



Reykjavík 05. Febrúar 2010

Tilvísun í mál: RAN091203-3044

Comments on a draft report of expert committee on an application by RU-SSE for an accreditation for a PhD programme.

We find the report to be complete, accurate and pertinent in all aspects. We found discussions we engaged in with the committee during its visit were fruitful and instructive to us as we hope they were for the committee.

There are however some points where we think that the report might profit from the comments we provide below.

1. In item 7 in section 6, Summary of Findings (Page 16), the Expert committee comments on the provision in the rules for the SSE PhD programme that every PhD candidate should spend an extended period at another university as a part of the PhD course of study. The committee recommends that it should be specified that this should always take place abroad.
This was widely discussed when the rules were being created, both in the SSE and in the School of Computer Science that has identical rules in this respect. The consensus was not to add the firm requirement that the period be spent abroad in all cases. This was seen to provide too little flexibility in the programme. The idea behind this provision is that all of our students should gain insight into how things are done at other institutions. It also helps supervisors develop and mature relationships with colleagues locally and internationally. We consider that this will almost in all cases be in an institution not in Iceland. There will however be international students recruited to the programme and during their PhD studies they are already in some sense abroad and probably come from MSc programmes to which the RU supervisor has good connections. Co-supervised PhD thesis with the University of Iceland may also be quite common and in the case of a candidate coming from abroad and being co-supervised with UI this provision is unnecessary. Currently we have one case of such a student in SSE and about half of the PhD students that are currently active in SSE are from abroad.



The committee also suggests in item 7 that SSE adds to the current rules that supervisors should be formally approved by the SSE RC for each PhD study. We find this an excellent point. However we have the understanding that this is already a part of the current rules. In article 4 on admission procedures it says:

“... Applications are reviewed by the Research Council, which makes a recommendation on acceptance or rejection, as well as determining whether students need to take any preparatory courses. The recommendation is based on student qualifications, the commitment of a qualified supervisor, and availability of funds. The Dean of the School of Science and Engineering makes the final decision. ...“

2. In item 10 in section 6, Summary of Findings (Page 17), the committee expresses concern over the size and type of students in the pool of MSc students graduated from the SSE.

We have no intention of limiting the pool of recruits to newly graduated MSc students from the SSE and in fact do expect many of our PhD students to come from other institutions. To assure that the programme is populated by well qualified students we will recruit internationally and nationally in a similar fashion as we recruit faculty. Another source of students is people that have worked in industry and feel the professional or personal need to continue towards a PhD. We believe that recruiting widely and very selectively into the programme is essential to create and maintain quality. For the above reasons we do not agree with the statement that SSE should have graduated a substantial number of MSc students in every focus field prior to accreditation to start a PhD program.

We have however started a full range of MSc programs that are based on our focus fields and expect to graduate as many as 30 MSc students in 2010 and over 60 per year from those programmes as soon as 2012. (See table 2.). We therefore expect to have a substantial number of MSc graduates in most of our focus fields in the coming years.

In view of the arguments set forward above, we do consider our current MSc programs to be a sufficient base for a PhD programme and agree sincerely with point no 5 In the Summary of findings (page 16), where the committee points to the goal of the SSE of graduating approximately 5 PhD students based on an MSc program that produces ca 50 students as a well formulated strategy.

Minor errors and imprecision.

1. Section 3.1. Roles and objectives. We find the phrasing “business oriented university” slightly imprecise. A more precise wording would in our opinion be “technology and business oriented university”, as technology and sciences account for about half of the operations of RU.
2. Section 3.2. The highest unit in the organisational chart of RU is the *Board of trustees* but in the text it is often referred to as the *University council*.



3. Section 3.2. The committee that is composed of the Deans and other key personnel is usually referred to as the *Executive committee* and not Executive Board.
4. Section 3.2. Page 7 near the top. School of Science and Engineering and not School of Engineering.
5. Text of the Table 2. *2010* and not 2009
6. New versions of the tables are attached as working versions of the tables were sent by error and not the final versions. The information contained in the tables is essentially the same as before but there are minor differences in the numbers.
7. A new version of the organisational charter that contains information on the executive committee of RU is also attached.

Sincerely

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