



PhD Student Handbook

For PhD students at the Faculty of Forest Sciences, SLU

S-fak PhD Student Council, September 2022

Based on

“VH-faculty PhD student handbook” (updated Mar 2017),

“NJ-faculty PhD student handbook” (updated Apr 2019), and

“Arranging your PhD and Defense” (Dept. of Wildlife, Fish, and Environmental Studies, updated May 2018)

“Guidelines for PhD student-supervisor discussions at the beginning of PhD Education at SLU” (Dept. of Forest Ecology and Management)

Contents

Welcome	4
The PhD Student Council of the Faculty of Forest Sciences	4
Getting Started	5
Moving to Sweden	5
Residence permit	7
After you arrived in Sweden	8
Personal number	8
Bank Account	9
BankID and Swish	10
Driver's license	10
Car import	10
Administration	11
Apply to become PhD student	11
Mailing lists	12
Director of postgraduate studies at the department	12
Office equipment	13
Internal online systems	13
PhD Student Rights	13
Salaries	14
Vacation and Working Hours	14
Teaching	14
Ombudsman/Counsellor	14
Student Union	15
Labour Union and A-kassa	15
Tax return	15
Transportation	16
Additional Information	16
Mental health	16
Health insurance	17
Sick leave	17
Parental leave and child supervision	18
Statistical consultation	18
Progress check-ups yearly and half-time check points.	18

Postgraduate Courses	19
SLU requirements	19
SILVA Research School	20
SLU and NOVA courses	20
Registration of credits	21
General advice	21
Congresses and conferences	21
Approaching the end	22
Registration of published articles	22
Arranging your defence	22
Writing your Thesis	23
Printing and “Nailing”	24
Last arrangements for your defence	24
Language	25
Culture – The Swedes	25
Appendix: Guidelines for PhD student – supervisor discussions	27

Rules, policies, and webpages are in a constant state of change at SLU. We do our best to keep this handbook updated, but there may be some information (such as names of certain people and links to websites) may change between successive updates. This handbook is not a binding document of SLU and serves primarily for your assistance in navigating PhD student life at SLU. Please let us know if you find updated rules, regulations, names, and working links that we should update in the next edition of the handbook.

Welcome

Particularly for those of you coming from outside of Sweden, it is important to understand that SLU's structures, processes, and procedures might differ in key regards to other universities you have attended. This handbook is intended to give you an overview of what is likely to happen, what you need to know, and who can help you during your time as a PhD student at the Forest Faculty. We give useful tips to Swedish and non-Swedish PhD students; however Swedish PhD students can easily skip the first two sections and start reading at page 10. Have a look at page 5 if you need housing.

You are welcome to suggest changes that you think may be of value for other PhD students. Please send your suggestions or comments to shs_doktorandradet@slu.se.

The PhD Student Council of the Faculty of Forest Sciences

This handbook is organized and presented by the PhD Student Council of the Faculty of Forest Sciences (fakulteten för skogsvetenskap or S-fak for short). The S-fak PhD Student Council is connected to the SHS Student Union for undergraduates (skogshögskolans studentkår) and handles issues concerning research and post-graduate studies at the Faculty of Forest Sciences. The Council's purpose is to support PhD students in the Forest Faculty at the Swedish University of Agricultural Science. Each department is encouraged to send at least one representative, preferably more, to be on the council. The PhD Student Council has representatives on various boards and committees in the University administration and is the main way by which PhD students can influence PhD studies at the faculty level.

Besides working for the rights and working conditions of PhD students, the Council often arranges social events and workshops that have included topics ranging from poster-making and Photoshop to how to make better research presentations. The PhD Student Council is also a great place to get information about what is going on and how things work at the University. We send out a newsletter with current information once every trimester.

Get in touch with someone from the [PhD Student Council](#) or e-mail the following address for more information: shs_doktorandradet@slu.se – we are happy to talk with you or let you drop into one of our meetings to see what we do. Moreover, there is a public shared folder which you can access to read the minutes from SHS PhD council meetings, that you can access [here](#). You can access all the information on the council by following [this link](#).

1) Getting Started

Moving to Sweden

Most students at the Faculty of Forest Sciences are located in Umeå; however, significant numbers of us are also based in Alnarp, Uppsala (Campus Ultuna), Grimsö and Skinnskatteberg.

While it is not the University's responsibility to find housing for you, it is advisable to contact your department explicitly about a place to live. In the past, some departments have been able to help students (particularly those coming from non-EU countries) with housing, **but there is no guarantee your department will be able to help you find an accommodation**. Check out [SLU's webpage](#) for some useful tips and a list of all renting companies by location! If you have a personal connection in the city where you are moving to or the surrounding area, it is worth contacting them to see if they or someone they know has a property or a room they can rent to you in the short or long term.

In general, the major apartment rental companies have a rigid queue system to determine who can rent an apartment. When you are registered in a housing queue of a private company, you will collect so called 'queue days'. The more you have, the higher your chance in obtaining a room/apartment when you apply for it. The accommodation will always be granted to the person who has waited longest in the queue. Depending on the apartment you apply for, it is often the case that one needs to be in a housing queue for many years to get a non-student, one or two-person apartment for rent. That being said, people with more time in the housing queue can and do succeed in getting apartments with the major rental companies. Student apartments (normally consisting of one room and a bathroom with a shared kitchen and common facilities) generally take less time to become available for those in the queue.

It is extremely important that you register in these housing queues immediately and check the homepages for available rental apartments on a regular basis. There are often a lot of people applying for one room/apartment, so you will have to be patient and not give up if your first attempts are unsuccessful. Please note that each of these companies/organizations have different requirements to keep your registration active. Some need a small fee in advance and almost all need you to renew your queue days on a regular basis (i.e., once a year by logging in, applying for a room or sending an email to the secretary of the housing provider). If you fail to do so, you will lose all of your queuing points.

Here is a short list of apartment rental companies in Sweden

- [Rikshem](#) (Swedish personal number needed)
- [Heimstaden](#) (Swedish personal number needed)

Umeå:

- [Bostaden](#)
- [Lerstenen](#) (in Swedish)
- [Balticgruppen](#) (Swedish personal number needed, ask your HR responsible to get a temporary one!)

Uppsala:

- [Uppsala Bostadsförmedling](#) (Swedish personal number needed, yearly fee of 290 SEK)
- [Studentboet](#) (both private companies with queues and second hand)
- The [VH PhD student handbook](#) and the [NJ PhD student handbook](#) also provide some useful information about searching for housing in Uppsala.

Alnarp:

- SLU – Alnarp housing [website](#) E-mail: housing@slu.se
- Alnarp student union provides a good [website](#) with useful information (in Swedish)
- Note that many PhD students studying in Alnarp live in Malmö, Lund or other cities closed by. Have a look at the biggest [housing queue](#) that covers southern Sweden, Skåne (in Swedish, yearly fee of 300 SEK).
- At [Akelius](#), and [LM bygg](#) you are not dependent on queuing days.

The second hand market for rental housing may be a good place to check as well. The website [blocket.se](#) is the main place where people post all over Sweden ads of properties or rooms they want to rent out. You can also set up your own ad as someone searching for an apartment. Of course, be careful to protect yourself from scams. For an example of some of the basic things to watch out for when renting a property on the secondhand market, click on this [link](#).

Searching for housing on the secondhand market via blocket.se is an experience that can be vastly different for different people at different times. It is common that those posting an apartment or room to sublet get upwards of 50 responses or more to their ads within the same day they post the ad. Other times, few people respond to an advertisement for several days. It is important to be persistent checking new postings daily, or even multiple times per day, and apply to multiple ads if you are searching on the secondhand market. The length of the secondhand contract offered can vary from a few months to a year or two. Some students and post-Docs have had relatively quick success by posting an advertisement as a person seeking an apartment.

Residence permit

Citizens of an EU country will follow a different process than non-EU citizens for entering Sweden, obtaining a residence status, and acquiring a personal number. First, the **process for non-EU citizens** will be described. Before you arrive in Sweden, you should make arrangements for your residence permit. If you are not a resident in a European country, the first thing that needs to be taken care of is your visa or residence permit. This process requires a passport, which is also required for entry into Sweden. Since the process of issuing the permit can be long and time consuming, you are strongly advised to begin this as soon as possible. You need to have an acceptance letter (that includes the time of your employment as a PhD student and date of admission), fill out the application online or in paper form, and then the Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket) will process the application. If you need an entry visa to travel to Sweden (see list [here](#)) you will need to visit a Swedish embassy or consulate general to be photographed and fingerprinted as soon as you have been granted a visa ([more information here](#)). If you do not need an entry visa, your student residence permit must still be granted before you travel to Sweden and you must be able to show the decision on your residence permit from the Swedish Migration Agency when you enter the country.

One important condition, that changed with the revision of the Alien Act in 2021, is that you must be able to support yourself (i.e. the living expense requirement is of at least 8694 SEK per month as of 2022); this means that you have to show that you have money available through salary, stipends or bank assets (more info via [this link](#)) and that you are able to pay for your food and accommodation. Additionally, you must have a comprehensive health insurance policy. This condition holds even if you need to renew your permit.

You hand in the documentation for a physical residence permit card to the Swedish Migration Agency once you have arrived in Sweden. To clarify: a student residence permit must be granted to non-EU citizens before you travel to Sweden, and the actual card verifying your residence permit must be also issued by the Swedish Migration Office before arriving to Sweden. Detailed instructions for the entire process can be found [here](#).

You may have to wait in line for some time at the Migration Office for your residence card to be issued. **You can get a residence permit for up to four years at a time.** After that time, you will have to renew your residence permit (see the procedure [here](#)).

If you are not entering Sweden on a student residence permit due to immediate family in Sweden or marriage/domestic partnership with a Swedish or Nordic citizen living in Sweden, the [Migrationsverket website](#) will instruct you how to proceed.

European citizens need an official ID card to enter Sweden. But note that you will also need your passport for other things, such as applying for a Swedish ID card. Students who are residents of an EU country will have to register their 'Right of residence' once they have entered Sweden within the first three months of their stay. It is highly recommended to do

this online at the [homepage of Skatteverket](#). **Citizens of the Nordic countries** do not need a residence permit but do need to register at the Tax Office ([Skatteverket](#)).

2) After you arrived in Sweden

Here is a checklist of important things you should arrange as soon as you enter Sweden. More information about these are given below.

- Swedish personal number
- Swedish ID card
- Swedish bank account
- Bank ID
- Swish
- European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)

Personal number

The Swedish personal number (*personnummer*) is the key to accessing most services from the state, setting up a bank account, and even creating customer accounts with private companies. Accordingly, **getting your Swedish personal number (*personnummer* in Swedish) is a top priority**. The Swedish *personnummer* consists of 10 digits with 6 of them corresponding to your birthday and usually a hyphen followed by a four-digit number. The number will make you part of the Swedish civil system which will link your personal information (birthday, address etc.) with authorities in healthcare, universities and the social insurance system.

Only people who will stay in Sweden **longer than one year** are entitled to a Swedish personal number. In order to get one assigned, you must visit the Swedish Tax Office (*Skatteverket*), fill out a form they provide, and bring the following documents:

- Your passport with residence permits (only for non EU-EEA citizens) for identification;
- Your rental contract with your current address in Sweden (even if you are staying in a temporary housing arrangement); and,
- Your letter of acceptance which contains a statement on your funding, your insurance status as well as how long you will be in Sweden. In addition, you can also bring a written contract with SLU if already available.

Confirm the tax office opening hours before you plan your trip. An employee of Skatteverket will likely greet you when you walk in and ask you what task you are there to complete. Be prepared to wait in line by taking a slip of paper with a number on it indicating your place in line. The Swedes often have a numbered queue system at public buildings and even some retail stores, so check if you need to take a number before sitting down to wait. There will be multiple electronic displays over various desks showing what number in the queue a particular desk is serving. Like Migrationsverket, Skatteverket can help you in English. While you are there, ask about applying for a **Swedish ID card** for reasons explained in the next section. See the Skatteverket [website](#) for more information.

After you have submitted all your papers it can take some time until you receive your number. Outside of August/September when the school year starts, a wait of more than a couple of weeks is often due to clerical error. If you have not received your letter in the mail with your personal number after two weeks or so, it is a good idea to contact the tax office to check if everything is in order with your application. If you move during your stay in Sweden, you will have to contact Skatteverket within a week of your move and let them know your new address. You can update your address with Skatteverket online.

As soon as you receive your personal number, you *should be* covered by the Swedish health insurance (*Försäkringskassa*). For more information, please see [here](#). However, it can happen that your information is not directly transmitted from Skatteverket to Försäkringskassan. We recommend checking with your local insurance office or give them a call-in order to make sure that you are insured properly! In case you have not been automatically insured in Sweden (and want to be insured there), you will have to send information to the Försäkringskassa via the so-called [5456 form](#). You can either send the form by post or use the online service, and you will get an answer from them after a few weeks.

Bank Account

After you have obtained your *personal number*, you can get a Swedish bank account. This will facilitate the transfer of your salary from SLU (if you choose to use your foreign bank account, you will have to complete a form, and the transfer of your salaries might take several months) While different banks have different policies, **you will probably need a Swedish ID card to open a bank account**. Identity cards from another EU member state will not be accepted as a substitute. There are several banks you can choose from, such as: Nordea, Handelsbanken, SEB, and Swedbank, among others. Particularly if you are coming from outside Sweden, ask your non-Swedish colleagues which bank they use and how easy it was to create an account as a newly arrived foreigner.

If you decide to open a bank account in Sweden but are still waiting for your Swedish ID card, you will still receive your salary from SLU, in the form of a paycheck that you can submit to the bank as soon as you open a bank account with them.

Sweden is not a cashless society, but it is well on its way to becoming one. Accordingly, having an credit or debit card connected to your bank account is highly recommended. Ask the bank that you are considering if they can issue you a card that can make purchases on the internet (that will require a card reader or an electronic “bankID”). This also allows you to pay bills electronically. Some bank officers follow a strict 1 year-customer policy, which means that you first need to have an account with them for a year until your card will be extended for further use online. If not, it is a good idea to see if there is another bank that will. Additionally, creating an account that allows you to do online banking is recommended. There is often a small fee, but online banking is more than worth that sum.

Be advised that most banks have restricted hours for in-person customer service, often between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., so check the bank's opening hours before you visit.

BankID and Swish

A lot of operations are done with smartphones in Sweden: for example, when you want to connect to your bank's online portal, to Skatteverket or Försäkringskassan (but also to other websites such as housing company websites), you can use what is called "[BankID](#)", which is an e-identification app you can download on your phone. Identification is made easier with this app, as it links your personal number to various sites. You can also sign contracts or your tax declaration online. Please note that BankID only works with smartphones with an NFC.

Once you get a Swedish bank account and a BankID, you can also get [Swish](#), which is a secure and fast method of payment. The Swish account is linked to your bank account, so you can easily send money, for example to private persons. Now even more and more shops are also accepting payments made with Swish. Be aware that entrance fees to some events, for example concerts, can only be paid by Swish. You can get Swish even if you have a foreign telephone number.

Driver's license

If you have a driver's license from a non-EEA country, then you will only be able to drive using that license for one year after you have been issued your residence card. After that point you will need to take the test for a Swedish driver's license. Also, you can apply for exemption to drive with your foreign driving license for more than one year if you will be temporarily staying in Sweden for studies or for work. For more information [see here](#).

This does not apply to people who received their driver's license in EEA countries. Those can drive as usual as in their home country. If you are from an EU country, it is advisable to ensure that you switch from a paper to the modern plastic card license. It could otherwise be problematic when renting cars, as many rental companies do not accept the older paper license.

Most people find the Swedish driver's license exam to be quite difficult and it normally requires taking a preparatory course and multiple preparatory driving lessons. This is an expensive process and can be rather lengthy.

However, it is easy to get around in most University cities on foot, by bike, or by bus if you live in or close to the city.

Car import

In case you want to bring your car to Sweden (from an [EU-country](#)) and change its registration to a Swedish license plate, you will have to contact [Transportstyrelsen](#) (the Swedish Transport Agency). For this process you will also need a personal number! You will have to prove that you acquired your car in a legal way and that it is registered in your

home country. For this you will have to fill in an application and send it together with the following documents:

- a copy of the purchase document or a receipt
- the **original** registration certificate

Further, you will have to pay a fee (currently 1100 SEK) in advance. When your application is approved, the decision will be sent to you and you can make an appointment for a car inspection. If your car passes, it will be registered in the Swedish Road Traffic Registry and a registration certificate and registered plates will be sent to you via post.

In case you are importing a car from a [Non-EU country](#), you will have to first clear your car through customs. With a copy of proof of customs clearance, the application process is the same.

3) Administration

Apply to become PhD student

After you have formally been accepted a PhD position, there are several steps to be completed before you can officially start. Note that it takes several weeks or months for the entire admission process to be completed, as you first need to be **admitted** as a PhD student and depending on financial support, PhD students need to go through the process to gain **employment** as a PhD Student. Note also that PhD students are often employed as something else in the beginning (e.g., research assistant) before being accepted as a PhD student. Admission occurs in several stages. Here's how:

- **Evaluation of Documents**

The department or individual hiring you should collect and send the following documents to the Division of Education Affairs in Uppsala to be verified. Some of these documents will be included in your application, so hopefully you will have them available still. Check with your advisor or department to be sure all the following documents are sent:

- [Certified copies](#) of master diploma, master transcript, bachelor diploma and bachelor transcript
- Proof that the candidate meets the requirement of English 6
- [Application form](#), signed by the applicant
- Information about contact person and department (usually included in the application form)
- SLU ID-number (usually included in the application form)
- Copy of passport

Ensure that you meet **all** the requirements, including language, and that all of the certificates are certified. If the documents are not in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English, French or German, get them translated. It is always nice to send a cover

letter listing the documents included. Also, read the information in the link below to get forms and specific mailing addresses. This step (granted that all of the documents are in order) can take up to ten days.

The documents will be returned, along with the report, to your supervisor.

- **Admission process**

Now your supervisor needs to send these documents, along with an application form and a copy of your preliminary Individual Study Plan (ISP), first to the Head of Department for a signature. The department administration sends a “recommendation on admission” to the Faculty Board for you to be admitted into the PhD program. This should include copies of the official application from the top candidate (same documents sent for evaluation and the preliminary ISP). The preliminary ISP requires some thinking, but you shouldn’t place too much emphasis on getting it perfect, as the final ISP needs to be submitted after 3 months. Most important now, is to get your admission process running.

- **Employment process**

The decision and documents need to be sent to Division of Human Resources, as part of a proposal for employment. This would lead to your employment as a PhD student at SLU. You will receive a letter from the faculty at your home address.

You will find more specific admission information on this [website](#).

As soon as you are accepted as PhD student it is recommended to have a detailed discussion with your supervisor. We attached in the appendix a document which can be used as guidelines for a PhD student - supervisor discussion (p. 23).

Mailing lists

After admission into the PhD education programme, you should be added to the faculty’s PhD student mailing list (doktorand-sfak@slu.se). Very useful emails about courses, stipends and other general information for PhD students are sent to this mailing list. If you are not added to this list, you can contact the person responsible for PhD students at your department to ensure that you get added or contact the PhD administrator at S-fak (at the time of writing this document, charlotta.bergstrom@slu.se).

Additionally, make sure that you are included in the email list from your department, or even the one from your division. Some departments have their own PhD student mailing lists in which you should be included as well.

Director of postgraduate studies at the department

Within the first weeks of employment, you should meet with the Director of Postgraduate Studies at your department as part of your orientation. If this does not occur, it would be useful to find out who this person is and to arrange a meeting. Usually, any questions

regarding PhD studies or issues can be directed to this designated person. As a general rule concerning who to contact with questions or problematic issues at the university, follow this ascending list of contacts in the following order: first seek out your advisor, then the director of graduate studies at your department, then the head of the department, then the director of graduate studies at the faculty. The Director of Studies at the Faculty (at the time of writing this document: Göran Spong in Umeå, Petra Fransson in Ultuna and Annika Felton in Alnarp) could be contacted in case there are questions or issues that cannot be resolved by someone at the department level.

Office equipment

Office space is covered by the project that you are employed to work with. How prepared your office space is depends on your department and supervisor. At the bare minimum, there is usually a desk and chair. However, you might most likely need to order your computer on the first day of employment from the IT department. This process is normally very fast, then you would need to indicate which programs you would like installed and make sure that you have administrator status that will allow you to install other useful programs in the future.

Your supervisor will introduce you to the administrators at your department who will assist you in getting keys, a letter to take to the IT department for email access with login details and information on where to uplift your SLU access card – most likely at the service centre. If you require something that is not available, please contact your admin staff or supervisor.

If you are using a computer at the department, you can see all your information from any computer that you log in to. However, if you wish to work at home, you will need a VPN connection. Ask your IT department for help with this.

Internal online systems

In [Primula self service](#) you can register several things such as travel expenses, leave-of-absence, sick leave and check your current and past wage statements. You need to be logged-in on the internal staff webpage before logging into Primula. If you work remotely, you need to connect with a VPN.

[Proceedo](#) is the university's system for purchasing, through which you can place all your orders. After you place an order online, an invoice will be registered in Proceedo. You will have to check if the invoice is yours and if it is consistent with what you ordered, the delivery and the price. If the cost centre and the project number are also correct, you can accept the invoice and the invoice will be forwarded to the financial administrator of your department.

PhD Student Rights

[The doctoral student support webpage](#) provides a detailed description of all guidelines related to working hours, salaries and general employment issues.

- **Salaries**

Salary is paid the 25th day of every month to your Swedish bank account, or before if the 25th day is a weekend day or red day. In addition to your start-up salary, there is a “salary-ladder” which is merit-based and salary increases are received after the student has passed various milestones. For more information see [here](#). Be proactive asking your advisor and head of graduate studies at your department about having your yearly review done promptly. If you are several months late with your annual review and/or required seminars, then you will not be able to recover the lost increase in salary from the time you were eligible for it to the time you passed your review.)

- **Vacation and Working Hours**

PhD students do not have regular working hours. Instead, there is a system of total annual working hours. The number of vacation days and working hours are age-based and as follows:

- 1700 hours for employees with 35 days’ vacation (from 40 years of age)
- 1732 hours for employees with 31 days’ vacation (from 30 to 39 years of age)
- 1756 hours for employees with 28 days’ vacation (up to 29 years of age)

Within the first few days at your department, you should begin to get familiar with the main staff page: <https://internt.slu.se/en/>. From the main page you will be able to apply for vacation by logging in to Primula.

- **Teaching**

If you are involved in teaching or other administrative duties at your department, you will usually not be paid at that time. Instead, you will most often receive the number of hours as paid extension at the end of your PhD (so-called “prolongation”). How teaching is handled does however vary between departments, so find out how it works at your department! Make sure you keep a good account of how much time you spend teaching, in general for each hour teaching you should get 3 hours preparation. It is important that any such teaching and additional duties be planned in agreement with your supervisor and division boss/head of department. New rules also stipulate that all teaching activities must be reported biannually, information on this will be sent to you by your director of graduate studies.

In addition to the guidelines available at the faculty-level, each department has a website for internal information, discussions and documents. These can be found [here](#).

Ombudsman/Counsellor

The doctoral student *ombudsman/counsellor* at SLU monitors doctoral students' work situation and can give individual support and counselling, and try to find solutions to problems that may arise. Discussions you have with the ombudsman are confidential, and no information you give will be passed on without your approval.

Hopefully you will not need an *ombudsman*, but in case conflicts occur that cannot be resolved at the department-level **do not hesitate to contact the ombudsman/counsellor**, at the time of writing this document: Monika Appel (phone: 018-671164; email: monika.appel@slu.se; link: [Graduate students ombudsman](#)).

Student Union

Become a member of the student union! As part of the union, you will be able to get access to student discounts via [Mecenat](#). The fee for PhD students is 112.50 SEK per semester. You can become a member by entering the information and paying the fee at [this website](#).

The PhD Council of the faculty has one representative that will be able to assist you in case there are issues related to membership in the student union. You can find contact details of the membership responsible, as well as all PhD Council members [here](#).

Labour Union and A-kassa

Everyone working in Sweden is eligible for basic unemployment insurance at a low rate. However, it is usually recommended to pay unemployment insurance during your PhD, which entitles you to 80% of your last salary for 300 days after your unemployment started. Note that there is a minimum requirement of **one year** of monthly payments before the end of your PhD contractual period. You should therefore join the [AEA](#) (unemployment agency for academics) as early as possible during your PhD.

In addition to contribution towards unemployment insurance, it is usually beneficial to join a union. There are two options for academics: Sveriges universitetslärare och forskare (SULF) and Statens fackförbund (ST). Membership in a union increases your unemployment payment percentage to as high as 80-93% of your last salary. For more information, check the websites of [SULF](#) and [ST](#). There are many labour unions you can join, so ask your colleagues what they recommend. For instance, some members of S-fak are in the [Naturvetarna union](#).

Note that in order to receive unemployment payments you will need to register as unemployed at the Swedish Unemployment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen) **the day your contract ends**. You will find more information on the registration process and other details [here](#).

Tax return

In Sweden, taxes are almost always withheld at the time of salary payment, because employers are obliged to deduct tax from your salary before you are paid. If you are staying in Sweden for more than six months, you pay income tax according to the tax rate in the municipality where you live, usually around 30%. Everyone who has been working in Sweden during the whole previous year or part of the previous year should submit a tax return form (Inkomstdeklaration 1). This income tax return form is sent by the Swedish Tax Agency in April to all those obliged to submit a tax return. You shall submit the tax return form before 2 May. Large parts of the tax return form have already been filled in by the Swedish Tax Agency. It is important to verify the preprinted information, and to make corrections, and to submit information on taxable incomes that have not been pre-printed. You will also receive a specification of the income statements which have been submitted to the Swedish Tax Agency. You may declare your income online, by mobile phone, telephone, or text message. If you want to know more about where to declare your taxes, kindly visit the following website: [Declaring taxes \(Skatteverket\)](#)

4) Transportation

Depending on your campus, the transportation options vary. Be familiar with the transportation company in your city. You will usually not be able to pay with cash on the bus. Only credit cards are an acceptable form of payment on public transportation. The telephone apps of Umeå Ultra, tabussen.nu, Uppsala UL, and Skånetrafiken.se (depending on which campus you are based) are highly recommended for ticket purchases as well. In addition, pre-purchased tickets are usually cheaper if you purchase a bus/train card that you can load with several trips. As a member of the student union you will also be able to obtain discounts when purchasing train tickets.

In Sweden, the bicycle is one of the most popular modes of transportation. Each city is different, but used bikes are often sold on [blocket.se](#). You can adjust your search by changing to the appropriate county and city. There are usually facebook groups for selling bikes as well.

5) Additional Information

Mental health

SLU is generally responsible for creating a healthy work environment for all staff. During PhD studies it is not unusual for persons to become highly stressed or even suffer from depression. For this reason, SLU provides support to staff members that have psychological issues related to the work environment. These services are provided from 2018/2022 on through *Anonova Previa*. For more information, see [this webpage](#)

In addition, find out about [FOCUS](#) talks, which provides an opportunity for staff to have personal time with an expert to talk about ongoing situations at work during different stages of your PhD studies.

The Student Health Centre as well as the Occupational healthcare at SLU offers counselling to all registered students. The counsellors at the Occupational healthcare are available at the Campus Umeå University, Uppsala, Skinnskatteberg, Wången and Lund. Full details can be found here: [Student health centre](#)
[Occupational health services](#)

Health insurance

During working hours, all doctoral students are covered by the personal injury insurance for students via Kammerkollegiet (the Legal, Financial and Administrative Service Agency). This includes occupational injuries that were caused by an accident in the workplace, on the way to and from work. If you travel abroad as part of a course or independent study, ask the responsible person for Human Resources at your department for help. You will find further information [here](#).

Sick leave

If you become ill, you have to give a notice to the personnel administrator as soon as possible. It is important that you actually take sick leave if you are unable to work or significantly less productive due to poor health. It is mandatory to exclude longer periods of sick leave from your net study time (see official guidelines to details). The Swedish employment system is built so that it is beneficial for both you and your employer to take sick leave when you need it. You or the personnel administrator registers the notice in [Primula](#) (click on 'Primula'). If you are sick for more than seven consecutive days, you are required to submit a doctor's certificate starting from the 8th day. The certificate shall be sent to the Personnel Unit. Under certain circumstances a doctor's certificate can be required for shorter periods of illness. When you are ill, SLU will pay you an "illness-salary" (sjuklön), which is the normal salary with some reductions:

- the first day: 100% reduction (i.e., no salary)
- day 2-14: 20% reduction (i.e., 80% of your salary)
- day 15-364: 90% reduction (i.e., 10% of your salary).

The salary will then depend on Försäkringskassan where you have to apply for the salary during that extended period. This will usually take 4 - 6 weeks or even longer for them to decide, so be aware of some shortage in your budget.

If you are a PhD student on stipend you can get help through [Kammarkollegiet](#).

Parental leave and child supervision

If you want parental leave for a long-term period, you must apply two months in advance. You shall always make the application directly to the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) for maternity allowance, parents' allowance, parents' temporary cash benefit, and paternity leave. Contact your department or the Payroll Unit if you have questions regarding paternity leave. You can find more information [here](#) and at the internal staff webpage [Parental Leave at SLU](#).

If you are a PhD student on stipend you can get help through [Kammarkollegiet](#).

Statistical consultation

PhD projects are often quite statistically challenging. The [Centre of Statistics at SLU](#) offers free statistical consultation. Every person has 20 hours of free support per year. Are you located in Alnarp? Adam Flöhr (adam.flohr@slu.se) and Jan-Eric Englund (jan-eric.englund@slu.se) offer a help group for R and a wide range of statistical matters every week through Zoom.

6) Progress check-ups yearly and half-time check points.

As a part of your study program AND for purposes of your employment as a PhD student, you need to have planning and follow-up checks documented in your ISP (Individual Study Plan) and filed with your department. The ISP is digital now. You are entitled to a salary increase each year upon completion of your annual follow-up review, so make it easy on your supervisors to get the paperwork done!

The ISP is used as the outline by which you will be assessed each year, but the ISP is also something you will revise on a regular basis. Some supervisors make use of the ISP as an advising tool and some less so, but all students will need to submit an ISP revision each year. The follow up should address: your progress, what changes to make in the plan to improve on your work or catch up if you are behind, and what your plans are for the coming year. Some departments may require additional activities, such as a seminar, for each yearly progress check-up.

The halftime seminar is an important checkpoint that should come after two years of net study time. Students should hold a seminar in which they orally present their work in a seminar style setting. The presentation must be assessed by an associate professor (or faculty member of higher status) and may not be someone in your supervisor group. A critical part of this review is to assess your prospects for completing your thesis within the next two years. Official guidelines are to have a representative appointed by the faculty board to assist the department in deciding if the student is on track to complete the thesis on time or what adjustments should be made to help the student finish in time.

Pre-thesis evaluation/seminar: departments vary a great deal in what they require in terms of a thesis pre-exam before applying for thesis defence and/or defending a thesis. At a minimum, your principal supervisor must decide if your thesis and other academic work meet the formal requirements to apply for thesis defence at the forest faculty. If the supervisor believes you have not met the minimum requirements, then you must have an external pre-examination (this is a rare occurrence.) Some departments have a routine procedure for pre-examination. Forest Economics, for example, requires students to have an external reviewer act as opponent in a preparation seminar before the final defence to give feedback before the thesis goes to print. Ask the person responsible for doctoral studies what your department requires for pre-evaluation of your thesis.

Below is a figure from the Guidelines for third-cycle education for 2015 that gives a timeline for required reviews, seminars, and thesis defence application.

Figure 2. Timeline illustrating the compulsory steps



7) Postgraduate Courses

SLU requirements

As a PhD student at SLU you are required to take general basic courses and subject courses. When finishing your degree, you have to have at least:

- 30 credits in the form of courses for a degree of Doctor;
- 15 credits in the form of courses for a degree of Licentiate.

However, it is possible to require up to 120 credits for a degree of Doctor, and up to 60 credits for a degree of Licentiate.

Credits for previously completed courses

There are some instances in which you can transfer credits for courses you have previously completed towards your PhD degree credit hour requirement. See section 5.1.6 of the [University guidelines for doctoral education](#) for details. Credits can only be awarded for courses that have not been included in previous degrees. This means if you have a course from your master's program that fulfils a requirement for your PhD study program then you will not be able to get credit for it (double check the most current guidelines to confirm this). Some departments may consider their requirement for a specific course to be fulfilled based on your previous coursework even though you cannot be awarded credit for that course towards your PhD degree. These situations must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with your supervisors and department's study program director. You will have to find other courses to make up the difference in terms of overall credit hours.

SILVA Research School

[SILVA](#) is a united research school, described as a “cross-departmental platform”, Their main aim is to train doctoral students with the skills, knowledge and network they need in order to thrive in academia and tackle the current world's issues and challenges. Not only do they organise courses (most courses at the Forest faculty at SLU are held through them), but also they organise frequent seminars, e.g. about important skills to develop as a PhD student and future researcher, such as career days, seminars on kappa and thesis writing and presentation, interventions from forest companies, etc. In addition, they hold a yearly [PhD student conference](#) (1 edition so far, which took place in Umeå in 2022), where PhD students regardless of department and campus gather, present their research results and discuss. Excursions are also organised from time to time.

At the PhD Student Council, we are in constant dialogue with SILVA so that it offers the best and most suitable courses, seminars and networking possibilities possible. Similarly, SILVA regularly asks for feedback to every PhD student.

Make sure that SILVA knows you exist! Send an email to the coordinators Dimitris.Athanassiadis@slu.se and Navinder.Singh@slu.se so that you get added to their email list.

SLU and NOVA courses

Our university offers a variety of [SLU courses](#) on each campus. Additionally, PhD students at SLU have the opportunity to participate in [NOVA courses](#). NOVA is a cooperation between agricultural universities in northern Europe. The participation at SLU and NOVA courses is **free of charge** for PhD students at SLU, apart from travel expenses. Travel costs can be rewarded, see [this webpage](#).

You can also take courses at other Swedish universities, which can be found on the respective university's webpage. But then you need to apply for separate funding.

Mandatory credit-awarding courses are in Research Ethics and Philosophy of Science. These can be two or one joint course depending on the campus, e.g., Campus Umeå offers annually one joint course *Philosophy and Ethics in Science*. Individual departments may have additional mandatory courses. Talk to other PhD students, your supervisor or Head of postgraduate studies to be informed about any such courses.

It is recommended to participate in the pedagogics courses for university teachers if you are going to lecture but also for your future career, for example *Teaching in Higher Education* at SLU. Further, SLU offers a variety of statistics courses.

Registration of credits

Courses (examinations) are assessed with the grades *pass* or *fail*. Roughly one week of work equals 1.5 credits (ECTS). Credits vary between courses.

Passed courses need to be registered in [LADOK](#), which is the university system where all academic merits are recorded. After each completed course you will get a course certificate. You are then responsible for handing a copy of the course certificate to the person responsible for LADOK at your department, and that person will register the credits in the system.

General advice

Take the opportunity to take as many basic courses as possible when you have a low workload, for example before your experiments and field work have started. Courses add to your professional profile – let your future plans impact on your choice of courses.

More information is available in the [University guidelines for doctoral education](#), point 5.6.

8) Congresses and conferences

Participation in conferences is a good way to acquire subject-specific knowledge. For you to be able to participate, your supervisor often demands that you present your results in some form, e.g., as a poster or giving an oral presentation. Funding of these trips can be included in the project budget, but if not, you will have to apply for a travel stipend, which should include all expenses associated with the trip. General scholarships will be announced through the e-mail list for PhD students at S-fak and more information can be found at [this page](#).

The trip should be booked through Stureplans affärsresor (from October 1st 2022), which is the travel agency SLU cooperates with. A personal reference is needed for this. Costs you had during your travel (e.g., bus tickets, taxi, etc.) can be claimed via [Primula](#). If you need any assistance, you can contact the administrator at your department.

9) Approaching the end

Registration of published articles

All published articles and conference contributions should be registered [here](#). Ask for help from your supervisor!

Arranging your defence

Several months in advance, you should think about your defence date. There is a preliminary [calendar](#) where people can register their intended dates.

To register your date, send an email to Charlotta Bergström (charlotta.bergstrom@slu.se). Note that you cannot defend during summer or at the exact same time as someone else at the faculty.

Also check the availability of the [lecture halls](#).

Also, to finalize this you need to send an email to "Lokalbokningen@slu.se"

Check that all courses that have been taken are registered in LADOK (ask for a certificate from the person at your department who is responsible for LADOK) before submitting the application for the PhD defence.

An opponent and an examination committee need to be appointed for a **PhD defence**. Officially this is your supervisor's task but hopefully it can be arranged through a joint discussion. There are several restrictions regarding who they can be, and more information is available [here](#). In general, the examination committee should consist of 3 to 5 members (if 3, a stand-in must be appointed) and must be gender diverse. The opponent and at least 3 of the examination committee should be at least associate professors, and all should have a doctoral degree. At least one member of the examination committee must come from another university. Furthermore, at most one member of the committee may come from your Faculty.

At a **licentiate seminar** an examination committee is appointed consisting of 3 members, all with a doctoral degree. At licentiate seminars there is no external examiner. The respondent always presents their research, and it is the job of the examination committee to review the work and discuss it with the respondent. Neither the opponent, nor the committee members are allowed to have a co-authorship with the PhD student or its main supervisor during the last 5 years. There should be a chairperson both at a PhD defence

and licentiate seminar. If your supervisor seems uninformed regarding this whole procedure, [here](#) is a link where all information aimed for supervisors can be found.

When everything is set, the [application form](#) for the PhD defence shall be completed and signed by the student, supervisor and head of department. This may take slightly more time than you think to get everything sorted, so **start early**. You will also need all committee members and the opponent to sign the declaration of conflicts of interest which you can find [here](#). Any committee member that is not associate professor or professor at a Swedish University will also need to send their CV.

Send all the forms to the faculty administration, at the time of writing this document: charlotta.bergstrom@slu.se. They should receive them **at least 3 months before** your proposed defence date. Don't forget to mention your plans for your dissertation to the rest of the department, especially to the director of postgraduate studies and the head of department.

Writing your Thesis

See the [Universities guidelines for doctoral education](#) and read section 5.5.1 about what your thesis must contain.

Based on those guidelines, the following minimum requirements must be met by a compilation thesis:

<u>Degree of Doctor</u>	<u>Degree of Licentiate</u>
1) The thesis must include at least three papers.	1) The thesis must include at least one paper.
2) The doctoral student must be first author or equivalent of at least two of the papers.	2) The doctoral student must be the corresponding author or equivalent of at least one of the papers.
3) At least one of the papers must have been accepted for publication or have been published in an international scientific journal.	

Get an ISBN-number for the thesis and a part-number in the Acta-series. Order those [here](#) or at bib-isbn@slu.se.

Remember to contact the journals concerned to get permission for the printed articles to be included in your thesis.

It is recommended that you start writing your thesis in the [template](#) [OBJ:OBJ]. Double check that you have the correct version of Word for the template you are using. Read the instructions carefully; it is helpful and will probably save you time in the long run. If you have problems with the template contact biblioteket@slu.se. Remember to save it as a .docm file so that

you can use all the embedded macros. Don't forget about your back cover (separate file in the templates). Have a look at previous theses and decide how you want your unpublished manuscripts formatted. There are no rules on what they should look like, you decide. It is always helpful to discuss with a few different people if you are unsure on what to include, how to write the kappa, what to include in the methods etc., this seems to be rather personal and can vary a lot between theses. SILVA also offers courses throughout the year to help with the thesis and kappa writing.

Printing and “Nailing”

[Here](#) you will find information on how to format your thesis, print it and publish it in SLUs open archive Epsilon. Double check where you have located the page numbers in your manuscripts.

When the summary is ready for conversion to a Pdf file it is common that the Pdf and Word versions are not fully compatible. Certain paragraphs can have been slightly shifted, and you may need some advice from an IT specialist, a recent PhD graduate or the SLU Printing unit to get the Pdf version into the form you want.

It is tradition at SLU to “nail” (*spikning* in Swedish) your thesis on a piece of wood somewhere in your department. This is an important event at your department, so in general a lot of people gather around you to see you nail your thesis with a hammer, after a little speech from your main supervisor. Then, in general, the nailing is followed by a festive gathering where everyone at the department is invited, for example to have a piece of cake in the fika room. The “nailing” of your thesis usually happens before your defence.

Last arrangements for your defence

It may be good to make sure that your supervisor attaches a certain document (not online at the time of writing; contact Lotta Jäderlund (lotta.jaderlund@slu.se)) as they email the opponent so that they get clear instructions for the defence.

Before the defence, go talk to the building technician regarding technical support on your defence day. Make sure that you have gone through your presentation in the room your defence will take place beforehand. If you decide to use the computer that is already in the room, remember that it takes a while to start up the first time you log on to a new computer with your AD. Check things like microphone, pointer, etc.

In case your supervisor is unaware, [this form](#) is needed for the committee members after your defence.

Last but not least: Apply for your degree (via Ladok) and [celebrate!](#)

10) Language

If you plan to stay in Sweden, Swedish skills will be needed for your career purposes. But also during your time as a PhD student it might be very helpful to already know some basic communication skills, just to facilitate communication with the locals and maybe get integrated better. One option might be to visit the **SFI** courses (*Svenska för invandrare* = Swedish for immigrants) if this fits your working schedule. These courses are offered in most university cities in Sweden and are free. Some general information can be found on this [webpage](#).

Furthermore, **Folkuniversitetet** offers several Swedish courses per semester at different levels. You can check their [webpage](#), but keep in mind that course fees are rather high. If Swedish is needed for your work as a PhD student, you might ask your project leader/supervisor if parts of the course fee (or the whole) can be covered via the project you're working in. But this is not a guarantee.

If you're a PhD student in Umeå, it is good to know that Umeå University offers courses in basic Swedish. EEU citizens can study for free in Sweden and can apply for courses at [antagning.se](#) where you first need to register. Select the semester ('termin') you want to study Swedish and search for 'Svenska för internationella studenter'.

On some occasions SLU might also offer courses in Swedish for employees. You can ask the head of your department if a course is currently offered or planned to be offered in the future. If not, ask among your colleagues that might be interested and push for a course to be organized. This might need some effort but has happened already in the past on campus and department level. Are you located in Umeå? Then you can also contact jenni.vahlstrom@slu.se (at the time of writing this document). Often courses are offered in collaboration with Umeå University. Are you located in Alnarp? Information about Swedish courses offered by SLU (swedishlessons@slu.se) is often sent out by violeta.kokos@slu.se.

11) Culture – The Swedes

If you arrive in a foreign country, you might realize that certain habits or social roles appear strange to you in the beginning. Understanding the reaction of people you live with can be a key feature to your well-being while living abroad. We provide in the following a summary of typical Swedish habits. For more information see [Study in Sweden](#).

The Swedes are very nice people, with a great sense for family and equality. It is said that the Swedes are rather shy and reclusive. This might be true but they are also very friendly and helpful as well as respectful to other people, rules and laws. Always make sure you are on time when you have an appointment or meeting.

The most Swedish habit you will probably experience during your stay in Sweden is the Swedish 'fika'. Fika is a kind of coffee or tea break with an important social aspect. Usually every department has fixed times: one fika during the morning and one during the afternoon. Occasionally, some cake or sweets might be offered. Ask your colleagues for the fika times at your department and join them! It is a good opportunity to get to know people and learn/improve your Swedish.

Swedes also love queuing up. No matter if you are at *Skatteverket*, agencies, health care centres, as well as shops and services, you will have to pick a number and wait to be called. A digital display indicates when you can step forward to make your request. So as soon as you enter a shop, check if this system exists and pick a number. Be patient and respectful while waiting. NEVER cut the line when queuing for something! ☺

Another basic rule in Sweden is to take off your shoes when you enter a Swedish household.

The Swedes might also appear to you as a very healthy nation. No weather is too bad or too cold for sports. So don't be surprised if you see people running outside with -20°C. Families and friends also like to gather especially during the weekends to meet for outdoor activities or BBQs at nice spots. Note that at most public BBQ places (in Umeå) fire wood is available for free ☺ Also note that the Swedish *Allemansrätten* gives you the right to access, walk, cycle, ride, ski, and camp on any land in Sweden – with the exception of private gardens, the immediate vicinity of a dwelling house and land under cultivation. Restrictions apply for nature reserves and other protected areas. It also gives you the right to pick wild flowers, mushrooms and berries (provided one knows they are not legally protected), but not to hunt in any way. Swimming in any lake and putting an unpowered boat on any water is permitted, unless explicitly forbidden. Visiting beaches and walking by a shoreline is permitted, providing it is not a part of a garden or within the immediate vicinity of a residence. However – with the rights come responsibilities; that is, an obligation neither to harm, disturb, litter, nor to damage wildlife or crops. The maxim is "do not disturb, do not destroy".

Appendix: Guidelines for PhD student – supervisor discussions

This document has been prepared by the PhD students and the PhD student education responsible at the Department of Forest Ecology and Management at SLU, Umeå.

Good discussions and an open atmosphere between the PhD student and supervisor is a pre-requisite for good work during PhD studies. The following items are intended to be a starting point and a help in a first general discussion between the PhD student and the supervisor(s). This discussion should take place within the first month of employment and should be a separate (un-disturbed) discussion during 1-3 hours. It is important that both the supervisor and PhD student talk, ask questions and listen to each other during the discussion. Prepare for the meeting (both the PhD student and the supervisor) by reading through this document before the meeting.

General discussion on relationships, supervision and conduct

The roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the project

- Role/responsibility of the main supervisor
- Role/responsibility of the PhD student
- Role/responsibility of the co-supervisors

Key-words: main task for each person, changing roles/responsibilities over time

Authorship of papers

- Should the order of authors be stated out already at the beginning?
- Should the PhD student be first author on all papers?

Key-words: importance of authorship for PhD student and supervisor, general problems with authorship

Expectations

- Expectations of the supervisor on the PhD student and vice versa
- Expectations of both parties on the project.

Key-words: What are the most important expectations on each part? Independency vs close collaboration, progress/changes over time?

Economy

- What funds are available? What will they cover and how will expenses be handled?

Key-words: Who buys equipment? When is there a need to tell or ask about this?

Communication

- What is the preferred mode of communication?

Key-words: time available, when and how to meet, schedules, holidays, conference, feedback on private issues when it affects ones work, writing process/strategy with expected feedback.

Teaching

- What are the expectations on teaching?

Key-words: Does the PhD student want to teach? Does the supervisor want the PhD student to teach?

Career perspectives

- Advice on scientific career.

Key-words: After the degree? Desirable things to do during the PhD time for a future career? How do you (PhD student) believe the PhD education can be beneficial for your own future career?

NOTE: Many PhD holders build a career outside of academia. It is highly recommended that you initiate an open and honest discussion with not only your advisor, but with others at SLU who can give you advice on different possible career paths. Be on the lookout for a document the forest faculty is planning to publish providing a roadmap for supervisors and students to discuss career prospects early during PhD studies.

PhD Courses

Key-words: Which courses are you (PhD student) expected to take? Which courses, what direction do you (PhD student) want to take?

Expectations on the research project

What are your (PhD student/supervisor) expectations regarding responsibility for:

- Making progress within the research project
- Setting up experiments/field work/ lab work
- Conducting/executing field work or lab work
- What kind of working strategy do we like?

Degree of freedom in the research project

Key words: influence over the project (student and supervisor), design of the project and deciding on the direction of the project

Writing process

- When and in what form does the supervisor want to have a manuscript?
- What kind of feedback do we appreciate/not appreciate?

- Who decides about collaboration?

Key words: How should the writing process be done ideally?

If things go wrong

- What happens if things don't work as we like/expect?

Discuss some scenarios of possible problems and how to solve them.