

At GTS we have focused the last 1,5 years on identifying and describing any areas in need of a change and then making the necessary improvements. Here is an update on the actions that has already been taken and the challenges we still see ahead of us.

We appreciate your help in distributing this information to all PhD students at Chalmers.

General information

- A couple of weeks ago we released the **dates for the autumn 2020 courses**. We post the dates this early to facilitate early scheduling and thereby better planning for both PhD students and teachers.
- **The Research Ethics course** has been paused pending development, since it did not reach the expectations of either the PhD students or us in the team in its current form. The aim is to develop a new course which corresponds better to the need of PhD students at Chalmers.
- During 2019, after almost 10 years of providing education on generic and transferable skills, **GTS underwent evaluation**. The evaluation was based on interviews with a broad range of stakeholders at and outside of Chalmers, and the results were published in the form of a report in early 2020. The evaluator found that the view of GTS in all stakeholder categories is generally positive. He also pointed at areas in need of further analysis and improvement, such as:
 - The Introduction Day and the Popular Science presentations, both of which need an entire makeover in terms of purpose, content, and procedure.
 - The participant booking and handling procedures.
 - The fact that the program is not really designed to cater to and accommodate industrial PhD students who typically spend most of their time off campus.
 - The fact that some courses, notably those in academic writing, are under-dimensioned and do not offer enough seats.

The Vice President for research and research education has put together a working group, consisting of assisting heads of department with responsibility for PhD studies, to discuss the issues further.

- We know that you experience **problems booking seats in the GTS courses**. This is a challenge that we are constantly working on trying to resolve, but which has proven very hard to fix due to different reasons:
 - a. The number of PhD students has increased in the last years and we have not been able to fully meet the increased demand for seats due to budget constraints.
 - b. New PhD students immediately get the information from their peers that it is hard to get a seat in the GTS courses and therefore sign up to as many courses as possible. The result is that one PhD student can take up as many as three seats in courses offered within the same subject.

- c. There are many late cancellations and no-shows which unfortunately result in many of our courses being run with empty seats despite the long lines to get a seat. This problem has decreased somewhat since we started with late cancellation fees in 2018, but still exists.

Updates to courses

- **People in Flow** will have a new format from the fall semester 2020 – two and a half days instead of five half-days – since many of you have let us know that you’ve had problems fitting the course into your calendars.
 - **Teaching learning and evaluation** will try a new format with shorter days to improve the learning process in accordance with feedback from the students: “the days are too long” and “when class ends at 3 pm there is too little time left of the workday to be productive”.
 - **Sustainable development** has extended their tutoring time by adding extra appointments with the teachers.
 - The **Career planning** course has been improved in several steps over the last couple of years in order to make it more relevant for the target group. Some exercises have been discarded, and the rest are today given in a blended learning format which shortened the course from 12 to 9 hours. Also, gender equality aspects have been integrated in the course work.
 - For **Academic writing** A PhD Writing support resource page is under development and testing. The goal is to present online resources available for self-studying for those who need introduction to the writing process, critical reading and peer reviewing.
-

The GTS team is continuously evaluating and developing the program in terms of both content and administrative processes and routines. Some current examples are:

- More efficient handling of enrollment and participant lists for courses, including updates to the Sembok booking system which will be connected to PDB. Care is taken to make the work process fully GDPR compliant.
- Resource pages are being developed in Canvas for the *Popular science presentations*. The pages are created in collaboration with the Blended learning team at the Department for communication and learning in science, and will offer reference material, information and guidance on how to perform the presentation. The material is particularly tailored to support PhD students who do not take the *Advanced communication* course.
- Two new formats/platforms have been approved for the *Popular science presentations*: YouTube videos and podcasts. A “one button studio” is being set up in the main library and will be available for PhD students to record their presentations.
- An online course in Sustainable Worklife for PhD students is being developed together with the HR department and the Blended learning team, covering issues relating to work balance, health, and stress. We hope to be able to release the course before summer 2020 but the Corona situation has moved the deadline forward. In that context, we would like to get in contact with 5-7 PhD students who would like to take part in our test panel and give us feedback on the content, format, and exercises. If you or someone you know would be interested in helping out, please contact me at malena.gorgne@chalmers.se