SCHOOL OF
ECONOMICS AND
MANAGEMENT

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Peer-review group of the PhD programme in
Informatics

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PhD programme in Informatics at Lund University School of Economics and Management: Response to peer-review evaluation report

The PhD programme in Informatics at Lund University School of Economics and Management went through an evaluation based on a self-evaluation report and digital visits during November 2020 by the peer-review panel (PRP) of professor Bendik Bygstad, Oslo University, professor Johan Klaesson, Jönköping International Business School, and professor Virppi Kristiina Tuunainen, Alto Business School. The peer-review panel submitted their evaluation report on December 8, 2020.

The Department of Informatics found the peer-review evaluation report constructive and we appreciate the approach and understanding of the peer-review team of our situation of being in a state of transition, strengthening our research staff and reorienting our research focus. Below, we give our responses to the recommendations of the peer-review panel.

1. Area, environment and resources

The peer-review panel summarised the evaluation of "Area, environment and resources" like this: "*The academic and infrastructural resources are sufficient for the PhD program. The MIT research school works well for PhD students and staff, and provides a network for both. The PhD program has a good structure and quality assurance is conducted.*

Looking forward:

- *In order to grow and have more PhD candidates, the department needs more external funding.*

- *The extensive industry network of the department might be used as a resource for the PhD program.*"

Response from the department:

A new full professor is recruited to the department starting June 1st, which will provide more strength and time for applying for more external funding.

The department is also announcing one senior lecturer and postdoc position during spring 21, both facilitating the above mentioned purpose.

The extensive industry network of the department has so far mostly been used for applied courses within the information systems bachelor education. The supervisors of the PhD candidates will be encouraged to use the industry network as a resource for joint research projects and data collection within the PhD program and for cooperation in designing and giving new PhD courses.

2. Design, implementation and outcomes

The peer-review panel summarised the evaluation of "Design, implementation and outcomes" like this: *"The general program syllabus states that the program will provide the student with in-depth knowledge of the subject, an in-depth training in research methodology and good insights into the problems that occur in research and its practical application.*

To ensure that the learning outcomes are addressed and achieved the program is designed so that each element contributes to fulfilling these. To make it explicit matrices have been created to highlight through which courses and activities each and every learning outcome is introduced and examined.

The individual study plan (ISP) is an important tool for making clear the structure of each individual student's plan, financing and progression. The plan is set up jointly by the student, the supervisors and department head. The ISP is to be approved by the head of the department and reviewed at least annually."

Response from the department:

The matrices of learning outcomes are actively used as tools also in the individual study plans of the PhD students.

8. Summary evaluation and recommendations

Building on the interdisciplinary perspective

The peer-review team wrote in their report:

"The six departments at Lund University School of Economics and Management offer an opportunity for interdisciplinary research and PhD supervision in the digitalisation field. This could also increase the capacity to submit high-quality applications for external funding."

Response from the department:

We will strive for more interdisciplinary cooperation in research and PhD supervision. As digitalisation is a cross-disciplinary field, there should be several possibilities of finding areas of cooperation within Lund University School of Economics and Management. There are for instance plans to develop a PhD course on the topic of sustainability together with the disciplines of business studies and business law.

From a broader perspective, the Department of Informatics needs to improve outreach to the other departments at LUSEM i.e., improve the communication about what we do. We do believe that this aspect is also facilitated by the ongoing recruitment and general growth of the department.

Widening the research focus

The peer-review team wrote in their report:

"The department could consider widening its research focus, which is now primarily in a niche area of eHealth. Here the department could build on the above mentioned interdisciplinary collaboration to expand also to more mainstream areas of the discipline. In addition, this should be considered when recruiting new faculty. In fact, widening the research focus of the department would likely attract a wider pool of applicants to new faculty as well as PhD student positions. The visiting professors and the new full time professor will in all likelihood be helpful in this."

Response from the department:

Previous evaluations (for instance the RQ20 evaluation in 2020) have described the research at the department as of good quality but fragmented, as a clear focus of the research is missing.

To assemble PhD students and senior researchers in a group focusing on e-Health is a way of the department management to create a clearer research focus. However, there are also competences among the researchers at the department in other areas, among them artificial intelligence, decision support systems, design science research, online learning, and sustainability – all respected, included and welcomed in the strategy.

By means of these competences, PhD candidates can also be offered other areas than e-Health. As the PRP also notes, the new full professor and the guest professors can also be helpful in this.

We believe that when the current strategy was formulated it was relevant. However, with the growth of the department we fully agree with the PRP about widening its focus. The new professor has since the PRP evaluation been introduced to the department and engaged in the work with widening the current research strategy and upcoming recruitments. The goal is to formulate a better elaborated and more including research strategy during spring 2021.

Increasing the size of the Department's PhD student body

The peer-review team wrote in their report:

"It would be beneficial for the Department's PhD program to have regular admission of 2-3 new students each year, which would eventually translate into a PhD student body of 10 - 15 students at all times (each student 5 years). Even though a lot of synergies particularly in coursework are gained from collaborating with the Swedish Research School of Management and IT (MIT), a local cohort of PhD students would strengthen the research culture, efforts and output of the PhD students, as well as the whole department. We do understand that this would require new sources of funding, but we also believe that addressing the above to recommendations would be helpful also in here."

Response and actions from the department:

We fully agree that it would be beneficial for the department's PhD program to grow with a regular intake of 2-3 students each year. This would create a critical mass of PhD students that would strengthen the research culture at the department. We also recognize the significance for the overall research culture of regular admissions which is another goal of the department.

With the upcoming senior positions recruitment, necessary for ensuring the number of PhD student supervisors, and successful applications for external funding the department will prioritize PhD student recruitment from early fall 2021.

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