

Education for the future

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Present and future education

- **Research-based education**, from undergraduate studies to a PhD: [The Computational Physics group at the University of Oslo](#) as example
- Future challenges and directions

Takeaway message

Excellent research mutually depends on excellent education.

The role of computations, from education to society

Computations are central to our basic understanding of nature and to technological advances.

Examples

- **Nanotech and Materials**: quantum physical systems in nanotechnology; characteristics of new materials; semi-conductor devices and quantum computers
- **The smallest particles in nature**: subatomic physics at its smallest length scale
- **And the largest**: simulating galaxies and the evolution of the universe
- **Life science**: cancer treatment and how the brain works
- **Geosciences**: predicting climate changes and this week's weather, simulating natural disasters
- **Finance**: assessing risk in the insurance and financial industry
- and many many more

Modeling and computations as a way to enhance algorithmic thinking

Algorithm : A set of instructions to solve a problem.

Algorithmic thinking:

- Enhances instruction-based teaching
- Introduces research-based teaching from day one
- Triggers further insights in math and other disciplines
- Emphasizes validation and verification of scientific results, and integrates ethics
- Ensures good working practices from day one!

What does computing mean?

Computing means solving scientific problems using computers. It covers numerical as well as symbolic computing. Computing is also about developing an understanding of the scientific process by enhancing the algorithmic thinking when solving problems.

Computing competence is about:

- derivation, verification, and implementation of algorithms
- understanding what can go wrong with algorithms
- overview of important, known algorithms
- understanding how algorithms are used to solve complicated problems
- reproducible science and ethics
- algorithmic thinking for gaining deeper insights about scientific problems

All these elements (and many more) aid students in maturing and gaining a better understanding of the scientific process *per se*

Computing and research-based education

A computational approach allows us to introduce research concepts and engage students in research from *day one*.

What should the education contain?

- Theory + experiment + simulation is the norm in research and industry
- Modeling of real, complex systems with no simple answers
- Insight and understanding of fundamental principles and laws
- Visualization, presentation, discussion, interpretation, and critical analysis of results
- Development of a sound ethical attitude to own and other's work
- Enhanced reasoning about the scientific method

This is what we do in the [Computational Physics group at UiO!](#)

Computational Physics group at UiO; our visions

Physics students can **pose and solve problems** that combine **physical insights** with **mathematical tools** and now also **computational skills**. This provides a unique combination of applied and theoretical knowledge and skills. These features are invaluable for the development of multi-disciplinary educational and research programs.



A social and scientific learning environment

Goal: Students should realize their full potentials and discover their creative powers

- Students come with different dreams, ambitions, aspirations and topics they wish to study, our approach is to tailor the education to all these aspects
- Our motto: foster students who are better than their supervisors
- Students and teachers help each other
- Students with different backgrounds and needs can thrive socially and scientifically
- Not a competitive environment, but a drive and enthusiasm for sharing and developing knowledge

We develop a social and scientific learning environment

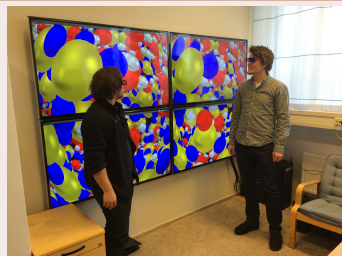
- We target bachelor, MSc and PhD students
- Project-oriented work where students develop and mature their own ideas, with an individually tailored approach to each student
- Office space with desktops to every student and large common room for recreational activities (meals, gaming, movies)
- Many students collaborate on similar thesis topics and **publish in top scientific journals**

Features of the Computational Physics group

- Our students have made significant contributions to the **Computing in Science Education** (UiO education prize in 2011) by developing exercises and participating in educational projects at the MN faculty
- Our students have also developed educational **tools and applications for understanding complicated physical problems**
- A group of PhD students is now developing **new textbooks for Computational Life Science**
- 2005-2015: > 60 students have finalized their master's theses and 60% have continued with PhD studies
- Many students don't want to leave the group after finishing their studies

Investing in equipment for students

Using research funds for visualization tools



Building a supercomputing cluster

We got (for free) the old supercomputer at UiO (TITAN)



Undergraduate student publishes in PNAS

Using research funds for visualization tools

UTDIO
UiO's Fysikk institutt

Begynnerstudent gjør oppsiktsvekkende oppdagelse

Bachelorstudent gjør ryktet om middelmådig norsk forskning til skamme ved å få sin forskning publisert i et internasjonalt topp-tidsskrift.



Henrik Swinssen. Foto: Ole Jansen

Vanligvis deltar ikke studenter i forskning før etter 4-5 år på universitetet. Nå er forskningsmidlene ved UiO endret slik at studentene møter både i send til å tenke på reelle problemstillinger. Studentene får mulighet til å være med i toppforskning gjennom et prosjekt som kalles "Grand Challenge". Henrik Swinssen er en av studentene som har deltatt i Grand Challenge-prosjektet.

Forstå jordskjelv
—Henrik viste tidlig både talent og interesse for forskning. Derfor mente jeg det var viktig å gi ham

Multiscale modeling is the big open research question in the 21st century

- Present and future problems, unlike traditional science and engineering, involve complex systems with many distinct physical processes
- The wide open research topic of this century, both in industry and at universities, is how to effectively couple processes across different length and energy scales
- Progress will rely on a *multi-disciplinary* approach

We need to foster candidates with the right multi-disciplinary background and computational thinking!

The future: A new type of students

Computations will play a central role in almost all aspects of scientific investigations and technological innovation

Candidates who are capable of modeling and understanding complicated systems, are in short supply in society.

We need students that

- can handle large and demanding multi-disciplinary projects.
This requires structured thinking and good analytical skills and a thorough understanding of the problems to be solved
- This knowledge makes the students unique on the labor market, a labor market which in the years to come will experience heavy automatization and massive loss of jobs.

This will lay the foundation for cross-disciplinary educational, research and innovation activities.

Create the Department for Computational Science!

UiO's strength in computational science (education and research) has the potential to make UiO a top European university

How to achieve it

- Establish a new center/department with focus on computational science and its applications to a wide range of fields (natural science, medicine, social sciences, humanities, applied research etc)
- Hire ten young professors (age < 40) dedicated to innovative *computational* research and education
- Establish another ten professorships with shared positions between the new department and the discipline-specific department (physics, chemistry, ...)

The process must start now in order not to lose momentum.

Our takeaway messages

- Computing plays and will play an even more important role in future scientific and technological advances
- A successful research program cannot be disconnected from education and vice versa
- An educational and research program which focuses on these issues needs to be established as soon as possible
- Key goal: students must realize their own potentials and creative power

Our success builds on the Computing in Science Education project (UiO educational prize in 2011)

The results, insights, ideas and thoughts presented here, would have been impossible without the continuous interaction with colleagues in the [Computing in Science Education](#) project.

- Hans Petter Langtangen, Informatics and Simula Research Laboratory
- Knut Mørken, Mathematics
- Arnt Inge Vistnes, Physics
- Oyvind Ryan, Mathematics
- Solveig Kristensen and Annik Myhre, Deans of Education, MN faculty
- Hanne Søltna, Director of studies MN faculty
- And: all our fantastic students who keep giving us new insights!

Thanks for the attention