Department of Molecular Biosciences,

The Wenner-Gren institute

Protocol for PhD Council meeting – 7th October 2026 – 12:30 to 13:00 in F504

Attendees: Symeon Kourmoulakis, Ylva Veith, Lova Granqvist, Wissal Bakri, Max Louski, Miren Urrutia Iturritza, Andrea Lobo, Terrence Infant Wilson Lawrence, Emma Block, Thomas Mazza

Chair: Emma Block

Clerk: Thomas Mazza

1. Welcome to new PhD students

Five PhD students who joined the department during summer and autumn were announced: Felix Harryson Olivberg, Christine Kallenberg, Jonghoon Kim, Wissal Bakri, and Fanny Hedbom. Discussed how to give them proper info as soon as they start.

2. Feedback on previous semester's events

Events organized during the spring semester, including the union presentation, barbecue, and PhD Day, were discussed. Feedback was generally positive, although the union presentation was considered somewhat broad and not necessarily relevant to everyone's needs.

Participants expressed interest in a career-focused event featuring former MBW PhD students now working in industry or in positions outside academia. Such an event could offer practical career perspectives and opportunities for discussion.

3. Updates from the NFR meeting

- PhD students were reminded that the Mathematics Department can be contacted for advice on statistical analysis, including selecting appropriate tests for experiments.

It was proposed to share a link to the statistical support service in the next newsletter.

- An AI policy is being drafted at university and faculty levels to guide the use of AI in academic work. Faculty-specific guidelines are expected.

- Differences in licentiate/halftime across departments were discussed, particularly whether doctoral milestones should be evaluated primarily by elapsed time or by academic performance. No changes were announced at the NFR meeting. It was noted that PhD representatives should be included in future discussions.

- Concerns were raised about subjective or inconsistent assessment of Bachelor's and Master's theses and the limited recognition of students' work throughout a project. Participants discussed clearer grading criteria and possible separate assessment components for the supervisor's evaluation, written thesis, and oral presentation. Numerical grading versus pass/fail assessment was also debated.

- The proposed Green Light System has advanced through the university approval process, but has not yet received all approvals for implementation. Under the proposal, graduating PhD students would anonymously evaluate their supervisors. Repeated negative feedback could prompt administrative review. Concerns included the late timing of the evaluations and the possibility of indirectly identifying respondents in small research groups. HR and trade unions were mentioned as existing channels for addressing problems during a PhD.

4. PhD survey results and follow-up discussion

- Results from the university-wide PhD survey were presented and discussed. Satisfaction with supervision was generally high (above 70% across several categories), but satisfaction with support at the start of the PhD was lower at MBW (64%). The survey did not clearly identify which aspects of onboarding required improvement.

- Two options were proposed: a short anonymous follow-up survey with space for specific suggestions, or a dedicated PhD-only discussion event. Low attendance at the earlier survey-results meeting reinforced the need to encourage student participation.

- Participants considered existing onboarding information insufficient, particularly for international students unfamiliar with Swedish administration. Suggestions included a practical guide covering A-kassa, social security, housing queues and other processes, an additional introductory session, and a buddy system linking new students with more experienced PhD students, including across research groups.

- A follow-up to the previous mental health workshop was discussed. Participants also stressed that institutional and supervisory causes of stress should be addressed, rather than placing responsibility solely on students. The discussion noted that the confidential PhD-student segment of annual ISP meetings, when the supervisor should leave, is not

always implemented in practice. Training for supervisors in communication and student wellbeing was suggested.

- The importance of formally reporting threats, harassment and other inappropriate behavior was emphasized. Affected students were encouraged to contact appropriate university representatives, including the Head of Department.

5. Nobel Week at Stockholm University

Nobel Week activities at Stockholm University were presented, including laboratory visits, free seminars, panel discussions, and guided campus activities. The PhD Board was preparing to contact the 2026 Nobel Prize laureate in Physiology or Medicine to explore a possible seminar at MBW as last year.

6. Ideas for upcoming events

The Board proposed an entertaining but scientifically relevant seminar on an Ig Nobel Prize-related topic. The suggestion was received positively. An online seminar could be considered if an in-person guest is not possible.

A follow-up mental health workshop was suggested for a future semester.

7. Annual Salary Review

The annual salary review is underway for PhD students and other university employees. Stockholm University aims for revised salaries to take effect from 1 October 2026, with retroactive payments in December.

8. PhD representation at departmental level

The importance of PhD representation on departmental committees was emphasized, both to keep doctoral students informed about decisions and to ensure their concerns are heard. Representatives unable to attend a meeting were reminded to contact their alternate, if available, or a PhD Board member so that a replacement can be arranged.

Several existing members of the PhD board are approaching the end of their PhD and may have to step down. Participants discussed encouraging new PhD students to join the next Board.

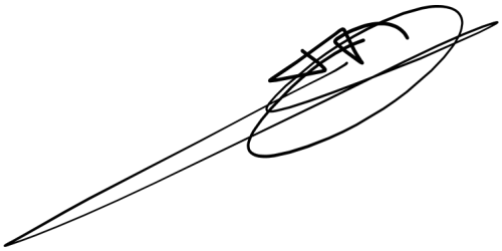
9. Introduction to Teaching in Biology - PhD course

The upcoming teaching course was introduced as a response to PhD feedback that the general introductory course did not provide enough practical teaching preparation. Starting on 24 November 2026, the approximately three-week course includes five scheduled meetings, independent reading and practical exercises. Participants will develop and present a concrete teaching plan at the end of the course.

Registration closes on 10 November 2026. Early registration was encouraged because at least eight participants are needed for the course to take place.



Emma Block



Thomas Mazza