

# **Handbook for first-year PhDs in Economics at Stockholm University**

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THE GRADUATE STUDENTS' COUNCIL (GSC)

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*Part I*

*Living in Sweden*



# 1

## Immigration

### 1.1 Migrationsverket

Migrationsverket (Migration Board) is the government office that handles citizenship, visa, asylum etc., as well as matters related to working and studying in Sweden. Anyone planning to stay in Sweden for longer than three months needs a residence permit.

Website: <http://www.migrationsverket.se>

#### *Registering as EU/EEA citizen*

A student with legal residence in an EU/EEA country has the right to reside in Sweden. Nonetheless, you *must register* with Migrationsverket no later than three months after entering the country.

You can register with Migrationsverket either before your arrival in Sweden or once you entered the country, but only if you already have an address in Sweden (since you have to indicate it in the form). However, there is no need to register in advance, and it is easier to do it once you are in Sweden (because then you can easily gather/check all the documents you need from the administration at Stockholm University and you will have a home address).

There is always the option to register by sending your application by mail but it is much more cumbersome. The best way is doing it online.

You have to make sure that you are in possession of all the documents that you will be asked to attach during the registration procedure.

Scan the following documents before starting the procedure:

1. a copy of your passport or your national ID card. A copy of a national ID card must show which country issued the card, ID card number and its date of expiry;
2. a certificate of acceptance for studies;
3. a statement of means of support (for example your scholarship);
4. a certificate of your current health insurance coverage.

A photocopy of the card issued by the health service in your country should be enough, e.g. the blue European insurance card.

If you do not have valid health insurance, you can register

once you have applied for and have been granted your personnummer (see section § 1.2). You can use the personnummer in the Migrationsverket application form and attach a scanned copy of your Skatteverket document as proof of health insurance (see also § 3.1).

Once you submit your online application, Migrationsverket will process it and will send your registration certificate to the address you provided.

### *Registering as non-EU/non-EEA citizen*

A person who wishes to study at a university or college in Sweden for a period longer than three months must have a residence permit. The permit must be entered into the passport before entry into Sweden.

*Waiting time.* It may take 2–3 months to get the permit, so applying as soon as you get the admission letter is important.

*Where to apply.* You apply for the permit at the Swedish embassy or a Swedish consulate in your home country or in the country in which you are a permanent resident.

Check <http://www.swedenabroad.com/> on how to contact a Swedish embassy in your country.

### *Required documents:*

1. passport;
  2. admission letter, funding letter or bank statement (if you don't get a scholarship)
  3. two passport-sized photographs
  4. filled-in application form;
- Check if the embassy at your country has specific requirements. The application forms and additional information are available on the Migrationsverket website.

*Permit for family members.* Your spouse or partner and unmarried children under the age of 18 can be granted a residence permit if they can show, among other things, that their support is secured. Check the above webpage for specific support requirements.

Unlike for EU/EEA citizens, it is better to obtain the residence permit from the Migrationsverket before applying for the personnummer at Skatteverket. This should simplify the process. But it is better to check it from the very beginning with Skatteverket and avoid further complications.

*Permanent residence.* As a doctoral student you can apply for a permanent residence permit once you have been a permanent resident in Sweden for at least four out of the last seven years. To obtain a permanent residence permit you must plan to live in Sweden.

## 1.2 Personnummer

The personnummer is the Swedish personal identity number. One cannot do without it when staying in Sweden: it is the key to almost any interaction with government entities and most private companies such as banks and mobile phone providers. Often you cannot even shop online without it.

The personnummer consists of your birth date and four additional digits (YYYYMMDD-XXXX).

### *How to apply for the personnummer*

You must pay a personal visit to the local tax office (Skatteverket). There you fill in a form concerning immigration to Sweden.

The Stockholm office is currently located in Regeringsgatan 109. You can check <http://www.skatteverket.se> for an updated list of branches.

The following documents must be enclosed:

1. contract of employment or certificate of admission;
2. copy of your passport;
3. if you have it, a copy of your registration with Migrationsverket. It should be enough to bring the supporting documents that you need for your registration with Migrationsverket instead of the actual registration.

Additionally, if you are married or have dependent children:

4. passports of all family members (all applicants should be present);
5. marriage certificate;
6. birth certificate for children;
7. divorce papers where applicable;

You should get your personnummer after 2–4 weeks (or faster if you are employed). An official transcript with the granted national registration and personal identity numbers is sent to your Swedish home address.

Remember to notify other institutions / companies of your new personnummer, in particular SSSB (see § 2.1), the student union (see § 4.2) and your bank (see § 4.3).

## 2

# *Finding accommodation*

This is the most painful part of moving to Sweden, as renting an apartment or a room in Stockholm is more difficult and more expensive than in many other European cities. Not surprisingly, many Swedes prefer to buy apartments, even if they plan to live in them for only a few years.

Make sure you are settled before the program starts at the end of August, so housing trouble does not distract you from your studies. Whatever arrangements you make (except for buying your own apartment), you will most likely move several times during your studies. Hence there is nothing wrong with initially getting only temporary accommodation for a few months.

### 2.1 SSSB

SSSB (Stiftelsen Stockholms Studentbostäder) is jointly owned and run by student unions in Stockholm. They offer rooms and apartments in all areas of Stockholm including the suburbs, at prices ranging from 2,500–6,000 kr. You need to be a member of a student union (see § 4.2) and have sufficient days in the queue (“credit”) to be able to get a first-hand contract. However, when you are admitted to the PhD program you will have zero credit and thus you will not be eligible to get housing from from SSSB.

SSSB website: <http://www.sssb.se>

The minimum number of days needed for the least desirable accommodation is about 300.

*Types of accommodation.* To understand how SSSB might still be of use even initially, consider the types of housing available:

1. *Corridor rooms* (“studentrum”) have an own bathroom/toilet but the corridor kitchen is shared with 10–15 other students. You are not permitted to share a corridor room.
2. *Studios* (“studentetta”) are single-room apartments with a small kitchenette, bathroom and toilet. These may be inhabited by one or two people, even though the contract is awarded to a single person.
3. *Apartments* with two or more rooms (“studentlägenhet”) are only awarded to two tenants, possibly with dependent children.

Thus in order to live with SSSB without having sufficient credit yourself, you can either

- find someone who has a first-hand contract and is willing to rent out his/her room or studio (possibly because this person is going abroad); or
- find someone who is the main tenant of a two-room apartment and is looking for a second person (“co-tenant”) to share the apartment with.

This arrangement has the added benefit that you can yourself become the main tenant after a year once the original tenant moves out. For this to work, the main tenant must have gotten the apartment via regular credit days (i.e. not by moving in as a co-tenant), and you must be registered with SSSB as a co-tenant when you move in.

*Registering with SSSB.* Regardless of whether you are able to find someone who is willing to rent out (part of) their SSSB accommodation, you should in any case register with SSSB, even if you do not plan to live with them in the initial years of your PhD. After accumulating sufficiently many days you will eventually be able to get decent apartments below market price.

Formally, you need to be a member of a student union to be registered with SSSB. However, since you cannot become a member before coming to Sweden and enrolling at the university, SSSB has a 90-day grace period. Therefore,

1. Sign up with SSSB immediately, without having a Swedish personnummer (see § 1.2) or being a student union member;
2. Collect up to 90 credit days before coming to Stockholm.

If you have not become a student union member within 90 days, you should put your queue on hold after 90 days until you do so.

3. Once you enrolled at the university, register with the student union (see § 4.2). Make sure that you use the same email address for the student union and SSSB, as union membership is matched by email address if you have no personnummer.
4. After receiving your personnummer (see § 1.2), make sure to update it in your SSSB profile.
5. Note that you need to log into your SSSB account regularly (once every 90 days) to keep your queue status active!

## 2.2 Accommodation via Stockholm University

In the past years Stockholm University has started to provide a limited number of rooms to PhD students. Note that these apartments are available only for a limited time (currently this seems to be two years).

## 2.3 Renting from other PhDs in the program

Many PhD students eventually spend a year abroad and are interested in renting out their room/apartment. If you learn of such

You can get up to 90 “free” credit days without being a student union member.

Website: <http://www.su.se/english/staff-info/new-employee/living-in-sweden/accommodation-for-visiting-researchers/housing-areas>

an opportunity, you should definitely consider it as it solves your housing problems for one or two terms.

#### 2.4 *Bostadsförmedlingen i Stockholm*

Stockholm City has its own queue for apartments for rent (these can be publicly or privately owned). You need several years in the queue to be able to book any apartments, so this will be of no immediate use to you. You should sign up if you plan to stay in Sweden after your PhD, however, in case you do not want to buy an apartment. There is an annual fee of approx. 200 kr.

They also have separate offers for student housing, which can be located in buildings owned by other companies (such as Svebo, see § 2.5), but managed by Bostadsförmedlingen.

Website: <https://bostad.stockholm.se>

#### 2.5 *Svebo*

Svenska bostäder (Svebo) is a real estate company that provides approximately 750 apartments for students. It seems that these days the queues for their student housing are managed by Bostadsförmedlingen (see § 2.4), but there is some information available on their site as well.

Website: <https://www.svenskabostader.se>

#### 2.6 *blocket*

Blocket is the largest Swedish website for classified ads of all sorts, including renting out accommodation. These days they have a separate section of their website dedicated to housing which you find by clicking on "bostad".

The website is of limited use to foreigners for two reasons:

1. the site and most ads are in Swedish; (you can use automatic Google translate supported by some browsers such as Google Chrome)
2. you most likely need a Nordic credit card to place an ad.

However, you could ask someone living in Sweden (such as future colleagues or your buddy) to place an ad for you.

Despite these drawbacks, given that this site is so popular among Swedes it might still be worth it. Several foreign students in the program got at least temporary initial accommodation by posting ads (in English or Swedish – ask your buddy to translate if necessary).

When trying to contact potential landlords, also keep in mind that due to the housing market in Stockholm apartments can be rented out within days.

Website: <http://www.blocket.se> (only in Swedish)

#### 2.7 *Bostad Direkt*

Bostad Direkt is one of the largest agencies for subletting, i.e. for renting an apartment or room from a private person (rather than

Website: <http://bostaddirekt.com>

public housing).

Its major drawback is that you have to pay for using it. In fact, it is possible to search for potential accommodations without being registered. Once you've found an interesting offer, you will have to register in order to get the contact information. In order to get information about flats in the Stockholm area, you have to pay 700 kr, and it is valid only for 45 days.

Once you're registered, you can start to contact landlords. If they post both their number and email address, calling them is more effective, as very often emails are not answered. Don't worry if you don't speak Swedish: in the majority of the cases they understand English.

You should check the page frequently for new offers and try to contact landlords as soon as possible: often landlords find tenants within days.

A second way to use Bostad Direkt is posting your own ad, with all your information and what kind of place you're looking for. It can definitely be a good strategy, as some landlords might not bother to write their own ad, but instead just scan through the ads of potential tenants.

## 2.8 *Akademisk kvart*

Akademisk kvart is a website where owners and other students post their ads for renting apartments/rooms to students. The webpage is also available in English, and you can apply online or contact the landlord via phone/email. Given the target group, it lists more offers suited for students, and it does not seem too hard to get in contact with landlords through this website.

Website: <http://akademiskkvart.se>

## 2.9 *lappis.org*

[lappis.org](http://www.lappis.org) (short for "Lappkärrsberget", the SSSB housing area closest to Stockholm University) is an online forum where students post all sorts of ads, including those who want to sublet their (mostly SSSB) apartments. Despite the name, these apartments do not have to be located in Lappis.

Website: <http://www.lappis.org>

Note that you can only get second-hand contracts with limited (or no) rights, since SSSB usually does not allow subletting. On the other hand, SSSB does not actively check whether someone sublet their apartment, and many students do it. Beware that since no one checks the authenticity of offers placed on this site, some of them might be dubious. In no case should you transfer money before inspecting the place you want to rent.

SSSB permits subletting only under special circumstances, e.g. when students go abroad.

## 2.10 *Living in the suburbs*

If you cannot find reasonably priced housing in Stockholm, consider living in the northern suburbs such as Danderyd or Täby. Trav-

eling time by bus or Roslagsbanan (a train network) amounts to about 30–45 min to the university, and renting a room or part of a house there is cheaper than in central Stockholm.

## 3

### *Other administrative issues*

#### *3.1 Insurance*

##### *Swedish health system*

Precise information is surprisingly hard to get, but here is how we understand it: the health system is run by the state; the state finances the bulk of health care costs, with the patient paying a nominal fee for examinations and some tests. The state pays for approximately 85% of medical costs, and everyone possessing a Swedish personnummer (see § 1.2) has access to this system (probably, being registered at Migrationsverket (see § 1.1) is also necessary, but you won't be asked for proof when visiting a doctor). You pay subsidized prices (around 200 kr per doctor visit, low prices for medication) for the first few visits, but the total is capped at a maximum of 1,100 kr per year. Once you reach this amount, any further doctor visits are free. A visit to a specialist costs around 300 kr, and in-patient care around 80 kr per day. Appointments at child health centers are not subject to any fees.

In Sweden, the system is not based on the “family doctor”, as it is in other countries, but rather on the “vårdcentral” (care center). When you first register with the system, you get assigned a default vårdcentral based on residence and a general practitioner from that vårdcentral; you may however be able to choose a different vårdcentral if you want.

When you need to see a doctor, you need to contact a health center. Waiting time on average is between one and two days for a general practitioner. The national guarantee of care states that a patient should be able to get an appointment with a primary care physician within 5 days of contacting the clinic. If referred to a specialist by the GP, they should get an appointment within 30 days, and if the specialist deems treatment necessary, it should be given within 90 days. However, urgent cases are always prioritized and emergency cases are treated immediately.

You can also always find health care centers with “drop-in” hours without prior appointment.

More information on health services is available at <http://www.1177.se/Stockholm/Other-languages/Engelska/>.

You can find a health center or make appointments at <http://www.1177.se>, or call 1177.

In case of an emergency, call 112.

*Dental care.* Dental care is quite expensive in Sweden, so it might be a good idea to visit a dentist before you come to Sweden.

*European insurance card.* If you are an EU/EEA citizen, make sure to apply for the blue European insurance card in your home country if you don't already have it. It will be useful initially to get access to emergency health services until you receive your personnummer.

*Private health insurance.* There are private insurances that get you additional benefits (faster treatment, private hospitals etc.). Check [www.folksam.se](http://www.folksam.se) or [www.dkvhalssa.se](http://www.dkvhalssa.se) or other insurance companies for more information.

### *Försäkringskassan*

Försäkringskassan (Social insurance agency) is administrating a great share of the Swedish social insurance systems. To be covered by a social insurance benefit, you must either be resident in Sweden or work here. If you work in Sweden, you are insured for employment-based benefits. As a PhD-student, what you are entitled to varies a lot depending on what type of financing you have.

Although it is not entirely clear whether it is required, as a doctoral student you can explicitly register with Försäkringskassan by filling out a form you can find on their website. This might (but need not) happen automatically if you receive taxable income. In any case, you can visit doctors without registering with Försäkringskassan beforehand as long as you have a personnummer.

Some of the benefits provided by Försäkringskassan are as follows:

- Försäkringskassan is the agency that issues the blue European insurance card. Once you have a personnummer and are registered with Försäkringskassan, you can apply online to receive the card.
- If you are employed and fall ill, you must report sick to your employer. When a physician declares a patient to be ill for whatever reason (by signing a certificate of illness/unfitness), the patient is paid a percentage of their normal daily wage from the second day.

For the first 14 days, the employer is required to pay this wage (if you are employed for at least a month or have worked for fourteen consecutive days), and after that the state pays the wage until the patient is declared fit. The state also reimburses patients for travel costs to and from the clinic or hospital.

- If you are not entitled to sick pay, you may be able to get sickness benefits from Försäkringskassan. In this case, you must notify Försäkringskassan that you are ill and assesses your entitlement to sickness benefit.

Website: [www.forsakringskassan.se](http://www.forsakringskassan.se)

- Dental Care: Everyone who lives in Sweden can receive subsidized dental from the age of 20. Dental care is free of charge for children and young people under 20.
- Housing allowance: Families with children and also young people without children aged 18–29 may be able to get housing allowance. However, without children you are very unlikely to qualify for any amount given the stipends/salaries of PhD students at Stockholm University.
- Parental benefit: As a parent you are entitled to parental benefit if you stay away from work to look after your child. Parental benefits are payable for 480 days.

### *Other insurance*

You can buy so-call “hemförsäkring” (home insurance) to insure against theft, damaged property, etc. from various insurance providers. If you have a first-hand contract with SSSB, you will be offered a hemförsäkring package from Trygg Hansa at student prices that is tied to your SSSB housing.

# 4

## Miscellaneous

### 4.1 Swedish courses

If you plan to study Swedish (which is useful, even though you can survive with English), there are several options.

*Courses at Stockholm University.* Swedish courses are offered at the Department for Swedish language at SU free of charge.

Website: <http://www.su.se/svefler/>

They offer a sequence of about six courses, all of which except for the first one are held in groups of about 20 students. The introductory course is given in large lecture rooms for 200 students, so do not expect to learn much. After passing the initial exam, you basically start again from scratch in smaller groups. The remaining courses in the sequence should take you from A1 to a B2 language level.

The quality of these courses is very mixed, as they are attended by numerous Erasmus students who come to Sweden for at most a year and thus have limited incentives to learn the language.

*SFI.* Free courses in Swedish are also offered to all immigrants as part of the program *Swedish For Immigrants* (SFI).

Website: <http://www.stockholm.se/sfi>.

The evening courses usually involve 6 hours per week. Enrollment for residents in Stockholm takes place at the SFI Centre (Hornsgatan 124); you must have a personnummer to register. Classes can be large, and experiences regarding the quality of these courses are mixed.

Note that SFI is administered by the municipality you live in, so if you do not live in Stockholm (e.g. in areas such as Täby), you will have to contact the local administration.

*Private providers.* Alternatively, there are a number of private schools in Stockholm such as Folkuniversitetet and Medborgarskolan that offer courses. Fees vary between 500–4,000 kr, not including books and other material. These course may also be offered over summer.

Folkuniversitetet (<http://www.folkuniversitetet.se/>) and Medborgarskolan (<http://www.medborgarskolan.se/>) offer course information in English.

## 4.2 Student union

Every university has its own student union. As a student at Stockholm University you can become a member of *Stockholms Universitets studentkår* (SUS) once you have enrolled as a student.

The student membership is 120 kr per term and offers some benefits:

- You can accumulate credit days in the SSSB housing queue (see § 2.1). When you live with SSSB, you *must* be a student union member.
- There are some additional discounts available only to union members.

If you do not have a personnummer yet, you can become a member using a temporary ID number assigned by the university. Be sure to update your personnummer once you have it, and to use the same email address as with SSSB. After paying your membership fee, you can order a plastic student card (“studentkortet”) or use the mobile phone app.

Even if you do not want to become a student union member, you should get the “classic” student card, since

- when traveling using discounted SL student tickets (see § 4.7), you might be required to show your student card;
- several companies offer student discounts to card holders (including Arlanda Express).

There seems to be an administrative fee of 50 kr to obtain the classic card, so there is no good reason not to get the union membership.

Note that after the first year the student union is unable to verify whether PhD students are eligible to become members (i.e. have enough ECTS credits). Therefore, every term you need to get a confirmation from the program administrator that you are a PhD student and email it to SUS (or drop by in their office).

## 4.3 Bank account

Getting a bank account without a personnummer is hard but not impossible. If you do not want to wait a few weeks until you receive your personnummer, you might be lucky enough to convince a bank to open an account for you. Some people were successful in the SEB branch close to SSE, since that one deals with many foreign students. You will get an account for non-residents (without a debit/credit card) and have to change that once you receive your personnummer.

You should bring the following documents:

1. passport or Swedish ID card;
2. admission letter to the PhD program;
3. some document from SU stating what stipend/salary you are entitled to.

If you want to use your foreign credit card in Sweden, make sure you know the PIN number. It is not needed in some other

Website: <http://sus.su.se/>

The SUS office is located in “studenthuset” next to building A.

You can order a plastic card at <http://www.studentkortet.se>.

See <http://www.studentkortet.se> for additional student discounts and on how to order a plastic student card.

Student union membership is not renewed automatically!

European countries, but Swedish terminals might require it.

#### 4.4 ID card

You should consider getting a Swedish ID card (“identitetskort”) as it makes things easier:

- Using some services requires a Swedish ID card, a passport will not do (e.g. getting a mobile phone contract). Some Swedish businesses insist on Swedish ID cards since these can be scanned automatically in shops, etc.
- You don’t need to carry around a passport.
- The ID card shows your personnummer, unlike your passport.

You can get an ID card at the local Skatteverket office for 400 kr. Check what documents you need online; in any case you do not need passport photos, since digital pictures will be taken when you apply.

Note that you can apply for an ID card only at some Skatteverket offices. In Stockholm this is currently the office at Lindhagensgatan 76 on Kungsholmen.

#### 4.5 e-legitimation

e-legitimation is an electronic identification mechanism that can be used to authenticate yourself when using various government services online. For example, when moving you can change your living address in the Swedish register at <http://www.skatteverket.se> without having to go there in person. Similarly, you can file your tax returns online.

If you have a bank account, you most likely already have e-legitimation, either via the mobile BankID or your debit card and a smartcard reader you received from your bank for online banking purposes. Alternatively, the ID card issued by Skatteverket also comes with e-legitimation, but you will need a smartcard reader.

#### 4.6 Mobile phone contract

Getting a mobile phone contract is surprisingly difficult for foreigners. Not only do you need a personnummer, most telecom companies will also refuse to give you a contract without a Swedish ID card (or drivers license). Additionally, you will need to have a credit record (or a taxable salary), which implies that you won’t be able to get a contract in the first few months after you received your personnummer.

Initially you therefore have two options:

1. Get a pre-paid card (“kontantkort”) which might include mobile data;
2. Ask a colleague who has lived in Sweden for a while to sign a contract for you. This contract can be transferred to your name later.

#### 4.7 *Public transportation in Stockholm*

SL, the public transportation company in Stockholm, offers discounted 30- and 90-day student travelcards for 560 kr and 1540 kr, respectively. These are valid throughout Stockholm county. These tickets must be loaded onto an electronic card (SL Access card) which can be bought at SL counters and in Pressbyrån stores. Once you have a card, you can recharge it at SL vending machines located at many stops.

If you do not want to use a travelcard, you should instead charge your SL Access card with travel credits (called "reskassa") in advance. The minimum charge is 200 kr, but paying one-way tickets via reskassa costs only 25 kr per trip, instead of 36 kr for regular one-way tickets.

Website: <http://www.sl.se>

Once you have a personnummer, you can register your card online to protect against loss or theft.

*Part II*

*The PhD Program*



# 5

## *Institutions*

At a macro level, the Stockholm Doctoral Program in Economics is jointly run by Stockholm University and the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE). Within Stockholm University, three separate institutions are involved in managing the program, offering courses and employing graduate students: the Department of Economics, the IIES and SOFI (these will be referred to as “institutions” below). There is no hierarchy of institutions, even though the department is responsible for most of the administrative work. Since these institutions are independent, they have their own administration, faculty, funding systems and even seminar series.

### *5.1 Department of economics*

The Department of Economics is the central institution when it comes to organizing undergraduate economics education at Stockholm University. Furthermore, the director of graduate studies and the program administrator for the doctoral program come from the Department of Economics. Almost all the relevant information about the doctoral program is located at the Department of Economics website.

When admitted as a graduate student to the PhD program at Stockholm University, in most cases you will by default start as a student at the Department of Economics.

Website: <http://ne.su.se>

### *5.2 IIES*

The Institute for International Economic Studies (IIES) is a research institute at Stockholm University, founded in the early 1960s.

You may be offered the possibility to join IIES as a research assistant (RA) at the beginning of your first year for a duration of two years. In this case you will receive a salary from IIES and will have different funding than your first-year colleagues at the Department of Economics (see § 7.6). Note that being an RA is not the same as being a graduate student at IIES.

Website: <http://iies.su.se>

### 5.3 SOFI

The Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI) has been around since 1972 and is part of the social sciences faculty at Stockholm University. It is an interdisciplinary institution: there are both economists and sociologists among its approximately 70 members, and SOFI has close ties with both the economics and the sociology department. The main focus of research at SOFI is on education, labor market, welfare state analysis, and immigration. Most research work is empirical.

You can become a graduate student at SOFI in later years (see § 7.3). In exceptional cases, first-years students can also be admitted directly to SOFI.

Website: <http://sofi.su.se>

### 5.4 Stockholm School of Economics (SSE)

SSE (also known as HHS, the Swedish acronym for “Handelshögskolan”), is the other institution involved in running the Stockholm Doctoral Program in Economics. Depending on research interests of faculty, some first- and second-year courses are held at SSE. However, SSE is a completely separate institution from Stockholm University, with their own campus, faculty, students and seminar series.

Website: <http://www.hhs.se/en/Research/Departments/DE/>

# 6

## *The first year*

### *6.1 Diagnostic math exam*

At the beginning of your studies you have to take a diagnostic math exam. No credits are awarded for taking the exam, and you cannot pass or fail the exam. You will receive a grade solely as an indication of your current math skills.

To prepare for the exam, you are expected to know the material covered in Sydsæter et al. (2012). If you do not own this book, try to borrow instead of buying it, as you will not need it in the remaining courses.

The relevant chapters are 1–8, 9.1–9.4, 11.1–11.3, 12.1, 14.1, 15 and 16.1–16.4.

### *6.2 Preparatory math course*

Again, you will not receive any credit for this course which lasts only a few days. The course is meant as a first peek at what will be covered in MATH I later on, e.g. a brief introduction to topology.

### *6.3 Courses and exams*

The first-year courses are all organized in the same way:

1. The material will be covered in lectures, however attendance is not mandatory.
2. You will be assigned problem sets (4–8 problem sets, depending on the course).
3. You are required to hand in your solutions to the teaching assistant (TA). The TA will discuss suggested solutions in the TA sessions (again, attendance is not mandatory).
4. Each course has a final exam.

Whether problem sets count towards your grade depends on the course. In some courses you have to hand in problem sets to be able to take the exam even though problem sets themselves give you no additional credit; in others, problem sets count towards 20% of the final grade.

#### 6.4 *Retaking exams and courses*

There are no adverse consequences from failing an exam (or deciding not to take it) beyond not getting credit. Exams can be retaken in January and August, and there is no official limit on how often you can retake an exam:

- In January you can only retake exams for courses offered in Q1, i.e. MATH I and MICRO I.
- There are retakes for all first-year courses in August.
- Retake exams for second-year courses take place in August if there is any demand.

If you did not pass an exam after the first retake, you will have to retake the entire course. Since there is no mandatory attendance, you effectively just have to sign up for the course / exam next academic year. If you handed in solutions to problem sets, these usually remain valid for the following year, even though this is up to the lecturer.

Do not worry if you did not manage to pass all courses initially. For any particular exam, the fraction of students failing an exam varies between 0–30%, so this is nothing unusual.

#### 6.5 *Taking second-year courses*

There is no regulation that prevents you from taking a second-year course in your first year, and occasionally students who have covered the first-year material in their master program choose to do so.

# 7

## *Later years*

### *7.1 Courses*

There is a wide selection of second-year courses (“field courses”) covering diverse research interests (with the exception of theoretical econometrics). The grading scheme varies widely, ranging from courses with exams and problem sets to courses where you write term papers or referee reports. Note that at least five students are required for a course to take place. On top of the courses offered at SU and SSE, you may also take courses at Uppsala University.

Since you need 105 ECTS credits in total, you will usually need to select six of these field courses (of 7.5 ECTS credits each) on top of your first-year courses.

### *7.2 Teaching*

Starting from the second year, you have the opportunity to teach as a TA (you are not permitted to be the main lecturer in a course). Teaching at Stockholm University is not mandatory, but may be required to get extended funding beyond the first four years if you are at the Department of Economics.

There are two types of teaching opportunities:

1. Undergraduate courses offered by the Department of Economics will usually extend the number of years you are entitled to receive funding (see § 7.6). A list of available teaching positions is sent out a few months in advance.
2. You can also TA first-year PhD-level courses. TA-ing these courses is usually by invitation, so students who performed well may be asked should any such position be available.

Until recently, no funding extensions were awarded for TA-ing PhD courses, but now students at the department are eligible for prolonged funding. Non-department students, on the other hand, will receive a salary that amounts to approx. 5000 kr after taxes for a course with four TA sessions. The effective hourly wage is quite low, so the main motivation to accept such TA positions is to familiarize yourself with the subject more thoroughly and put the teaching experience on your CV.

Except for Political Economics, second-year courses have no TA sessions.

### 7.3 *Transferring to IIES or SOFI*

#### *IIES*

If you are interested in Political Economics, Development Economics or Macroeconomics, you should consider applying to the IIES. For other topics (e.g. trade or labor economics), the Department of Economics may be the better match.

To be admitted as graduate student at the IIES, you have to be selected through an application process. Admission usually takes place at the beginning of June. Students who are RAs at the IIES during their first two years must also apply in order to remain at the IIES after their second year.

Students typically start at the IIES in their third (or fourth) year, as you are supposed to have taken most of your courses before you apply. In a few cases students at the end of their first year have been admitted as well.

#### *SOFI*

If you become interested in teaming up and intend to focus your research on a topic that overlaps with research done at SOFI, you can contact one of the professors, or some other member of the research staff at SOFI. If you find a supervisor from SOFI, you may consider to become a PhD student at SOFI. There is no formal schedule on how and when to apply for a position as PhD student at SOFI.

PhD students at SOFI are usually involved in ongoing projects of their supervisors. They might be asked if they are interested in teaching (e.g. undergraduate labor economics), but teaching is not mandatory.

### 7.4 *Seminars and study groups*

From your second year onward you should attend the seminar series offered by your institution. Attendance is not mandatory at the Department of Economics, but highly encouraged. At the IIES, graduate students are expected to attend all seminars. You are also free to attend the seminar series of the other two institutions at Stockholm University, or even at SSE. Seminars are announced on each institution's website.

There are two types of seminars:

1. Regular seminars are usually given by external invited speakers from all over the world;
2. Brown-bag seminars are used to present work in progress by faculty members and graduate students. You can start signing up for brown-bag seminars in your second year.

On top of the seminar series, there are various other reading or research groups with regular presentations:

Graduate student positions are announced online at <http://www.iies.su.se/about-us/vacancies>. In addition, the announcement is usually set out by email to students at SU.

- The *Macro reading group* is organized by students who present influential papers in macroeconomics. Students meet every two weeks on average.
- The “*Microwave*” is a group for students to present their research progress in all areas of applied microeconometrics, including development, labor and behavioral economics as well as Political Economy. The group meets every 2–3 weeks.
- The *Macro group* at IIES is organized as a research group where students mostly supervised by IIES faculty present their research progress.

### 7.5 Supervisors

One of the central tasks in your second year is to choose a supervisor. Unlike with many other programs in Sweden, you are not assigned a supervisor or mentor during your first year.

There is no formal requirement to have a supervisor from your institution. However, it is advisable to have either the supervisor or co-supervisor from your institution. This is due to funding, but also to time constraints: it can happen that professors prioritize students from their institution if their time is limited.

At the beginning of each academic year, some form of supervisor presentations are organized where potential supervisors from all three institutions present their research interests and ongoing projects. These events are primarily targeting students starting their second year and should “kick-start” the process of finding a supervisor.

Formally, the current director of graduate studies is your supervisor until you find one yourself.

### 7.6 Funding

*Disclaimer: The information presented below has been compiled by the Graduate Students’ Council and is meant to give an overview of the current funding situation. Needless to say, neither the Department of Economics nor the IIES is bound by anything written below, and thus your actual funding might differ.*

#### *Department of Economics*

The stipend / salary system at the department is somewhat complicated and undergoing repeated change due to new regulations at the university and national level. Currently there are three major funding schemes:

1. Initially, students are financed by so-called *donation stipends* which amount to 12,500 kr a month of non-taxable income. Since these are not a form of employment, social insurance such as parental and sickness leave are financed by *Kammarkollegiet*. There are no contributions paid to your pension account (either public or private) during this time.

See Kammarkollegiet’s website at <http://www.kammarkollegiet.se/english/insurance/doctoral-students-stipends> for information on how to claim parental and sick leave benefits.

Occasionally, students continue to be funded by donation stipends in their second year (or a part thereof), but the income received is increased to approximately 18,800 kr to be comparable to formal employment (see 2).

Note that since you pay no taxes, you cannot benefit from various tax deductions.

2. The main form of funding for most students is the so-called *doctoral studentship* or "*Doktorandtjänst*." Students receiving this funding are formally employed and thus entitled to the usual social insurance benefits available to other Swedish employees. However, by law this form of funding is limited to the first 48 months of full-time studies, *regardless of whether a student actually received Doktorandtjänst money during this time*. For example, a student who was financed by stipends in the first year can be financed by Doktorandtjänst only up to year 4, not 5.

The income received from Doktorandtjänst depends on the fraction of doctoral studies you have completed:

Percentage completed	Pre-tax income
less than 50%	24,100 kr
50%–80%	26,400 kr
more than 80%	28,000 kr

Your supervisor decides which category is applicable. The exact net-of-tax amount will depend on where you live (which determines your tax rate) and how much other taxable income you have (e.g. from TA and RA jobs). However, 24,000 kr correspond to roughly 19,000 kr after taxes.

While the law states that Doktorandtjänst can be paid only for 4 years of full-time studies, teaching can be used to extend financing beyond the fourth year. If you choose to TA courses (usually from the second year onwards), you are regarded as a part-time student, spending only 80% of your time on studying and research. The remaining 20% are devoted to teaching. Your salary will be adjusted accordingly (80% of the amount given above and 20% teaching salary). As a rule of thumb, funding is extended by six months for every 70 hours you teach (hours vary by course, since some courses are more time consuming).

Note that you forfeit this funding extension if you leave the department within the first four years (e.g. by transferring to IIES or SOFI).

3. A third source of funding comes from grants/stipends obtained by your supervisor or some other member of faculty. A major provider of such funds is Handelsbanken, a big Swedish bank. Handelsbanken in addition finances contributions to private pension insurance, however, parental and sick leave are again paid for by *Kammarkollegiet* (see 1).

This form of funding is explicitly granted for research purposes, hence it will in general be available only to students in

their later years who are done with course work.

The exact amount received depends on the particular grant, which might impose limits on the amount of stipends doctoral students are allowed to receive. The income progression ladder mentioned in 2 therefore is not applicable.

Unlike with Doktorandtjänst, students can receive these stipends beyond the fourth year, but this depends on arrangements they make with their supervisor.

Teaching is also treated differently: students on stipends get paid for teaching by the hour, but do not become eligible for funding extensions.

*Funding timeline.* To summarize, the funding over your entire PhD (conditional on staying at the department throughout) will look as follows:

*Years 1–2:* You are initially funded by donation stipends and usually transition into formal employment (Doktorandtjänst) at some point in your second year.

*Years 2–5:* You are funded either via Doktorandtjänst (until year 5 if you earned extensions by teaching) or grants obtained by your supervisor.

*Years 5–end:* You are funded by grants your supervisor may have obtained. There is no guarantee that such funds will be available to you.

*Studying abroad.* If you choose to go abroad (see § 7.7), your funding period is not on hold, even though you do not receive any funds from the Department of Economics during that time. According to the current formula, the department deducts half a year of funding for one year spent abroad, i.e. if you fund yourself from other sources for one academic year while abroad, the department will fund you for 3.5 years (assuming that you have no extension from teaching).

*Additional funds.* Each student has up to 30,000 kr to spend on conferences and summer schools during the first two years (pending supervisor approval). Additional funding may be provided by your supervisor in later years.

## IIES

The funding scheme at the IIES is much simpler:

- If you start as an RA in your first year, you receive income comparable to first-year students at the department.
- Once you are admitted as a graduate student, you receive a non-taxable stipend of 18,000 kr per month (20,000 kr starting from July 2016), which is drawn from your supervisor's funds. Since you are not employed at IIES, and thus do not contribute

to your pension benefits, you receive an additional 50,000 kr a year which are to be invested in a savings account or fund at Handelsbanken (the exact rules are somewhat ambiguous).

- Just like department students funded by stipends, you are entitled to parental and sick leave financed by *Kammarkollegiet*.

*Teaching.* There is no obligation to teach, and teaching will not extend your funding. Teaching salaries (which are taxable) are paid by the Department of Economics on top of your IIES stipend.

*Studying abroad.* If you choose to go abroad on external funding, your IIES money will be put on hold. The same rule applies if you do an internship, for example at the Riksbank (the Swedish central bank).

*Additional funds.* Additional funds for conferences, summer schools, etc. may be available. You have to arrange for these with your supervisor.

## 7.7 *Studying abroad*

There are ample opportunities to study abroad during your PhD. Students usually go in their third, fourth or even fifth year, depending on whether they want to attend courses or focus on research when abroad. The paragraphs below are intended to give you a broad idea of your options.

### *US universities / Hedelius scholarship*

In the past, students have spent an academic year at top US universities such as Harvard, MIT, Yale, NYU, Columbia, Princeton and others. These are the things to keep in mind:

- The main source of funding for most students is the Hedelius scholarship, which awards up to 700,000 kr to study abroad. The application deadline is in September of the year *prior* to the academic year when you actually want to go.

Note that the Hedelius scholarship is not tied to going to US universities, even though most students do. The LSE is one popular non-US alternative.

Additionally, in the past students have visited US universities without receiving the Hedelius scholarship.

- Deadlines for applications to US universities vary widely, sometimes ending more than half a year before you actually want to go.
- If you need to secure an invitation from a faculty member of your host university, having a supervisor with contacts to faculty at a particular university is an advantage.

The Hedelius scholarship website is located at <http://www.handelsbanken.se/shb/inet/IStartSv.nsf/FrameSet?OpenView&id=Forskningstiftelserna>.

*ENTER network*

Another alternative is to visit one of the participating universities within the ENTER program, which include 1. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; 2. Université Libre de Bruxelles; 3. UCL; 4. Universidad Carlos III de Madrid; 5. Universität Mannheim; 6. Tilburg University; and 7. Université de Toulouse 1. Each institution also offers presentation slots in their seminar series to students from participating universities. Additionally, universities take turns arranging an annual conference where students present their work.

Website: <http://www.enter-network.org>

If you want to study abroad or present at partner universities, contact the current student ENTER coordinator at the Department of Economics.

*PODER network*

Policy Design and Evaluation Research in Developing Countries (PODER) offers fellowships to PhD students who want to visit one of the participating universities besides IIES: 1. Bocconi University; 2. Paris School of Economics 3. Facultes Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix à Namur; and 4. LSE.

Website: <http://poder.cepr.org>

Two types of fellowships are available for either Early Stage Researchers (ESRs) or for Experienced Researchers (ERs). ESRs are mainly meant for 2nd to 4th year PhD students, ERs for 5th year PhD students.

The network gives students a chance to take courses and/or to conduct research during a 3–36 months period for ESRs or a 3–24 months period for ERs at one of the above universities.

# 8

## *Extracurricular activities*

### *8.1 Graduate Students' Council (GSC)*

The GSC is a student body that handles issues concerning the social and academic life of economics PhD students at SU. Meetings are typically held twice a term. The idea is to discuss issues affecting more than one student and agree on a joint decision and course of action when dealing with faculty or the administration.

Website: <http://www.ne.su.se/english/education/2.3646/the-graduate-students-council-1.17183>

#### *The GSC board*

The board is elected at the beginning of each academic year. The number of positions varies, but these core position should be filled every year:

1. President (possibly assisted by a vice president);
2. Treasurer; the GSC does not have any funds of its own, but can apply for a grant from the student union (500 kr) to cover operational expenses such as buns at GSC meetings.
3. Representative at the Department Board ("Institutionsstyrelse");
4. Representative at the Social Science Faculty Council;
5. Course evaluators for first- and second-year courses; Course evaluators are responsible for managing electronic course evaluations (feedback forms) sent out to students after each course. This task is rather straightforward (filling in course name, lecturers, etc.; sending out the forms; processing and communicating results). Currently this is the only GSC position that is paid (approx. 15,000 kr per year before tax for both evaluators). Usually, the first-year course evaluator is chosen from the current first-year cohort, the course evaluator for second-year courses from the current second-year students.

All GSC board members are entitled to a funding extension to compensate for they effort (ranging 15 days for the president to 2 days for other board members).

GSC meetings are announced by email. You are more than welcome to drop by!

### *Activities*

- There are some reoccurring tasks performed by the GSC, for instance organizing social activities for incoming students and throughout the year (jointly with SSE).
- Assignment of buddies to incoming PhD students;
- Organizing the SUDSWEC conference (joint with Uppsala and SSE) every third year;
- Other initiatives in the past included:
  1. conducting a general assessment of second year courses regarding availability of syllabi, course literature and the deadlines and rules surrounding registration to the courses;
  2. introducing payment for course evaluators;
  3. monthly faculty lunch, gathering PhD students and professors from the Department and the IIES.
  4. The PhD night out (jointly with SSE).

### 8.2 *FENSU*

FENSU is a network for female PhD students in Economics at Stockholm University, Uppsala University, the Stockholm School of Economics and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. The purpose is to support female PhD students in Economics by providing contacts between female economists in the region and by providing female role-models for junior female economists. In the past years the main activities of FENSU have been the organization of social events such as informal meetings for a drink, as well as more formal meetings like panel discussions on career paths for young economists in and outside academia.

The FENSU Facebook group is located at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/335576189796902/>.

To join FENSU, contact a FENSU board member from SU.

### 8.3 *Sports*

#### *Staff gym*

There is a staff gym at Stockholm University that can be used by PhD students. The fee is approximately 500 kr per term, which is usually paid by your institution. Contact the administrative staff at your institution to arrange for the amount to be paid.

Note that you need a short introduction to the gym before you are allowed to use it (see information and contacts on its website).

Website: <http://www.su.se/english/staff-info/personnel/working-environment-health/sports-facilities/staff-gym>

#### *Friskvårdsbidrag*

All PhD students are entitled to a subsidy for gym and sports activities up to a maximum of 1,500 kr per year. To get the reimbursement you need to hand in the receipts (no older than three months!) to the administrative staff. You can be reimbursed for membership fees, but not for tickets for a single entrance. Activities that are covered include gym memberships, swimming or racket sports.

*Football (soccer) / floorball*

Football is being played Wednesdays, 11.30–13.00. Student and faculty from all three institutions can sign up. You need to be added to the mailing list to be able to participate.

Floorball (“innebandy”) takes place Fridays, 12.00–13.00. The procedure to participate is the same as above.

Ask older cohorts who is currently in charge of the mailing list for football / floorball.

## *Bibliography*

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