

Results of the Survey on the Doctoral Program at CP2014

DP Chairs: Justyna Petke, Andrea Rendl
Local Chairs: Yves Deville, Christine Solnon
Summary written by: Andrea Rendl, October 1, 2014

- [1. Student Figures](#)
- [2. General Impression](#)
- [3. Doctoral Program Dinner](#)
- [4. Poster Session](#)
- [5. Invited Talks](#)
- [6. Mentoring System](#)
- [7. New Features at the Doctoral Program 2014](#)
- [8. Social Experience](#)
- [9. General Comments and Suggestions](#)

Student Figures

24 students attended the Doctoral Program (DP) at CP2014, of which 9 students had a regular conference paper, and 15 students a DP paper. All students' registration was fully funded, thanks to funding provided by the ACP and funding from the AFPC (Association Francaise Pour la Programmation par Contraintes) for French-speaking students. The rate of female students was quite high: 25% of the students were female (this rate is the same within the group of students with CP papers and with DP papers).

We conducted an anonymous survey on the Doctoral Program from September 16-23, 2014 (the week after the conference). The response rate was very high: 22 out of the 24 students filled out the survey, which corresponds to a **92% response rate**. We did not add any demographic questions into the survey to preserve anonymity (due to the low number of DP students).

General Impression

We first asked the students about their general impression of the DP, the results are below. Please note that two students skipped this question.

"How would you rate your overall experience at the DP?"

very good	good	satisfactory	bad	very bad
45.00%	50.00%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
9/20	10/20	1/20	0/20	0/20

We also asked the students to rate the presentation facilities:

very good	good	satisfactory	bad	very bad
54.55%	36.36%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%
12/22	8/22	2/22	0/22	0/22

General Impression Summary. We see an overwhelming result, showing that 95% of the students have a "very good" or "good" experience at the doctoral program. Furthermore, over 90% of the students rated the presentation facilities as "very good" or "good".

Doctoral Program Dinner

We evaluated the students' experience at the DP dinner that was held in the evening (8:00pm) of the same day as the DP in a small restaurant in the city centre. We also invited the two invited speakers to the DP dinner, which they both accepted. Below are the results for the question *"How would you describe your experience at the DP dinner?"* where multiple answers were possible. We ordered the answers by consent.

"How would you describe your experience at the DP dinner?"

I got to know new people at the DP dinner	86.36%	19/22
The DP dinner was a good opportunity to socialize	86.36%	19/22
I enjoyed the venue where the DP dinner took place	81.82%	18/22
It was good that the invited speakers attended the DP dinner	77.27%	17/22
It would be better if the mentors also attended the DP dinner	27.27%	6/22
Other and comments/suggestions	13.64%	3/22
It was difficult to engage with the people I wanted to talk to at the DP dinner	9.09%	2/22
It would have been better to schedule the DP dinner on a different day	4.55%	1/22
It would be better if only students attended the DP dinner	0%	0/22

Suggestions from the students. We received some suggestions to improve the doctoral dinner, which are given in the last chapter of this document.

DP dinner facilities. We asked the students to rate the DP dinner facilities; results are below:

very good	good	satisfactory	bad	very bad
27.28%	59.09%	9.09%	4.55%	0.00%
6/22	13/22	2/22	1/22	0/22

DP Dinner Summary. We see that most students perceive the DP dinner as a good opportunity to meet peers and socialize, including with the invited speakers. Moreover, the DP dinner location has been rated as "very good" or "good" by over 85%. Furthermore, we also see that almost all students are in favour of having the DP dinner on the same day as the DP.

Poster Session

The poster session was held on Tuesday evening during the Cheese and Wine reception. The poster stands were located on a kind of balustrade above the reception, accessible through two stairs, and clearly visible from below. The upper floor was very hot due to (unexpected) warm weather and little opportunities to open windows. We first asked the students about their experience where again multiple answers were possible; we order the answers by consent.

"How was your experience with the poster session?"

I met new people at the poster session	86.36%	19/22
I got relevant feedback during the poster session	59.09%	13/22
The conference attendees seemed to be interested in the DP posters	50.00%	11/22
The poster session was too short	22.73%	5/22
Other	22.73%	5/22
It would have been better to schedule the poster session at a different day	9.09%	2/22
The poster session was too long	0.00%	0/22

Comments by students. Many students complained about the heat in the poster session location. Some students also complained about the distance to the food/drinks from the poster location. Some students voiced their impression that the conference attendees had no interest in attending the poster session.

Evaluation of the poster session facilities. We also asked the students to rate the poster session facilities; the results are below.

very good	good	satisfactory	bad	very bad
4.55%	31.82%	45.45%	13.64%	4.55%
1/22	7/22	10/22	3/22	1/22

Poster Session Summary. We see that the poster session location was not well suited for many students. The main reasons appear to be the distance to the reception and the (unexpected) heat. Furthermore, only 50% of the students perceive the conference attendees as being interested in their posters.

Invited Talks

We invited two speakers at the DP: *Gilles Pesant* (University of Montreal, Canada) to talk about scientific writing and *Maria Garcia de la Banda* (Monash University, Australia) to talk about life after the PhD and resuming a successful research career. Below are the results for the question “*How was your experience with the invited talks?*” where multiple answers were possible. The answers are again ordered by consent.

“How was your experience with the invited talks?”

The topics were relevant	86.36%	19/22
The presenters gave some useful insights for my career	81.82%	18/22
The presenters were well suited	72.73%	16/22
Other or comments	9.09%	2/22
The topics were not relevant	0.00%	0/22

Invited Talks Summary. We see that over 80% of the students found the invited talks relevant and could benefit from them. Furthermore, three-quarters of the students found the presenters well suited. One of the students suggested in her/his comments that “reviewing papers” would make another interesting topic for a future invited talk.

Mentoring System

We evaluated the student’s experience with their mentors. Below we show the results to the question “*How would you describe your experience with your mentor at the DP?*” where multiple answers were possible. We ordered the answers descending by consent.

“How would you describe your experience with your mentor at the DP?”

I met my mentor during the conference	90.91%	20/22
My mentor was friendly	90.91%	20/22
I discussed my research topic with my mentor	90.91%	20/22
It was easy to contact and to communicate with my mentor	72.73%	16/22
My mentor made enough time available for us to meet	68.18%	15/22
My mentor was a good match for me	54.55%	12/22
My mentor gave me useful tips for my research	54.55%	12/22
I invited my mentor to attend my presentation	54.55%	12/22
I talked several times with my mentor during the conference	50.00%	11/22
My mentor attended my presentation	50.00%	11/22

My mentor introduced me to other researchers in the field	18.18%	4/22
I already knew my mentor	13.64%	3/22
My mentor was a bad match for me	4.55%	1/22
I did not manage to reach my mentor to organize to meet with her/him	4.55%	1/22
Other or comments/suggestions	4.55%	1/22

Mentoring Summary. We see that the mentoring system works well for most students, that most mentors are friendly and many take their role seriously. However there is room for improvement concerning the allocation of students to mentors (creating good matches), which, however, is not easy to achieve. One possible solution would be to maintain a pool of prospective mentors with keywords for their respective area of expertise.

New features at the Doctoral Program 2014

We introduced four new features at the DP at CP2014:

1. We introduced **3-minute presentations** (pitches) for each student who has a CP paper and therefore not a DP presentation. In this presentation, the student can advertise their conference talk and therefore gets some visibility during the DP.
2. We required each student to add **“About Me” slides** to their presentations (regular and 3-minute presentations) where they present themselves (hobbies, etc).
3. We re-introduced **poster prizes** to give an incentive to the students to produce good posters. There was a big prize (Kindle) for the best poster, and small prizes (funny mugs) for the second and third best poster.
4. We let the **conference attendees vote for the posters** and provided a **prize** for a randomly picked voter to create an incentive for conference attendees to attend the poster session.

We asked the students if they think that the new features should be kept in future DPs; their answers are again ordered by consent.

“We introduced some new features this year at the DP. Which ones should be kept for future Doctoral Programmes?”

The 3-minutes presentations for students with CP papers should be kept.	95.45%	21/22
The obligatory “About Me” slides in the DP presentations should be kept.	81.82%	18/22
The prizes for the best posters should be kept.	81.82%	18/22
The voting for the best posters by the conference attendees should be kept.	68.18%	15/22
Comments/Suggestions	13.64%	3/22

Suggestions from students. One students suggested to divide the poster session into two parts since the high number of posters can be overwhelming for the audience and to give prizes to posters for each session. This way the students can also see the other student’s posters. Another student suggested that only students without CP paper should be eligible for poster prizes.

New Features Summary. We see that all new features were accepted by the majority of students, in particular, the 3-minutes presentations (supported by 95%), the “About Me” slides and poster prizes (both supported by over 80%). We therefore highly recommend to keep these features in future Doctoral Programs.

Social Experience

We also asked questions regarding the social experience at the DP, which we regard an important part of the DP experience. The answers are again ordered by consent.

“Did you get to know new people at the DP?”

Yes, some.	72.73%	16/22
Yes, many.	27.27%	6/22
No.	0.00%	0/22
Other or comments	0.00%	0/22

“How would you describe your social experience with other students during the DP?”

I met people with similar research interests	63.64%	14/22
I already knew some other students from other labs	59.09%	13/22
I had a good social experience at the DP	54.55%	12/22
I made new friends	50.00%	11/22
It was easy to talk with and get to know other students	50.00%	11/22
I spent most of the time with students I already knew	31.82%	7/22
I spent most of the time with students I did not know before	22.73%	5/22
I did not have a strong interaction with other students at the DP	18.18%	4/22
Other (please specify)	4.55%	1/22

Social Experience Summary. We see that the majority of DP students had a good social experience, and half of the students made new friends, which is a promising result that however has room for improvement. The students have provided us with some suggestions on how to improve the social aspect in the survey, where the most prominent suggestion was to accommodate the students at the same location. This could be achieved by organizing the accommodation for the students via the DP, or by announcing a hostel/hotel as the “student hotel” where the students can book their rooms themselves.

General Comments and Suggestions

Finally, we asked the students to provide us with comments and suggestions to improve future Doctoral Programs. Below we list all suggestions/comments that the students have provided for improving the DP (over the whole survey).

- “Maybe not a DP problem, but there should be a confirmation email when registering for the CP conference. Pressing "cancel" to paypal and never getting a confirmation email saying the registration was complete was un-nerving (but, it did work).”
- “Being able to cover conference fees was very helpful, although it's a shame that this meant missing out on a printed copy of the proceedings.”
- “The DP is a fantastic experience for us students. I was impressed by the quality of presentations this year, compared to last year. The length of the presentations is just right. The invited talks were both perfectly suited and very valuable. The only issue is the timing in the program, clashing with the workshops, but I don't have a good suggestion for that. I'm personally not convinced by posters in general as a good means to convey one's work but I guess it is good experience for students to prepare one in this setting. One invited talk suggestion for future could be for scientific reviewing. Also, maybe students could get a little experience with peer reviewing other DP student papers, along side the PC.”
- “Maybe if all the students had stayed and met at the same hotel before the DP, it would had been more convenient in terms of social experience.”
- “Getting the students to all stay in the same hostel together would help with the socialising aspect of the DP. On the whole I really enjoyed the DP, thanks for your hard work :-)”

- “I think the poster session itself should be slightly altered. The comments I heard from attendees who should have voted were that there were too many posters at once. Maybe one should have organized 2 poster sessions and let the attendees vote once per session. That would have given the students an opportunity to see each others posters.”
- “Give feedback about the presentations (oral, to everyone) with tips on how to make the presentation better, so we can learn how to present better”
- “The [DP dinner] venue was maybe too small, I only talked with the people at my table. A finger food standing function (with a few stools or small tables) would facilitate mingling better. “
- “The [DP] dinner was a bit late. I felt very tired at that time, which makes it a bit difficult for me to socialise. “