

CPS after June 2024

In this document we describe our ambition to secure and further develop the significant platform for research, education and interdisciplinarity that is the CPS – Centre for Philosophy and the Sciences.

Vision. To further develop CPS as a Centre for Philosophy and the Sciences that unites strong research groups with a shared focus on collaborations across disciplines. This includes strengthening CPS's visibility and reputation beyond the university, both nationally and internationally, consolidating CPS as a contact point and platform that fosters cross-disciplinary collaborations in both research and education, ensure long term stability for research groups and teaching initiatives, and attract new resources, perspectives, and external funding to the philosophy group at IFIKK.

1. Why keep the Centre status, name, and organization?

We envision to organize CPS with a steering group, comprising key permanent faculty members and relevant leaders, a total of 5-6 persons, which meet on a biannual basis. CPS also needs a leader that can devote time and resources to coordinate and represent the Centre. This will require some funding, possible sources are discussed in section 3 below, for a buy-out or part-time position.

The reasons for keeping this structure, the CPS name and status as a Centre are manifold:

Stability. CPS is already known as a significant actor and contact point for interdisciplinary research across several disciplines. To take away the Centre name will jeopardize the value directly connected to the CPS name. A central ambition for the FPIII application back in 2017 was to add stability to a research group that was somewhat fragile, partly due to reliance on short term funding and to central persons being in temporary positions. In 2023 the situation is different. There has been great success in attracting external funding, partly due to the existence of CPS (see below), there are more people, and the thematically related research blooms. Still, there is need for a stable unifying entity like CPS to enable new collaborations, support initiatives and facilitate long term planning and connections for both teaching and research.

Unity. The thematically related externally funded project groups comprise a robust research environment at present. Keeping CPS as a Centre will bring unity to this environment, both as it appears from outside IFIKK, and as a framework for sharing experiences and enabling interactions within the philosophy group at IFIKK. A joint seminar series like the CPS lunch forum is an example, where we attract both internal people across different projects and interests, and external people across disciplinary boundaries¹.

¹ In the fall 2023, for example, the CPS lunch forum has been visited (as speakers or audience/discussion partners) by faculty members from biology, social sciences, medicine (P1H, pandemic Centre), informatics, linguistics, and philosophy. The number of people present has ranged from app. 10 to 45. In addition, CPS has arranged the annual lecture for an interdisciplinary audience, and organized an interdisciplinary meeting point seminar in the spring 2023.

Visibility. For CPS, it has been a priority to build external connections and facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations across departments and organizations, both internal and external to the University of Oslo. For this work, we need the visibility and institutional backing that the status as a Centre gives and represents. A Centre has more efficient and unified ways for presenting activities and contact points in the form of a Centre website. Moreover, representing - or being associated with - a Centre indicates institutional commitment and prestige, which provide advantages in application processes and for raising the profile and visibility of our activities beyond UiO.

Impact and societal relevance. As a Centre, CPS has greater influence on initiatives, developments, and events in cross-disciplinary settings. This includes several settings that bring philosophy in interaction with research that directly addresses societal challenges, as well as teaching initiatives across disciplines, planning of new entities, development of research infrastructure, and public outreach events². Societal challenges directly relevant to the profile of CPS are expected to increase in the years to come (for example questions concerning artificial intelligence, pandemics, science and democracy, climate change). Having a Centre that focuses explicitly on the connections between philosophy and the sciences on these vastly important issues will have an increasing value in the years to come. It will also signal to external parties that HF and IFIKK keep prioritizing cross disciplinary approaches to societal challenges. Taking away the Centre status may very well signal the opposite.

2. CPS accomplishments and ambitions

At present, CPS has reached a critical mass of people and projects required for successful organization of the Centre's ongoing activities, and there is an increasing interest for CPS initiatives and collaborations outside IFIKK. It is worth stressing that we have managed all this despite challenges from the very start, not least due to the financial situation at IFIKK, which effectively cut the CPS funding in half, and the practical limitations resulting from the pandemic.

Several externally funded projects are connected to CPS. This includes ERC funded projects like C-FORS (Linnebo, ERC advanced Grant), DEVCOM (Falkum, ERC starting grant), and GOODATTENTION (Watzl, ERC consolidator grant), which are likely to have benefited from being affiliated with CPS. In addition, and as a direct consequence of the existence of CPS, Oftedal received an ERC consolidator grant in 2023 for the project AssemblingLife.

CPS applied as a unit in the previous call for Centers of Excellence (SFF, NRC). The application was not funded, but a re-worked application to the UiO:Democracy call resulted in funding for the

² For example, CPS members have contributed to planning and start-up events for P1H (Center for Pandemic and One Health Research, Faculty of Medicine, UiO), work on the new strategy for UiO:Life Science, panel discussions on law and pandemics (<https://www.uio.no/om/aktuelt/universitetsplassen/domus-bibliotheca/arrangementer/2023/pandemijuss.html>), the Science Studies Colloquium Series (UiO, <https://www.uio.no/english/research/news-and-events/events/guest-lectures-seminars/science-studies/>), several events on medical research ethics (including; <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/aktuelt/personvern-er-en-viktig-del-av-forskningsetikken/>), collaborative teaching and seminars with the Centre for Medical Ethics and the Department of Behavioral Medicine, courses at the Honours program UiO (like HON2120), and several UiO:Life Science convergence environments (including: <https://www.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/life-science/research/convergence-environments/morgi/>, <https://www.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/life-science/research/convergence-environments/programmable-cell-like-compartments/>).

project “Science and Democracy” (SCIDEM) headed by Cathrine Holst. The potential for a successful SFF application at a later point in time is substantial.

Karen Crowther (hired by CPS in 2019) applied for an ERC starting grant with a philosophy of physics project last year. This application got to the very last phase of the ERC selection process. While it was not funded this time, the quality ensured that local funds were awarded for hiring a PhD-student to work with Crowther. Also, Crowther is leader for the Nordic Network for Philosophy of Physics, which has received funding for three interdisciplinary workshops across three different Nordic countries from the NOS-HS Exploratory Workshop Grants.

A continuation of CPS has the potential to attract new students to the philosophy program and to single course-offerings, by continuing the development of interdisciplinary courses at all levels. This includes students outside IFIKK who are interested in interdisciplinary courses. Offering such courses will also equip our graduates with pertinent skills and orientations for the future job market.

Earlier, CPS has been involved in the development of courses in algorithmic thinking, philosophy of life science (FIL29000, 2022-23, with funding from UiO:Life Science), science and democracy, and courses for the Honours program (HON2110 and HON2120)³. CPS (Gry Oftedal) collaborated in early planning and seeking funding from UiO:Energy and Environment to co-organize the course FIL4315 – Climate Change and Energy Transition: Philosophical Issues (with Alejandra Mancilla)⁴. Sebastian Watzl and the convergence environment ConsciousBrainConcepts organized the course PSY4318 - Multidisciplinary Studies of Consciousness⁵.

At the PhD level, Gry Oftedal and Yael Friedman organized a PhD course in Philosophy of medicine with Prof Cornelius Borck in 2022, and Karen Crowther and Jørn Kløvfjell Mjelva organized a PhD course in philosophy of physics in 2023, with lecturers from philosophy as well as physics. The courses benefitted current and new PhD students at IFIKK, as well as attracted several international students⁶. In addition, Nick Allott *et al* organized the Norwegian Summer Institute on Language and Mind, partly funded by CPS in 2019⁷.

CPS has also run a visiting scholar program, which resulted in fruitful new collaborations and research ideas over an extended period, and Yael Friedman is organizing an international research group in philosophy of medicine - a direct result of the PhD course organized by CPS in 2022. These exemplify the kind of activities that will increase international academic visibility for CPS.

³ For more information, we provide links to course websites here. HON2110: <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ifikk/HON2110/index.html> , FIL2406: <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ifikk/FIL2406/index-eng.html> , FIL 2900 <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ifikk/FIL2900/v23/index.html> , Science and Democracy: <https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/people/aca/philosophy/tenured/sebaswat/teaching/science-and-democracy/>

⁴ <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ifikk/FIL4315/>

⁵ Convergence environment: <https://www.uio.no/english/research/strategic-research-areas/life-science/research/convergence-environments/consciousbrainconcepts/>

PSY4318: <https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/psykologi/PSY4318/>

⁶ Philosophy of medicine PhD course: <https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/news-and-events/events/phd/2022/opening-philosophy-of-medicine-to-the-future.html>

Philosophy of physics PhD course: <https://www.hf.uio.no/ifikk/english/research/news-and-events/events/phd/2023/non-locality-in-quantum-mechanics.html>

⁷ Norwegian Summer Institute on Language and Mind: <https://philevents.org/event/show/70398>

3. Funding potentials

We aim to apply for funding for organization/leadership of the Centre and for ongoing activities. UiO internal sources for limited funding of this kind include UiO:Life Science (possibly, no guarantee). Also, the current CPS budget indicates that there will be some funding leftover after June –24, which can be used to ensure continuity in a transition period.

A continuation and further development of CPS will ensure a strong environment from which to attract funding to research projects, from external funding bodies like NRC and ERC, and from UiO sources like UiO:Life Science and UiO: Democracy.

4. What we ask for

Support for the ambition described, including keeping the name and status as a Centre. The possibility for buy-out or a part time position, at least partly based on IFIKK external funding, for a leader that can coordinate the Centre activities and represent the Centre outside IFIKK. Some administrative support.

In support of the continuation and development of CPS,

Nick Allott, senior lecturer ILOS.

Karen Crowther, Ass. Prof. IFIKK.

Ingrid Lossius Falkum, Ass. Prof. IFIKK and ILN, leader of DEVCOM (ERC starting grant project)

Salvatore Florio, Ass. Prof. IFIKK

Yael Friedman, completion grant fellow IFIKK.

Carl Henrik Gørbitz, Director UiO:Life science.

Cathrine Holst, Prof. IFIKK, leader of INFLUEX (NRC, FRIPRO) and SCIDEM (UiO:Democracy).

Øystein Linnebo, Prof. IFIKK, leader of C-FORS (ERC advanced project).

Gry Oftedal, Ass. Prof. IFIKK, leader of Assembling Life (ERC consolidator project).

Anders Strand, Ass. Prof (temp) IFIKK, head of CPS.

Sebastian Watzl, Prof. IFIKK, leader of GOODATTENTION (ERC consolidator project).