

MC2 PhD council minutes - 2024/03/25

Time: 11h30

Place: B618

Present: Ariadna Soro Álvarez, Núria Alcalde Herraiz, Ragnar Ferrand-Drake Del Castillo, Hanna Karlsson-Fernberg, Isak Brundin, Nermin Trnjanin, Patrik Blomberg, Hanna Linn

Election of meeting officials

- Chair: Ariadna Solo Álvarez
- Secretary: Núria Alcalde Herraiz
- Adopt the minutes: Ariadna Solo Álvarez

2. **Approval of the agenda:** The agenda were approved.

3. **Meeting notice in due order:** Yes.

4. Updates from boards and committees

- The executive board (Ledningsgruppen, LG) – Hanna Linn and Isak Brundin
 - Peter Andrekson was awarded the Gustaf Dalén medal.
 - Emptying of the service corridors to happen at the beginning of April, everything that should be kept has to be tagged. Additionally, there is a need for more storage space for big unused equipment.
 - Discussion of business/action plan for the year. There is a significant group of researchers that will go on half-time or retirement in the upcoming years.
 - Still working on implementing broader recruitments.
 - Remember to respect the office spaces and common areas.
 - On Teaching duties:
 - * We should report our departmental duties to the administrators as MAX(actual hours spent; hours outputted by the table). The information given to the course examiners and therefore to Ingrid Collin (financial officer) should be the actual hours spent.
 - * Make the table of teaching duties accessible for everybody. Isak will talk to Susannah Carlsson to put it on the intranet, Ariadna will put it up on our website and share on Facebook.
- The department's advisory board (Institutionsrådet) –Nermin Trnjanin
 - On Head of the Department recruitment. The previous recruitment firm wasn't a match, so a new one was employed. Selection meeting on the 25th of April following up interviews 15th-16th June. There is an aim to have a head of the department by June-July.

- Chalmers PhD student Guild (Doktorandsektionen, DS) – Ariadna Soro Álvarez
 - Yin Zeng is stepping down from the DS and therefore DS need a new board member. Still looking for it.
 - There is a new chair and co-chair chosen at an extraordinary General Assembly on Friday 22nd of March.
 - The DS PhD Alumni event took place on Friday 22nd of March and all the alumni were from MC2. Ragnar should invite them to join the Alumni Network, and a post should be written soon, either by Ragnar or Yin.
 - * Some of the alumni recommended the coaching services that we are entitled to after the PhD, through TSN: <https://www.tsn.se/en/about-trygghetsstiftelsen/> They send you an email at the end of your PhD, so make sure to answer it! They offer coaching services for interviews, help with CV, and even financial support to get licenses.

- The association of graduate students in Physics (Föreningen för Forskarstuderande i Fysik, FFF)
 - Malte is the new FFF MC2 member.
 - FFF is missing a member from SEE, but will still proceed with a General Assembly soon.
 - Ariadna presents an idea for an FFF career seminar lead by PhD students who work part-time at other companies during the PhD, or who started their own companies. This could help other PhD students bridge the gap with industry.

- Equality group (Jämställdhetsgruppen, Jägr) – Erik Strandberg
 - Erik not present. No updates.
 - Sign up for the Gender balance training (sent out on the Newsletter 22 March). Spread the information and ask supervisors to join.

- Dr Genie – Achintya Paradkar
 - A letter of “proposed changes to address gender-based violence and sexual harassment at Chalmers” was written by Dr Genie and DS (attached after the minutes). We the Council support it fully and therefore agree to sign it. Ariadna will communicate that and provide some minor feedback as discussed during this meeting.
 - 4 main objectives for the upcoming year: improve the outreach and visibility of Dr Genie; improve representation on Dr Genie; increase awareness on equity; and increase awareness and influence policies from discrimination and sexual harassment. Plan of action and task groups are being developed for all 4 objectives.

5. Other issues

- School evaluation – Patrik Blomberg
 - Still on the evaluation step, currently pushing for more and better PhD courses. Aim to submit the report by the middle of May, which will then be evaluated by SEE.

- Department Day – Everyone
 - On “An inclusive working environment requires awareness – and constant work”, the article about AQP posted on the Newsletter and Intranet: misalignment with the reality and the article.
- Ariadna learned that to get unemployment benefits after the PhD, you can join A-kassa for 80% of your last salary, but you get more if you also join a union. Ariadna will talk to union representatives for more information and spread what she learns.

6. Actions to take by next meeting.

- Isak: talk to Susannah about uploading TA hours table to Intranet.
- Ariadna: 1) upload TA hours table to website and Facebook. 2) Investigate A-kassa vs Union for unemployment benefits and spread the information. 3) Pitch FFF seminar idea. 4) Send agreement and feedback about the letter.
- Ragnar: 1) PhD Alumni event on Friday 22nd of March, the attendants should be invited to join the network. 2) Post about the event on the network, or get Yin to do it.
- All: spread information about gender balance training.

7. Next meeting: Next meeting will be held 18th of April 13:00

8. Closing of the meeting: 13h05

Proposed changes to address gender-based violence and sexual harassment at Chalmers

Chalmers has had, and still has, a problem with gender-based violence and sexual harassment. This is a problem that the university in part shares with larger parts of the academic sector, but there is strong evidence showing that Chalmers in particular has challenges to address in this field.¹

Given that:

- 11% of female PhD students at Chalmers are exposed to physical harassment and unwanted sexual attention or invitations¹;
- Chalmers' female PhD students are subject to bullying at least 4 times more than their male colleagues¹;
- Unlike faculty and undergraduate students, PhD students are in a position of dependence on supervisors and examiners, making them particularly vulnerable;
- Survivors of sexual harassment and violence in society at large are frequently disbelieved, or find their experiences minimized;
- These problems and knowledge at Chalmers about them are not new, as shown by reports from 2005² and 2017³;

We, the board of the Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild (DS), are convinced that the actions that have been taken by Chalmers central leadership and its departments to address the issue of gender-based harassment and violence so far are not sufficient.

On behalf of the Chalmers Doctoral Student Guild, the PhD councils at all departments at Chalmers, the DrGENIE members, and the Chalmers student union, we are demanding immediate and determined action to address the issue of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. In line with this, we propose the implementation of a central victim support system at Chalmers, increased transparency, and improved preventive work against gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Those proposals are in detail:

Victim support:

- Create an independent and trained group of staff working for the victim, which should provide:
 - A safe space where a victim can come and talk about incidents on their own terms.
 - Help the victim reporting incidents at Chalmers.

¹ Data subset from: [Karolinska Institutet: Survey on Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Harassment in the Swedish Higher Education Sector, 2022](#)

² Markör Marknad och Kommunikation: Förekommer sexuella trakasserier på Chalmers?, 2005

³ Chalmers Studentkår: Chalmers against sexism - omfattande arbete inleds för nolltolerans, 2017

- Support and help to get emergency and recovery medical care.
- Help to get in contact with police if the victim wants to file a report.
- Workplace adaptations to support recovery.
- As this function needs to be available for all employees and should receive special training, this should preferably not be the DOMB.
- Ensure accessibility to physical and mental healthcare, e.g., provided through Pe3, without the need for prior approval. If the manager's approval is needed after several visits, it is necessary to ensure that not only the line manager can approve, but any of the persons the victim could have contacted (e.g., the previously mentioned support entity).
- Ensure that any Chalmers employee who is in contact with a victim of sexual violence and/or harassment has proper training (e.g., HR, line managers, and supervisors).

Reporting system:

- Create a clear and easy-to-access step-by-step guide on how to report an incident at Chalmers.
- Make sure that employees are personally informed by their line manager on how to report incidents, instead of relying on passive information, e.g., through the intranet.
- Provide a channel for anonymous reports.
- Provide a channel for reports from guests and visiting researchers.
- Provide an explanation of what to expect when an incident has been reported:
 - Time frame – how long does it typically take to make an investigation?
 - Who will be involved and what information will be shared with whom?
 - What are the possible and typical outcomes of reporting?

Immediate action:

- Ensure that immediate action is taken as soon as any sexual harassment is reported to eliminate any risk of further exposure of the victim or other persons.
- Keep protective measures in place and monitored until the investigation is concluded.
- Direct victims to mental health care and crisis support.

Investigation:

- Provide a prompt and quick investigation to avoid further damage.
- Enable a fair investigation of the cases. This entails:
 - That the investigator and the one deciding about possible consequences must not be in a power relation with the reporting person, or have an existing professional or personal relationship with the accused and the reporting person. This is because professional or personal relationships could bias the investigation outcome, and power relations would hinder a fair investigation and limit the victim to share confidential information without the fear of repercussions.
Furthermore, sexual harassment happens commonly as an instrument to enforce hierarchy and suppression, which is inherently directed toward people in more vulnerable positions (e.g., undergraduate or PhD students in contrast to permanent faculty). Because of this, the investigation needs to be independent and untainted by these hierarchies.
 - Ideally, the investigation is carried out by either a central, specially trained function at Chalmers or an external entity. It is preferable that any decision on possible consequences is taken by this central function.
- Implementation of consequences based on the investigation outcome that lives up to the promise of zero tolerance.
- Follow-up on investigations one/two months as well as half a year after they have been concluded, to ensure that the decided actions have taken place and that the situation has improved.

Prevention:

- Improve Chalmers code of conduct – include an appendix with what harassment includes.
- Ensure sufficient routines for employee onboarding throughout the organization, during which the new employee receives information on what kind of behavior is acceptable, how to recognize harassment, and what to do in case of incidents.
- Implement a mandatory course for all employees on evidence-based sexual consent and bystander intervention training.

Transparency:

- Collect and provide Chalmers-wide statistics on the number of reports, typical investigation durations, and outcomes.
- Make sure that the parties involved in the investigation are informed about the outcomes and consequences of investigations.

- Ensure transparency of the investigations to the rest of the employees in the affected group, while preserving the privacy of the involved parties, both to raise awareness and to show that actions have been taken on the case.

We see the need for a systematic approach to dealing with the issues of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, including the implementation of evidence-based methods and a need to evaluate the impact of implemented measures.

We look forward to a continued constructive dialogue and would appreciate a written answer to our proposals within three months.

Göteborg 2024-03-18

Sincerely,

The board of the Chalmers Doctoral Students Guild on behalf of DrGENIE, the departmental PhD councils and Chalmers Studentkår