



Year report 2024 CAPHRI PhD representatives
CAPHRI, Universiteit Maastricht

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1. Our goals

As CAPHRI PhD representatives, our objectives can be divided into three core pillars:

1. Represent: We serve as the collective voice for all CAPHRI PhD students, identifying potential concerns or areas for improvement and transmitting these to the CAPHRI board. Additionally, we ensure that the perspectives of PhD students are considered in policy decisions by providing timely and relevant input to the board. This encompasses both internal and external PhD students.
2. Organize: We strive to cultivate a strong sense of community among CAPHRI PhD students by organizing inclusive events. These gatherings aim to balance intellectual enrichment with social interaction, whenever possible, creating an environment that nurtures both academic and personal connections. As there are students in Maastricht, as well as outside, we strive to include everyone, despite their location.
3. Communicate: We disseminate essential information to the CAPHRI PhD community, ensuring that all students remain well-informed. Furthermore, we act as the primary point of contact for PhD students seeking guidance or assistance, for example by the CAPHRI PhD-reps mail account.

2. CPCP en FPC

The Central PhD Candidates Platform (CPCP) met four times in 2023 (January, May, October, December 2024). In February, June and October 2024, a meeting took place in the presence of the rector of Maastricht University. Quincy participated in these meetings. In this university-wide platform, issues concerning PhD candidates, both interfaculty and (inter)national, were discussed. In 2024, some of the topics included:

- PhD input and elaborate on Reward and Recognition
- Printing and reception costs for the defense
- Rules around external PhDs and scholarship candidates
- Less money for research due to the new government
- More education that needs to be given in Dutch and how this will affect the PhD's

The Faculty Promotion Committee (FPC) of FHML advises the board on a wide range of promotion-related matters. The committee also serves as a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, as well as the discussion of relevant developments and operational issues within and among schools/institutes. Quincy represented CAPHRI on behalf of the PhD candidates in meetings 165 through 170, participated in the preparatory meeting, and also discussed the on the agenda items of CPCP in the FPC.

Topics that have been addressed (not exhaustive) include:

- The role of confidential advisors
- New PhD regulations
- The positioning of external PhDs
- Social safety
- Obligated courses: introduction scientific integrity
- Double and joint degrees
- Golden rules

3. CaRe

Of the CAPHRI PhD representatives, Diogo represented CAPHRI in the CaRe PEC-meetings for most of 2023, up until February 2024. After that, Bo van Engelen, a PhD student, took over. Bo is not a PhD representative but was asked to summarize the events related with Care for the year 2024. Below is a paragraph written by Bo:

"The CaRe Days 2024, held on May 29-30 in Eindhoven, gathered approximately 150 PhD students and senior researchers for discussions on public health advancements and future research directions. Topics included recent projects in health research, training opportunities for upcoming researchers, and the introduction of Prof. Hugh Montgomery as a visiting professor. The topic inspiration for the CaRe Days 2025 will include the 30th-anniversary celebrations, focusing on innovation in multidisciplinary health research."

4. PPM meetings

In 2024, the PPM meetings took place on the following dates: 01-02-2024, 16-05-2024, 03-10-2024, and 03-12-2024. The following items present an overview of the items that have been covered during these PPM meetings:

- CAPHRI visitation 2023 (including evaluation and plan-of-action)
- New PhD representatives
- Welcome meetings
- Kick Off meeting
- Winter meeting
- CAPHRI-day
- Confidential Advisors
- PhD regulations
- Updates from CNN, CPCP, FPC and CaRe

The events are further explored at item 6, Activities.

5. CAPHRI PhD Post/UMployee

Summary of PhD Posts

The CAPHRI PhD Post was sent monthly and generally contained the following items:

- Announcements
 - From the PhD representatives
- Events
 - Specific events per month
- Courses and workshops
 - Specific workshops per month
 - Language Center
 - Staff Career Center
 - University Library
 - PhD ceremonies
- Leisure
 - UM Sports
 - Studium Generale
 - PhD Academy
- CAPHRI PhD Guide
- Contact persons for PhD candidates
- Contact us

The communication officer of CAPHRI acquired input, drafted and sent out the PhD posts.

Summary of Umployee contributions

A CAPHRI PhD Community was created on Umployee. Currently, this community has 72 group members. A large number of messages have been posted on Umployee in the last year. In total, over 100 items have been posted since the creation of the community. It has become apparent that there have been little to no responses from other CAPHRI PhD students to these messages.

Reflection

As of the CAPHRI Day, the Umployee CAPHRI PhD Community is a closed group on Umployee. Since then, we have posted several messages with the goal of engaging CAPHRI PhD candidates. However, the reach of and response to these messages has been very low. The PhD Post remains the preferred method for reaching CAPHRI PhDs. We believe that the use of the Umployee CAPHRI PhD Community needs to be promoted for it to fulfill its potential.

6.

Activities

Spring Meeting

The Spring Meeting of 2024 consisted of two parts, which will be discussed in detail below. The overall aim of the Spring Meeting was to give PhD-students useful tips for their PhD journey. The webinar took place on 9 April and the onsite part was hosted on 25 April 2024.

Part 1: Webinar 'A practical guide for your PhD Journey (online)

The aims of the webinar were to highlight the different phases in your PhD trajectory, to inform about important (administrative) to do's in each phase, to link the new PhD regulations to these phases, and to offer time for Q&A. The webinar, which was hosted by CAPHRI PhD coordinator Francine Schneider, took one hour.

Part 2: 'An Insiders Guide to your PhD Journey' (onsite at DUB30 0.051)

To start off, there was a nice lunch provided, including sandwiches and soup. After the 30 minute lunch, the floor was opened to some experienced panel speakers to share personal experiences (90 minutes) and give some tips regarding the following:

- Incorporating your (personal and professional) goals in your PhD, so you can get the most out of your PhD journey.
- Tips and tricks for finalizing your dissertation: how to successfully wrap up your dissertation and how to overcome last hurdles
- Life after your PhD: the beginning of a new chapter.

At the end, there was room for questions from the audience. The panel speakers were Diogo Lopes Leao (current PhD student, substituting for Milena Pavlova), Francine Schneider (CAPHRI PhD coordinator), Rok Hrzic (former PhD-student), Patricia von Schenckendorff (GB) (secretary office), and a delegate of the Printing Company ProefschriftMaken. The printing company provided a sponsorship of 250 euros.

Evaluation of the meeting

The Spring meeting was a great success! In total, 68 people participated in the online meeting. In total, 30 people registered for the Spring Meeting. For the first time, more people (38) participated than had registered initially for the meeting. Adding a lunch and an outlook invite definitely helped in decreasing the no-show.

The on-site meeting was evaluated by 32 individuals, excluding the PhD-representatives. The overall meeting was assessed with a 7.9, meeting the expectations with a 7.8 and the usefulness of the content with an 8.3. More networking opportunities was a feedback point for future meetings. This was incorporated in 2024's Kick-Off Meeting, by hosting a networking workshop and a bouldering workshop, with lots of opportunities to get to know your fellow PhDs. The room (DUB30 0.051) was also a point for improvement, as it was quite hot in the room and ventilation options were limited. The preferred option is the co-greep zaal, as here there are windows and also more options for organising hybrid meetings. It was also stated in the evaluation sessions that a session for starting PhDs and a session about writing and publishing could be helpful. This is helpful input for next years' meetings.

Reflection by organizers

We are very satisfied with the turnout, the content of the meetings and the organisational process of the Spring Meeting of 2024. We are happy to incorporate our lessons learned and feedback for future meetings.





Kick-off Academic Year Meeting

On September 26th, we held the annual kick-off meeting, setting the tone for the new academic year.

The meeting consisted of two on-site parts: a networking workshop as an informative part and bouldering as a social event.

Part 1: Networking workshop

The first session was dedicated to learning and practicing networking skills. The first part of the program consisted of the following components:

- People dropped in the room and could grab tea, coffee, water, or orange juice.
- PhD-rep Giselle Menting welcomed both the attendees and Mark van der Zwan, who gave the workshop.
- Mark shortly introduced himself and what we were going to do.
- Warm-up exercise to break the ice.
- After this Mark explained how people connect and shared some tips.
- We then had a short coffee and cake break.
- Refreshing your strategy: quick consultation round, what did we want to learn.
- We learned how to consolidate our network, and we learned about the goal-oriented approach and how to use it.
- Thereafter, we practiced our networking skills.
- Finally, Mark made some closing remarks and did the evaluation.

Part 2: Bouldering

Around 15:00, we departed to Boulderhal Radium Boulders for the social event (Bouldering). Attendees were given an explanation of the do's and don'ts of bouldering. How they could determine which route they would climb and how they could get down safely. Afterwards we had a drink to close the successful day. The goal was getting to know other PhDs in an informal way, while having a great time.

In summary, our annual kick-off meeting on September 26th fulfilled its objectives: the attendees learned and practiced networking skills and could network later in an informal and fun way with other attendees. These sessions have set a positive tone for the upcoming academic year, equipping us with the tools to network with other people.

Evaluation of the meeting

The first part of the kick-off meeting was attended by 17 participants. Initially 23 people signed up, but send their cancellation on the 26th. The evaluation was completed by all attendees since the forms were handed out during the meeting, evaluating this part of the meeting with an overall score of 4.7/5. The workshop's applicability to their work was scored with a 4.8/5 indicating its usefulness for the participants. As a suggested future topic an impact workshop was suggested by 4 of the participants, also narrative cv writing, interview skills, better presentations, management of your PhD, and how to have effective meetings were suggested as future topics.

The second part of the Kick-off Meeting, Bouldering, was attended by 12 participants. We did not formally evaluate this part. But we noticed that everyone was climbing the walls and engaging in conversations.

Reflection by organizers

The Kick-off Meeting was a great success from the organizers' perspective. We received a positive evaluation score of 4.7/5 for the initial session. The second part, Bouldering, was also exciting and we got a good feeling that the participants liked it. We are particularly delighted that attendees appreciated the opportunity to connect with fellow PhDs from diverse backgrounds and that the participants indicated that they would recommend the workshop to fellow PhD's (score 4.8/10). The high number of no-shows has been reduced, which we believe is due to the calendar invitation with send the participants once they have registered. At least people e-mail us the day of the event they won't come.

Organizers are grateful for this enthusiastic response and are committed to making future events even more engaging. An idea to consider is the impact workshop which was suggested by 4 attendees.



Online workshop: Narrative CV writing by the grants office (November 15th)

The webinar about narrative CV writing for PhD Candidates was given by Vivian Braeken (±18 attendees). We approached the grants office to see if they would be willing to host such a workshop and with some tailoring of the workshop they already has this was possible.

Evaluation

The narrative CV writing for PhD Candidates webinar evaluation form was filled in by 11 respondents. The overall average assessment grade was 8.2 out of 10 (range 5-10). The expectations of the participants were met (average 4.3 out of 5; range 4-5) and believe the content of the webinar will be useful in their work (average 4.6 out of 5; range 4-5).

Reflection by organizers

The workshop was good, and a good division between explanation and interactivity. It was also easy to organize together with the grants office. However, we had 15 no shows, this is quite a large amount. Despite frequent emailing and sending calendar invites, no show remains high.

PhD Christmas Celebration

This year's Winter Meeting was held at 'Magical Maastricht', Maastricht's Christmas market on 12 December. The Winter Meeting had a change of name, namely 'PhD Christmas Celebration'. We chose for a new name, because this is an on-site, informal event with the primary goal of fostering connections, to have fun and to get into the Christmas spirit. PhD candidates who registered for the celebration were invited to meet us at 15:30 by the illuminated giant present across from Pinky's. Once everyone had arrived, we enjoyed a stroll through the Christmas market, followed by a fun round of curling, and rounded off with some festive drinks and bitterballen. The event wrapped up around 17:00.

Reflection by organizers

From the organizers' perspective, the PhD Christmas Celebration was a great success. While we did not send out a formal evaluation, we received very positive feedback from participants. Unlike previous years, many people signed up. Of the 37 people who registered, 29 attended, and we were happy to see attendees enthusiastically connecting with fellow PhDs from a wide range of backgrounds.

General reflection of activities

This year was filled with a mix of formal and informal events that boosted engagement. Participants gave excellent ratings to all organized activities. Using Outlook invites and including lunch effectively reduced no-shows and led to better participation rates. In addition, the collaboration with the communication officer on sending out invitations and reminders contributed to the success in reducing no-shows.

Duboisdomein 30 room 0.051 worked well for formal activities, but the Co-greepzaal was preferable due to better ventilation and hybrid meeting capabilities. Looking ahead, we would like to organize more hybrid events to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for all PhD candidates. Efforts to explore new solutions to engage more PhD candidates will be continued.

7. Warm welcome new PhDs

Welcome meetings

Two Welcome Meetings were held on 26th of March and 12th of September.

Recap: we introduced this kind of meeting because we got signals that not every PhD candidate got the same information at the start of their PhD, besides the introductory e-mail sent by CAPHRI. Also, we thought it would be useful to meet the people of CAPHRI and other starting PhD's. Therefore, we decided to hold this kind of Welcome Meeting 2-3 times per year for the PhD students that started in the last 4-6 months.

Goal of the meetings

The organization was introduced (management, research lines, departments/living labs, funding advisors, quality assurance officer), as well as the community and the PhD community (PhD administrative coordinator, community coordinator, confidential advisors, representatives). Additionally, information regarding documents PhD candidates need to pay attention to were introduced (TSP and PRP), as well as the TRACK system and several topics that can be accessed through the CAPHRI website. At the end, there was time for any questions the new PhD candidates might have had. The PhD candidates also had some time to chat and get to know each other.

Reflection by organisers

There was no evaluation sent out. However, from subsequent reactions, it can be concluded that it was very useful. Additionally, there were a good number of participants.

There were questions regarding the Umployee registration, and it was decided afterwards that FHML marketing & Communications would invite a list of all currently active PhDs to register for Umployee.

8. Finances

Budget CAPHRI PhD Representatives		
Spring Meeting		
	Sponsor from Printing Company	-€250,00
	Gifts to Speakers	€77,50
	Orange Juice/Water	€26,00
	Food/Drinks ordered	€318,98
	Total spent	€172,48
Webinar		
	Activity	€0,00
	Total spent	€0,00
Kick-off Meeting		
	Workshop	€1 180,00
	Cake/Cups	€11,04
	Bouldering/Drinks/Food	€261,60
	Total spent	€1 452,64
Workshop		
	Activity	€0,00
	Gift bags	€26,00
	Total spent	€26,00

Winter Meeting		
	Christmas Market activities	€80
	Drinks/Food	€250
	Total spent	€330
Total Spent		€1 981,12
Budget		€2 000,00
Remaining		€18,88

We approached Proefschriftmaken.nl for sponsoring once again this year. They decided to sponsor the Spring meeting with 250 euros. They participated in the Spring meeting and talked about their services. They also distributed materials to our PhD students.

The webinar, held by Francine, and the online workshop, held by the UM library staff, did not have any costs.

The Kick-off meeting had costs for the workshop, held by ElroyCOM Training, as well as for the social event held afterwards (bouldering).

In the last event of the year, the Winter meeting, costs came from the activities (curling), food and drinks at the Maastricht Christmas Market. Curling had a cost of 80 euros, and we used almost the remaining budget to treat our fellow PhD students to some food and drinks.

9. Any other business

The “roof tile construction” has been working well. Chrissy, Diogo and Quincy joined the team in 2023 to replace Monique and to complete a team of representatives from all research lines. This transition seems to have worked well, as there were no “hiccups” in event preparations or other topics. Frederike, Ken and Lieve were replaced as of January 2024 by Esther van Santbrink and Giselle Menting, and this transition also seems to have been successful.

After two years of being a PhD-representative, Diogo and Chrissy will leave their position as PhD representatives as of 31-03-2025. Quincy will leave her position as of 31-05-2025. Diogo’s research line (VHC) and Chrissy’s research line (HISP) already have the new representative function fulfilled. Efforts will be made to find replacements for the research line ALTC, so that transitions are as smooth as in previous instances.