

# SDF Management Report 2018

The board of the SULF Association of Doctoral Candidates (SDF) presents the following management report for financial year 2018 (through 10 November 2018).

During the year, the board has consisted of:

Megan Case	Chair	Dalarna University
Per Boström	Vice Chair	Umeå University
Somayeh Aghanavesi	Secretary	Dalarna University
Benny Borghei	Member	Linköping University
Eduardo Rosa (left the board 2018-08-29)	Member	University of Gävle
Jacob Sommer	Member	Stockholm University
Magne Torbjörnsson	Member	Lund University
Parisa Aasi	Member	Stockholm University
Jennie Reuben (left the board 2018-01-25)	Member	Karlstad University
Vijay Pratap Paidi	Alternate	Dalarna University
Asreen Rostami	Alternate	Stockholm University
Sharmin Ahmed	Alternate	Umeå University

Other participants in the board's activities have been:

Anna Ilar	Auditor
Jeanette Melin	Nominations Committee
Constanze Ackermann-Boström	Nominations Committee

## Introduction

SULF's operational focus for 2016-2018 has had three priority areas:

- Employment conditions and career paths
- Teaching
- Professional influence

Of these three areas, the SDF Board has chosen to focus on employment conditions and career paths in 2018, with a particular focus on the theme of "increased stability for doctoral candidates". The board has worked with issues such as physical and mental health during the PhD process, supervisory issues, and foreign doctoral candidates' challenges in dealing with Swedish public agencies.

This management report presents SDF's four operational areas and concludes with a financial overview, as follows:

1. Board work
2. Membership activities
3. Recruitment
4. Advocacy and opinion-building
5. Financial overview

# 1. Board Work

This year's board consisted of three returning members who will not be eligible to continue on the board in 2019 and nine new members. For this reason, we have put a special emphasis on board training and held more board meetings than usual.

## Board Meetings and Retreats

SDF has had nine board meetings, two of which were in conjunction with board retreats, since the last AGM. Below is a short description of the meetings.

1 December 2017: The first board meeting was held in Stockholm. Eleven of the 12 board members were present. The board focused on getting to know one another and planning the work for the year ahead. The convener of the nominations committee, Jeanette Melin, participated in the meeting via Skype.

26 January 2018: The second meeting was held online via Adobe Connect. Eleven of the 12 board members were present. The working group structure was discussed and decided upon. Planning began for the upcoming retreat in Umeå and the Contact Day.

4-5 March 2018: A retreat and board meeting were held in Umeå. Eight of 11 board members were present. SDF's auditor Anna Ilar participated in the retreat and gave an educational presentation on SDF's place in the union landscape and on the steering documents. The theme for the Contact Day was decided and the Contact Day was planned in greater detail.

13 April 2018: The fourth board meeting was held online via Adobe Connect. Seven of eleven board members were present. The focus was on preparations for Contact Day. Dates for the AGM were discussed, preliminarily 24 November (in connection with the SULF Congress).

4 May 2018: The fifth board meeting was held in Stockholm following the Contact Day. Seven of 11 board members were present. Robert Andersson participated in brainstorming regarding the planned survey on PhD candidates' health and interactions with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency. The convener of the nominations committee, Jeanette Melin, presented the committee's work in progress.

27 August 2018: The sixth board meeting was held online via Adobe Connect. Ten of ten board members participated. The working groups regrouped after the summer break. Plans for the AGM and the October retreat were discussed.

12 September 2018: The seventh board meeting was held online via Adobe Connect. Nine of 10 board members participated. Plans for the AGM were discussed and it was decided that the autumn retreat would be held in Linköping on 17-18 October. The working groups presented their work and future plans.

18 October 2018: A retreat and board meeting were held in Linköping. Seven of 10 board members participated. Work was done on the survey regarding sick leave and the Swedish Social Insurance Agency as well as the starter kit. The AGM was planned in detail. SULF ombudsman Åsa Rybo Landelius gave an educational presentation.

24 November 2018: The ninth and last board meeting will be held in Stockholm immediately before the AGM.

## Videos

The meeting with local PhD candidates in Umeå March 2018 was video recorded. The videos has been edited by Parisa and will be made available to the membership online.

## Language Issues

The issue of which languages are used at Swedish universities was raised and discussed at the Contact Day (see Membership Activities below). SDF has encouraged SULF to produce informational and educational material in English in situations in which only Swedish versions are currently available. SDF has made all of its communications in English this year.

## Citizenship, residence permits and population register

According to its 2018 Plan of Operations, the board was charged with continuing the work of improving foreign doctoral candidates' opportunities to gain citizenship, residence permits and registration. During the year, the working group for migration, headed by Benny, has continued to work with this question.

The 2018 Contact Day (see Membership Activities below) brought together representatives from a number of different organizations to discuss the challenges and opportunities that internationalization presents to researchers based in Sweden.

Before the AGM, and as part of the handover to the 2019 board, the working group is preparing a report with priority areas. This includes the planning of a dialogue meeting with other interested parties on this issue, such other union groups, student organizations, and government agencies.

## Social Media

The social media strategy approved at the 2017 AGM has functioned as a point of departure during the year, particularly with regard to the Facebook page. We have also explored the possibilities for Linked In and other social media platforms. A social media working group has been created. Responsibility for finding content and updating the page has been shared among all board members.

Most of SDF's activities during the year have been publicized on SDF's Facebook page. The Facebook page has worked particularly well for spreading information about changes and for recruitment. Between 1 December 2017 and 1 October 2018 the number of "likes" the page has increased from 1302 to 1345. All posts were written in English. 43% of the page followers are women. 59% of the members are between 25 and 34 years old.

## Sick Leave and Prolongation

The issue of PhD candidates' sick leave and prolongation of contracts has continued to be an important question worthy of further research and mapping. During this year the working group for work environment issues, headed by Per, has drafted a survey regarding PhD candidates' experiences and interactions with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). Before the AGM the survey is to be piloted in order to get suggestions for improvement. Asreen interviewed 15 of PhD candidates from four different universities regarding their experiences with sick leave to collect data as preparatory work for the survey.

## Handover to the 2019 Board

The board plans to do a short evaluation of its 2018 activities in connection with the final board meeting, to see what can be improved. Based on her experience, Megan updated the internal documents that are to be turned over to the next chair. Those from the 2018 board who would like to and have time will be invited to a meeting with the 2019 board, tentatively scheduled for December 2018.

## 2. Membership Activities

### Contact Day

On 3 May, a national contact day for PhD candidates interested in union work was organized, planned by Megan and Per. In addition to the eight SDF board members who took part, participants included Jeanette Melin from the nominations committee (via Skype), and 30 doctoral candidates from Lulea Technical University, Uppsala University, Linnaeus University, University of Borås, Linköping University, University of Karlstad, Karolinska Institute, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Stockholm University, Royal Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Umeå University, University of Halmstad, and Lund University.

The theme this year was “Internationalization: challenges and opportunities”, divided into three areas of focus: language aspects, international opportunities for Sweden-based researchers, and internationalization and Swedish government agencies. The presentations were:

- The Swedish Government’s Internationalization Investigation, Maria Wilenius, Head Secretary of the Internationalization Investigation.
- Multilingualism in the internationalized university, Jennie Spetz, Institute for Language and Folklore, and Linus Salö, Royal Institute of Technology
- Internationalization and the role of Swedish government agencies, Robert Andersson, SULF
- International opportunities with the Swedish Institute, Johanna Jeppson, Swedish Institute

The day concluded with a social hour and informal discussion. The participants later received an e-mailed summary of the day and a survey. The survey results were positive overall, though some participants commented that they would have liked to have heard more about international opportunities for Swedish researchers.

### Newsletter to members

In 2018, newsletters were sent out by the board chair in March, August, and October to all SDF members with registered e-mail addresses. The newsletters were written in English and included current information from SDF and reminders of upcoming activities, such as the Contact Day and the Annual General Meeting.

### SULF Day

This year’s SULF Day took place on 4 October. SDF’s board members took part in local activities at their home universities.

### Annual General Meeting

The SDF AGM will be held on 24 November. In addition to SDF officials, representatives of the Nominations Committee, the Board Auditor, members of the SFS-DK board, and board members and staff from SULF have been invited. Between the board meeting and the AGM, Per will give a presentation on IT stress developed by SULF ombudsperson Karin Thorasdotter.

## Facebook

All of our membership activities have been advertised on our Facebook page. The page has also been frequently updated with news and links. The Facebook page is the primary channel of contact between SDF and its members.

## 3. Recruitment

### Local recruitment

At SDF's board retreat in Umeå (4-5 March), a lunch meeting was organized. Approximately 40 PhD candidates attended. The board presented itself and its work, as well as SULF's benefits for PhD candidates. Per Lundgren and Charlott Nyman from SULF in Umeå gave a presentation about local union activities. Jenny Sullivan Hellgren offered perspective and inspiration for PhD candidates. The lunch led to a number of new SULF membership applications.

Parisa presented the work of SDF to PhD candidates in pharmacy at Uppsala University on 8 March. This visit led to a number of new registrations for Contact Day.

Per presented the work of SDF and promoted the Contact Day in a meeting to which all doctoral candidates at Umeå University were invited on 25 April.

Megan visited the University of Gävle on 24 April and presented the work of SDF. The participants were particularly interested in discussing salary ladders for PhD candidates at different universities, since they were in the process of negotiating theirs. This meeting led to several new SULF membership applications.

Per presented the work of SDF to 25 new PhD candidates at the faculty of arts at Umeå University on 3. September. There were a lot of questions about double membership as many of the participants were already members of Lärarförbundet.

Parisa presented the work of SDF to 7 new PhD candidates at the department of computer and system science at Stockholm University on 3 September. This led to at least five new SULF members.

Somayeh presented SDF to 20 PhD candidates from all departments at Dalarna University on 11 September.

Sharmin presented SDF to 15 PhD candidates in the department of computer science at Umeå University on 20 September.

Somayeh organized a meeting of new PhD candidates in Microdata Analysis to present SULF/SDF in the first week of October.

At SDF's board retreat in Linköping (17-18 October), a fika with local PhD candidates was organized. The board presented itself and its work, as well as SULF's benefits for PhD candidates. SULF ombudsman Åsa Rybo Landelius took part in the discussion as well. All the participants were already members of SULF.

## Informational Material

The working group developing the Starter Kit with useful information for newly registered PhD candidates, headed by Jacob, has continued to develop the kit. Ombudsman Åsa Rybo Landelius has contributed text and suggestions for improvement. The next step is to present and discuss the kit at the AGM to get additional feedback.

## The Nominations Committee

This year's Nominations Committee has consisted of Jeanette Melin (RISE; Research Institutes of Sweden) and Constanze Ackermann-Boström (Uppsala University). Jeanette, the convener, was present via Skype during the Contact Day and several board meetings during the year.

The nominations committee has compiled a suggested list of candidates for the 2019 SDF board, which will be sent to the representatives before the AGM.

## 4. Advocacy and Opinion Building

Since the last AGM, SDF has been represented at several events organized by unions, government agencies, and other organizations concerned with higher education and research in Sweden.

- Sharmin is a member of the board of the Swedish National Union of Students PhD Candidate Committee (SFS-DK) and has kept SDF and SFS-DK in contact during the year. Collaboration with SFS-DK has been difficult because their board has been without a chair for long periods during the year. Sharmin has invited all interested board members to attend SDF's AGM.
- Megan attended the Saco Congress on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of November 2017 as a guest/observer. <https://www.saco.se/saco-kongress-2017/>
- Megan participated in a workshop organized by SUHF and UKÄ called "How many PhDs does Sweden need?" on 30 November 2017. <http://www.uka.se/om-oss/konferenser--seminarier/konferenser--seminarier/2017-10-05-hur-manga-forskarutbildade-behoversverige.html>
- Megan participated in a dialogue meeting on a national quality assurance system for research organized by UKÄ and the Swedish Research Council on 29 January. <https://www.uka.se/om-oss/konferenser--seminarier/konferenser--seminarier/2017-11-07-dialogmote-kvalitets-sakrings-systemet.html>
- Magne participated in the Academics' Higher Education Policy forum organized by Saco on 18 April. <https://www.saco.se/akademikernas-hogskolepolitiska-forum/>

## Saco Student Council

During the year, SDF has participated in a number of Saco Student Council activities. Since the other 22 trade union student sections focus on education at the undergraduate and second level, it has been important for SDF to participate in the Saco Student Council activities and to be the voice of the doctoral candidates. The relationship between SDF and Saco Student Council has grown stronger during the year and there is a great deal of potential for future collaboration.

### **Saco Student Council's Membership Council**

Three membership councils have been held in 2018. The purpose of the councils is to be a channel of information as well as a forum for the development of skills in union work. Per participated in the first membership council on 17 March. Megan and Magne participated in the second and third councils on 2 June and 22 September.

### **Saco Student Council's Leadership Council**

Three leadership councils were held in 2018. The leadership councils are for the chairs and vice chairs of Saco's student sections. Per participated on 18 March and Megan participated on 3 June. Neither was able to attend the third leadership council on 23 September.

### **Saco Student Council's Annual Congress**

Megan, Asreen and Somayeh participated in Saco Student Council's annual congress on 9-10 December 2017. Magne, Sharmin, and Asreen plan to attend the congress on 1-2 December 2018.

## **SULF**

### **Local collaboration**

During the year, SDF has had meetings with representatives from two local SULF/Saco boards, in Umea and Linköping, during the SDF board retreats. The meetings have offered a picture of which problems PhD candidates are experiencing at the local level and SDF has been able to offer inspiration and suggestions for solutions.

### **Central collaboration**

During the year, SDF has had a number of discussions with SULF staff, particularly Chief Negotiator Robert Andersson, who presented at the Contact Day and assisted with the development of the survey on PhD candidates' experiences and interactions with the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). SULF staff were also involved in the planning and administration of a number of board activities, particularly the Contact Day.

### **SULF Congress**

Megan and Per attended the SULF Congress on 22 and 23 November and Benny and Sharmin attended on the 23 November.

## 5. Financial Overview

SDF requested a budget of 250,500 kronor and received 70% of its request, 176,000 kronor. As of 10 November, we have remained within budget, but this does not include the costs of the final board meeting, the AGM or the handover to the 2019 board.

Target Area	Activity	Requested	Received	Used (through 10 Nov)
<b>Member Activities</b>	Newsletters	0	0	0
	Contact Day	60 500	42 350	52 280
	AGM	15 000	10 500	?
	SULF Day	2 000	1 400	0
	Facebook	500	350	0
	<b>Total: 78 000</b>		<b>Total: 54 600</b>	<b>Total: 52 280</b>
<b>Recruitment</b>	Local recruitment	6 000	4 200	13 907
	SULF activities for PhD candidates	2 000	1 400	0
	Member benefits	0	0	0
	Information material	3 000	2 100	0
	Nominations committee	7 500	5 250	0
	Facebook	1 000	700	0
	<b>Total: 19 500</b>		<b>Total: 12 987</b>	<b>Total: 13 907</b>
<b>Board Work</b>	Handover	5 000	3 500	3 330
	Board Meetings	130 000	91 000	88 344
	Board Training	5 000	3 500	3 748
	Facebook	0	0	0
	<b>Total: 140 000</b>		<b>Total: 98 000</b>	<b>Total: 95 422</b>
<b>Advocacy and Opinion Building</b>	Publications	0	0	0
	Saco Student Council	10 000	7 000	11 000
	SFS-DK	2 000	1 400	0
	Online visibility	0	0	0
	Facebook	1 000	7 000	0
<b>Total: 13 000</b>		<b>Total: 9 100</b>	<b>Total: 11 000</b>	
		<b>Total: 250 500</b>	<b>Total: 176 000</b>	<b>Total: 172 609</b>

## Conclusion

The departing Board would hereby like to thank the membership for their confidence during their period of service.