

Rektor

LUSEM response to the evaluation of the PhD program in Statistics

The PhD program in Statistics underwent an evaluation by an external peer-review panel during 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.

Because the Department of Statistics had a temporary department management until end of March 2021, the LUSEM management team postponed its response to the evaluation of the PhD program in Statistics (as communicated February 16, 2021).

Overall, the peer-review panel was positive regarding the PhD program in Statistics and pointed out what works, not least engaged supervisors available for individual and group meetings. The panel found that overall, the goals of the program were fulfilled.

The panel also identified some weaknesses and gave recommendations on how to improve the program. Some of the challenges pertaining to the PhD program relate to the small size of the Department of Statistics, and are general, whereas others are specific to the program at LUSEM. The panel believed that the Department of Statistics should safeguard and further develop collaboration within LUSEM (for example with Dept of Economics), within LU (for example with Mathematical Statistics), but also nationally and internationally with other partners. The panel suggested that these collaborations should be formalized to the benefit of existing and prospective PhD students. The panel also emphasized that collaborations within the Swedish network for graduate and postgraduate education in Statistics (GRAPES) should be kept up because it strengthens the program in many respects. The department should also aim to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration by reaching out to other departments at LUSEM and within LU to have greater success in attracting external funding. The panel suggested that the PhD program should emphasize both theoretical and applied statistics. Finally, the panel recommended that the department broaden its research focus to include Data Science, which is in demand now.

In their response to the evaluation report, the department management addresses suggestions made by the panel, and explains how they will work strategically to develop the program. They state that they will make efforts to further develop collaboration within LUSEM and within LU (and mention examples such as joint seminars). They also explain how they plan to broaden the scope of both teaching and research, not only by strengthening its profile regarding computational methodologies of modern data science but also strengthening other aspects of statistics. This will be done through new hiring and more emphasis on attracting external funding through competitive processes.

The LUSEM management agrees with the main message put forward in the department's response, though it is brief, to the peer-review panel. It is important to stress that the department is in charge of strengthening both research and the PhD program. The LUSEM management looks favorably on the initiatives taken to rejuvenate faculty (and thus the research environment and supervisor pool) and increase the number of PhD students through external funding and new hiring. In this respect, it is important that existing as well as new collaborations are upheld and formalized and that the Lund engagement within the Swedish network for graduate and postgraduate education in Statistics (GRAPES) is secured and further developed because it is an important resource for PhD candidates at LUSEM, a way to attain a pool of peers (critical mass) and serves as a quality-enhancing benchmark. Relatedly, it is important to make sure that PhD candidates have adequate resources in terms of supervision and academic guidance, not only in terms of time and availability which seems to work well, but also in a range of research areas, which concerns the reviewer panel. The Department should make sure that (potential) PhD candidates get proper information (for example online) on what the PhD program in Lund offers in terms of research profile, competence, courses, and networks as these are updated through hiring and new research ventures and collaborations. Collaborations of relevance for PhD students should preferably be formalized within the year 2021. Finally, the LUSEM management looks favorably upon the initiatives to develop collaboration within LUSEM and within LU and to extend research in ways that address societal challenges. It would probably be good to consider work with the PhD program jointly with revising the department's research strategy (in line with suggestions from the RQ20 evaluation). This, and considering the PhD program as part of the department's research activities is a good way to handle challenges regarding the program at a small size department that is an important part of LUSEM.

On behalf of the LUSEM management team,



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Vice Dean/Chair of the Doctoral Program Committee
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Mats Benner

Dean