

SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates Management Report 2022-2023

The Board of the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates present the following Management Report for mandate period 22/23 (up to 21st April 2023).

The Board

During the year the Board has consisted of:

Paulina Rajkowska	Uppsala universitet
Chair	
Haro de Grauw	Lunds universitet
Vice-chair	
Jennifer Emsfors	Lunds universitet
Luca Love	Karolinska institutet
Isabel Garcia Velazquez	Linköpings universitet
Beatrice Björkskog	Mälardalens universitet
Konstantin Golpayegani	Mittuniversitetet
Sravan Tatipala	Blekinge tekniska högskola
Liubov Timonina	Kungliga tekniska högskolan
Bekzat Musrepova	Umeå universitet
Joel Martinsson	Linnéuniversitetet
Jeffery Marker	Karlstads universitet
Daniel Hedbom	Uppsala universitet
Miaoxin Gong	Lunds universitet

Nomination Committee:

Amineh Ghaderi
Arash Jouybari
Niki Matinrad
Tim Roberts

Introduction

Each year, the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association (the Association) centres its work around a theme chosen at the Annual General Meeting. For the mandate period of 2022-2023, the theme was The New Normal – life with vulnerability. This theme put emphasis on everyday struggles of PhD students which follow the events of last years including the pandemic, the Aliens Act and many more.

This Management Report presents an overview of the year of activities, and it is structured according to four operational objectives of the Association, namely board operations, membership activities, recruitment, as well as advocacy and opinion building. This is followed with a brief financial overview.

Board operations

Board meetings and training of Board members

This year's board consisted of four returning members, and ten new members. During the mandate period two of the board members resigned on their own requests. During the 2022-2023 mandate period, the board held eight board meetings. Three meetings were held in person, in connection with outreach events, and five via zoom to simplify the travelling needs. Meetings focused on ongoing work planning and setting the agenda for regular events such as contact day and local visits.

Almedalsveckan

Last year Paulina joined the central SULF at Almedalsveckan to be an active part of the union organized events as well as network in Association relevant context. The Association became part of the discussion on possible improvements to ISPs as well as the political planning on possible changes to PhD education. This should be followed up on the upcoming Almedalen week.

Mental Health

Vulnerability and mental health were the core topics of this mandate period. The Association discussed both actively during all of the outreach events as well as in online activities. The board began working on a series of videos on mental health awareness as well as guidance for new PhD students, unfamiliar with help options available in Sweden. The work is ongoing and will be transferred during the board handover.

Aliens Act

The changes included to the Aliens Act have been publicized by the union and collaborating organizations enough to become a point of interest in Tidöavtalet. Work around the topic has been more in hands of central SULF but the Association also stayed in touch consistently with relevant staff at kansli to make sure the issue does not get abandoned. In most recent developments, the Association began organizing a new event to update our members on latest news in the case. Paulina had a meeting with Robert Andersson on the topic and reached out

to Karin Åmossa for help with organizing. This process will need to be picked up by the newly elected board.

Handover to the 2022-2023 Board

The Association plans to perform a self-evaluation of how the Association has operated during the past year in connection to the last board meeting, to see how the Association's work can be improved for the coming year. The chairperson is working on updating the internal chair handover document, based on experiences from the past year.

Membership activities

Doctoral Candidate Contact Day

On 9th November, the annual contact day for doctoral candidates interested in the work of the union was organized. It took place at Mälardalens University in Västerås. The event received 50 registrations from around Sweden, of which around 30 joined the event. This was deemed a great turnout considering it was the first in person contact day since before the COVID pandemic. The event was a full day of workshops and presentations focusing on gathering the different voices on possible directions of future work of the doctoral association.

All participants were contacted after the event with requests for feedback. Overall, the event was well received with participants wishing to have more options for social interaction. We recommend that next time the event takes an overnight format including a dinner for all the participants to get to know one another better.

Newsletters to members

In 2022/2023, newsletter was sent out during autumn 2022 to all members with registered email addresses. The newsletter was written in English and consisted of information about the work in the board and upcoming events. Additional notifications have been sent through central SULF to spread more specific information about events and election information. A total of five of those was sent out to inform members about local visits, contact day as well as the opening of nomination window for the upcoming board.

SULF day

The SULF Day DCA event was held on October 6th at Karolinska Institutet. As there is no existing presence of SULF at KI, the idea was to provide the local PhD students with information on our activities and familiarize them with the union. The event was successful and accompanied by one of the official board meetings. All of this was done in coordination with central SULF and other local association, each with their own local activities on the same day.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association will be held on April 21st and will be a hybrid event to allow the opportunity to those who can travel as well as to those in risk groups who still need to maintain social distancing. In addition to the association officials, representatives of the Nominations Committee and SULF board members will be present.

Facebook

All membership activities have been mentioned on the association's Facebook page. The association's Facebook page has also been updated with relevant news articles, and promotion of interesting events.

Local Visits

The association conducted 2 local visits, one to Karlstad University and one to Umeå University. The board decided to focus on universities that have not been visited by the association in recent years. The meetings' goal was to increase awareness of SULF and SULF Doctoral Candidate Association as well as to provide information about ongoing events. The meetings were well attended, and the resulting discussions were very giving. The participants appreciated having an opportunity to interact with union representatives who could relate to their individual struggles. The board recommends maintaining and further expanding this format in the future and will document lessons learned from the two visits that took place.

Recruitment

The work of the Nominations Committee

In 2021/22, the nominations committee consisted of Amineh Ghaderi, Arash Jouybari, Niki Matinrad and Tim Roberts. The committee was elected at the previous AGM of the doctoral association. During this year, the committee was short on people. Nonetheless they held several online meetings and maintained a regular email correspondence. The work of the nomination committee was advertised through newsletters, social media and during local visits.

For the nomination process, the committee created an online nomination form that was spread through different channels. The nominations committee has compiled a suggested list of candidates for the 2023/24 board.

Advocacy and opinion building

Since the last AGM, the Association has advocated for the doctoral candidates of Sweden in several ways, through debate articles and participation in events.

Outreach

The Association focused on visiting campuses around Sweden and discussing PhD rights and possibilities for becoming actively engaged in union activities. The effort was appreciated by local members and the attendance at the events greatly improved in comparison to similar initiatives during the prior mandate period.

Saco Student Council

Paulina attended the Saco Student Council Congress in 2022, which was held on location in Stockholm. Paulina, Liuba and Daniel also attended the membership council in Stockholm. This year SULF-DCA also nominated Paulina to become a member of the Saco Student Council board and represent Doctoral Student interests in the organization.

SFS-DK

The SULF Doctoral Candidate Association has had an ongoing collaboration with SFS-DK throughout this mandate period.

SULF

Throughout this mandate period, Paulina has had several discussions with SULF staff, in particular Maria Mattiasson, Ulrika Herstedt, Robert Andersson, and Jon Stenbeck, regarding different topics related to the work of the Association.

Central cooperation

- During 2022/2023, SULF Doctoral Candidate Association was represented in the central SULF board. This function was taken up by multiple board members including Haro de Grauw, Jennifer Emsfors and Paulina Rajkowska. The purpose of the representation is to make communication between the two boards easier,

and to provide a means to make the voice of the doctoral candidates heard on the central level as well.

- Paulina has met with Git Claesson Pipping, Maria Mattiasson, Robert Andersson, Jon Stenbeck and Karin Åmossa to discuss the ins and outs of SULF, and how they can support the Association in their work.
- Paulina represented SULF-DCA at the SULF symposium on Academic Freedom.
- Paulina was a panelist on a seminar organized in collaboration with SULF central and SULF Uppsala about Harassment in Academia
- Paulina represented the organization together with representatives of SULF central at Almedalsveckan, attending talks and networking regarding PhD rights and the broader academic environment in Sweden

Finances

The operational year of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association starts in April/May after the AGM and lasts until April/May of the next year. SULF's financial year starts January 1st and ends on the last of December. This means that the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association operational plan is financed by two different budgets. This operational year used parts of the budgets for 2021 and 2022. The period from April until December 2021 were financed by the 2021 budget and the period January – May by the 2022 budget.

For 2022, the previous board had requested the sum of SEK 290 000 and was granted SEK 287 500. The cut concerned a reduction in budgeting for SULF day (from 5000 to 2500). The increase in requested budget was mostly related to planned return to on-location activities, hence requiring more travel resources. The Association stayed within the financial framework received for the operational year.

For 2023, the sitting board had requested the sum of SEK 287 500. Deeming the previous budget well adjusted to the current needs of the organization, there was no need to make changes in comparison to the prior mandate.

Few words from the board

This was our first year of functioning post COVID and it came with many challenges. While being able to meet in person was a great boost for many of us who have only attended online SULF events, it also came with a few logistical and planning problems. Our knowledge of previous event formats was not well documented, and we had to reinvent them anew with the example of Contact Day being most prominent. It was a learning process, and we believe we did our absolute best under the circumstances. We managed to keep many balls in the air by following up on activities which now had to take some time out of our hands. Aliens Act proposals have now moved into higher governmental processes where central SULF represents us, and our influence is limited.

This year instead we finally had the chance to focus on outreach and meeting members all over the country. Reestablishing local connections was very giving and is something to continue with in the coming mandates. Right now, we are focusing our energy on organizing new forms of handover to make sure that the organizational experience and knowledge survives through the annual changes of board members.

The election committee once more proposed a fully staffed SULF-DCA board showing that our efforts on visibility and outreach have had an impact and more PhD candidates want to join our ranks. Hopefully with the new energy coming our way the organization continues with this great momentum and keeps up the good work.

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