

## MC2 PhD Student Council

Minutes for council meeting on December 15, 2020

**Present:** Martí Gutierrez Latorre (QT), Stavros Giannakopoulos (MEL), Hafid Zehri (EMSL), Isabel Harrysson Rodrigues (TML), Israel Rebolledo Salgado (PL), Ivo Cools (QDP), Nermin Trnjanin (QDP), Ariadna Soro Álvarez (AQP), Ragnar Ferrand-Drake Del Castillo (Guest)

### Opening the meeting

The meeting started at 12:00 in room zoom

### Election of meeting officials

Martí was the regular chair and Stavros was appointed secretary. Ariadna was elected to adopt the minutes.

### Approval of agenda

Agenda was approved.

### Meeting notice in due order

Electronic meeting notice was sent in due time.

### Updates from other boards and committees

#### *The executive board (Ledningsgruppen, LG)*

Martí reported the following. Several senior members of MC2 were offered to willingly quit via an advantageous package, as a part of the cost savings efforts permeating Chalmers. Nothing to be done by us, but we need to be aware of situations where students are left without supervisors, or equipment is left without maintenance personnel.

Exams assistants will not get hired externally. That leaves a large gap in man-hours to be covered during exam periods especially with most of the exams being done via Zoom. Four people per department will be expected to take these positions which entails quite intensive workload during exams, however it might be beneficial to students lacking departmental work.

#### *The department advisory board (Institutionsrådet)*

Personnel's positions who are taking voluntary leave or pension will not necessarily be filled. New employments will not follow the current pension rules which will make them more cost efficient to employ. Allegedly, 2 out of 5 positions will be potentially emptied. We, as students, can only hope that those positions will be re-staffed.

#### *The union of research student in physics (Foreningen för Forskarstuderande i Fysik, FFF)*

No updates from FFF. The FFF has been getting a lot of questions regarding them supporting popular science presentations, to which they have answered that it is not within their role. FFF's

seminars and poster events are aimed at too "high-educated" audience according to the departments opinion, therefore they should not be considered for popular science presentations.

### *Chalmers PhD student guild (Doktorandsektionen, DS)*

No updates from DS.

### **Follow up Survey of the effects of the pandemic**

A survey which was sent by us to all MC2 PhD students regarding the effects of the pandemic is to be followed up with another follow up survey. This is to assess any changes, positive or negative, after several months of this continued situation.

After inspecting the current survey draft, the council came up with suggestions. A question regarding whether students are experimentalists or theorists is to be added to better judge the impact of the pandemic to the specific categories. A question of whether a student has taken any vacations, and how the vacations taken were affected by the situation (given travel bans, etc). Additionally how the students mental health has been affected by the situation and which was the most relevant factor for that effect (lack of vacations, social isolation, work delays, etc). The Survey was decided to be sent as soon as possible and it should ask the students to answer based on the second half of 2020.

### **DS survey**

We inspected a DS survey which examined the work environment of all Chalmers PhD students among several metrics. The survey was quite expansive to fully review. A few interesting remarks. The opinion of the students is torn about whether supervisor and examiner should be the same person or not. The preparedness of the students for the job marked seemed to be (perceived as) rather low. However, we believe that this largely varies across industries, clean-room and equipment reliance, willingness to relocate and other factors.

### **Nation wide SULF (Sveriges universitetslärarförbund) survey**

A nation-wide survey carried by the Swedish university teachers association - SULF (Sveriges universitetslärarförbund) commented on the effects of the pandemic in the work of graduate students. Their main remarks were that the remote work flow has been lacking and required significant effort to setup. The student's experimental work suffered delays and has become inefficient due to the remote working environment and the limited support personnel. Cancellations or postponements of conferences have put significant delays on planned publications. Supervisory meetings which are held remotely, lack fruitfulness. Social distancing and lack of research group interaction has left students socially isolated.

All of the above are issues we have been discussing since the first survey in summer, as well as found also in DS' survey.

### **Handbook of doctoral studies**

Some other departments have compiled handbooks of doctoral studies which are offered to newly admitted students as a helpful guide to get started with their studies. As opposed to the technical and administrative issues found in the intranet, those handbooks help students with getting started

in Sweden (bank accounts, housing, personal number), as well as getting started in Chalmers as a PhD student, explain the purpose and operation of supervision, manager and examiner, etc.

The council believes that such a handbook warrants the effort and MC2 should have an adopted version of it. The intention is to produce (or adapt) a handbook, and offer it to all newly admitted PhD students.

### **Election of interim member**

The council had a guest: Ragnar Ferrand-Drake Del Castillo who expressed interest to join the council. The council approved with consensus as an interim member from MEL until the next general assembly.

### **Other issues**

There were no other issues.

### **Closing of the meeting**

The meeting closed at 13:00.

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting 15th of January at 12:00

### **Sealing the minutes**