

The International Committee of the Research  
Studies Board

## Rules of Procedure for Review of Foreign Scholarships for Research Studies

Approved by the **Research Studies Board** on 13 December 2022

Valid from 1 January 2023

### Background

Lund University is to be open to students, teaching staff and researchers from all corners of the globe. Research studies for international PhD students comprise an important part of Swedish universities' contribution to capacity building in low and middle-income countries. Such research studies also fit well with Lund University's contribution to **Agenda 2030**, the aim of which is a transition to a sustainable society for humanity, the planet and prosperity. In order for the Faculty of Medicine at Lund University to be able to continue to offer education to PhD students from low and middle-income countries to the same extent as today, PhD scholarships from foreign organisations and authorities are crucial. Thanks to such funding, the faculty is able to provide research studies for a group of PhD students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to undertake research studies in Sweden.

At the same time, foreign scholarships potentially present pitfalls. Often the size of the scholarship does not fulfil the minimum salary for a PhD student as stipulated by Lund University, meaning that the supervisor at Lund University has to provide supplementary funding, despite it initially having appeared that the PhD student was fully funded by their home country. Furthermore, the scholarships can in some cases be associated with conditions that breach the Higher Education Ordinance and/or the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions' draft recommendations pertaining to grant-funded research studies (see appendix). For example, the scholarships might

- (1) have conditions attached about repayment if thesis defence does not take place within a certain time.
- (2) involve third parties (guarantors) who become financially liable if the PhD student breaches the conditions of their scholarship
- (3) have conditions featuring clauses that are unclear, such as that the scholarship contract will be terminated if the PhD student "fails to respond to criticism and representations"
- (4) have conditions including a requirement to report to the embassy/consulate about the project and supervisor

In summary, each kind of foreign research studies scholarship must be assessed individually. Substantial knowledge of international relations and experience of international research cooperation are required in order to correctly weigh advantages against drawbacks for the research team, the faculty and the University as a whole.

## Rules of procedure

Against this backdrop, specific rules of procedure relating to the admission of PhD students financed via foreign scholarships are hereby approved. In brief, each scholarship is to be assessed by the Working Group for Internationalisation of Research Studies, which then provides a recommendation to the Faculty of Medicine's Research Studies Board as to whether the scholarship meets the basic criteria for scholarship-based research studies, *i.e. whether it can be considered part of an aid and capacity-building programme, and whether the conditions of the scholarship are reasonable and clear*. Such an assessment does not, however, need to be undertaken within programmes financed by the European Union or other collaborations which include framework agreements on research studies at faculty or university-wide level, such as *double PhD* or *joint PhD*.

## Requirements for scholarship approval when assessed by the Working Group for Internationalisation of Research Studies

### 1. Contract has reasonable terms and conditions

The scholarship must not be conditional with demands for repayment or similar clauses such as penalty fines if the contract is breached. Third party private individuals may not be included as guarantors in the terms of the contract. The contract may not include terms that restrict freedom of speech, other human rights or rights protected by the Swedish constitution.

### 2. Contract has clear terms

The contract may not contain unclear or generalised formulations that can restrict the legal rights of the scholarship recipient.

### 3. The project is to contribute to capacity building (see Chapter 5, section 4a of the HEO) in the home country

Capacity building is the process whereby individuals, organisations and societies achieve, reinforce and maintain the capacity to formulate and realise their own development goals over time.

### 4. The country giving the grant must be included on the OECD's DAC list\*

Each year, the OECD publishes a list of countries and regions that are entitled to receive aid (Official Development Assistance, ODA). The list includes four categories which are updated annually.

### 5. Clear plan for topping up

In most cases, foreign scholarships do not meet the minimum level of a monthly salary as established by Lund University. In order for the PhD student to be admitted, the supervisor is required to go in and top up the scholarship to the correct level. In order for the PhD student to be admitted, a clear financial plan for this is required.

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\*Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is the [OECD](#) committee for aid. The DAC, an international forum for the largest donor countries, was founded in 1961 for the purpose of developing government aid and ensuring its quality. DAC undertakes regular reviews of the donors' aid and collates statistics about aid flows.

### **Administrative procedure for assessment of scholarships**

As soon as a supervisor is contemplating admitting a PhD student on a foreign scholarship, they should contact the PhD Studies Office. The supervisor is to submit:

- a description of how the project contributes to capacity building (around 250 words)
- a short description of the organisation awarding the scholarship including official designations and contact details for the administrator responsible
- the scholarship contract
- funding plan, including any requirement for a supplementary scholarship from the supervisor

The PhD Studies Office forwards the documentation to the Working Group for Internationalisation of Research Studies, which makes an assessment according to approved criteria before making a recommendation to the Research Studies Board. The final decision is made by the Research Studies Board. The process is to be completed quickly, and draft recommendations can be adopted by the Working Group for Internationalisation of Research Studies per capsulam.

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## Appendix

### **The Higher Education Ordinance, Chapter 5, section 4a**

A PhD student in receipt of a PhD grant does not need to be appointed pursuant to section 4 if the grant is awarded as part of

1. an aid and capacity-building programme in which grants are an accepted form of funding with reasonable terms and conditions and the admitting higher education institution has insight into these terms and conditions and into how the grant is paid, or
2. a programme funded by the European Union or other partnerships, in which grants with reasonable terms and conditions comprise an accepted form of funding and where requirements for funding through employment are a barrier to participation for the admitting higher education institution.

### **From the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions' publication 2015-09-17 REV Dnr 14/077**

**The investigator makes the following recommendations and comments:**

*The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions recommends that higher education institutions do not accept applicants with a grant contract that contains demands which diminish conditions of study compared to those applicable to other PhD students at the higher education institution or that restrict the right of the higher education institution to decide how education is delivered or examined.*

*The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions recommends that higher education institutions do not accept the following requirements from funders:*

- *Repayment requirement if the PhD student fails to achieve the qualitative targets and therefore cannot receive their degree.*
- *Requirements that the higher education institution or supervisor report to the funder about planning, content and execution of the individual PhD student's education.*
- *Requirement to return to the home country after completion of the degree. It is for the individual to decide whether this kind of requirement, along with potential sanctions such as, for example, repayment in the event of the contract being breached, are reasonable.*

### **From Government Investigation (SOU) 2016:29 Security and attractiveness – a research career for the future**

#### **4.6.2 PhD students with grants**

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*PhD students with grants do not need to be employed if they have been awarded grants within the framework of national or intergovernmental aid and capacity-building*

*programmes in which grants comprise an accepted form of funding and the admitting higher education institution has insight into the conditions of the grant and how the grant is paid.*