

Crash course in navigating your PhD or PostDoc

Supervisor-student communication, work environment, know your rights, identify your needs for personal productivity

Background

Starting an academic career as a PhD or Postdoc is often very rewarding as you get to immerse yourself in your favorite scientific challenges, learn new things every day and work with colleagues equally dedicated to science as yourself. However, it often comes with challenges or obstacles that could be related to the scientific work itself, or to the psychosocial work environment, for example problems communicating and collaborating with supervisors and colleagues.

As a fresh PhD student or Postdoc, it is not always easy to be aware of all the written and unwritten rules in the academic setting, and many often lack experience in handling work-related conflicts. Young researchers may react too late when conflict occur, which can make the situation difficult to turn around. In this course we will focus on the importance of a good psychosocial work environment and on how young researchers can influence their own situation at work. Our goal is to give the participants a set of tools to better prepare them for any challenging situation they may meet in the academic work environment, and to discuss and share tips and strategies that contributes to an efficient and successful progression of their PhD or PostDoc.

When: The course will be held on the 24th and 25th of September 2020

Where: Jægtvolden Fjordhotell, outside of Trondheim

By: Digital Life Norway Research School and Norwegian Research School in Neuroscience

Number of participants: 30

Main topics

The program will cover four main themes:

Laws, rules and regulations that covers the psychosocial work environment.

Jon Wikende Iddeng, Forskerforbundet

Jon is an associate professor II in History at the USN school of business but comes to this course in his capacity as a special advisor for Forskerforbundet. Forskerforbundet is one of the unions available for academic workers. He will talk about the rules and regulations that regulate employment in fixed-term contracts as PhD and PostDocs. He will also address regulations concerning a sound work environment, the support functions that are in place and how to contact them. Any differences between different universities will also be covered.

“Basal needs” – a reflection on what you need to thrive at work

Tore Stiles, professor and psychologist

If you know what you need to do a good job, it is also easier to pinpoint when some of those factors are missing. Tore will first give us a brief introduction before he leads us in group-based discussions on what are important factors for a well-functioning work environment, especially in an academic setting. The goal is to become more aware of one's own needs for both academic productivity and a satisfying social work environment. We will also have room for discussions on any common challenges that the course participants may have and sharing of possible strategies to solve those challenges.

Boundaries and communication

Katrine Kavli Smith, NTNU

After Tore's session, we should all have a better sense of what we need to be content at work. But how do we communicate that to our supervisor and group members? Katrine will talk about how to communicate your needs, how to set your own boundaries and how to set up expectations for collaboration with both your supervisor and colleagues. She will provide us with practical tools to help you communicate these things in an effective manner. These tools will also help you to have more fruitful discussions and conversations with your colleagues in general.

Communication, different types of leaders and means of suppression (hersketeknikker)

Petter Bakken (<https://www.holtskog.no/team/petter-bakken/>)

How to be an effective communicator will always depend on the person you are talking with. Being aware of how people with different personality traits communicate can be very helpful, both to get your point across, but also in understanding what is important for the other person. Petter will share some tips and tricks on how to adapt your communication style to different leader types and personality traits.

In your professional career, you might at some point have to cooperate with someone that uses means of suppression (“hersketeknikker” in Norwegian) when they communicate. Although we hope you'll never need it, Petter will go over some common means of suppression and show you how to both recognize them and most effectively counter them in a conversation.

How to get there

Please do not book any tickets before being told so.

Participants from outside Trondheim: Train at 08:53 from Værnes airport – arrival at Røra 10:07.

Participants from Trondheim: Train at 08:18 from Trondheim S – arrival at Røra 10:07.

All participants will be picked up at Røra train station and will arrive at the hotel a little bit before 10:30.

Preliminary program

Thursday the 24th of September

- 10:30 – 11:00 Arrival + check in + coffee and wraps
- 11:00 - 11:30 Welcome + Nina: “Things I wish I knew when I started my PhD”
- 11:30 – 13:30 Talk/discussion, theme 1 (Jon W. Iddeng, Forskerforbundet)
- 13:30 – 14:30 Lunch
- 14:30 – 17:00 Talk/discussion/group work, theme 2 (Tore Stiles)
- 17:00 – 18:00 Break + snacks
- 18:00 – 19:30 Social activity
- 20:00 Dinner

Friday the 25th of September

- 09:00 – 11:00 Talk/discussion/group work, theme 3 (Katrine K. Smith)
- 11:00 – 12:00 Lunch
- 12:00 – 14:00 Talk/discussion/group work, theme 4 (Petter Bakken)
- 14:00 – 14:30 Coffee break
- 14:30 – 15:30 Summary and sharing of lessons learned (“experience-session”)
- 15:30 Attendees travel home (train from Røra at 15:52)