

Doctoral Programme Chairs at CP: Handbook of the ACP (Update 2024)

Please put here the list of things you would like to pass on to future chairs (do and don't...) and also to the ACP (clarifications and connections that could be improved, ...). The structure of the document is largely "free" at this point, so please add sections as you feel you need them.

Directives from the ACP Executive Committee (from CP 2015 on)

"The spirit of the Doctoral Programme (DP) is that every interested student whose work is within the scope of the conference should be admitted and be given a chance to present his/her work, get a mentor, and participate in the social program. However, not all DP participants need to be financially sponsored, and the ACP encourages any financial support (which is to be secured by the Conference Chairs) to be first offered to students (1) who are most in need *and* (2) whose work is of the highest quality. To assess the financial need (1), applicants can be asked to submit a request for funding accompanied by a letter from their supervisor. The quality level (2) may be measured by a *lightweight* reviewing process, where again a letter of support from the supervisor can be helpful." (EC Quarterly Report Q3 of 2014)

Call for DP paper:

- Get the call out between submission to the main conference and notification
- Submission deadline around 2-3 weeks after notification of CP
- Ask publicity chair/website chair to put the call on website/twitter/...
- Just after the notification of the acceptance of CP paper, ask the program chair for the list of students with accepted papers and send them an email recalling the call for DP paper. It will prevent student forgetting about the call.
- The calls for participation in the DP must be approved not only by the Programme Chair, but also by the Conference Chair(s), and the ACP Conference Coordinator, in order to ensure that these new directives are followed adequately.

Website:

- Ask the publicity chair/website chair to get your call for paper on the website.
- Ask also to get a page for the event (with the planning, specifics, and proceedings)

Review:

- The DP papers are reviewed as papers at the main conference. The goal is not to review papers (except those really very bad) but to get the authors some feedback on their current work and writing skills.

- The students also participate to the review (one paper to review per student).
- You can recruit other reviewers by asking the Program chair for the list of reviewers and sending invitations to all the members of the PC of CP. Not all will answer at all, but you generally get enough to provide one experienced reviewer for each extended abstract and two for the other papers.
- You can create an easy-chair for the DP. There is a free version of up to a few submissions. The excess can be paid by the conference.

DP scholarship:

- The DP sponsors a number of students each year. The sponsoring usually includes registration to the conference + housing (or part of the housing).
- The Conference chair is responsible for finding the funds and booking the rooms. Contact him to know how many spots you can give.
- In the call for DP paper, includes a call for funding. The student wishing to benefit from it should send you a motivation letter, with a letter of support from their advisor (motivating a bit why they need the money). It is up to you to decide who to attribute the money to. You can ask the Conference chair to help you choose if needed. Prefer the ones in the most need and the ones whose work is the highest quality.

DP papers:

- The type of DP papers are usually: extended abstracts of main conference papers (2-pages), full papers (8-pages), and (sometimes) thesis summaries (8-pages)
- Proceedings are usually made available on the CP website (zip or big pdf with all the pdf grouped)

Paper talks:

- It is customary to have everyone with a DP paper present during the DP. The summary paper usually gets a 3-min lightning talk (as they have their talk at the main conference), full paper and thesis summary gets 15-20 min (dépending on the schedule, total number of paper,...). Check with the Conference Chair what are is the general schedule of the day (when is the dinner, coffee breaks, and lunch)

Posters:

- If it is possible to organize, a poster session is appreciated. It can be during coffee breaks the DP days, or during the opening reception of the conference, depending on organization constraints.
- It can also be a poster of DP participants only or also open to the main conference paper (less often), depending on organization constraints.
- Every participant of the DP (having a paper) is very much encouraged to do a poster.
- A best poster award, based on the vote of the conference member can be done.

Invited talk(s):

- Goal of the DP invited talk(s): be informative on transversal aspects of the Ph.D. student life (former example: talk on stress, talk on how to go to plan in advance for academic life, talk on PhDs in industry,... see previous edition of the DP). Talk is usually a mix of technical and transversal knowledge. Ask senior member as they can reflect more on their path into the research world
- One or two invited talks usually, try not to be redundant with previous years
- There is no specific funding for the invited talk, so choose the speaker among the people coming. Ideally, ask the Conference Chair for the list of people registering early and pick from it.

Mentors:

- Students participating in the DP can be assigned a Mentor if you wish
- The mentor's job is to (ideally) assist to the presentation of the mentee, go to his poster (if there is a poster session), and take time to talk to the mentee during a lunch or coffee break (to give feedback on presentation, answer question, talk about broad research life,...).
- You can proactively decide on a given day's lunch as the mentor-mentee lunch to encourage the meeting.
- Ask for available mentors early: you can ask Conference Chair for the registered early and send an email to all of the non-PhD students on the list asking if they want to be mentors. In the mail, you can ask them if they have someone in mind they want to mentor. If you want, you can also ask which day is the mentor coming, to ensure you pair a mentor with a mentee presenting when the mentor is available.

Participation to the DP and DP dinner:

- The "participants" to the DP are the students who submitted a paper. However, anyone can come and listen to the talks.
- There is a DP dinner on the evening of the DP (financed by the conference) for the DP participants, DP invited speaker, and DP chair. It is usually in a nice convivial place (pizza bar, tapas bar,...). See with Conference Chair for the place, number of people to book for, and budget (how many drinks included).

Advice to DP Chairs from former DP Chairs:

Notes from the ACP EC:

- Get the call for papers early, even if the submission date is after the CP acceptance rate. Students need more time to write a paper than experienced researchers.
- If students are asked to write a review, that review can be shared with the authors. However, the authors should know which review is from an experienced researcher and which review is from a student. Some students can write harsh review.

Notes from the CP2022 DP chairs:

- Get a first call for paper before the CP acceptance date
- Send a second targeted call to student having paper accepted to the main conference to remind them about the DP, the possibility to submit a summary to the DP and get funding to come to the conference
- Have multiple ideas of speaker, ask them if they plan on coming to CP (there is no budget to invite the speaker, so it is best to select people coming to CP), check the list of accepted paper or the list of early registration
- Find early your mentors (or at list most of them), check from the list of early registration
- Check with the conference organisation that they have thought about every details (if you organize poster, be sure they have a place for posters, don't let them forget the hotel room for the DP students, the DP dinner,...)

Notes from the CP2016 DP chairs:

- Reading the handbook and deciding early what you do/do not want to do compared to the previous year(s) is very helpful to guide yourself.
- Determining a timeline early (including when to send out CFP, reminders, invited talks fixed, etc) helps to stay on track.
- Say hi to the Conference Chairs very early on; they booked the dinner and arranged student hotel for us, and handled everything wrt the registration form.
- A separate EasyChair for the DP was very helpful. For the student reviewing, we made all of the students reviewer at a later stage and reopened/modified the reviewing form; worked well.
- We didn't really do much with the reviews they did, except suggesting that they discuss how the process was with their mentor. The students asked to make all reviews visible to all, to learn something extra from it. EasyChair allows this anonymously, so we did.
- We cancelled the poster session very late (like 2 weeks before CP) because based on our direct experience the year before, it is most useful if it can be part of the main conference. We forgot to follow this up properly, and there was no location close to the coffee break room available, so we cancelled. We thought it was only of limited success last year (students having to stand next to their poster during every break that day with very few people passing by). However, the poll after the event indicated that students answered reasonably positively to the question 'Would you have liked to have had a poster session if it were possible'. From comments, I think because it would have given

themselves the opportunity to discuss with each other their work in a less time-limited way.

- The timing was tight and it was quite difficult to stick to it (esp. when starting a bit late), also because we wanted it to be a quite 'relaxed' atmosphere. We went overtime about 5-10mins each time I think.
- Finding mentors took _a lot_ of time, because we had to chase people. General invitation emails (to all PC and authors) work only up to some point, after that it is asking people directly by mail... Perhaps you can quick-start by checking who mentored in the past here:
http://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/100u02W56y2uDPbmDugt__5J18PuuwWxNpETbsCackpo
- The students appreciated the DP, and it was quite fun, so that was nice.
- See also the results of our survey (available from the ACP Conference Coordinator).
- Finally, we collaborated through a Dropbox and we think it is most beneficial if we share this Dropbox folder with the chairs of the coming edition. Contact us.

Notes from the CP2024 DP chair (Edward Lam):

Notes from the CP2015 DP chairs:

- First and foremost, read the advice of the previous chairs! They were extremely helpful, and allowed us to plan properly. A few extra pieces of advice are listed here.
- If you want a poster competition, set aside actual time in the program. We did this in an ad-hoc fashion and received a decent number of votes, but more votes would have been better and we believe that if there was a designated time published in the conference program that would help.
- Run the poster competition. Students like it, and it gives us an opportunity to award up-and-coming students.
- Prepare a survey for the participants early so that in the last session you can make it available.
- Ask the participants for their presentations BEFORE the conference. That way you can have all of them on your machine, and ready to go. There was a lot of time spent switching computers, and because the talks are relatively shorter than other sessions, this was a problem.
- Make sure the room is large enough. It was a bit cramped.
- Regarding the mentors, make sure that they know they should attend the talks. You should make the schedule of the talks available as early as possible, and not change around the order or timing of anything once it was published. To do this, make a sample schedule, send it before publishing it online to each of the DP participants making sure that they can make it during their time. Then, post it on the website and make it available to everyone, and try your best to never change it.

Notes from the CP2014 DP chairs:

- We conducted an anonymous survey the week after the conference to evaluate what the students liked and what not, and to gather suggestions for future DPs. This was really helpful (and rewarding) and we recommend to do that too. 92% of the students filled out the survey and we will use some of their answers in the following notes.
- We used a shared email address dpcp2014@gmail.com that we both used (following the tip from former DP chairs) and this worked out really well, in particular since we were in completely different time zones (UK and Australia)
- We used Google docs spreadsheets to monitor the current student applications and their features/status (also following a tip from previous chairs)
- If paper submission deadlines are strict, make that clear in advance
- Contact the ACP if there are any changes in the DP process, in particular for ACP funding (we had a little incident because we were not informed of a change)
- Ask people to chair sessions at the DP so you have less work
- We introduced 3-minute presentations (pitches) for all those students who had a CP paper and therefore not a regular DP presentation. The students give these short presentations at the regular DP (we grouped several students into a 15-minute block) and they use it to advertise their CP talk and therefore get some visibility at the DP (which they would not have otherwise). In our survey, over 95% of the students stated that the 3-minute presentations should be kept in future DPs, so we strongly encourage you to keep them.
- We required the students to add at least one slide about themselves in their talk (including the 3-minute presentations). On this "About Me" slide, they were supposed to say something about themselves (we suggested them to talk about their hobbies, country of study or origin, etc). The objective of the "About Me" slides is to ease making contact between students, remembering each other, and to "lighten up" the presentations. In our survey, over 80% of the students stated that the "About Me" slides should be kept in future DPs, so we strongly encourage you to keep them.
- We re-introduced poster prizes for the best posters. We had a big prize (Kindle) for the best poster and two small prizes (funny mugs) for the second and third best poster. The objective of the prizes was to give an incentive for the students to put effort into their posters. Another objective of the poster prizes was to give the DP students a better visibility at the main conference, and to give an incentive for conference attendees to take part in the poster session: We asked the conference attendees to vote for the best poster and one randomly chosen voter would also get a prize. This worked quite well - we got 49 votes from about 200 conference attendees (which still leaves room for improvement) and the poster session was quite busy. We announced and handed over the poster prizes at the banquet and then also randomly picked a voter who won a prize. The voting ballots were put into the conference bags and some people could not vote, because they did not bring their ballot - this might also be improved. In our survey, over 80% of the students stated that the poster prizes should be kept and almost 70% stated that the conference attendees should do the vote. We therefore

encourage you to keep the poster prizes and involve the conference attendees in the voting.

- Ask the invited DP speakers to join the DP dinner - we did this at CP2014 and the students (and the speakers) loved it.
- Hold the DP dinner on the same day as the DP - this way the socializing works best (just don't make it too late). In our survey, 95% of the students liked that the DP dinner was on the same day as the DP.
- The students proposed "How to review a paper" as another interesting topic for an invited talk at the DP
- Encourage the students to invite their mentor to their presentation
- We tried to accept all the students to the DP, which was possible due to generous funding (which covered the registration fees). We did not receive any substandard submissions.
- We tried to re-organize student 'peer reviewing' (as organized by Yves Deville in a previous DP), but failed with time constraints. If you want to do this, contact Yves for information and start planning it way in advance (you will need someone like Yves to coordinate it).
- Coordinate with local organisers to make sure the facilities for poster session and talks are adequate. The survey revealed that students found the poster session location only satisfactory (45.45%), bad (13.64%) or very bad (4.55%).
- At CP14, we used easychair and the DP was made a kind of sub-conference of the CP conference. This resulted in a huge (time-consuming) hassle, because we did not have proper admin rights and had to bother the conference chair for even simple tasks (he was the only one with the rights). We strongly recommend to create your own easychair conference for the DP, so you have full control over everything (insist on this!).
- At CP14, the students were left to themselves to book accommodation, which meant that the students were spread all over the hotels/hostels around the conference location. This is not ideal, in particular if we want the students to bond and socialize. In the survey there were quite some comments from students stating that a common place for accommodation would have been much better. We suggest the following:
 - either organize accommodation as part of the DP (as in previous DPs) so that the DP students stay at the same place
 - or pick a hostel/hotel for the students (the "Student Hotel") and reserve ~30 rooms there and recommend that the students book a room at this place

Notes from the CP2013 DP chairs:

- At CP13, we used an online FAQ document for DP students to share and keep information in one place. It was very convenient and saved us from answering a lot of emails. I would recommend this. Perhaps, new chairs can have a look at [our FAQ](#) as the same questions/problems will be asked next time.
- At CP13, we used a simple criterion for acceptance, with full funding, to the DP:
 - a. we accepted students who declared applying for the first time;
 - b. for tie-breaking, we used recommendations from DP program committee

members.

- It was a nice idea at CP13 from Yves Deville to invite all students that did not receive funding from the DP to participate nevertheless in the DP, though unfunded: they could attend DP talks (but not give one, purely for time reasons), show a poster on their own work, and attend the DP dinner (funded by the Conference Chairs).
- We were planning at CP13 to have a DP panel: "Life after PhD". The plan was to invite a few people from industry, academia, and recent graduates to share their experience. Unfortunately, we did not have time for the panel this time as we had ~25 presenters at the DP. However, we believe such a panel will be interesting for students to attend.
- Our deadlines for CP13 were ok. We did not have to rush at any stage.
- We used a shared spreadsheet to coordinate the gathering of information, and it worked reasonably well.
- We had an email address where both chairs would receive the mail, which raised the question of who should answer. Because the chairs were in almost opposite time zones, it usually turned out that only one would be working at the time and that person would answer, and we didn't step on each other's toes.
- At CP13, we did not have an email address (or an account) that we can use to *send* notifications from. As a result, students/mentors were using our personal emails. In this case, either of us missed a lot of emails. We had to forward these emails to each other all the time. Comment from the Conference Chairs: The functional address dp@cp2103.a4cp.org given by the Publicity Chair could have been used as Reply-To address.
- At CP13 maybe the poster session could have been organised better -- there wasn't much mingling of the attendees among the posters. This is tricky and depends a lot on the specific details, such as:
 - a. will there be a main conference poster session?
 - b. can the posters stay up for several days?
 - c. will the coffee breaks and lunches be near the posters?

The students usually go to some effort to make nice posters and it would be good to give them more exposure.

Notes from the CP13 Conference Chairs:

- At CP13, we eventually succeeded in fully funding 30 DP students from sponsorship, and the DP chairs could change their original call from conditional funding (subject to the supervisor's financial situation) to unconditional funding. In retrospect, that suggested change of the DP call was a bad idea by us Conference Chairs, since 6 (of 36) DP applicants were "rejected": 5 of them succeeded in funding their participation nevertheless, but maybe some of them (and the 6th one) were in a financially more needy situation than some of the 30?
- Negotiate the room needs and timing with the Conference Chairs.
- If the Conference Chairs are arranging accommodation for the DP students, then make sure that the students get clear instructions and information on what sort of accommodation is provided. At CP13 a youth hostel was provided, but some students

misunderstood that they had to share a room, despite a form about room sharing.

- Do not underestimate the capacity of people (especially doctoral students) not to read instructions (or to misinterpret them) and thereby wreak havoc on the overall organisation.
- Some airlines charge extra for poster rolls as cabin baggage, so a lot of DP students will want to print their posters just-in-time: provide addresses and opening times of print shops near the conference venue.

Notes from the CP2011 DP chairs:

- if you are two DP chairs, discuss who is responsible for what (who answers emails? who does the web pages? who prepares the proceedings? who invites mentors?). A possible model could be that one DP chair is in charge, while the other mainly watches and helps and will be in charge the following year.
- clearly state that the deadline for both DP submissions AND support letters is the same (including support letters for students who have papers in the main conference)
- take special care that support letters don't end up in your spam folder (emails from Asia and Africa are particularly likely candidates)
- for students with full CP papers, require a support letter from the supervisor AND a co-author of the paper (if the supervisor isn't), clearly stating that the paper is mainly the student's work (we had a case this year where the student changed supervisor, and his previous supervisor and co-author was quite unhappy about him being accepted on the basis of their paper)
- make sure the DP deadline is after the CP notification, and the DP notification is before the early registration deadline
- after notification, ask for explicit registration by a certain date, e.g. within a week (this year many students were not very responsive, and we had problems getting the required data from everyone)
- on the web pages, be as precise as possible about what being accepted to the DP entails (e.g., that you're supposed to give a talk, present a poster, and talk to a mentor, that you're supposed to be present for the other talks etc), in particular including the funding details (what kind of costs are covered, what kind of accommodation will be provided if any, etc)
- ask mentors early (previous DP chairs can give you a list with email addresses of people who have agreed to mentor before, and maybe the conference chairs can suggest people)
- organize a tutorial early

Comments to the ACP

It would be nice to have more money allocated to the DP to fund all students. (DP2014 chairs also fully agree with this)

→ Reply from the ACP EC: This negotiation is between you and the Conference Chairs (who may ask the ACP EC for sponsorship), not between you and the ACP EC.