Reg. No.
STYR 2018/45

Date 2018-01-19

Research Programmes Board
Margareta Forsberg, board secretary

Guidelines for collaborations between MSc students and doctoral students at the Faculty of Engineering

With these guidelines, the Research Programmes Board (FUN) at the Faculty of Engineering (LTH) clarifies how degree projects can be carried out and supervised within the context of a doctoral

thesis project on the faculty's third-cycle programmes, so as to avoid suspicions of deceitful plagiarism. The reason for this is that LTH doctoral student representatives has called attention to a judicial precedent where a doctoral student collaborated with MSc students on their degree projects, and the doctoral student copied segments of the MSc theses and added MSc students as passive unknowing co-authors in his thesis [1]. In the context of research and education at LTH, collaboration is a regular occurrence and often a logical prerequisite. The majority of the doctoral theses are compilations, in which the individual doctoral student's contributions are clarified in 1) the synthesis (in the introductory chapter or monograph) and 2) the required declaration of the division of labour for each thesis section

involving a co-author. LTH's position is that collaborations between doctoral students and students working on degree projects have several significant benefits that should be safeguarded:

- The Doctoral students have the opportunity to practise instruction. In the Higher Education Ordinance, this is stipulated as one of the learning outcomes for a degree of Doctor: "*The third-cycle student shall [...] demonstrate the capacity to contribute to social*

*development and support the learning of others both through research and education…"[*2]. This type of educational experience is expected to have a positive impact on the doctoral student's ability to process research hypotheses and thus contributes to their education [3]. The doctoral students thereby supervise rather than carry out the planned sub-study.

- The MSc students have the opportunity to conduct their degree project in an authentic learning situation, often linked to companies that may provide future job opportunities for the students. This type of study situation has a major potential impact on the student's employability and personal motivation and, in turn, their performance and attainment of the learning outcomes for a degree of MSc, in accordance with the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance. One of the key learning outcomes in the syllabi for degree project courses at LTH is for students to *"demonstrate the ability to be actively engaged in research and development and thereby contribute to the advancement of knowledge".*

- The departments use their resources in a financially responsible way, as the MSc project and a limited part of the doctoral project may share the same empirical material and expensive equipment, for example. If students working on a degree project are not allowed to take part in doctoral projects, their study programmes may be forced to create invented degree projects at a higher cost. Furthermore, it is typical for MSc projects to contribute only with a limited aspect of a major, complex research issue.

- The faculty (LTH) finds it beneficial that research conducted by MSc students reaches the research community.

To avoid any suspicions of deceitful plagiarism, self- plagiarism or duplicate publication, the Research Programmes Board (FUN) at LTH hereby introduces the following guidelines:

   a) A MSc project is primarily a practice project ("grey literature" with limited international dissemination [1]). This means that the content of the MSc project, in whole or in part, may coincide with a research publication of a doctoral student (or

another researcher). LTH considers this to be a legitimate duplicate publication, provided that the relationship is reported openly by e.g. referring to the MSc project in the research publication.

b) In accordance with sound research conduct, MSc students who substantially contribute to a research publication of a doctoral student (or another researcher) shall be included as a co-author. All co-authors are responsible for the entire content of the publication, unless otherwise stated, and all co-authors must approve the final draft prior to publication [4, 5]. Planned and implemented co-publications should be documented in the doctoral student's individual study plan (in LADOK) as early as possible.

c) If the MSc student refrains from co-authorship, or if the content of the MSc project is used in a doctoral student's introductory chapter or monograph (without the possibility of coauthorship), all the facts and statements in the MSc thesis reused in the doctoral thesis must include a reference to the MSc project.

d) If the Author guidelines for the research publication do not allow referencing to MSc projects and similar "grey literature", the significance of the MSc project to the publication must be stated under Acknowledgments, Author contributions or equivalent headings.

e) The relationship between the supervising doctoral student's thesis and the MSc project should be described briefly in the MSc project, preferably, in the Introduction or the Acknowledgments section.

f) The doctoral student's supervisor, the doctoral student, and the MSc student (and other involved research collaborators) may draw up an agreement regarding the ownership of the study material and the timetable for the investigation. Note that the MSc student's and doctoral student's joint work may be subject to confidentiality, but this must not prevent either of

them from defending their theses within the designated timeframes of their studies.

The Research Programmes Board (FUN) at LTH finds that the above guidelines (a–f) comply with Lund University's plagiarism policy [6]. In Application rule 4 of the policy, Lund University emphasises that the intended learning outcomes of the study programmes determine the level of independence required. According to the Research Programmes Board, collaboration between MSc students and doctoral students within a certain part of the doctoral student's third-cycle studies does not inhibit the doctoral student's independence. Rather, the supervision and collaboration that it entails are found to contribute to the doctoral student's development of independence as well as their attainment of several of the independence-related intended learning outcomes for third-cycle studies, in accordance with the Higher Education Ordinance [2]. Lund University's Application rule 12 on deceitful self-plagiarism [6] can also be considered to be conformed to by the guidelines a–f above, as these prescribe that co-publications between MSc students and doctoral students are to be documented openly, with clear links between publications. In addition, the board finds that the guidelines a–f are in line with the judgement made by the Administrative Court in its judicial precedent [1].

References

[1] Administrative Court in Uppsala, Verdict 14 May 2014 (case no 6813-13), 20 pp.

[2] Higher Education Ordinance/Qualifications Ordinance.

[3] Feldon et al, 2011: Graduate Students' Teaching Experiences lmprove Their Methodological Research Skills. http:/lscience.sciencemaq.orqlgontentl333/6045/1037

[4] The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (Revised Edition). ALLEA – All European Academies, Berlin 2017, 20 pp. http://www.allea.orq/allea-publishesrevised-edition-european-code-conduct-researchintegrity/

[5] ICMJE, Defining the role of authors and contributors.
www.icmje.orq/icmjerecommendations.pdf

[6] Lund University: Guidelines and regulations on plagiarism and deceitful plagiarism in first-, second- and third-cycle education at Lund University. Reg. no LS 2010/722.

LTH's "Guidelines regarding collaboration between MSc students and doctoral students at the Faculty of Engineering" were drawn up by director of studies at LTH Anders Ahlberg in collaboration with the Research Programmes Board at LTH. They are hereby adopted by the undersigned Dean of LTH.

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