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Proposition 4

Development of opinion in
relation to third-cycle issues

Covering letter

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Introduction

After a proposal from the Postgraduate Committee, the Board has decided to propose a number of changes in the Programme of Principles and SFS' position: Scope, range, financing and admission in Higher education (HUOUFA), with the objective of strengthening SFS' principles concerning third-cycle education.

To start with, there has been a major need to define what is meant by students in the document and to clarify that students refers to students and postgraduate students on free-standing courses, programmes at Bachelor and Masters level as well as doctoral studies in accordance with the Higher Education Act.

The term “scientists”

The Postgraduate Committee has highlighted that the term "scientist" is particularly unclear when it comes to third-cycle students, and that a new alternative should be produced. Based on this, the Board has conducted a long discussion on the definition of scientist and whether students conduct research or not. Scientists can be understood in relation to terms like academic personnel, which refers to employees at universities who conduct research and teaching, for example senior lecturers, lecturers, readers, postdocs and so forth. In relation to the term "scientists", SFS would like to emphasise that students too can conduct research and also that external parties can be brought in for teaching and research without being employees at the higher education institution.

Students can pursue activities that are similar to research, without the academy regarding it as research. For example, there are differences in accountability, which are manifested through disciplinary committees rather than the Board for Assessment of Misconduct in Research. From a lifelong-learning perspective, the individual is simultaneously in a learning and a researching phase, and the term scientist thus constitutes a difficult boundary to define. The Board therefore proposes a reformulation in the Programme of Principles.

The Board proposes to replace scientists with “academic personnel”. It is proposed that "scientists" be removed throughout the text. Academic personnel is a term that is used within the higher education sector to describe research students, as well as staff who research and/or teach, such as professors and lecturers. Academic personnel differ from other staff such as technical, administrative or library personnel.

About proposals in the Programme of Principles

The Board would like to add a sentence to section 2.4 on academic freedom for third-cycle students and that the higher education institution is responsible for this. The lack of unrestricted publishing rights and the right to change supervisor is perceived by third-cycle students as problematic. This is partially covered by previous chapters, for example, the right to change supervisor is covered within section 4.2 of the Programme of Principles.

A number of changes have been added in order to contribute to a specific doctoral perspective or to address an issue that is specific to third-cycle students. Examples of such changes are the proposals in section 4.1 or 4.4.

In certain cases, such as with the changes in section 4.2 or 2.6, the change also has an effect on first-cycle education. Section 2.6 addresses the internationalisation concept in order to emphasise aspects other than physical mobility. The change in section 4.2 partly concerns clarifying the fact that supervision is something different than teaching and should be incorporated when we talk about staff who operate within education.

4.2 develops the rationale for inclusion of third-cycle education and above all it concerns the term “self-study”. Self-study includes students' non-teacher-led time within the framework of traditional courses, independent work such as graduate and postgraduate dissertations, as well as large parts of third-cycle programmes. SFS does not want the bulk of traditional courses to comprise self-studies, as this risks impeding quality, but self-studies naturally constitute the main part of third-cycle education. The paragraph is thereby reformulated to take these aspects into account.

In section 4.4, the Board proposes a text related to research students' public defence of their doctoral thesis. The emphasis on economic conditions derives from the fact that certain public defences do not receive sufficient financial support to, for example, replace the opponents.

About proposals in SFS' position: Scope, range, financing and admission in higher education

The first paragraph in section 2.1 has been rewritten in order to specify which principles should govern the range of programmes at first- and second-cycle level, and which principles should govern the range of third-cycle programmes.

A paragraph has been added in section 2.2 in order to clarify the purpose of third-cycle education and that doctoral students' academic freedom and influence in their own research must be safeguarded.

The size and character of the third-cycle programme influences the principles that govern its range. A paragraph has therefore been added at the end of section 3.1 which specifies that the link to a high quality research environment is central for the range of third-cycle programmes. Research and education within different fields should be conducted

throughout Sweden and in order to expand this principle to also include third-cycle education, it is specified that third-cycle education within all research subject areas should be available throughout the country.

An addition is made between paragraphs 4 and 5 in section 4.1 that the dimensioning of third-cycle education is governed by the academy's and society's need of researchers. The role of third-cycle education in relation to high quality education at first-, second- and third-cycle level is specified. To ensure the autonomy of higher education institutions, it is specified that it is the higher education institutions that control which individual third-cycle places should be advertised.

A paragraph has been added at the end of section 5.1 to the effect that the higher education institutions should not be dependent on external financiers to provide a necessary dimensioning of their third-cycle programmes. This is in order to ensure the higher education institutions' autonomy and long-term nature. The dimensioning of third-cycle education is linked to the quality of education at first- and second-cycle level, as third-cycle students perform a large proportion of teaching and supervision of students at first- and second-cycle level, which is also specified in the new paragraph.

Access to third-cycle education differs substantially from access to education at first- and second-cycle level. A section 6.3 is therefore added which exclusively concerns this. The parts from section 6.1 and 6.2 which addressed this have been incorporated into the new section. The focus in section 6.3 is how to ensure transparent and legally secure admission to third-cycle education, particularly the situation for shadow doctoral students and third-cycle students who operate at Swedish higher education institutions, but who are admitted to foreign higher education institutions.

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Draft decision

The Board proposes to the General Assembly

that a new paragraph is added directly after the first paragraph in the Programme of Principles' chapter 1: In this text, student refers to a person who is accepted on to and pursues higher education studies at first-, second- or third-cycle level, and doctoral candidate refers to a student who is accepted on to and pursues studies at third-cycle level, unless specifically indicated otherwise. I VoteIT: #P4-PP-1

that the sentence in the Programme of Principles' chapter 2, "The bulk of the research that is conducted should be financed by the public through non-competitive public funds." is changed to "The bulk of the research that is conducted at the higher education institutions should be financed by the public through non-competitive public funds." #P4-PP-2

that the sentence - "It is both the state's and the higher education institutions' responsibility to ensure academic freedom for students and academic personnel. The higher education institutions have a specific responsibility for research students' academic freedom." - is added at the end of the third paragraph, section 2.4 of the Programme of Principles. #P4-PP-3

that the sentence - "All students should have the opportunity to pursue student influence without it having a potentially adverse impact on the student or his/her education." - is added at the end of the first paragraph, section 2.5 of the Programme of Principles. #P4-PP-4

that the sentence - "Internationalisation does not refer solely to being physically active in another country, but also, for example, making international contacts as a student or an academic staff member." - is added at the end of the first paragraph, section 2.6 of the Programme of Principles. #P4-PP-5

that a new third paragraph with the following text is added in the Programme of Principles' section 3.2: Third-cycle students occupy a double role in the academy as both students and academic personnel. Similarly to other personnel, third-cycle students should have decent, predictable working conditions from day one. #P4-PP-6

that a new third paragraph with the following text is added in the Programme of Principles' section 4.1 after the current second paragraph: For third-cycle education, usefulness means that the third-cycle student should be an independent researcher with the ability to administer, expand and communicate his/her range

of knowledge within the scientific field to the benefit of both society and the individual. #P4-PP-7

that the first paragraph in the Programme of Principles' section 4.2 is changed to "The responsibility for the student's learning process is shared between the student and the teacher or supervisor. The role as academic teacher entails special demands linked to the purpose of higher education. In order to give a student the best possible education, it is important that knowledge is passed on by scientifically or artistically competent teachers. It is equally important that the teacher or supervisor has solid higher education pedagogic skills. Everything taught within the framework of higher education must rest on a scientific or artistic foundation, or proven experience. Likewise, all learning activities and the teaching and supervision provided must be anchored in science and tested experience about student learning. To safeguard the necessary competency, higher education pedagogic training must be mandatory and recurrent for teaching and supervisory personnel. All education leading to an examination must also be planned and conducted with a clear foundation in the national examination goals." #P4-PP-8

that the second paragraph in the Programme of Principles' section 4.2 is changed so that the paragraph reads: It is important that the teaching formats used are varied and relevant to the education, so that students can absorb the knowledge in the best possible way. Self-studies should never take place without sufficient guidance, as this reduces the opportunities for students to develop the analytical and critical thinking that higher education requires. Apart from in connection with independent work, self-studies must never constitute the bulk of the programme for education at first- and second-cycle level. #P4-PP-9

that the sentence - "Doctoral students should never bear responsibility themselves to finance or ensure the quality of the public defence of their thesis." - is added in the Programme of Principles' section 4.4, at the end of the paragraph. #P4-PP-10

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 2.1, the sentence - "SFS considers that the number of study places within higher education should be controlled so that all applicants who are qualified can obtain a place to study." - is changed to "SFS considers that the number of study places within higher education should be controlled so that all applicants who are qualified can obtain a place to study at first- and second-cycle level." #P4-huoufa-1

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 2.1: "The number of study places at third-cycle level should be according to both the academy's own needs as well as society's needs". - is added after the first paragraph #P4-huoufa-2

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 2.1, fourth paragraph, “first-cycle education” is changed to “education”. #P4-huoufa-3

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 2.1, last paragraph second sentence - “the higher education pedagogic skills of teachers must never be classified as secondary to, for example, an individual teacher's research.” is changed to “the higher education pedagogic skills of teachers and supervisors must never be classified as secondary to, for example, an individual teacher's research.” #P4-huoufa-4

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 2.2: "Third-cycle education is the highest level of academic education." - is added as final paragraph The principles that govern education at third-cycle level are in many ways similar to those that govern education at first- and second-cycle level, but the focus for third-cycle education is always to train third-cycle students to become independent researchers. For it to be possible to regard a third-cycle programme as academic, the individual research student's academic freedom must be safeguarded to an equal extent as that of other researchers within the academy. #P4-huoufa-5

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 3.3, add as final paragraph: Third-cycle education is a central part of higher education, just like education at first- and second-cycle level. To ensure the quality of third-cycle education, it is necessary for it to be linked to a research environment of high quality. There should be broad access to third-cycle education throughout Sweden to ensure a strong link between research, education and society, and to make third-cycle education widely available. #P4-huoufa-6

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 4.1, after the third paragraph add: It is the higher education institutions' responsibility to determine which third-cycle study places should be advertised. The dimensioning of third-cycle education should be governed by the academy's and society's need of researchers. A particularly important aspect of this is the academy's long-term nature, where the dimensioning of third-cycle education should satisfy the academy's need for people educated to third-cycle level in order to ensure high-quality education at first- and second-cycle level. #P4-huoufa-7

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 4.2, the sentence “The higher education institutions should offer the education the students demand, as long as the education meets criteria for academic education.” is changed to “The higher education institutions should offer the education at first- and second-cycle level that the students demand, as long as the education meets the criteria for academic education.” #P4-huoufa-8

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 4.2, the sentence - “SFS considers that it is the higher education

institutions' obligation to ensure student influence in relation to the higher education institution's dimensioning and range as well as responsibility to discuss dimensioning issues with a range of stakeholders in society.” - is changed to “SFS considers that it is the higher education institutions' obligation to ensure student influence in the higher education institution's dimensioning and range. Besides student influence, the higher education institutions have a responsibility to discuss dimensioning issues for all levels of education with a range of stakeholders in society.” #P4-huoufa-9

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 5.1, add as final paragraph: For the financing of third-cycle education, it is central that the higher education institutions have resources to dimension third-cycle education based on the principles described in this position. The higher education institutions should not be dependent on external financing to maintain a necessary scope of third-cycle education. #P4-huoufa-10

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission section 6.1, the paragraph - “A person who has completed a degree at second-cycle level or has the corresponding qualifications shall be qualified to apply for third-cycle education within his or her subject area.” - is removed As third-cycle education is normally also an employed position and a person admitted to third-cycle education is normally employed, the admission must also test whether the applicant fulfils the requirements for doctoral student employment. Third-cycle study places must be advertised openly and an assessment be made against a clear description of the programme and the position. When advertising a third-cycle position, it shall always be clear whether the position refers to a licentiate exam or a doctoral exam. #P4-huoufa-11

that, in SFS' position: Higher education's scope, range, financing and admission chapter 6, add the following as a new section:

6.3 Access to education at third-cycle level

A person who has completed a degree at second-cycle level or has the corresponding qualifications shall be qualified to apply for third-cycle education within his or her subject area.

Third-cycle study places must be advertised openly and an assessment be made against a clear description of the programme and the position. The application process should be transparent and legally secure. The decision to determine who is employed as a doctoral student should never rest with a single individual. When advertising a third-cycle position, it shall always be clear whether the position refers to a licentiate exam or a doctoral exam.

Admission criteria for third-cycle programmes should be clear, transparent and reasonable. Admission to a third-cycle programme must never require that the applicant has conducted research together with the research team in which the

doctoral post is located. Neither should it be a requirement that the applicant has published articles in scientific journals. However, it can be a merit.

All doctoral posts should be advertised publicly and be available for all prospective third-cycle students. It is important that higher education institutions work actively to counter the presence of so called “shadow doctoral students”, individuals who are engaged as third-cycle students, but who are not accepted on a third-cycle programme.

Third-cycle students who are registered at a foreign higher education institution, but who act as guest researchers at a Swedish higher education institution for a period should be specifically included in a research team. The higher education institution should be aware of the existence of these doctoral students and be clear about which mutual expectations there are between them and the higher education institution. Even though these third-cycle students are not accepted to a third-cycle programme at the higher education institution where they are engaged, they should as far as possible be treated in the same way as those third-cycle students who have been accepted. #P4-huoufa-12