

What are the needs of doctoral students in mathematics education?

Activities during summer and early autumn in the Nordic Graduate School

Summer school

In August 2004 four doctoral students participated on behalf of the Nordic Graduate School in Mathematics Education, NoGSME, in the YERME summer school in Podebrady in the Czech Republic. I myself was generously invited to observe everything in the summer school. This year's summer school was very successful and had around 60 participants from 14 different countries in Europe. Five experts took care of the groups of students in workshops and discussion groups. Each morning offered a two hour lecture and there was also a social programme in the form of an excursion and a social dinner. In the evaluation the students confirmed the value of the programme for their development as researchers. The four Nordic students, Claire from Norway, Jukka, Markus and Antti from Finland, are now part of the planning group for a Nordic Summer School in early August 2005 at the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. They work together with two members from the board of NoGSME.

Seminar for supervisors in mathematics education

In the beginning of September 19 participants were gathered for a seminar in Vasa, Finland. The theme of the seminar was Supervision and Quality in Mathematics Education Research. Criteria for scientific quality in research papers and theses were discussed and for practice some articles were investigated and judged according to the criteria presented. Invited guest speakers were Frank Lester and Diana Lambdin from Indiana University, USA. Their outstanding experience from doctoral programmes offered a rich background to the work in the seminar. Two workshops took place and gave time for deep discussions about quality. Issues on the construction of doctoral programmes and of supervision were also covered. Questions were raised about the need to discuss the work of a scientific opponent at the defence of a thesis and the need to develop such expertise, as now in the coming years many Nordic doctoral students will defend their theses. Do we have a common view in the Nordic countries about what can be demanded from a good quality thesis? Do we wish for such a shared view?

Courses in the Nordic countries for doctoral students

During early summer and in August several offers have been sent out for students to participate in courses. We know that there are about 80 students in the Nordic countries and therefore find it astonishing that the wish to participate in the courses is rather low. We welcome feedback from students and supervisors on what are the most important resources we can offer for doctoral students. NoGSME is intended to be a resource for doctoral students and supervisors and we wish to offer what is most valuable for them.

Coming activities in 2005

For students

For spring 2005 two courses are offered so far. A course on Problem Solving and another on Research Methods and Design. Both take place at Agder University College. We are pleased to offer other courses if any of the participating universities can give them. All suggestions are welcome and will be discussed. Students are welcome to suggest subjects for courses that they want but cannot find at their own university. The offer for travel support to courses continues, and also the opportunity to get a mobility stipend to stay for a month at another Nordic university. All information is available on the web page www.hia.no/realfag/forskerskolen.

August 8-14 the Nordic Summer School will take place in Jyväskylä in Finland. We expect to be able to accept about 30 participants and the most experienced will be prioritised. The evaluations of the YERME summer schools have shown that post-doctoral students and those approaching their thesis defence are those who have the best learning outcome from a summer school. All students are welcome to give suggestions for themes they would like to see in the summer school. Is there, for example, enough interest in research on textbooks in mathematics? That theme was not available in Pödebrady but wanted by some Nordic students. Two issues that the students in the YERME summer school found interesting were how to read a scientific article and how to write one. Maybe those are eternal questions that have to be taken up repeatedly.

For supervisors

In late spring there will be another offer for supervisors to take part in a two-day seminar, probably in Denmark. A one-day seminar will take place before the Fourth Nordic Conference in Mathematics Education

in Trondheim, September 2-6. More information on this will be sent out by e-mail and advertised on the web page. Suggestions for themes to be included are welcome.

Communication is difficult

During the first nine months of the existence of the Nordic Graduate School of Mathematics Education we have noticed how hard it is to establish communication in a new network. This was given to us as a well known fact from NorFA from earlier experiences. We need help to find ways to reach all students and supervisors. Sometimes when we send out letters on long sending lists we find that they are taken by the SPAM-filters. When the receivers look in their SPAM-folder they find letters from NoGSME. If you suspect that you do not get our mail, please contact us. We have also visited groups and made a presentation of our activities, and this is a much more useful way to work. That way we also get immediate feedback on our initiatives. If anyone wants to have a visit from a board member, please let us know about it. And please help us in every way to establish contact and keep our sending lists and lists of addresses up-to-date.

Responses to the board of the Nordic Graduate School

The board of the Nordic Graduate School wants to see initiatives or get suggestions from doctoral students and supervisors in mathematics education. As the board has at least one member from each of the Nordic countries it is hopefully easy for you to contact the board member in your country. For information see the web page. The Nordic Graduate School in Mathematics Education should be seen as an extra resource for doctoral students and supervisors, and that their wishes and initiatives can guide the work in the Nordic Graduate School. We are looking forward to many contacts and suggestions and interesting future cooperation.

On behalf of the board of the Nordic Graduate School in Mathematics Education

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