



# LUND UNIVERSITY

School of Economics and Management

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## **LUSEM response to the evaluation of the PhD program in Business Law**

The PhD program in Business Law underwent an evaluation by an external peer-review panel during fall 2020. It was based on a program self-evaluation report and interviews with the program management as well as a few selected teachers/supervisors and doctoral students at an online site visit in November 2020. The results of the evaluation were presented in a report, and based on the suggestions made by the panel, the department has outlined measures to improve the quality of the program. Doctoral students were invited to nominate a member of the peer-review panel as well as to write a response to the self-evaluation report.

Overall, the peer-review panel was positive regarding the PhD program in Business Law and pointed to a number of strengths, including the relevance of the subject and theses topics, fine placement opportunities of PhD graduates, a stimulating and supportive research environment, and broad networks that benefit the PhD candidates/graduates in Business Law compared to peers elsewhere. The peer-review panel also pointed to the caring and supportive work environment as a strength of the program. The panel found that overall, the program is well-functioning and that the goals of the program were fulfilled.

The panel also identified some weaknesses and causes for concern and gave valuable suggestions on how to improve the program. Some of the difficulties are related to the small size of the Department of Business Law, and are general, whereas others are specific to the program at LUSEM. The panel believed that the Department of Business Law should position itself against the Faculty/Department of Law in Lund as well as to other departments at LUSEM to better define their unique features as well as their potential interdisciplinary contributions regarding the PhD program. Of particular importance, the panel suggested that the cooperation with the Faculty/Department of Law should be assessed and evaluated. Relatedly, the panel wanted to see a clarification regarding the two tracks that PhD candidates in Business Law may pursue to get either an LLD or a PhD at the end of the program. Finally, the evaluation report listed several aspects in which the program could be further developed, including internationalization, and the development of courses and collaborations with departments at other universities (in Sweden and the other Nordic countries).

In their response to the evaluation report, the department management addresses these points of concern, and offers solutions that warrant further developments of the program. They will initiate a discussion regarding the format for continued collaboration with the Faculty/Department of Law. They are also considering cooperating with departments at other Swedish and Nordic universities. In line with the panel's recommendation, the department management agree that it is important to clarify the distinction between an LLD and a PhD through transparent criteria. They also agree that some of the aspects in which the program could be further developed, are to be considered as the department revises its research strategy.

The LUSEM management agrees with the department's response to the peer-review panel. It is of utmost importance that the format for collaboration with the Faculty/Department of Law is assessed and, if needed, adjusted so that it can continue in an efficient manner, not least when it comes to the introduction to basic theory at the start of the program and quality control at the end of the program. It is also very important to clarify the distinction between an LLD and a PhD and set up transparent criteria for what the two tracks entail. These tasks should be prioritized and made explicit in a revised General Syllabus for Third-Cycle Studies in Business Law at LUSEM, effective within the year 2021. Further, cooperation with departments at other Swedish and Nordic universities is encouraged and to the extent that this could strengthen the program, it should be developed. Finally, the LUSEM management looks very favorably upon the way the department management considers other aspects in which the program could be further developed; considering the PhD program within the broader scope of revising the department's research strategy (as a response to the RQ20 evaluation) is a good way to handle challenges regarding the program facing a small size department that make up an important part of LUSEM.

On behalf of the LUSEM management team



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