

Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild's Annual Report

1 Introduction

The Doctoral Student Guild (DS) is a student union (SU) body at Chalmers University of Technology (Chalmers). It is the key coordinating body that represents the interests of all doctoral students across Chalmers in several boards and committees within the institution and outside of it. More specifically, our goal is to improve the existing conditions for doctoral students at Chalmers by:

- Representing the interests of doctoral students in several boards and committees at Chalmers.
- Identifying, preventing, and eliminating issues related to doctoral education at Chalmers
- Becoming a communication hub by facilitating a direct link between the PhD students and the institution groups
- Ensuring that the rights of every doctoral student are withheld

During the year 2021/2022 the Doctoral Student Guild (DS) board has been actively representing the doctoral students in several different committees and activities within and outside Chalmers. This report will briefly highlight the main activities performed in the committees, as well as summarize the internal activities.

General information about the activities and committees as well as full board meeting notes can be found on the DS webpage (<http://www.dokt.chs.chalmers.se/>).

1.1 Members of the Board 2022-2023

<i>Adriana Canales Ramos</i>	Board member	Physics
<i>Angelica Avella</i>	Board member	Industrial and material science
<i>Anna af Hällström</i>	Board member	Technology Management and Economics
<i>Ariadna Soro Alvarez</i>	Board member	Microtechnology and Nanoscience (MC2)
<i>Christina Lee</i>	Board member	Industrial and material science
<i>Daniel Gyllenhammar</i>	Chair	Technology Management and Economics
<i>Emma Månsson</i>	Board member	Chemistry and Chemical engineering
<i>Evgeniya Pavlova</i>	Board member	Biology and Biological engineering
<i>Farha Munavara</i>	Board member	Space earth and environment
<i>Fayas Malik Kanchiralla</i>	Board member	Mechanics and Maritime Sciences
<i>Francisco Blas Izquierdo Riera</i>	Board member	Computer Science and Engineering
<i>Fredrik Sandén</i>	Board member	Chemistry and Chemical engineering
<i>Ioanna Motschan-Armen</i>	Board member	Mathematical Science
<i>Jingnan Zhang</i>	Vice Chair	Biology and Biological engineering
<i>Johan Ulander</i>	Board member	Mathematical Science
<i>Michail Vourakis</i>	Board member	Mechanics and Maritime Sciences
<i>Mustapha Saleh</i>	Board member	Chemistry and Chemical engineering
<i>Paul Imgart</i>	Board member	Electrical Engineering (E2)
<i>Rahul Aggarwal</i>	Board member	Technology Management and Economics
<i>Rita Laezza</i>	Board member	Electrical Engineering (E2)
<i>Thomas Deppisch</i>	Board member	Architecture and Civil Engineering
<i>Yao Hu</i>	Board member	Physics
<i>Yin Zeng</i>	Board member	Microtechnology and Nanoscience (MC2)
<i>Yingxiao Yan</i>	Board member	Biology and Biological engineering
<i>Yiting Cai</i>	Board member	Space earth and environment

2 Internal operations for the Board and the Guild at large

The Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild is a part of Chalmers student union and has during the operational year 2022/2023 represented all registered doctoral students at Chalmers University of Technology. During the year, the board had 5 board meetings, the minutes from the board meetings are available on DS website. During the board meetings the members report from their different activities and discussions regarding strategic topics of the doctoral studies are held. The main topics that have been addressed are detailed in this report.

During the year, DS has had two general assembly meetings (10th of November 2022 and 20th of April 2023). The meetings were held during lunch and food was provided for the attendees. Minutes from the meetings are available on DS website.

The main topics during the General Assemblies where:

- Annual report and freedom from liability for the DS board of 2021/2022
- Election of auditor.
- Election of nomination committee
- Election of the new DS board for 2023/2024.
- Brief presentation of the proposed new DS board structure.

2.1 Communication

The contact with our members is vital for the Guild's operations. Previous years there has been troubles with reaching the members via mail due to new spam filters at Chalmers and issues retrieving correct/active mail addresses from the Student union. As of this year this issue has been resolved and we can now reach our members properly via our mailing list(s).

Furthermore, two newsletters (autumn and spring) has been sent out to inform our members of current activities and social events to join. These can be found on our webpage. Our social media accounts have also been used to some extent; however these has mainly been limited to gaining attention for the social events.

Our main information-hub is our website (<https://www.dokt.chs.chalmers.se/>). This has been maintained and updated on several points, including back- and front-end. Here all official documents are stored and available for our members.

2.2 Finance

The Vice Chair Jingnan Zhang was responsible for the finances, and these are presented in a separate document.

2.3 Local PhD councils

An important part of the Guild is each department's local PhD council as a point of contact since it fosters a forum for direct dialogue with and between individual departments.

Communication was established with all Local PhD council Chairs of all Chalmers Departments (except for CLS since they don't have a council). Two Chairs' meetings that facilitated inter-departmental communication has been organized and received positive feedback from the participants.

2.4 Collaboration with Student Union

The collaboration between DS and the Student union management team has been active. Matters such as PhD students' place in the Student Union as well as overarching matters involving the concerns of DS and the Student Union. The relationship with the student union is important for DS as they have a more stable organization and a strong voice in matters which are of importance for PhD students.

During this year Chalmers has recruited a new rector. In the recruitment process, the Student Union management team is both part of the final voting as well as a part of the smaller group that performs the interviews. Through the collaboration with the Student union, our voice as PhD students has also been heard in the recruitment process of the new rector.

2.5 Recruitment of the board

The recruitment team consisted of three members from the board (22/23) who did not intend to stay in the board for upcoming year (23/24). The recruitment was done according to the statutes. All departments have at least one representative, except CLS who has none. In total there are 21 members of the board. New for this year was the introduction of the role of co-chair. A role invented since, according to the statutes, the vice chair is also the treasurer, which means that the vice chair has no time in actually helping the chair with operational matters due to the time it requires to be the treasurer. This set-up is new for this year and more information about this will be detailed below.

2.6 IT

This year has put efforts into updating the webpage (in terms of software updates) and the internal DS cloud. Furthermore, we have located our servers (yes, we did not know where they were...). Short report but still important.

2.7 New board work group structure

One problem with the way the board has worked is that some positions/roles are lonely and hence lacks both a forum for getting feedback on ideas and also lacks a deputy (or similar) if someone has to step in. So, some of the consequences over the years has resulted in that the board meetings have become more of a working meeting, taking a lot of time, and also that at occasions, due to e.g., sickness some important meetings have been missing a representative.

A working group from the board consisting of the chair and two other members investigated the root cause and finding a solution to the problem. This was done through feedback loops with current and previous board members to get a nuanced picture of both problem and possible solution. In the end the suggestion could shortly be described as follows: the board should move from individual's that are assigned to tasks to work groups that are responsible for task, these work groups are then assigning the tasks to persons by themselves but are also responsible to act as/find a deputy for a task if needed.

However, the new structure should only be seen as a suggestion and a guideline, the new board(s) should be pragmatic about how they work. The structure is there for them, not the other way around.

For further information please contact the Chair of 2022/2023, Daniel Gyllenhammar.

3 Representation, Policy, and Advocacy

The advocacy work is a core operation of the Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild. This chapter outlines the work performed within advocacy work at the university, regional level, and national level. The main channel for his work is through direct representation in bodies, committees, and work groups. This chapter outlines the main issues through the academic year of 2022/2023. For full details see the public minutes from each university group and the DS board meeting minutes.

3.1 Representation

The DS is involved in several activities that directly impact both the quality of doctoral education as well as the overall environment for research. These activities are in the direct interest of every doctoral student employed at Chalmers. The DS is also indirectly involved in several other activities at the university which impact the quality of doctoral education. These advisory involvements are primarily through the representation at the various committees (such as at FUN). The stated goal for the year has been to provide active representation in bodies, committees, and work groups at Chalmers. Active representation has been defined in the plan of operations (POO) as DS representation in at least 75% of the meetings.

GROUP	DS REPRESENTATIVE
Central skyddskommite/central protection committee (Previously AJK)	Emma Månsson
Chalmers Research Fundoundation	Jingnan, Yiting
Chalmers University Board (Chalmers AB Board)	Daniel Gyllenhammar
Fakultetsrådet (Faculty council)	Fredrik Sandén
Forskarutbildningsnämnd (FUN)	Paul Imgart, Daniel Gyllenhammar, Emma Månsson (Deputy)
Institutional council	Anna af Hällström
Research misconduct	Francisco Blas Izquierdo Riera
Student union council meeting (FUM)	Rahul Aggarwal
Supervisor of the year	Yao, Yin, Adriana
Wage negotiation (SACO)	Johan
Focus equality	Angelica
Climate strategy (inactive)	Christina
Forskningsnämnd (FN)	Rita Leazza
KUL 2023	Emma Månsson

3.2 FUN Forskarutbildningsnämnden (Research education committee)

Below the most relevant aspects of this year in FUN is presented.

3.2.1 *Evaluation of the Research education*

During this year, the FUN (research education committee) have worked on the Evaluation of the research education, this in terms of how it is supposed to be performed, what it should look at /focus on etc. The evaluation will start in January 2024 and will be done at all research educations. In short, the evaluation will be done by the own research school/department as well as external/other research schools as well as a central evaluation committee.

3.2.2 *Gender based harassment and equality*

Since the report about gender-based harassment by Nya Karolinska was published in may 2022 (<https://ki.se/media/246914/download>), which showed that especially (but not only) female PhD students were targeted and exposed for this mistreatment, FUN decided to act. Study rectors and Vice prefects were invited to sessions to show and discuss the results of the study. Triggering local (at the department) initiatives to address the issue. At the end of the academic year all institutions were obliged to create and submit an action plan for how to address this issue. This in combination with an equality manager being hired at HR. This work is still ongoing and will take time, but at least it is now addressed, and the rest of Chalmers is starting to becoming aware of it and act upon it.

Another aspect on the same topic has also been raised by DS, which is the malfunctioning of “Safer at Chalmers”. This process takes too long time and there is seldom any outcome the helps the victim, amongst other aspects. During the year criticism towards the function has been forwarded and at the time of writing, potential actions are looked into.

The topic of doctoral courses supplied at Chalmers has also been discussed during the year. Hear, data from the PhD survey was used to highlight aspects of importance. Some issues that were addressed were difficulties knowing when and how often courses ran, if there were courses at other research schools that might be useful, and if there were enough courses at all research schools.

3.2.3 *Migration Agency*

DS has over the year tried to improve the situation when it comes to dealing with the migration agency. This has mainly followed two tracks: 1) Internal support from the organization at Chalmers, and 2) affecting the politicians who are responsible for the Migration Agency and its policies. This has been done through FUN and other forums (such as, the board of Chalmers AB, SACO, and others). As of the Swedish election in September 2022, Sweden got a new government which promised to improve the situation for foreign PhD students “to support Sweden as a knowledge nation”. However, out of my knowledge it has only been a temporal improvement regarding the speed for which applications are managed. In general, the government has promised a lot, but not yet delivered. In this work DS has also made use of the relationship with the Student Union and the Rector which have aided in our advocacy.

3.2.4 *Available Course for PhDs*

During this year in FUN there has been a discussion regarding the available courses for PhDs. Both regarding courses at each research school Chalmers, but also courses at other universities. One of the issues that started this discussion was the low transparency regarding courses, which previously, to a large extent, was based on either local mail within the research school when

the course was available or that the supervisor for the PhD student knew beforehand when the course was planned. As a first measure, available courses were to be made available at the webpage. A second measure, where to make all courses including those that were given more irregular (such as once every other or third year) should be visible.

3.3 Trade union, SACO

The DS has been actively engaged in matters dealing with labor rights and labor law (pertinent to the employment of doctoral students), mainly through the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO). SACO is a trade union confederation of 23 affiliated associations out of which six are represented at Chalmers. SACO represents trade union members in issues like job security, rights, salaries, and the working environment. The most important task for DS representative is to take part in the wage negotiation, which is held between Chalmers and the trade union organizations SACO and ST. Since the current contract ends 2024-04-30 the wage negotiation started during the end of the summer 2023, i.e., on the boarder of the DS board 22/23's year of mandate.

3.4 PhD Survey

This year was dedicated to analyzing and creating a report based on the results from previous year's survey (launched February/March 2022). The results was used, among other places, in FUN and it was also made available for the local council to see their separate results for their department.

3.5 International and Global issues

In the end of February 2022, The Public Health Agency of Sweden announced that the last restrictions regarding the covid-19 pandemic was relieved. However, about the same week the invasion of Ukraine started. This was later followed by the situation in Iran regarding Mahsa Amini. This has affected the PhD community and DS has tried to support its members to the best of its capability. Two examples regarding what was done:

- During the autumn of 2022, a group of people wanted to hold a peaceful manifestation at Chalmers to show their support to the situation in Iran. DS helped with contacts at Chalmers as well as communication channels.
- Part of organizing a Chalmers central group which could support those in need of support and for questions regarding the war in Ukraine and the Conflict in Iran.
- Advocating for prolongation of contracts due to reasons created by the Covid-19 pandemic (done in FUN).

3.6 Climate action

During the year, a workshop from the Lärosätenas Klimatnätverk¹ was attended by a DS representative virtually (of which Chalmers is not a member of as it only public universities involved currently). This provided insight into activities being conducted at other universities including a large focus on emissions from flights.

Contact has been taken with Katarina Ekman who has taken over responsibility for Chalmers sustainability work after Maria Djupström left Chalmers.

¹ <https://www.slu.se/centrumbildningar-och-projekt/klimatnatverket/>

Chalmers has now released their sustainability report for 2022 which was reviewed and shows a high focus on social sustainability but lacks concrete actions and monitoring concerning climate impact. This indicates a stronger need for more concrete actions by Chalmers concerning climate change and DS has expressed their interest in being involved in this. The conversation is ongoing on how this involvement could take place.

3.7 Equality group

A working group has been formed and the main achievements were:

- 1) Distributing of an informative poster on the national study in occasion of Christmas holidays.
- 2) Starting a dialogue with Safe at Chalmers to identify the problems of the service and possible improvements.
- 3) Organizing a workshop on bystander intervention training for PhD students.

4 Social and career events

4.1 Social events

One of the missions this year was to restart the social activities and the PhD community, which had been suffering from the covid-19 pandemic. Over the year, game nights, Aws, pub visits, and hikes, was organized. Even though the community is not back at its former pre-pandemic level, it has started to regain its energy. Hopefully, this has paved the way for next year to develop this further.

4.2 Webinars/seminars

During the year three webinar/seminars (series) has been held. One called “Dear academia workshop series” constituting of four online workshops. 2022/2023 is the third time the workshop series is held. Furthermore, this year has also hosted an event on personal finance and one in collaboration with Chalmers Ventures.

4.3 Alumni event

One of our appreciated yearly events is the Alumni event which enables industry Chalmers PhD Alumni to meet with current PhD Students. This with a rather high alumni/PhD student ratio. This year DS has also started a collaboration with Unimeet, which lead to a joint Alumni-event between Chalmers and GU.

4.4 KUL

The KUL (Conference for learning and education) was held during the spring of 2023 and DS was responsible for the session ”supervisor of the year” where one member of the Supervisor of the year group in DS was part of the panel.

4.5 Collaborations for career events

During this year, initiatives has been taken to improve PhD students’ career opportunities and contacts. This in terms of new collaborations with Chalmers Ventures and Unimeet, resulting in several events aiming to support PhD students and their careers. There has also been an event organized by Chalmers Promotions where DS helped with support and advertisement.

4.6 Introduction session

Since last year, the introduction session is no longer mandatory. This impacts DS possibility to reach all PhD students with the information that is needed. Information about labour union, student union, student discounts, DS in general, etc does not reach some of our members. This has been brought up with both FUN and the Student union.

5 Final remarks

Based on this report, I hope that it is clearly shown that the DS Board of 2022/2023 has fulfilled its obligations towards the Doctoral student guild at Chalmers.

Sincerely, Your DS Chair, 2022/2023


Daniel Gyllenhammar