



Guidelines for handling lack of progress and collaboration difficulties in graduate education

Two main types of problems in the graduate program are inadequate efforts by the PhD student or the supervisor, so that the pace of education is too slow, and cooperation problems, which cause inconvenience without affecting the tempo of education. These guidelines divide the problems into three steps:

- *Normal problems*: The problems are not so great that they cannot be dealt with as part of the routine dialogue between PhD students and their supervisors.
- *Extraordinary problems*: Problems which PhD students and supervisors fail to deal with are to be handled by the relevant Head of Division as soon as possible and not later than a month after the problem was identified.
- *Crises*: Problems which the management at division level fail to solve are to be lifted to the Head of Department as soon as possible and at the latest within one month after the problem classified as extraordinary

Responsibility and actions

Responsible for dealing with problems are:

- *Normal problems*: The PhD student's main supervisor
- *Extraordinary problems*: The relevant Head of Division (or Head of department if the Head of Division is the supervisor involved)
- *Crises*: Head of Department (or acting Head of Department if the Head of Department the supervisor involved)

Problem management is to be primarily aimed at providing the PhD student and supervisor with the support needed to solve the problem.

The Director of Studies for graduate education programmes may be called upon for advice.

The main supervisor is responsible for informing the Head of Division that an extraordinary problem exists. The Head of Division is responsible for reporting to the Head of Department that a crisis situation has arisen. In addition, any staff member at the department who finds out about a



problem in graduate education level which the supervisor and PhD student cannot resolve by themselves is responsible for informing the Head of Division or Head of Department.

The responsibility for bringing attention to the problem is not the PhD students, but the PhD student herself/himself has the opportunity to lift the problem to the Head of Division or Head of Department. A PhD student also has the unconditional right to change supervisor in accordance with Chapter 6, Section 28 of the Higher Education Ordinance.

For extraordinary problems or crises, the person responsible for problem management is to inform the PhD student that he/she can contact the PhD Student Ombudsman at Uppsala Student Union (studentkårens doktorandombudsman).

If insufficient progress is made and the department considers that the problem lies with the PhD student, the department may, as a last resort, bring the problem to faculty level. If the faculty then agrees with the department's assessment, the faculty might propose that the vice-chancellor decides that the PhD student should no longer have the right to supervision or other study resources in accordance with Chapter 6, Section 30 of the Higher Education Ordinance.

To keep in mind when dealing with extraordinary problems and crises due to lack of progress and collaboration difficulties in graduate education

- The individual study plan serves as a contract between the department and the PhD student. When discussing lack of progress, it is important that the individual study plan is clear about what progress is expected.
- In order to reduce the risk of misunderstandings in communications, the problem should not be dealt with using e-mail but by scheduled meetings where everybody involved takes part at the same time.
- In such cases, it is important to keep detailed notes at supervision sessions and crisis meetings. The notes should be approved by those involved and preferably signed. These notes are important documents for the continued resolution of the problem.
- Any plan of action that is agreed, should incorporate checkpoints so that it is possible to see if the actions have had the desired effects.
- In addition to the Head of Division and Head of Department, it may be appropriate in problem management to involve other people who are trusted by all of the parties.