

Fakultetsstyrelsen

LUSEM RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION OF THE PHD PROGRAM IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

The PhD program in Business Administration underwent an evaluation by an external peer-review panel in early 2022. It was based on the program self-evaluation report and interviews with the program management as well as a selected number of teachers/supervisors and doctoral students at a site visit in January 2022. The results of the evaluation were presented in a report, and based on the suggestions by the panel, the department has outlined several measures to further improve the quality of the program. The doctoral students were invited to nominate a member of the peer-review panel as well as to write a response to the self-evaluation report – offers that they accepted.

Overall, the peer-review panel was positive towards the PhD program in Business Administration and found it to be working well and quite strong. The panel pointed to several strengths, including a cohesive program structure, good routines in place for admittance of students and assignment of supervisors, and established routines for quality control through seminars at the start and the end of the program. The panel also mentioned a high level of integration of PhD candidates in externally funded research projects, which give students first-hand experience in conducting high-quality research as a positive aspect, and placement data showing that PhDs from the Business Administration program get interesting jobs within academia as well as in other sectors. The peer-review panel also pointed to the excellent administrative support as a key strength of the program. The panel found that the goals of the program were fulfilled.

The panel also identified some weaknesses and causes for concern and gave valuable suggestions how to improve various aspects of the program. From a strategic point of view, the panel pointed at the high degree of external funding and how this could limit the program's scope and make it vulnerable to changes in the success rate when it comes to attracting external funding. The panel also raised concern that external funding could

affect the admittance process and suggested that the heads of department and PhD program should safeguard quality checks in this respect through a somewhat more formalized (and centralized) recruitment process and vetting of supervisors. Another cause for concern was that the program is rather small, making it difficult to create a critical mass of PhD students in different subdisciplines. The panel also noticed the lack of research groups in which PhD students can learn from peers and where synergies between projects and students might emerge. A larger program would establish cohorts of PhD students starting at the same time (once or twice a year) and support PhD candidates that may feel lonely during the early phases of the PhD program. Relatedly, the panel mentioned that the quality control through seminars at the start and the end of the program should be further formalized by adding at least one more compulsory (mid-term) seminar. This could also serve to detect and help underperforming students. As for content, the panel recognized a varied and high-quality package of courses available to PhD candidates and recommend that this portfolio is further developed and communicated at the start of the program to assist the candidates in identifying their course packages. The panel also recommended that candidates should be encouraged to take the compulsory courses early in the program and add on appropriate electives to strengthen their skills development and prepare them for alternative future careers. This should also be supported through a more explicit strategy for PhD student placement at the department of Business Administration.

In their response to the evaluation report, the department management addresses all these points of concern and suggestions for improvements and offer several promising solutions and further developments of the program. Their response testifies that they will use the result of the evaluation as a tool to improve the program, and it also shows that the management of the department is responsive to concerns and open to new ideas from both external reviewers and students at the department. Given that there is continuity in the department management to secure that the diffusion of new ideas and routines to innovate and revise the program, the program will likely be strengthened in the foreseeable future.

The LUSEM management agrees with many of the judgements made by the department in response to the peer-review panel. When it comes to proposed improvements, we would like to stress that while external funding is important and encouraged for the sake of competitive research, the department should try to foster strong research groups alongside with a strong research education program. The admittance process and allocation of supervisors should be further formalized and aim for admittance of a group of PhD candidates once a year, preferably in September so that they not only make up a group in Business Administration but also can benefit from activities for all new PhD candidates at LUSEM. The department should also better utilize internal funding to enlarge the program and to balance

recruitment over years and across subdisciplines. The introduction of additional quality checks through another compulsory (mid-term) seminar is highly encouraged alongside with an exit talk. This could definitely serve to detect students that need help. Further, the varied package of courses available to PhD candidates should be further developed and communicated clearly at the start of the program to assist the candidates (and supervisors) in planning the candidates' skills development and prepare them better for alternative future careers. The department that hosts an important part of the research education at LUSEM is encouraged to continue its efforts to continuously improve the quality of the program by following the many good suggestions made by the peer-review panel.

On behalf of the LUSEM management team



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