

# Evaluation report for postgraduate education in medicine and pharmacy at Uppsala University

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Subject for third-cycle education: Medical science

Subject for third-cycle education: Pharmaceutical science

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## Introduction

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This evaluation report is based on both the Self-assessment report from 6 August 2019 as well as the respective statements of the four external assessment panels, all collected under the same reference number MEDFARM 2019/204. The external assessment panels conducted site visits from 26 to 27 September 2019 (FarmFak and MedFak2) and from 30 September to 1 November 2019 (MedFak1 and MedFak3)\*.

The statements of the external assessment panels indicate that, although there are several important areas for improvement, the disciplinary domain's postgraduate education and its quality assurance are generally found to be of good quality and are resting on a stable foundation organisationally.

The present evaluation report discusses some of the most important areas of improvement that were touched on by all of the assessment panels. The report is not organised according to the 11 thematic aspects included in Uppsala University's evaluation model, but rather collects comments and viewpoints on five more overarching issues.

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## Summary

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The statements of the external assessment panels indicate that there are generally five overarching areas where the greatest opportunities for quality improvement measures can be seen. These are:

- 1) transfer and access to information on the organisation and regulations of postgraduate education
- 2) implementation of organisation and activities within the research tracks
- 3) the need for skills enhancement measures in relation to the pedagogical skills of the supervisors
- 4) the availability of postgraduate level courses and their content
- 5) clinically active doctoral students and their special and, in some aspects, vulnerable situation.

These five areas and more specific thoughts about the potential quality improvement measures are described in more detail over the following five pages, where the viewpoints from the assessment panel statements are discussed in light of planned activities.

A more detailed compilation of ongoing and planned future quality improvement measures is found in Appendices 1 (for the coming year, 2020) and 2 (for the upcoming evaluation cycle 2020–2025).

This report has been drawn up with solid support from the Office for Medicine and Pharmacy, and final editing was carried out by the Chair and Vice Chair of KUF, who are responsible for the final form.

Uppsala, November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

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\* Appendices with the compilation and statements of the assessment panels as well as the schedule for site visits have not been translated.

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## 1. Information

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All assessment reports bring up problems with the transfer of information, and this is reflected at several levels. First, in that some overarching and central parts of the postgraduate education organisation, such as the preparation and revision of individual study plans (ISPs) and the distribution of formal course credits within postgraduate education, are not clear to everyone. Second, in that the communication paths between KUF (Research training committee), the department managers, and operational managers at Uppsala University Hospital do not work satisfactory in some respects. Finally, in that communication between KUF and the doctoral councils is insufficient at times.

One reason for this can likely be attributed to the fact that information about postgraduate education on the disciplinary domain's web pages, through which a lot of the sought-after information should be channelled, has been neglected for several years. This is something that was noted by KUF previously, and significant work was done in 2019 to move these important web pages to the "Staff Portal" (MedarbetarPortalen) and to ensure information is provided in two languages (Swedish and English). Furthermore, reformulation of the external web pages has begun to instead make them a public showcase for information material about postgraduate education in the disciplinary domain.

Another reason is that the disciplinary domain's "Guidelines for Third-cycle Education" (MEDFARM 2015/711), which was last revised on 28 February 2017, is in great need of review and updating to adapt it to changes, both in legislation and KUF's way of working. We find that the following in particular require special attention in the various sections of the guidelines:

- rules for, inter alia, gender distribution between supervisors and grading committees, and how this should be handled. At present, it does not clearly indicate how KUF works to ensure equal opportunities and equal treatment.
- principles for how formal credits for courses and course modules are set, and examples of these. This issue was discussed at the Disciplinary Domain Board's meeting on 22 March 2019 following a proposal, which was then revised.
- instructions on how ISPs should be created, adopted and revised so that we comply with requirements from the Swedish Higher Education Authority.
- change to the examiner role (this was done spring 2019), and some clarification that is required in connection to this, such as who can serve as examiner.

However, something that has been given less time and effort than it should – as made clear in light of the statements from the external assessment panels – is the direct communication between KUF, the departments and Uppsala University Hospital. In this, KUF members are an important link to their departments. Because of this, it is desirable for all departments to be represented in KUF. Special emphasis was placed on this when compiling the current KUF (2017–2020), however it was not fully successful. Continued attention should be paid to this. What is to a large extent lacking at present (but recommended by the external assessment panels and requested by KUF) is enhanced contacts between KUF and appropriate parts of Uppsala University Hospital's operational management.

To further improve the transfer of information between KUF and the departments, a series of information meetings with administrators and persons responsible for postgraduate studies at the departments is proposed. This would provide everyone with the same information at the same time and enable discussion of the departments' procedures in relation to laws, ordinances and guidelines. In addition to this, we could consider a simple "newsletter" which can be distributed once or twice a semester to provide information about relevant discussions and decisions related to postgraduate education in KUF and the Disciplinary Domain Board.

A first step towards improving the communication between KUF and the doctoral councils is to plan regular meetings. In the work to improve the transfer of information, review of student representation and assignments in committees and boards is suggested for the entire disciplinary domain. This relates to how student representatives work to pass on the information, as well as formulating clearer rules for which assignments bring with them the ability to prolong the duration of doctoral studentship. In relation

to the financial issues regarding crediting, we also find the finances related to doctoral students' teaching efforts in undergraduate education and how the time used for this is compensated by the department. It may be possible to coordinate this issue across the entire disciplinary domain – this is already being done in the Faculty of Pharmacy.

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## 2. Research tracks

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All assessment reports bring up problems related to the research tracks. While the assessors consider it a good initiative, it became clear during the site visits that the research tracks are not yet working in practice. KUF initiated the nine research tracks in 2016 with the aim of improving quality by stimulating interdisciplinary research and ensuring the academic environment for all doctoral students in the disciplinary domain.

As of January 2018, all doctoral students that are admitted must choose at least one track. A research track shall include courses, theme days and international conferences. To date, nine tracks have been proposed. Since several of the research tracks do not yet have any concrete content, doctoral students are worried about how they can meet requirements to earn “track credits”. Providing clear information about the status of the research tracks and the formal requirements for doctoral students who are already registered for a track is of the highest priority and will be done immediately.

The main problem is that there was still no one heading most of the research tracks at the time of the site visits. It is therefore important to maintain a dialogue with researchers in the disciplinary domain to identify groupings that can carry out the work in the respective research track. KUF recently appointed a working group, which will start their work immediately so that the groupings can then work to identify desired activities in each track over the next year. Moreover, KUF sees in a future need to provide additional funding to the research tracks to ensure there is one responsible person per track who is able to devote part of their time to this important work.

In order to give the tracks a solid foundation, extensive work will need to be done over several years. A first step is to ensure that each track has core operations. New courses must be created for many of the tracks. Further development and frequent follow-up of the tracks will then be a constant, ongoing process, with decisions about whether tracks should be discontinued or new tracks added.

When the research tracks were introduced, it was decided that evaluation would take place after four years, i.e. 2022. KUF proposes this timetable to be changed so that work can be done based on the present quality evaluation and the shortcomings that have come to light. The request from KUF, which will be presented to the Disciplinary Domain Board, is that a general evaluation of the tracks will be carried out in connection with the next evaluation cycle, 2025.

Finally, in this context it can be stated that all assessment panels bring up the importance of career guidance and so-called career days in their statements. In their statement, the MedFak2 panel suggests using the research tracks as a basis from which to supplement with representatives, areas and skills that prepare the doctoral students for their upcoming professional role.

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### 3. Supervision and the role of the supervisor

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Several of the external assessment panels raised questions about how the competence of the supervisors can be ensured over time. This was not related to their scientific competence, but rather the pedagogical training and mentoring abilities. The supervision of postgraduate students is a delicate task that differs greatly from teaching at the undergraduate level.

Several different ways of supporting the supervisors were touched on here, for example by encouraging them to attend one of the supervisor courses organised centrally at the University. At present, it is unclear to KUF to what extent this is happening. It is something that could be important to investigate. Another way would be to try to promote the establishment of supervisor meetings – this is already in place at a number of departments (and through this evaluation work will likely be implemented at others), but is still missing in many places. Although such supervisor meetings should primarily be a departmental matter, KUF intends to seek ways to support, facilitate or encourage the emergence of such.

In some sectors, the question of the need for further, supplementary programmes or workshops arose, in particular in relation to the supervisor collective's overall competence in sustainable development and in gender equality and equal opportunities work. A need for initiatives by KUF can be seen here.

In relation to the disciplinary domain's "supervisor information" (one-day course), it has been determined that the form and content needs to be updated. An external environment analysis should be done – many higher education institutions have longer courses with more elements of supervisor pedagogy. KUF intends to discuss the need for this in our disciplinary domain as well.

Another question raised in several of the discussions with the external assessment panels is whether we should have an "expiration date" on supervisor credentials, and whether supervisors should be encouraged to take the "supervisor information" course again if a lot of time has passed since they took it last. This is a relevant issue that KUF must address.

All assessment reports bring up the problem of annual follow-up. KUF sees a great need for special information efforts regarding annual follow-up. There needs to be a discussion about the purpose and importance of following up the individual study plan so that the annual follow-up is more than just an administrative task.

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#### 4. Courses at postgraduate level

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All assessment reports bring up the importance of developing the course offering. KUF is aware of this, and it became especially clear with the introduction of research tracks. This requires an inventorying of course needs, both overall in the disciplinary domain and within the individual research tracks. In this context, it is important to maintain a dialogue with the disciplinary domain's researchers to be able to identify within which groupings courses can be given, and how KUF can best enable new courses to come about. In some cases, the course offering will need to be supplemented with external courses. In the long term, a joint course database within the NorDoc network is being planned to provide a simple overview of the course offering of all affiliated higher education institutions.

At present, the doctoral courses of the disciplinary domain are collected in a course database. Most of the assessment reports emphasise the importance of performing course evaluations and making short course reports with measures available to doctoral students. The course database will be adjusted to accommodate this. The MedFak2 assessment panel emphasises the importance of having a syllabus for each course. KUF now plans to create a simple syllabus template that will be implemented beginning in 2020 as a step towards improving the quality of the courses.

The FarmFak assessment panel highlights a problem experienced by doctoral students of the Faculty of Pharmacy, namely that several of the compulsory courses focus on medical and, in particular, clinical issues. This should be taken into account for future course sessions – even though clinically active doctoral students are a large group, it should be possible to find more general examples for courses that span the entire disciplinary domain. The new web-based introduction course has just started, and in this new version is updated with current information and technology that make future updating easier. This course was created in Uppsala University's new learning management system "Studium" and is an example of how tools previously made available primarily for undergraduate education can also benefit postgraduate education. By extension, KUF would like to see all postgraduate education courses fully utilise the study administration systems. Furthermore, in line with discussions with the external assessment panels, KUF will review the quality and scope of the compulsory courses.

Another aspect touched on in the external assessors' statements relates to the future need of intercultural competence, and how this can be obtained within the framework of postgraduate education. KUF welcomes this, and has already made it possible for stays abroad as so-called "internships" or "secondments" to be awarded formal course credits. Another way to make things easier for doctoral students is to inform them of the possibility of applying for scholarships, which makes it easier to spend time at foreign higher education institutions. The importance of this was something brought up in the assessment reports. The Scholarship Office website contains a database for finding and applying for relevant scholarships, but KUF should provide additional information about the opportunities that exist.

Two of the reports identify the need of a brief introduction to teaching and learning early on in the studies in order for students to benefit from this in their own teaching. KUF feels that this should be handled at the department level since it should also contain practical information that is specific to the department in question and needed before beginning teaching work. This introduction should be distinguished from the formal teaching and learning courses that, both in the original and the new abbreviated form, are based in part on participants having their own experiences to discuss.

Work with the courses is of the highest priority, and will begin as early as next year (KUF action plan 2020), but it will then be a multi-year process before strategically important courses that have been identified are in place in the course offering.

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## 5. Clinically active doctoral students

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The complicated situation with clinical activities, postgraduate education and, where applicable, advanced clinical training is touched on by all assessment panels. Here, KUF is keen to try to understand how we can best help the clinically active doctoral students obtain a high-quality postgraduate education.

One of the most important tools is probably improved communication, both between KUF and Uppsala University Hospital and between KUF and the heads of the departments in which we have clinically active doctoral students. In this context, the focus is often on doctors. However, there are other groups – including clinically active pharmacists, physiotherapists and nurses – who may have the same need for support. During the discussions, it has been pointed out that the situation may sometimes be even more difficult for “non-doctors” (e.g. specialist nurses) employed within the county council as they often have a manager who does not have any research experience of their own.

A specific detail in this context is the so-called “operational manager certificate”. KUF has proposed a template for this, but operational managers have requested a revision of this. This shall take place during spring 2020.

A central, recurring issue (one which KUF has also devoted considerable time to) is how time allocated for postgraduate education is accounted for, and how to ensure that the doctoral students are allowed to devote the time they need to research and self-improvement. One way could be to ensure that a representative of the clinical departments participates in the so-called scheduling meetings in order to support the doctoral students’ wishes and e.g. help to prevent the research time being fragmented in an inappropriate way.

Another aspect touched on in several contexts is how KUF can facilitate clinically active doctoral students being able to follow the formal postgraduate courses. Here, it has been made clear that good preparation in scheduling and admission to the courses is important. The offering of clinically relevant postgraduate courses also needs to be expanded. To make these courses more accessible to the clinically active doctoral students, KUF suggests that relevant researchers in the disciplinary domain be tasked with creating web-based courses. With this method, some financial investment on the part of the disciplinary domain will be required to ensure the quality of the clinical active doctoral students’ studies.

Appendix 1 – Operational plan 2020

Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Pharmacy

Date: 18 November 2019
Programme: Postgraduate education in medical science; Postgraduate education in pharmaceutical science
Responsible: Vice-dean Anders Backlund, Chair of Research training committee (KUF)

Planned actions 2020

Activities	Timetable	Responsible working group
<i>1. Information</i>		
Revise Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy's guidelines for third-cycle education	Spring 2020	Anders Backlund, Anna Lindberg, Pernille Husberg, Anna Ehrenroth
Web pages for postgraduate education, staff portal + external web (Swedish and English), completion	Spring 2020	Pernille Husberg, Web Editor, Office for Medicine and Pharmacy
Procedures for establishing individual study plan (as per UKÄ) and management of ISPs in doctoral student database	Spring 2020	Anders Backlund, Ulrika Winblad
Guidelines for individual study plans	Autumn 2020	Anders Backlund, Ulrika Winblad, representative from Legal Affairs Division
<i>2. Research tracks</i>		
Identify groupings that can lead the work in the respective research track	Spring 2020	KUF working group: Anders Backlund, Sebastian Barg, Ulf Göransson, Peter Stålberg, Andrea Benediktsdottir, Pernille Husberg
Identify desired activities within the tracks	Autumn 2020	Identified groupings
<i>3. Supervision and the role of the supervisor</i>		
Focus on clarifying different roles for supervisors, examiners and head of department when updating the guidelines	2020	Anders Backlund, Anna Lindberg, Pernille Husberg, Anna Ehrenroth
<i>4. Courses</i>		
Guidelines for financial support for courses	Spring 2020	KUF working group: Sebastian Barg, Pernille Husberg, Markus de Ruijter
Standardised course evaluations and reports; information to course coordinators	2020	KUF working group
Course reports are made visible in the course database	2020	KUF working group
Identify desired course offering	2020	KUF working group
Initiate model for, and management of, syllabuses	Autumn 2020	KUF working group
<i>5. Clinically active doctoral students</i>		
Review of operational manager certificate	Spring 2020	KUF working group: Anders Backlund, Jan Eriksson, Peter Stålberg, PO Carlsson and Birgitta Johansson
Establish better communication channels between KUF and operational managers at Uppsala University Hospital	2020	KUF working group: Anders Backlund, Jan Eriksson, Peter Stålberg, PO Carlsson and Birgitta Johansson

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## Planned quality improvement measures for postgraduate education in the Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy 2020-2024

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### 1. Information

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Revise Disciplinary Domain of Medicine and Pharmacy's guidelines for third-cycle education  
 Web pages for postgraduate education, staff portal + external web (Swedish and English), completion  
 Procedures for establishing individual study plan (as per UKÄ) and management of ISPs in doctoral student database  
 Guidelines for individual study plans  
 Start holding information meetings for postgraduate administrators, other persons in capacities responsible for postgraduate studies and doctoral councils  
 Review remuneration forms for doctoral student representation in boards, committees and working groups  
 Mapping of doctoral student contributions in undergraduate education and crediting for this  
 Initiate newsletter from KUF to departments and disciplinary domain management

### 2. Research tracks

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Identify groupings that can lead the work in the respective research track  
 Identify desired activities within the tracks  
 All research tracks hold theme days  
 Career guidance included in all research tracks  
 Evaluation of the research tracks

### 3. Supervision and the role of the supervisor

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Focus on clarifying the different roles for supervisors, examiners and head of department when updating the guidelines  
 Information initiatives about annual follow-up  
 Together with persons responsible for postgraduate studies, KUF organises one introductory supervisor meeting per department  
 Review and update of the form and contents of the supervisor information day

### 4. Courses

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Guidelines for financial support for courses  
 Standardised course evaluations and reports; information to course coordinators  
 Course reports are made visible in the course database  
 Identify desired course offering  
 Develop and implement model for and management of syllabuses  
 Ensure that there are track-specific courses for all research tracks  
 Work to include postgraduate courses in study administration systems  
 Review compulsory courses, scope and content

### 5. Clinically active doctoral students

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Review of operational manager certificate  
 Establish better communication channels between KUF and operational managers at Uppsala University Hospital  
 Discussion about scheduling and reporting research time with operational managers in healthcare  
 Resource allocation and development of clinically relevant web-based courses

Actions	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1. Information					
2. Research tracks					
3. The role of the supervisor					
4. Courses					