

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

OF CHALMERS PHYSICS PHD COUNCIL (CPPC)

CONTENT OF THE REPORT:

1. Board members
2. Activities during the year
 - 2.1 FFF-CPPC interplay
 - 2.2 Buddy system
 - 2.3 Introduction for new PhD students
 - 2.4 Courses for PhD students
 - 2.5 Teaching distribution
 - 2.6 Equality
 - 2.7 New head of department
 - 2.8 Individual study plan (ISP) survey
 - 2.9 Working group on research education for the Physics/SEE merger
 - 2.10 Mingle & Munch
3. Outlook

1. BOARD MEMBERS

The Chalmers Physics PhD Council (CPPC) was elected by the General Assembly on the 6th of December 2024 and the work was handed over from the previous board to the new board during December 2024 and January 2025. Three members of the council were re-elected from the previous year: Athanasios Theodoridis, Esmée Berger, and Oliver Thim.

The active members of the council have been:

Athanasios Theodoridis – Chair

Esmée Berger – Vice-chair

Simon Niederkofler – Board member

Mirna Alhanash – Board member and Equality Council representative

Sofia Reiner – Board member and chair of FFF

Oliver Thim – Board member and Advisory Board representative

2. ACTIVITIES DURING THE YEAR

In summary, CPPC has continued working on the ongoing, permanent projects during the past year, such as the **Buddy System**, **Introduction Days**, **Course List**, **Equality** and discussions regarding **Teaching and Departmental work**. The previous year we have conducted an **ISP survey** which has been compiled and summarized with the, at the time, interim head of department (Paul Erhart) and deputy head of department (Lena Falk). The results were then passed over to Lena Falk for further dissemination to the rest of the study directors.

At the end of 2024 we had initiated a new series of events called Pizza days. We had conducted a successful first event and planned to continue with this project. Unfortunately, during the months after this event, we were informed of altered rules at Chalmers regarding offering food at such events. After discussions with the financial officers at the Physics department we concluded that the event series, in its current format, could not continue, and therefore we needed to adjust it, particularly in the type of food we offer. This led to the creation of the new event series titled **Mingle & Munch**. The first instance of this event was held on November 2025.

Finally, CPPC has been involved in other tasks through the appointment of representatives. These tasks include the appointment of the new Head of Department, and the working group on research education regarding the Physics/SEE merger. More details in the subsections below.

2.1 FFF-CPPC INTERPLAY

During 2025, CPPC has been represented in the FFF ([Föreningen för Forskarstuderande i Fysik](#)) board by Sofia Reiner. This year, FFF assisted CPPC in the introduction-day, both regarding the after-work but also arranging the lab tours (Cleanroom, CMAL, etc.). 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 “Mingle & Munch” event as an instance of a local council event in 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 Simon Niederkofler as the main responsible. 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).

A buddy recruitment carried out in spring 2025 resulted in 7 senior PhD students volunteering to become buddies. Over the course of 2025, a total of 24 new students were successfully assigned to a buddy.

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 and Esmée Berger presented the work of CPPC and the council's role at the department during the Introduction meeting in April and October, respectively. During the afternoon of each Introduction-day, a tour of the department was 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 especially in the second occasion in October. 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

Lena Falk has been the Director of Undergraduate Studies since 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 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, Mirna Alhanash, continued its involvement in the work of the Equality Council at the department (former Gender Equality Council). The department's ongoing work on equality is structured through internal meetings with the Equality Council at the Department of Physics, as well as through joint meetings between the equality councils within the Gothenburg Physics Center (GPC). These joint forums enable coordinated initiatives and the sharing of experiences across departments, as many of the challenges and questions are common within GPC.

A major focus this year has been the follow-up of the cultural and employee survey distributed in April. The survey showed positive overall results for the Department of Physics, with high scores in both engagement and trust/safety. The management group has begun identifying priority areas for development, focusing on respectful workplace culture, crisis preparedness, career support, and workload. Doctoral student issues have also been given special attention and analyzed separately. To deepen the understanding of the survey results, the Equality Council is preparing a series of follow-up in-person interviews with employees who expressed interest in participating. This follow-up work will continue into next year and will guide the department's targeted equality and inclusion efforts.

To strengthen accessibility and engagement, the Physics equality representatives organized an open lunch meeting where staff and PhD students were invited to share ideas, concerns, and questions. During this session, the representatives clarified their roles in supporting the department's work on equality, diversity, and inclusion, particularly in raising awareness of discriminatory behavior, improving information accessibility within research groups, and promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Finally, CPPC has initiated plans for an event aimed at informing PhD students of their rights, to be held in late 2025/ early 2026. This event will be organized in collaboration with UN Women Gothenburg and is intended to strengthen awareness of support structures, reporting routines, and available resources (both on campus and in the city) for students in vulnerable or uncertain situations.

2.7 NEW HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

In late 2024 and early 2025, CPPC provided a PhD student representative (Esmée Berger) to the recruitment group for the recruitment of a new head of department. Esmée collected thoughts from

the PhD students on what was important to consider in the recruitment process according to the PhD students at the Department of Physics. As part of the recruitment group, the role was to bring the perspective of PhD students to the discussions of prospective candidates, during the interviews as well as during the discussions evaluating the interviews.

2.8 INDIVIDUAL STUDY PLAN (ISP) SURVEY

The results of the ISP survey had been discussed extensively with Lena Falk and Paul Erhart in the spring of 2025. The results provided valuable feedback and they have been handed over to Lena, in order to be disseminated to the rest of the study directors.

2.9 WORKING GROUP ON RESEARCH EDUCATION FOR THE PHYSICS/SEE MERGER

During the fall of 2025, CPPC was tasked to join the working group that was formed in order to write a report on “research education” aspects, in light of the upcoming Physics/SEE merger. There, different topics were discussed, such as differences and similarities of the two departments in terms of the structure of doctoral programmes, department duties and length of employment contract, follow-up procedures, recruitment of new doctoral students, etc. Athanasios Theodoridis took part in that working group, and together with a PhD student from SEE was tasked to write a section of the report titled “integration of doctoral students”. At the end, a point was raised by CPPC, which relates to the potential fund allocation for additional representative(s) in the CPPC board, as a result of the arrival of two new divisions from SEE.

2.10 MINGLE & MUNCH

The “Mingle & Munch” event is a continuation of the “Pizza Days” but due to stricter regulations regarding food the name had to be adjusted. The concept of these events however remains the same; Invited speakers from both academia and industry give a presentation about their career paths and what led them there. Such an event is combined with a social activity of mingling and networking after the talks, with food (canapes) and drinks. The first event under the new name was held in November and had good attendance (22 people).

The budget for this event is included in FFF's yearly budget. We are really looking forward to continuing with this project and implement this to our core project portfolio, with potentially 3 instances per year.

3. OUTLOOK

We suggest that the 2026 board will continue the work on equality, teaching distribution, course list, introduction for new students, Buddy system, and Mingle & Munch.

As Julie Gold takes over the role of Assistant Head of Department, communication between her and CPPC should be established, to enable a good transition and that the interests of PhD students regarding, e.g., teaching distribution, course list, and introduction for new students remain considered in the future. A meeting has been scheduled with Julie Gold and Lena Falk in the beginning of December, to discuss the role hand-over, as well as inform Julie of CPPC's work and discuss related topics.

Athanasios Theodoridis

Mirna Alhanash

Sofia Reiner

Esmée Berger

Oliver Thim

Simon Niederkofler