

INTRODUCTION

This survey sought to gather information about PhD students' sense of integration and belonging at Karlstad University. It aims at improving and strengthening the GSA Board activities for the PhD students to feel part of the PhD community.

This survey was inspired by previous studies about PhD integration and belonging. In short, the sense of *integration* and *belonging* have direct effects on students' motivation, and thus, on their success. The concepts of integration and of sense of belonging are understood as having a close meaning. In other words, integration is not considered as the abnegation of the culture of origin of a person in favour of the dominant culture. It is considered as the possibilities offered by the environment to have the same chance as everyone else (including those from the dominant culture). It is measured through “a combination of various things, such as: “your interaction and contact with people who are different to you (...); “access to employment or volunteering opportunities(...); “your accommodation (...); “access to education (...); and “access to health care (...)”¹.

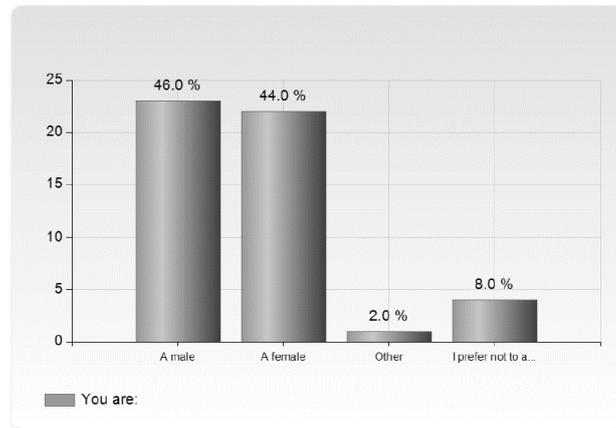
Shortly, the results show a lack of information for newcomers, a lack social activities organised by the Board, which are not enough diversified (e.g. for PhD who have a family). In addition, there is a lack of information about the Ombudsperson and her or his role. The results of the survey cannot solve issues about health, housing, and employment, but they can improve our understanding of what the PhD students need. Also, it gives a fair picture of your situation as a PhD student.

¹ Gregory, J. (2018). *Integration experiences of international students: A situated case-study* (Doctoral, University of Huddersfield). Retrieved from <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/34783/>

FINDINGS

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

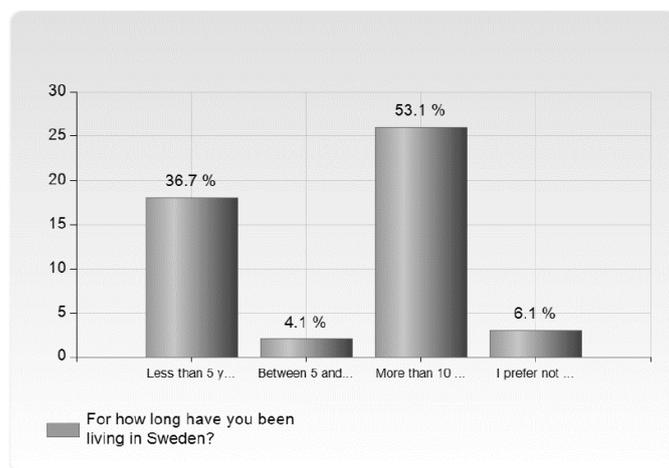
Fifty-one students answered the survey. The distribution in terms of gender is very balanced as the results show:



Which department are you affiliated with?	Number of Responses
Karlstad Business School	3 (6.0%)
Department of Artistic Studies	0 (0.0%)
Department of Political, Historical, Religious and Cultural Studies	6 (12.0%)
Department of Social and Psychological Studies	4 (8.0%)
Department of Language, Literature and Intercultural Studies	3 (6.0%)
Department of Geography, Media and Communication	4 (8.0%)
Department of Educational Studies	5 (10.0%)
Department of Environmental and Life Sciences	7 (14.0%)
Department of Health Sciences	2 (4.0%)
Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences	2 (4.0%)
Department of Engineering and Physics	4 (8.0%)
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science	8 (16.0%)
I prefer not to answer	2 (4.0%)
Total	50 (100.0%)

As the figure above shows, almost all departments are represented in the survey.

Swedish is the native language of half of the participants, and more than half (53.1%) of the participants have been living in Sweden for more than ten years. A significant share of the participants (36.7%) has been living in Sweden for less than five years. Only two participants (4.1%) have been living in Sweden between five and ten years.



A small majority of the participants (56.0%) do not have children, and 42.0% do have children.

HIGHLIGHTS

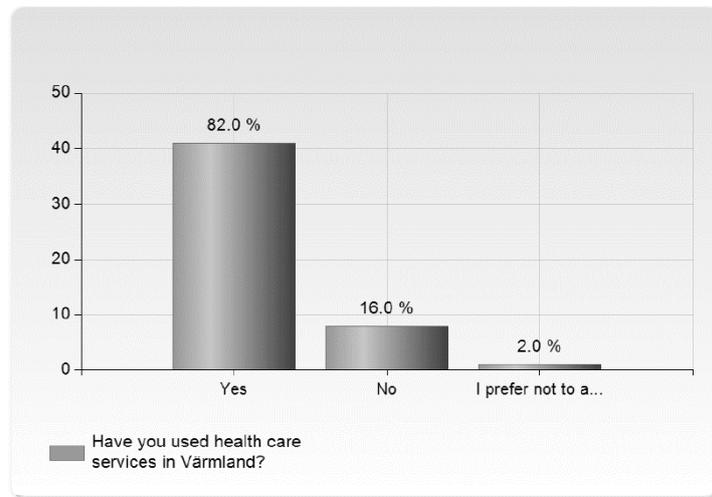
37% of the respondents have been living in Sweden for less than 5 years and 48% do *not* have Swedish as their native language

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT LIFE IN VÄRMLAND

- General information

Half of the respondents answered the general question: Do you think the university should provide more information about life in Sweden? 31.1% answered yes, and 20.0% answered no. Among those who answered yes, many mentioned the lack of information about administrative tasks (e.g. personnummer, Skatteverket, insurances, banking) and daily-life in Sweden (housing, healthcare, transport, SFI, information about cultural activities, basic legal information).

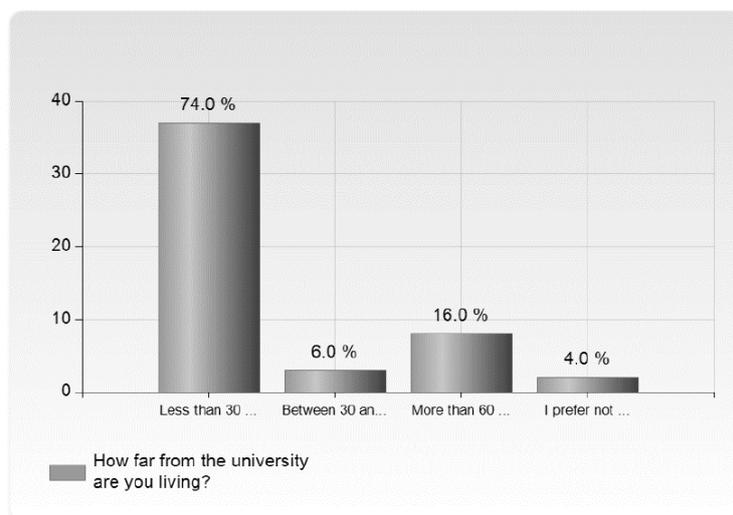
- **Health care services**



The figure above shows that the great majority of the participants have used the health care services in Värmland. For those *who have used* the health care services in Värmland, 34.1% (14 participants) stated that they had not been sufficiently informed about these services before they used them. For those who have *not* used the health care services, 50.0% (4 participants) stated that they are not sufficiently informed about health care services in Värmland.

- **Housing**

Most of the respondents (74.0%) live less than 30 km far from the university.



Almost all of the participants (92.0%) have a long-term solution (more than a year) for accommodation. However, three participants (6.0%) do not. The length of time taken to get access to long-term

accommodation is disparate. 15.2% of the participants needed more than six months, 30.4% needed between two and six months, and 34.8% needed less than two months. However, a large share of the participants preferred not to answer this question (19.6%).

HIGHLIGHTS

Newcomers need **more information about life in Sweden**

(e.g. about administration, health care, etc.)

Also, there is a clear need to help newcomers **to quickly find**

a long-term accommodation. 46% of the respondents needed more than two months to get access to a long-term accommodation

LIFE AS A PHD STUDENT AT KARLSTAD UNIVERSITY

- After your PhD life

A large majority of the participants (60.4%) wish to stay in Värmland after finishing their studies. A smaller share of the participants (27.1%) do not wish to stay in Värmland after their studies. It is noted that 12.5% of the participants did not state if they wish to stay. Among those who do *not* wish to stay in Värmland, some mention that they have their family and friends elsewhere, and/or there is a lack of opportunities in Värmland (in terms of jobs), and/or they have no affinity with the geographical location.

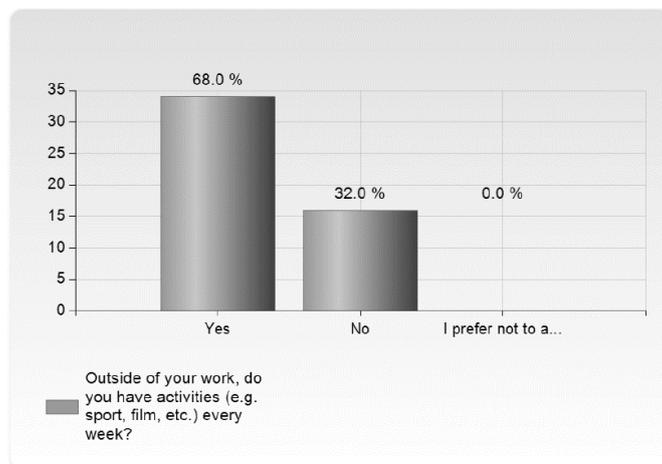
Among those who wish to stay in Värmland, 83.3% would like to work for the university, and only 6.7% do not want to. However, some respondents are already employed by the university (e.g. adjunkt), thus, this figure should be considered with precaution. Those who do *not* wish to work for the university mentioned the workload or that they were working already for another institution. Those who wish to work for the university mentioned that they already work for the university, and/or that they like the friendly environment at Karlstad University, and/or that they like research and teaching.

HIGHLIGHTS

More than a quarter of the respondents do *not* wish to stay in Värmland after their PhD. Among those who wish to stay, 83% wish to work at the university (although this figure includes those already in ‘adjunkt’ positions).

- Social activities

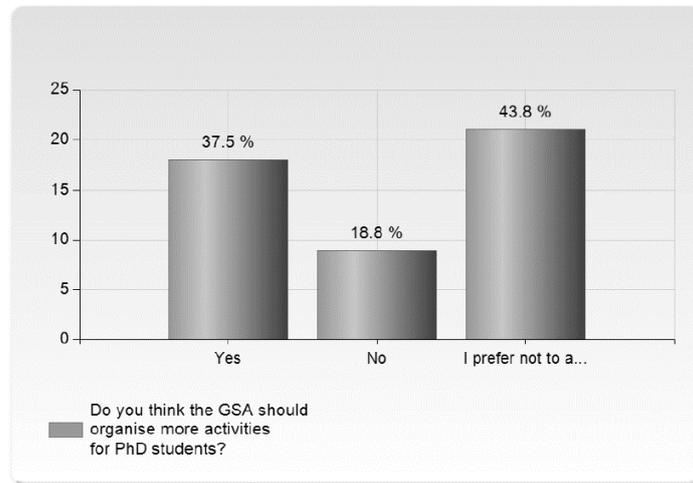
A great majority of the participants (68.0%) answered that they have activities every week. However, 32.0% of the participants answered that they do not.



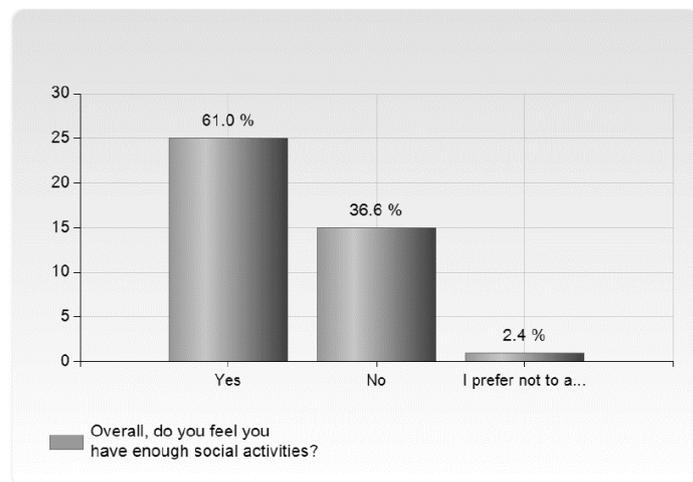
Most of the participants (68.0%) answered that they do not attend PhD pubs. The reasons mentioned concern mainly the lack of time (family obligations, workload, other activities) or the distance from their home. A few answers stressed other reasons, i.e. “I don’t drink,” “I am not much of a pub-person,” the lack of persons attending PhD pub, and being a *new* PhD.

- GSA activities

A good majority of the participants who answered the question on GSA activities (37.5%) thought that the GSA should organise more activities, and only 18.8% answered no. However, most of the participants did not provide a yes or no answer.



Although a good majority of the respondents feel they have enough social activities, 36.6% feel that they do not.

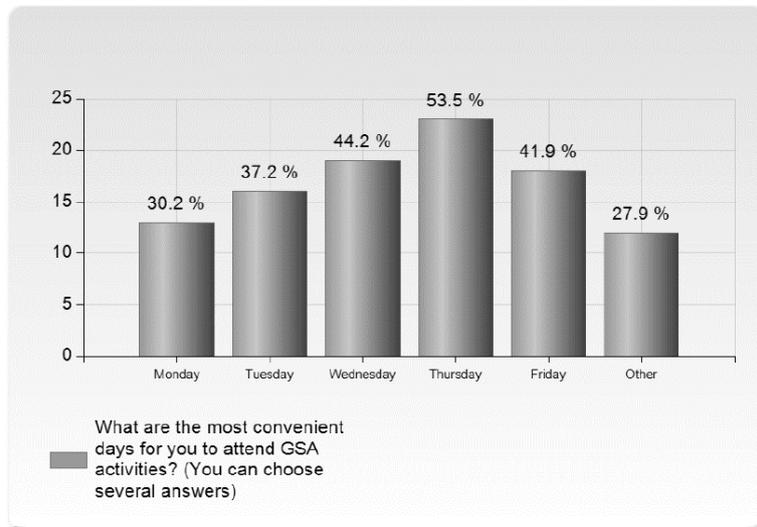


In terms of potential social activities, the respondents proposed several short excursions (including sport-related or cultural related excursions) and trips. Also, they propose a fair diversity of activities:

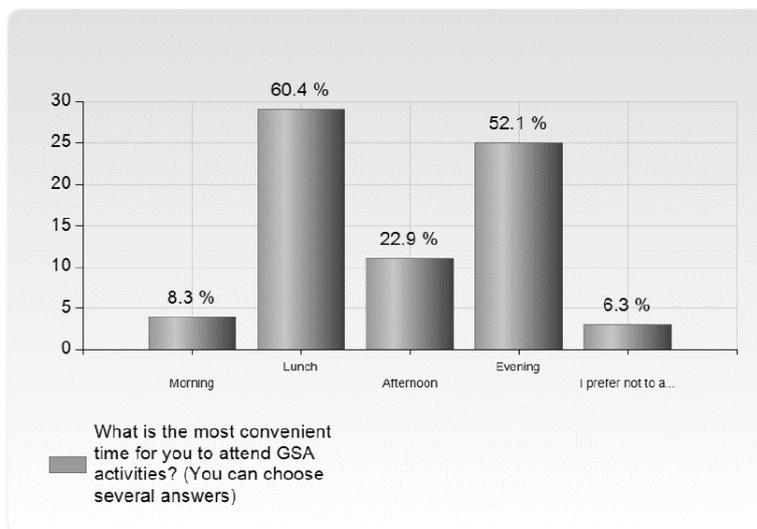
- Activities with children
- Daytime activities
- Evening activities (alternatives to PhD pubs)

- Activities oriented towards work (informative meetings, etc.)
- Games
- Paintball

In terms of availability, the respondents answered that the most convenient days to attend GSA activities are Thursdays.



In terms of availability during the day, lunches and evenings are by far the most convenient moments for the respondents to attend GSA activities.



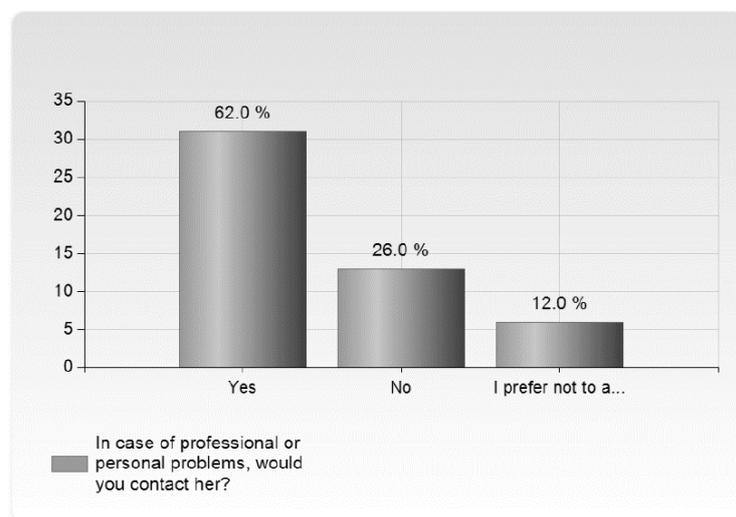
HIGHLIGHTS

32% of the respondents do *not* have social activities every week, and
37% feel that they do *not* have enough social activities.
Also, there is a need for alternatives to PhD pubs (in terms of time, and goal)

INFORMATION ABOUT THE GSA

- Ombudsperson

The great majority of the respondents (78.0%) know what the role of the Ombudsperson is. However, 20.0% of the respondents do not. In the case of professional or personal problems, the majority of the respondents (62.0%) would contact the Ombudsperson. Nevertheless, 26.0% of the respondents would not contact the Ombudsperson.



Among those who answered that they would not contact the Ombudsperson, some explained that they could get help from other persons (e.g. friends, colleagues). A few answers acknowledged that the respondents do not know who the Ombudsperson is and/or what his or her role is. One person mentioned a lack of trust, indicating her or his a lack of experience.

In response to the question, *What do you expect from the GSA board?*, the respondents mainly mentioned support for PhD students, and making the PhD education equal for all. In addition, some respondents suggested providing information about the GSA board activities, and strengthening the PhD community.

HIGHLIGHTS

20% of the respondents do *not* know what the role of the Ombudsperson is, and 62% would contact the Ombudsperson in case of professional or personal problems.

The respondents expect to be supported as PhD students by the GSA board, to receive relevant information about their position, and to have more social activities.

Finally, one of you asked for:

A year with some fun and inspiring activities :)

We will do our best!

THE WAY FORWARD

Considering the PhD students needs, the GSA Board aims at focusing our actions on:

- Increasing **social activities** among PhD students (Introduction day, PhD Aws, PhD lunches, etc.)
- Providing **useful information** for PhD students (PhD rights, administrative information, GSA activities) on Canvas; and increasing the communication from the GSA board to the PhD students on a general level (e.g. monthly newsletter)
- Increasing the visibility of the **Ombudsperson** and his or her role

The next survey will be longer, and it will be sent out in September. It will be conducted every year to follow the evolution of PhD students' situations.

QUESTIONNAIRE

- Information about the participant
 - o Male / Female / Other / I prefer not to answer this question*

* Abbreviated as PNTA

- o Which department are you affiliated with? [list / PNTA]
 - o Is Swedish your native language? [Yes / No/ PNTA]
 - o For how long have you been living in Sweden? [less than 5 years/between 5 and 10 years / More than 10 years / PNTA]
 - o Do you have children? [Yes / No/ PNTA]
-
- Health care in Värmland:
 - o Have you used health care services in Värmland? [Yes / No/ PNTA]
 - If yes, were you sufficiently informed about it in advance? [Yes / No/ PNTA]
 - If no, do you feel sufficiently informed to use the Swedish health care services in Värmland? [Yes / No/ PNTA]
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- Housing in Värmland:
 - o How far from the university are you living? [less than 30 km / between 30 and 60 km / more than 60 km / PNTA]
 - o Do you have a long-term solution (more than a year) for accommodation?
 - If yes, how long did it take to get this accommodation? [less than 2 months / between 2 and 6 months / more than 6 months / PNTA]
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- Employment
 - o After finishing your PhD, do you wish to stay in Värmland? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If no, why? [open question]
 - If yes, do you wish to work at the university? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If yes, why? [open question]
 - If no, why? [open question]
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- GSA:
 - o Outside of your work, do you have activities (e.g. sport, film, etc.) every week? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - o Do you attend PhD pubs? [Yes / No / PNTA]

- If no, why? [open question]
- Do you think the GSA should organise more activities for PhD students? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If yes, what activities would you like to do with other PhD students? [open question]
- Overall, do you feel you have enough social activities? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If no, why? [open question]
- What are the most convenient days for you to attend GSA activities? [Several answers possible]
 - Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday / Thursday / Friday
 - Other? [Open question]
- What is the most convenient time for you to attend GSA activities? [Several answers possible]
 - Morning / lunch / afternoon / evening
 - More details? [Open question]
- Ombudsperson:
 - Do you know what the role of the Ombudsperson for PhD students at Karlstad University is? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - In the case of professional or personal problems, would you contact her? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If no, why? [open question]
- Generally:
 - Do you think the university should provide more information about life in Sweden? [Yes / No / PNTA]
 - If yes, what type of information? [open question]
 - What do you expect from the GSA board? [open question]