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I have been in the pharmaceutical industry for many years. I have experience of working in research, being a regulatory director, project manager, line manager and as time past I also educated myself into an upper high school teacher. Time and experiences made me very interested in people and organizational development and I am still there. Two years ago I was given the opportunity to come here, to Chalmers, which was a wonderful surprise in my life.

What do you see PhD students lack when they move to work sectors?

I hesitate to look at PhD students as one collective of people that needs something. We all are different with different dreams and options and my belief is that we should start from our self and make plans for the future in relation with our surrounding environment but perhaps not “on-demand” by the surrounding world. The GTS training aims to support success in studies and prepare young researchers for a career in the academic and non-academic world. They are not only for those who plan to continue into the non-academic world but also for all young researchers at Chalmers.

How important are the GTS courses for the development of a PhD student?

The GTS activities are complementary to travelling abroad meeting people and learning new skills or working in interdisciplinary teams in larger projects etc. They are here to make your transferable skills visible to yourself and others. They support you to explicitly put words to the experiences you have in this area (your skills) and the skills you would like to work on further to develop your dream or preferred future.

We are unique beings and my understanding is that Chalmers look at our differences as an important resource in our common future development and cherish this by saying - we need to learn to be as effective as possible in communicating with each other also from our differences in a critically empathic way. This kind of communication is one platform for reaching excellence in research, which I believe you aim for.

To communicate effectively we need to learn about other working environments/disciplines too, we need to understand how we are perceived by others and how we relate to other - something the GTS activities aim to support as well as they offer tools for collaboration.

Skills are learned by practicing them – it is crucial that you apply the learning outcome from the courses into your everyday work to practice the skills. Employers and fundraiser will ask for learning from experiences, your skills. They will also know that you are able to plan and stick to your plan (your ambitions) as long as it is reasonable – this is why it is not sufficient to show a curriculum of courses you have ticked off, but also how you have used/implemented your insights at work.

How important are feedbacks for GTS? Have you changed anything after receiving feedback?

It is crucial for the GTS team to receive feedback from participants concerning our courses. They need to be experienced as relevant for the participant or they are of no use. Right now we are working on developing the career planning course in line with feedback we have received. Unless we become aware of the situation we cannot do anything to improve. Please respond to the evaluations, or send us a simple mail. We can always discuss.

Something I also would like to add in this context is that there is a limited amount of money we can invest in these activities – and for sure it is important we don't waste them by forgetting to cancel seats etc. You as PhD student are the one losing in that situation. It is a concern about showing each other respect in a positive sense. Respect for those who are working hard to delivering these courses but also for those who have registered to the courses, because the outcome your bring with you from the courses depends on how many we are in the class room, in the learning situation

How can we solve the issue?

If we could agree on registering to those courses you plan to participate in, and not to the “extra courses in case something might happen” there will be seats for all – today up to half of the seats in a courses can be cancelled a week before start – a very difficult situation for us to solve.

We do receive a lot of positive feedback and tips from the participants, and I want to thank you all for giving us this information. The courses are overall much appreciated and the feedback you will find on the GTS web. I enjoy being part of this work and I hope for more contacts in future. Don't hesitate to contact me. I am available at britt-marie.andersson@chalmers.se or at genericskills@chalmers.se I am often seated in the black house at Johanneberg Science Park and you are most welcomed to discuss GTS topics.