

CPPC board meeting 2019-04-29

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April 29, 2019

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1 Opening

The meeting was opened by Gustav. Mathias was made secretary.

2 Agenda

- A sub-point about “issues to communicate to PhD students” as raised originally by Lena Falk was added to point 4 on the proposed agenda.
- A point about the CPPC homepage was introduced as number 5 to the proposed agenda.
- **The modified agenda was approved by the board.**

3 Summary of meeting with Thomas Nilsson

- Thomas is very positive about the CPPC and thinks it will be clearer whom of the student organizations to talk to.
- Thomas will want to use us as a referral group (“remissinstans”). We are very positive about this.
- It was suggested that we should request having a representative in both *Institutionsrådet* and *Strategigruppen/Ledningsgruppen/Styrelsegruppen* (we will check which of these three is the relevant group).
- Gustav will ask the MC2 PhD Council about their experience of being represented in the “ledningsgrupp” of MC2.
- An issue dealt with by Thomas which we may also want to discuss in the future is the question of gender equality at the department. Is there something we can do to improve gender equality at the department?
- For the future, it seems Lena Falk should be our main point of contact with the department leadership.

4 Summary of meeting with Lena Falk

(i) Seminar series

- Lena made it clear that she very much wants us to organize something that improves the general interaction between PhD students at the department. Whether this is a seminar series or something else is not too important. The main point is that
 - It should give PhD students a broader idea about the physics research going on at Chalmers.
 - Increase collaboration between divisions.
- The graduate school are willing to provide economic means for organizing this. It may be in the form of free lunch, for example, but no specific limits have been set. It is therefore better that we come up with suggestions and let the graduate school decide what is worth sponsoring.
- Lena wants CPPC to be responsible for organizing these events. We are uncertain that this falls within our area of responsibility. We will come up with suggestions for possible formats and try to delegate the responsibility for actually organizing the events elsewhere if we feel it is too time consuming.

(ii) Home page

- We should have a homepage on Insidan. It will replace FFF’s current homepage (which will be moved to the Gothenburg Physics Centre page).
- The page has to be in Swedish. We are allowed to have only a short description in Swedish on Insidan, with links to a more complete web page on the DS (Doctoral Guild) web page.

- Mikael suggests we should look for inspiration (“do exactly like”) the MC2 PhD Council page on Insidan (<https://www.chalmers.se/insidan/sites/mc2/doctoral-student/fff-phd-student>).
- This issue was then further discussed as 5.

(iii) Introduction day

An introduction day for PhD students at the Physics department was recently introduced and has been held once.

- Lena would like CPPC to participate in the introduction day and present our purpose and the work we do.
- We are very positive to this idea and decide that we will tell Lena that we would like to participate in future introduction days.
- Mikael suggests we should be involved in planning the introduction day, and not just show up for a few minutes, as we may have opinions about which information should be given during the introduction day (in the sense that important questions were not touched upon sufficiently at the last event). We may also want to have an overview about what is covered in the presentation. **Gustav will bring this up with Lena at their next meeting.**

(iv) Information dissemination

- Lena would like us to inform students that there’s much information on Insidan (and that Insidan was recently updated).
- When PhD students have problems with their supervisors, the information does not always reach the director of studies in time. Usually, problems grow big before action is taken, at which point the issue taken to DOMB. Issues should preferably be brought up with the director of studies first.
 - One reason for this may be that students perceive that no action is taken when issues are brought to the attention of the director of studies.
 - Jan has however expressed that he often hear students complain about their supervisors just before study plan meetings, and that the students then explicitly ask him not to bring it up with the supervisor.
 - Maybe there should be a protocol introduced for the director of studies which specifies which steps to take when a complaint arises. If this is also known to students, they may be more keen on talking to the director of studies first.
 - We should ask DOMB about how common conflicts between students and supervisors are at the Physics department. **Gustav will send an email to DOMB (or go knock on her door).**
 - We may also want to discuss this further in the future (how to help with discovering student/supervisor issues early)?

5 Home page

- **Nitesh is in contact with people within DS about setting up a page for CPPC on the DS web page.**
- Mikael thinks we should draw much inspiration from the MC2 PhD Council's home page.
- Once the DS page is up, we should write a short Swedish summary on Insidan and link to the DS page.
- **Nitesh will request that CPPC replaces FFF as the student council at Physics on the DS contact page.**

6 Summary of survey

(i) Vacation

- Few people have problems but there appears to be about one in every group who has.
- Gustav: Vacation seems to generally be paid centrally by Chalmers, while if vacation is not taken out, it is paid by the project the person is employed on. This seems to be a bureaucratic issue which leads to problems for PhD students and should thus be fixed on a higher level.
- Students who don't take out all their vacation seem to feel that they don't have time to take out vacation, suggesting it is *not* a matter of PhD students trying to earn extra money or cheat.
- People do sometimes not register vacation, even though they are not working. This means that they easily accumulate many vacation days which were actually used, although not officially so.
- We should let Lena and Thomas know that PhD students are sometimes forced to take out vacation towards the end of their studies, and that this should not happen. We must ensure that both students and supervisors are aware that this is not acceptable. (Students should already know, as we have brought this up during the survey interviews).
- **Gustav will bring up the issue with Lena and ask that she ensures that all supervisors know that it is not acceptable that students are forced to take out their vacation.**

(ii) Förtroendearbetstid

- Vast majority of students were happy with their working hours.
- Some people report that their supervisor pushes them to work for example week days, and students are fine with it. This is in line with what the collective agreement for PhD students says, which states that working hours should be agreed upon by both students and supervisors.

- There are documents on Insidan for students and supervisors to grade each other. We should find out where they are and try to help spread them. Preferably the directory of studies should spread this during study plan meetings.

(iii) Departmental duties and teaching

- Works well for most people.
- English-speaking students have problems getting as much teaching as they want. This is due to the requirement in the BSc program that teachers speak Swedish.
 - We could try lobbying for allowing more mixed languages on the BSc level. There seems to be room for interpretation (books are already in English, other departments seem to allow English-speaking course assistants).
 - We could suggest to Jonathan to rephrase the question in the teaching survey he sends out: Would you be comfortable to teach a course where the material is in Swedish, but you're allowed to teach in English?
 - **Gustav will discuss this issue with Jonathan.**
- Compensation for labs can be quite uneven. Students who report how much time they actually spend on lab teaching to Jonathan usually get compensated for that though.
- No extra time appears to be given for grading lab reports. Lab reports can also vary in grading difficulty (in contrast to exams, where each exam usually takes about the same amount of time to grade).
 - We should raise the question to Jonathan: **Why isn't grading of lab reports handled like grading in other types of courses?**

(iv) Connection between divisions

- On average, it seems that students don't know too much about the research going on at the Physics department, and that most people seem interested in learning more about it.
- Suggestions for alternative events:
 - Require people to go to a certain number of licentiate seminars every year. One should be forced to attend seminars at different divisions than one's own.
 - Have professors present an overview of the research at their division. If each division presents their work once every year, then this shouldn't require very much work from the professors.
 - Combine with PhD courses. Some of the courses suggested by students were phrased very broadly and could provide the results desired on this point.
- It would be good if we could come up with a number of ideas that Lena could choose from.
- **We should hold a meeting dedicated to the planning of this. Preferably it should be held after the summer.**

(v) PhD courses

- Master's courses are not structured in ways that work well for PhD students (they are usually too large and their examination too fixed). Thus, the structure and examination format of PhD courses should cater to the PhD students. Formatting is a key thing for these courses!
- An alternative idea would be to allow alternative forms of examination for Master's courses, which are better suited for PhD students.
- Courses suggested by PhD students:
 - Statistics and data analysis
 - Thermodynamics/statistical physics
 - Graphics and “toolset” courses
 - Spectroscopy
 - Electrochemistry
 - Plasmonics
 - Forum where students can suggest courses and teachers can offer to teach the course (if sufficiently many students sign up).
- We should try to count suggestions for courses and see which types of courses would be the most desired.
- **Talk to Lena about introducing PhD courses. Note in particular that the format of most Master's courses does not work very well for PhD students.**

(vi) Other issues

- Students feel that general information is lacking. This probably (at least in part) due to that it is quite spread around, and that Insidan is quite difficult to navigate.
- Gender equality issues. This can lead to problems with surveys, as there are too few female respondents for doing any statistical analysis of results. This means that severe problems are at risk of going unnoticed.

7 Other matters

- Sara will participate in the next advisory board meeting. She will send out the agenda to the rest of CPPC before the meeting. We will have a meeting before the advisory board meeting to discuss the topics that will be brought up.

8 Next meeting

The next CPPC meeting will be held on the 9th of May, 13.00 in F5002. It will be dedicated to discussing the agenda for the next advisory board meeting.