

Faculty Board

Risk Assessment of Admission to Third-Cycle Studies at the HT Faculties

The Admission Rules for Doctoral Education at Lund University (Reg. no STYR 2024/288), specifically Section 4, state that a risk assessment is always to be carried out of admission to doctoral education, regardless of funding. The risk assessment is to apply to the following:

- independence, integrity, ethics and academic freedom
- dual-use products (software, technology and services that can be used for both civil and military purposes)
- the student's (doctoral student's) situation and capability to complete the programme in both academic and practical terms.

The purpose of risk assessment

The purpose of conducting risk assessments of admission is to identify circumstances that may constitute a threat to the doctoral student's capability to research freely or the doctoral student's capability to complete the programme. These circumstances may be, among other things, a funding body that sets unreasonable requirements or an external work environment that does not provide the right conditions for third-cycle studies. The risk assessment is to cover the circumstances of the programme, not the doctoral student's own ability. The risk assessment is not to constitute part of the assessment of the applicants or the selection process between them but is rather conducted before the assessment of the applicants starts.

In those cases where the risk assessment shows that there are risks, these are to be presented to the Faculties' Board for Third-Cycle Studies, either when requesting a vacancy announcement or when requesting admission. The risks and any measures to minimise the risks are to be taken into account in decisions on a vacancy announcements or admission.

The departments are responsible for conducting risk assessments where required. The responsibility of the Board for Third-Cycle Studies is to assess the risks that have been identified and determine whether or not they constitute an obstacle to admission.

The presence of risks in admission to third-cycle studies

The presence of those risks that are raised in the University's Admission Rules varies depending on how the doctoral student is funded. At the HT Faculties, there are the following forms of funding:

- doctoral employments¹ within the HT Faculties, funded by the University
- doctoral employments within the HT Faculties, funded by an externally financed research project or externally financed graduate school
- doctoral employments at another faculty or higher education institution
- other employer, i.e. collaborative doctoral students
- other financing of employment, e.g. old age pension.

The risks may have various causes. One cause is that an external funding body sets requirements that are not compatible with third-cycle studies. The extent of this risk varies depending on the funding body. The risk can be considered negligible concerning funding bodies such as the Swedish Research Council, European Research Council and Wallenberg Foundations, i.e. funding bodies whose main activity is funding research. Within the HT Faculties, this type of funding body predominates, but there is also external funding for which there is a risk that the funding body sets requirements that threaten the doctoral student's academic freedom, for example. Neither can it be ruled out that the activities of this type of external funding body involves dual-use products.

Another cause of risk is that the doctoral student is at a workplace where structures and procedures may pose a threat to academic freedom or to the doctoral student's capability to complete the programme. The Faculties actively work to ensure that this is not a problem for those doctoral students whose workplace is at one of the HT Faculties' departments. The risk is also small for doctoral students who have a doctoral employment at another higher education institution, but problems may arise nonetheless if there is a lack of clarity regarding the allocation of responsibilities and resources. For doctoral students who spend their working hours at a workplace outside academia there is a clear risk and therefore a risk assessment must be conducted in such cases.

A less common risk is one that arises when an individual doctoral student is in a position of dependency regarding a foreign power, voluntarily or involuntarily. It is not the University's task to assess an applicant's private relationships to ascertain whether they are in a dependent relationship regarding a foreign power. However,

¹ With "doctoral employment" we are referring to the special employment "doktorandanställning", which is regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance.

a risk assessment is to be conducted when there is reason to believe that the conditions for the programme are such that it may cause or contribute to a dependency that threatens the programme. One such situation is that the programme is funded by another state, which could occur when doctoral students are admitted to a joint programme with a university in a country outside the EU/EEA. Therefore, in these cases a risk assessment is to be conducted before the agreement on a joint programme is signed.

In many cases the risk assessment must be carried out long before admission, either in connection with the decision to apply for external funding or in connection with the decision to announce a doctoral student position.

Risk assessment regarding independence, integrity, ethics and academic freedom

There are two main causes of threats to doctoral students' independence, integrity, ethics and academic freedom: a funding body that sets improper requirements for the doctoral student and an unfavourable work environment. This means that the risks are negligible for doctoral students who are funded by the University or a by a recognised funding body whose main purpose is to finance research. However, regarding other external funding bodies there have been funding bodies that have had viewpoints on research questions or that have prohibited publication.

Problems can also arise for collaborative doctoral students. These doctoral students are employed by an external employer and their workplace is at this employer. This means that there is both an external funding body that could set improper requirements and a workplace that may be unfavourable for research. It is therefore important to conduct a risk assessment on these issues before admission of a collaborative doctoral student and to document that this has been done.

Risk assessment regarding dual-use products

Dual-use products refer to products that can be used for both civil and military purposes and products that can be used to make weapons of mass destruction. The products this applies to are listed in Appendix 1 of the EU's Dual-Use Regulation.

The use of dual-use products is not a major problem within the HT Faculties, but cannot be ruled out, as it could occur. The risk is deemed to be negligible in those cases where the doctoral student chooses their own thesis project in cooperation with the supervisors. This includes doctoral students with doctoral employments who are either funded internally, by a public sector research funding body or by major private sector research funding bodies such as the Wallenberg Foundations. It also applies to those doctoral students who have neither a doctoral employment nor are collaborative doctoral students, e.g. doctoral students who are funding their studies with an old-age pension.

Regarding external financing by private sector funding bodies that do not commonly finance research, it cannot be ruled out that dual-use products may be

present. The same applies to collaborative doctoral students, where it also cannot be ruled out that the employer expects the doctoral student to work on dual-use products. Therefore, a risk assessment is to be conducted when doctoral student positions are financed by external funding bodies whose main purpose is not the financing of research and for admission of collaborative doctoral students.

Risk assessment regarding the student's (doctoral student's) situation and capability to complete the programme in both academic and practical terms

The doctoral student's situation refers to the doctoral student's study and work environment, the doctoral student's income and other practical conditions.

Doctoral students with a doctoral employment² have financial security during the period of studies. In addition, these doctoral students have access to necessary resources, in accordance with Chapter 7, Section 34 of the Higher Education Ordinance. However, regarding those doctoral students who are employed at another faculty within the University or at another higher education institution, uncertainty may arise concerning responsibilities and resources, which risks impairing the doctoral student's situation. Ideally, this risk can be minimised by a written agreement with the faculty or higher education institution where the doctoral student is employed.

Regarding collaborative doctoral students and doctoral students with funding other than employment, the HT Faculties do not have the same control over the practical conditions. This is one reason why the Faculties are restrictive regarding admission of doctoral students who do not receive a doctoral employment. However, there are cases where it benefits all parties to do this, but an assessment is to be conducted of whether the doctoral student will have access to all necessary resources, in both academic and practical terms. For collaborative doctoral students, this is to be included in the agreement signed between the HT Faculties and the employer.

Risk assessment in specific cases for a vacancy announcement or admission

Within the HT Faculties, a risk assessment is to be conducted for vacancy announcements of doctoral student positions or for admission to third-cycle studies in the following cases:

- Before a decision on a vacancy announcement is made for a doctoral student position that is financed by an external funding body whose main purpose is not financing research.
The risk assessment is to include independence, integrity, ethics and academic freedom, as well as the presence of dual-use products.

² With "doctoral employment" we are referring to the special employment "doktorandanställning", which is regulated in the Higher Education Ordinance.

- Before an agreement is signed with an employer who wishes to finance third-cycle studies for one of their employees, i.e. a collaborative doctoral student. The risk assessment is to include all risks.
- Before an agreement is signed with a higher education institution in a country outside the EU/EEA on a joint programme. The risk assessment is to include independence, integrity, ethics and academic freedom, as well as the presence of dual-use products.
- Before a decision is taken on admission of a doctoral student with funding other than employment. The risk assessment is to include risks regarding the doctoral student's situation and capability to complete the programme in both academic and practical terms

In addition, a written agreement is to be signed before a doctoral position is to be advertised in those cases where the doctoral student will be employed by another faculty or higher education institution. The agreement is to regulate who has responsibility for various aspects of the doctoral student's work and study situation, as well as who is to provide the resources required for the doctoral student to be able to complete the programme.