

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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 8th of December 2023 and the work was handed over from the previous board to the new board during December 2023 and January 2024. Five members of the council were re-elected from the previous year: Martina Olsson, Björn Lönn, Athanasios Theodoridis, Oliver Thim and Pantea Dara.

The active members of the council have been:

Athanasios Theodoridis – Chair

Björn Lönn – Vice-chair and Doctoral Education Evaluation representative

Martina Olsson – Board member and Equality Council representative

Pantea Dara – Board member and FFF representative

Oliver Thim – Board member and Advisory Board representative

Esmée Berger – Board member and recruitment representative for the new Head of Department

2. ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

In summary during the past year, CPPC has continued working on the ongoing, permanent projects such as the **Buddy System, Introduction Days, Course List, Equality** and discussions regarding **Teaching and Departmental work**. Furthermore a few more projects have been undertaken such as the **Individual Study Plan (ISP) survey**, where we received valuable feedback from both students and supervisors/examiners. The preliminary results look very interesting, and we are in the process of compiling everything in a concise manner, in order to disseminate the results to Lena Falk and the study directors. Additionally, the **doctoral education evaluation** is in progress. Already conducted work includes the writing of a self-evaluation report and a local assessment between departments at Chalmers (see section 2.7).

We are also communicating with the head of department, where we discuss certain aspects/concerns of doctoral studies. Such discussions also led to a new series of events called **Pizza days**. We have conducted a successful first event and plan on continuing with this project. Finally, with the departure of the current head of department, a PhD representative was selected to take part in the recruitment process of the new head of department and will represent the interests of the PhD students at the department. These projects will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming sections.

2.1 FFF-CPPC INTERPLAY

During 2024 CPPC has been represented in the FFF([Föreningen för Forskarstuderande i Fysik, FFF](#)) board by Pantea Dara. This year, FFF assisted CPPC in the introduction-day, both regarding the after-work but also arranging the lab tours (Cleanroom, CMAL, etc.). Through this way students from all four Physics departments (Chalmers Physics, GU Physics, MC2 and SEE) had the opportunity to participate. Additionally, CPPC was able to hold the first “Pizza day” event through FFF’s budget.

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).

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. Athanasios Theodoridis presented the work of CPPC and the council’s role at the department and within DS, during the Introduction meeting in October (Note that only one such event was held this year, due to the limited number of new PhD students during spring). During the afternoon of the Introduction-day, a tour of the department were arranged for the Chalmers Physics students, including also any student from the FFF-affiliated departments that was interested. In total, the events were successful, with a large attendance. The introduction-day activities will be continued, and in collaboration with the rest of the departments that are part of FFF, we can optimize the lab tours and continue having an enjoyable after-work related to this event.

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. We aim to update this list every year 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](#). The list has been updated once in the past year.

2.5 TEACHING DISTRIBUTION AND TEACHING HANDBOOK

Lena Falk has been the Director of Undergraduate Studies for more than a year now, having received this position in early 2023. She is therefore responsible for distributing teaching to PhD students. In an attempt to make teaching hours more transparent, Lena has also worked on developing a canvas page (Fysik Utbildning) which includes useful information regarding teaching and anything related to that. There is also a document under Undervisning, tjänstgöringstimmar which is updated regularly by Lena, and includes the corresponding teaching hours for all employees in the department. Besides the continuous communication, the chair and vice-chair has met with Lena in May and discussed among others, the ISP survey, the department day (and her potential involvement in the form of a short presentation regarding teaching) as well as gave feedback on the canvas page that Lena and the department's administration had initiated. In the year before, Lena had informed that she was trying to level out the differences in teaching distribution between Swedish speaking and non-Swedish speaking PhD students. This could be done, where possible, by assigning pairs consisting of one Swedish speaking student and one non-Swedish speaking student. This has been implemented to some extent since then, and we are looking forward to this happening more in the future.

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). The departments work on equality is structured through internal meetings with the equality council at the Physics department and through joint meetings of the equality councils within Gothenburg Physics Center (GPC). The joint effort enables more active collaborations between the departments. In this forum ideas and outcomes from initiatives at the different departments are shared as many of the questions are similar between the departments. In addition, working groups regarding a cultural survey, educations for baseline training in EDI (equality, diversity inclusion) as well as increasing student outreach have been formed. The

work on the development of a cultural survey for the physics department is intended as a broad survey to probe what culture we have in the physics department and the results will be used to identify questions where focused efforts and initiatives are needed. The work has resulted in a draft of a survey that will be sent to all departments in GPC during the coming year. The baseline training in EDI will provide additional training to the staff in EDI questions to create a common language and expectations. The student outreach is intended to create a larger interaction between undergraduate students and PhD students to break the toxic norms and stereotypes for who is a PhD student. Martina is an active member in the working groups of the cultural survey as well as the student outreach to represent the interest of the Physics PhD students.

Following the initiatives for student outreach the CPPC took part in the regular “cocktail party” hosted by the undergraduate students where PhD students were invited to share their thoughts on being PhD students and mingle with the students. Later on, the Physics department will be involved in the physics work fair (FARM) where CPPC will assist with recruitment of PhD students for attending the fair and inform on the work of a PhD student.

In addition, CPPC arranged an informative event regarding the survey on [gender-based violence in higher education](#), published in 2022. This was a part of the action plan drafted from the department as a consequence of the results on the work environment of Swedish PhD students presented in the national survey. This event took place in April where Maria Saline and Rebecka Rilemark shared information on the national study as well as the results from the local study of the DS board regarding the EDI situation in Sweden and Chalmers. The event had an attendance of about 30 people followed with a workshop where thoughts and aspects from the PhD students were raised and discussed in the followed meetings with the next equality council.

2.7 EVALUATION OF DOCTORAL EDUCATION AT THE PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

During the present year, Björn Lönn has been part of the work group (consisting of Björn together with Lena Falk, Christophe Demaziere, Jan Swenson and Anna Lindqvist) assigned to represent Chalmers Physics department in the nationwide evaluation of the doctoral education at Swedish Universities. The project started with a kick-off in January, and proceeded with the writing of a self-evaluation report, which was finalized in May. In conjunction with the writing process, the doctoral students at the department were invited to contribute feedback and input as material for the report, through an e-mail sendout. The next step of the evaluation process consisted of a local assessment, where the internal report of the Physics department was assessed by the Microtechnology and Nanoscience (MC2) department, while the working group at the Physics department assessed the

report from the department of Space, Earth and Environment (SEE). The local assessment step was concluded in late August/early September, where local assessment reports, based on the internal reports and meetings with the concerned departments, were handed over. The evaluation is currently in its third stage, a central assessment at Chalmers which should be finalized around the end of the year, after which the issues and improvement points from the local and central assessments will be addressed in an action plan for the coming years at the Physics department. This action plan will be constructed during the first quarter of 2025. Björn Lönn will stay on as the student representative for the work group to see the final phase of the evaluation process through. This will however be in close collaboration with the 2025 CPPC board.

2.8 INDIVIDUAL STUDY PLAN (ISP) SURVEY

In the spring of 2024, we discussed internally within the board, the possibility to conduct a survey regarding the ISP meetings and format. This was communicated to Lena Falk who thought it would be a good idea and could give valuable feedback. She also assisted in the survey formulation by giving feedback. The ISP survey was then finalized and was sent out to students after summer vacation (late August). We believe there was good response to the survey with a total of 49 respondents including 15 supervisors/examiners. The preliminary results have been discussed within the board and provide very valuable feedback. At the moment the board is in the process of compiling the results that will then be discussed with Lena Falk.

2.9 PIZZA DAYS

During the meeting with Thomas Nilsson in April, the idea of starting a new series of events was brought up. These events aim at having people from both academia and industry talk about their career paths and what led them there. Such an event would be combined with a social activity of mingling and networking after the talks, with food (pizza) and drinks. Thomas was positive about this idea and gave the green light to fund such an event. The first event was held in October and had good attendance (25 people). The budget for this event in the end came from FFF and further discussion should take place in order to see if we can/should include all FFF-affiliated departments in future instances of this event series. We are really looking forward to continuing with this project and possibly implementing this to our core project portfolio.

3. OUTLOOK

We suggest that the 2025 board will continue the work on equality, teaching distribution, course list, introduction for new students, Buddy system, Pizza days, Head of department recruitment, ISP survey

and doctoral education evaluation. The ISP survey should be analyzed in depth and disseminated, and more events should be planned under the Pizza days umbrella.

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

- Continue the positive discussions with Lena Falk and put emphasis on the things that could be improved (e.g. teaching distribution, ISP) and maintain things that work well according to the survey. The ISP will be discussed in length with Lena and a suggested action plan will be proposed to her and the other study directors (Jan, Christophe)
- The Equality council at the department will continue their activities, and we look forward to their future endeavors. The 2025 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, as was done in 2024.
- The work with the self-evaluation of the doctoral education at the Physics department will enter its final stage in 2025, consisting of the creation of an action plan for the coming years (see section 2.7).

Athanasios Theodoridis

Björn Lönn

Martina Olsson

Esmée Berger

Oliver Thim

Pantea Dara