

## **CUSO Transversal Programme for the development of generic skills**

Thursday, 4th December 2014

10 am. to 5 p.m.

University of Neuchâtel (Law Building, Avenue 1<sup>er</sup>-Mars 26)

### **Seminar: the doctorate and generic skills**

#### **Background**

The CUSO Transversal Programme offers training courses for the doctoral candidates of western Switzerland (over 70 workshops per year, for around 800 participants). Organised in French and in English, these activities support the development of doctoral candidates' generic skills. The workshops offered by the programme are organised around six modules: the organisation, management and planning of a research project and of a researcher's work; oral and written scientific communication; software skills for the management and analysis of scientific data; writing and speaking in scientific English; the links between research and society; and preparation for the career after the doctorate.

Based on the direct experience of the doctorate, the tools and knowledge developed and/or reinforced by participating in the programme's activities will be useful during the doctorate to better conduct research work. They will also be of help after the thesis, whether for a career in academia, or on other professional paths. The transversal programme's workshops are proposed throughout a doctoral candidate's studies. They encourage him or her to analyse their activities, to become aware of the skills they acquire, and to take lessons from their experience in order to progress.

This inaugural day of discussion is intended for the trainers who design and lead the CUSO transversal programme's workshops. Coming from different backgrounds, the trainers are engaged in a wide variety of professions, in academia as much as in the private sector. With the exception of a few collaborative projects, the trainers have not yet had the opportunity to meet each other and to explore together how their various course offers can follow on and interact, the one with the other.

#### **Objectives**

The seminar is intended first as an occasion for each trainer to meet with their peers, to understand better the work each one does, and by so doing, to better comprehend how their different activities may correspond. The goal is thus to create stronger links between the different workshops and sets of expertise the programme is built upon. With this greater understanding of the programme's content, the trainers will be able to better advise participants in their workshops on the course offer that would correspond to their ongoing needs. This in turn should reinforce the promotion of workshops that habitually see less participation – with the hope that fewer workshops will need to be cancelled.

Despite the efforts made in promoting the transversal programme, the comments received in evaluations show that some doctoral candidates are not aware that training they would be interested in is already available elsewhere. As the transversal programme continues its very strong growth, informed advice on workshops given by other trainers can only add to the better organisation of our schedule – and most of all, to good decisions made by the doctoral candidates themselves.

More globally, the day proposes a discussion on the theme of generic skills in the doctorate. An ever-increasing number of university bodies (faculties, research institutes, among others) are

putting in place their own training offer in generic skills for their doctoral candidates and postdocs. A large number of frameworks and definitions have been developed around the concept of “generic skills”, whether by specialist researchers or employers. What do we mean by this term, and is it possible to grasp definitively? By studying the different understandings of the term, can we find their common points? If we take into account the different work situations and objectives of the scientific disciplines, is it more through the environment in which each doctoral candidate works that we can discern the skills he or she will develop during their doctorate? In the end, is it the situation the doctoral candidate works in that is transferable, rather than the skill learnt?

In their evaluations of the transversal programme’s activities, participants often indicate that they do not see much of a link between the training and their research work – although they very positively rate the workshop. The seminar will explore this link, with the aim of helping workshops participants understand the effects that their training in generic skills will have on their scientific research.

The workshops organised by the transversal programme aim to help doctoral candidates understand that they will develop particular skills by basing themselves on their own experience (the thesis itself, teaching, and so on): a reflexive approach. The transversal programme’s offer is there to provide them with the theoretical input and to send them on the way better prepared. It is then up to each doctoral candidate to identify the skills necessary for their professional path, and to develop them during the thesis. This objective underscores the link between the generic skills workshop and the individual work done by the doctoral candidate: even if the thesis is at the heart of his or her current activities, it is far from being the only thing on the horizon. The doctoral candidate needs to begin to give a broader definition to their professional development.

### **Seminar Leader**

The day’s discussion will be led by Paule Biaudet, Maître de conférences at the University of Pierre-et-Marie-Curie in Paris. Dr Biaudet contributed to the creation, and went on to direct for ten years, the institute for doctoral training at UPMC. In this context, she developed their offer of complementary training for doctoral candidates, and specific training for their supervisors. Today, she splits her activities between the institute, where she continues as a trainer and internal consultant, and the centre for research on training (Centre de Recherche sur la Formation) at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers, where she is an associate researcher.

### **Audience and Registration**

The seminar is open to all trainers who provide workshops for the CUSO transversal programme, members of the programme’s steering group, and other interested members of the university community.

Registration is through the following doodle: <http://doodle.com/28xiskhtufmd8yb5>

In order to better frame the discussion, trainers will be asked to complete a questionnaire to provide information on their background. In order to have the most complete information, all trainers will be asked to complete the questionnaire, whether or not they are able to attend the seminar. This information will be used by the organisers and seminar leader only and will not be published.

### **Reimbursement**

Participants are entitled to reimbursement of their travel costs (CFF, half-price card, 2<sup>nd</sup> class) on receipt of the duly completed CUSO form. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Further information: [competences@cuso.ch](mailto:competences@cuso.ch) / 032 724 8914 (Verity Elston or Ariane Jordi)