is part of a working group on "Forskningstunga miljöer" (research heavy environments) in SULF. The purpose of the group is to discuss how the trade union can be more attractive for such environments. Meetings will be held in June, September and October.
- Asreen met with Maria Mattiasson and Git Claesson Pipping in January and June 2019 and discussed board activities, how SULF can help the association to better operate and how the association can help SULF to better improve the situation for PhD students.
- Malin and Erik attended SULF's Förbundsråd meeting in September 2019 as representatives from the association.
- On April 2019 the board met with Mats Ericsson and Maria Mattiasson, where we discussed the importance of communication between the two boards, and how the association board could help SULF to stay connected to the younger members of the union and reflect on their needs and concerns.

Finances

The Board requested the sum of SEK 263 500 and was awarded SEK 203 500. The budget cut did not concern a special activity, rather it was made due to budget restraint. We have adjusted the received amount, based on board's activities. The budget was planned for one year board activity. With the change in Statute, the operational time for the sitting board changed from one year (December 2018-November 2019) to one year and half (December 2018-May 2020) with half a year as interim operational time (January-May 2020). The AGM 2020 expenses therefore, should be calculated as part of the new budget requested for 2020-21 (see plan of operation 2020-21) not the received budget for 2019.

We have stayed within the financial framework we received for the operational year. We had to cancel and postpone a few of our on-site events such as a lunch seminar and board meeting in Växjö as well as the on-site AGM due to the viral pandemic. The financial year stretches from January 2019-May 2020.

Goal	Activity	Requested	Received	Used (till April 12, 2020)
Board Work	Handover	5 000	5 000	0
	Board meetings	90 000	90 000	80 000
	Board training	10 000	0	0
Member Activities	Contact Day	55 000	55 000	101 824
	AGM	25 000	25 000	?
	SULF Day	1 000	1 000	2159
	Social Media	500	500	270
Recruitment	Local recruiting	15 000	15 000	7 000
	Information material	10 000	4 000	0
	Nominations Committee	5 000	5 000	5695
	Social Media	500	500	0
Advocacy and opinion building	Publications	5 000	0	0
	Saco Student Council	15 000	0	0
	SFS-DK	2 500	2 500	424
	SULF Central	2 500	0	0
	Online Visibility	1 000	0	0
	Social Media	500	0	0
	Dialogue Meeting	20 000	0	0
		263 500	203 500	197 372

Conclusion

The departing Board would hereby like to thank the membership for their confidence during their period of service.

