

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

OF CHALMERS PHYSICS PHD COUNCIL (CPPC)

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1. BOARD MEMBERS

The Chalmers Physics PhD Council (CPPC) was elected by the General Assembly on the 5th of December 2022 and the work was handed over from the previous board to the new board during December 2022 and January 2023. Three members of the council were re-elected from the previous year: Martina Olsson, Daniel Erkensten and Björn Lönn.

The active members of the council have been:

Björn Lönn – Chair

Daniel Erkensten – Vice-chair and department advisory board representative

Martina Olsson – Board member and Equality Council representative

Pantea Dara – Board member and FFF representative

Oliver Thim – Board member

Athanasios Theodoridis – Board member and DS representative

2. ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

In summary, 2023 has seen CPPC mainly continuing the work with permanent projects, including Equality, Buddy system, Introduction-day activities, Course list, and teaching distribution discussions. These projects will be discussed in more detail in the sections below. Moreover, discussions have been conducted with Thomas Nilsson regarding how to improve the celebrations after thesis defenses, as well as a new type of departmental duty. In addition, discussions within the board, and meetings with Lena Falk, initiated the idea of developing a survey on how to improve the Study Plan meetings. Finally, some preparatory work was conducted prior to an imminent evaluation of the doctoral education at the Physics department, planned for 2024.

2.1 FFF-CPPC INTERPLAY

Following last year's reorganization of the association of Graduate Students in Physics ([Föreningen för Forskarstuderande i Fysik, FFF](#)), CPPC has during 2023 been represented in the FFF board by Pantea Dara. This year, the responsibility for the Introduction-day After Work was transferred to FFF, and students from all four Physics departments (Chalmers Physics, GU Physics, MC2 and SEE) were invited to the After Work. Similarly, the Clean Room tour and the games in Nexus, arranged by the CPPC board, were expanded to include new students from all four departments. For the games in Nexus, FFF provided snacks and soft drinks.

2.2 BUDDY SYSTEM

The Buddy system was introduced in 2021 with the purpose of offering new PhD students knowledge, information, and help from an older PhD student at the beginning of their studies. The need for such a system became especially apparent during the early pandemic in 2020, and the Buddy system has been continued ever since, this year with Pantea Dara as the main responsible, with assistance from Björn Lönn. Additionally, the Buddy system provides a way to expand new PhD student's networks outside their own division, meeting both their Buddy and other new students assigned to the same Buddy. The work with the Buddy system is on-going and includes Buddy recruitment throughout the year (but mainly at the start of the semesters) to match the need with the number of newcomers. This is done via a survey sent out to the Physics PhD students. Buddies receive basic training before being assigned a small (up to three or four) group of new students.

Together with the Buddy assignment, new students are also provided with a welcoming letter from the CPPC board, containing valuable information and links about life as a PhD student in Sweden (including the [Unofficial PhD Student Guide](#) created by the [Doctoral Student Guild](#), DS).

In order to reflect upon, and improve the Buddy system for future years, a second round of surveys were constructed and sent out in early December, this time to both new students and Buddies. The results of these surveys will be analyzed during early 2024 and findings incorporated with upcoming Buddy assignments.

2.3 INTRODUCTION FOR NEW PHD STUDENTS

The CPPC board has continued the work connected to the Introduction-day arranged by Lena Falk and Anna Lindqvist. Björn Lönn presented the work of CPPC and the council's role at the department and within DS, during the Introduction meetings in May and November. During the afternoon of both Introduction-days, tours of the department were arranged for the Chalmers Physics students. New for this year was that the Clean Room tour and the games in Nexus were opened to include new students from all four departments. In total, the events were successful, with a larger attendance at the May event. The introduction-day activities will be continued, and the new tradition of inviting all four department's new PhD students will also be kept.

2.4 COURSES FOR PHD STUDENTS

Since the number of PhD courses offered by the department is very limited, CPPC has constructed a list of courses previously taken by PhD students at the Physics department. This list is updated every semester via surveys sent out to all Physics PhD students. The list contains PhD courses at Chalmers

and other universities as well as Master courses, and summer schools. The latest version of the list can always be [found in the CPPC section of DS website](#).

2.5 TEACHING DISTRIBUTION AND TEACHING HANDBOOK

Early 2023 saw Lena Falk replacing Jakob Welander as Director of Undergraduate Studies, taking over the responsibility of distributing teaching to PhD students. Teaching duties have been assigned and announced on time during 2023. On an even more positive note, Lena has, in discussions with members of the board (Björn Lönn and Daniel Erkensten), informed that she is now trying to level out the differences in teaching distribution between Swedish speaking and non-Swedish speaking PhD students. This is done by, where possible, assigning pairs consisting of one Swedish speaking student and one non-Swedish speaking student. As a result, Chalmers position regarding offering all undergraduate education in Swedish is not compromised. This matter is something that CPPC has been working on for a long time, and it is therefore encouraging to see changes taking place.

Another point that has been raised in the discussions with Lena, is that she is working on a solution to make teaching hours more transparent. In the future, starting from next year, there will be a Canvas page with a list of all PhD students and their corresponding teaching hours.

Furthermore, the Teaching handbook developed together with Ulf Gran in 2022, was released soon after the last Annual assembly, in mid-December 2022. The handbook should be seen as a guideline tool to increase the knowledge of procedures surrounding teaching duties and, hence, make it easier to follow these.

2.6 EQUALITY

CPPC has, through its representative, Martina Olsson, been involved in the work of the Equality Council at the department (former Gender Equality council). Martina has also taken part in the discussions together with Lena Falk regarding an action plan, which Chalmers requested from each department, related to the survey on [gender-based violence in higher education](#), published in 2022. This work will continue during 2024, and the board will try to facilitate a faster and more impactful turn-out of the council's work, for example by co-organizing events, and act as an extra source in spreading the information to all PhD students at Physics. The details will be discussed further in upcoming board meetings.

2.7 EVALUATION OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION AT THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

The Board was informed at one of the meetings with Lena Falk that Chalmers will perform an evaluation of its doctoral education in the upcoming years. The first step, that will take place in 2024, is a self-evaluation performed at department level, in which a writing group will compile a short text that will be evaluated by another department, later in the process. The writing group will include a PhD student representative, and the 2023 CPPC board has assigned Björn Lönn to perform this task, with assistance from the 2024 board. A dialogue should be initiated with the PhD students at the department to highlight important points to bring up in the evaluation.

3. OUTLOOK

The 2024 board will continue the work on equality, teaching distribution, course list, introduction for new students, and the Buddy system. The welcome letter and Buddy help list should be looked over and updated with new information, the Teaching Handbook being one such example. For the Buddy system in general, the results from the recently announced surveys should be evaluated, and potential improvements incorporated during the coming year.

Important matters will be further discussed next year. These include:

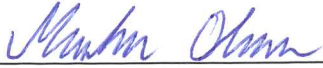
- Transparency in the process of how the teaching hours are reported, and other organizational issues linked to teaching need to be further discussed with the Director of undergraduate studies, Lena Falk. Make sure that the proposed Canvas page becomes available and that non-Swedish speakers receive a larger portion of teaching.
- The Equality council at the department will continue their activities, and we look forward to their future endeavors. The 2024 CPPC board should do what they can to enable more impact of the work done by the council. An example could be to co-organize smaller events on the topic.
- The work with the self-evaluation of the doctoral education at the Physics department will intensify during early 2024. The board should open a dialogue with the students to find important topics to bring to the writing group. It can be things that work well or points where improvements are necessary.



Björn Lönn



Daniel Erkensten



Martina Olsson



Athanasios Theodoridis



Oliver Thim



Pantea Dara