

Panel evaluation summary including strengths, weaknesses and recommendations

The PhD education program at the Department of Mathematics at Uppsala University successfully trains independent researchers and intellectual leaders. It has been shown that the program graduates highly qualified PhDs and fulfills all formal requirements.

The key to the success of this PhD education program is that it is carefully planned, with transparent processes and procedures, in an environment that nourishes scientific discussions and interactions in an international arena.

Having graduated with a PhD in mathematics the student has transitioned into an independent researcher and intellectual leader. This has taken place in an environment characterized by a never-ending search for knowledge and new ideas. With that perspective, it is quite clear that the PhDs from the department of mathematics at Uppsala are very well equipped to face the challenges of their future working life.

Strengths

- The PhD seminars
- Quality of research, connection to other research groups
- Variety and level of courses
- Academic international standing of the supervisors.
- The top publications by PhD students since 2011 as listed show clearly that the PhD work being done is of very high quality.
- Recruitment process, the information meeting, collegial input
- Graduated PhDs seem to quickly get good jobs. 30% stay in academia.

Weakness

- Lack of clear communication and information channels regarding administrative issues.

Recommendations:

Ideas:

- Consider a forum that allows communication between PhD students and supervisors on a regular basis, discussing issues with the PhD education.
- If possible include administrative personnel in the introductory meeting.
- Consider collecting easily accessible administrative information for PhD students.
- Strongly encourage attending the "Introduction to PhD students" course given by TekNat.

Weakness

- Lack of systematic alumni activity

Recommendation:

Idea:

- Maintain a database with alumni information.

Other recommendations

Ideas:

- Make sure that all students are aware of who to talk to in case of problems.
- Consider speeding up the recruitment process, maybe work with committees. A slow process risks losing good candidates.
- Consider including PhD students in the decision-making processes, e.g. by including a PhD representative in the team responsible for the PhD students.
- Consider a stronger encouragement for students to work across research group boundaries, e.g. by encouraging students to go to other seminars.
- Development dialogues (utvecklingssamtal): Consider introducing – and encourage students to participate in – yearly development dialogues with PhD students that discuss their overall development and not just scientific progress. This can be done with the main supervisor, FUAP/FUS, HoD or even a mentor.
- Consider some "integration program" for foreign PhD students. Ideas: Give each non-Swedish speaking student a formal option of exchanging some teaching time in the first year or two for attending a Swedish course, with the deal being that thereafter they will be expected to be able to undertake teaching duties in Swedish. Make sure that meetings where PhD students attend are held in English (unless there is some way of checking that everyone attending understands Swedish).

Method

The evaluation process has two parts (i) A self-evaluation report from the department was made available to the panel 2020-02-14 and (ii) A virtual site visit that took place 2020-05-28/29.

Panel

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