

TRAIN – a research and research education network in Media and Communication Studies

TRAIN is a research and research-education network in Media and Communication Studies and closely related subjects, e.g. Journalism and Media History.¹ It was started by the four media and communication units of the universities of Karlstad, Malmö, Södertörn, and Örebro in 2010. The number of participating universities has since grown, and currently the TRAIN network also includes the universities of Gothenburg, Lund and Stockholm.

The TRAIN network focuses on two kinds of activities:

- Arranging a yearly symposium where both PhD-students and senior researchers in Media and Communication Studies discuss and present current research. PhD student presentations are prioritized, but senior researchers are able to present research if there is space in the program.
- Organizing and offering two core PhD courses in Media and Communication Studies.

Annual symposium

Since 2010, a symposium has been organized in the spring each year. One partner university of the network organizes the symposium, and decides where it is to be held. Often, the symposia have been held close to railway centers, thereby making it easier for all partners to travel there (thus the name “TRAIN”), as well as making sure participants from the host institution do not disappear to their offices during breaks. Normally, the symposia have started around lunch-time one day and finished with lunch the second day. All PhD students and MCS researchers of the participating members are invited to the symposium. Participants who do not present papers are expected to function as discussants. Paper presentations have often been combined with a panel debate, dealing with relevant topics. If the number of presenting participants is large, parallel sessions are arranged.²

PhD Courses

Two PhD courses are offered by the network and the aim is to cover core parts of the field of Media and Communication Studies. These courses are created in collaboration between members of the network and are given in such a way that it is possible for students from all member universities to take part in a relatively easy manner. They are based on two intense two-day meetings combined with a final seminar at a third meeting (often placed in relation to the TRAIN symposium). Each course is open for all PhD students enrolled in programs at the participating universities.

¹ For reasons of brevity, we will refer to these subjects jointly, using the term Media and Communication Studies in the following text.

² TRAIN symposia held thus far: Katrineholm 2010, Karlstad 2011, Örebro 2012, Hässleholm 2013, Alingsås 2014, Södertörn 2015, Lund 2016, Stockholm 2017, Kristinehamn 2018.

The courses, to be given every other year from 2017, are:

Classics of Media Research

*Contemporary Debates in Media and Communications Theory*³

Other courses: When participating partners organize other PhD courses, they should, to the extent that it is possible, follow a structure that makes it possible for PhD students from all TRAIN network partner institutions to easily participate in the course (i.e. ideally focus the course around a few one- or two-day sessions which makes travel less cumbersome for participants).

Rights of participating partners

- All partners can send as many PhD students and researchers to the TRAIN symposia as they wish
- All partners can send as many PhD students to the courses as they wish
- All PhD courses are free for the students taking part
- PhD student's travel to TRAIN courses and the annual TRAIN symposium should not come out of whatever annual travel allowance/travel fund they have at their home institution; i.e. travel and accommodation in conjunction with TRAIN events should be funded separately by the home institution. This is tremendously important in order to ensure that all PhD students of the member institutions can participate equally and under the same conditions.

Responsibilities of participating partners

- All partners pay travel, lodging and food for their participants at TRAIN symposia
- All partners pay travel, lodging and food for their PhD students taking part in courses
- All partners alternate as arrangers of the TRAIN symposia
- All partners take part in the organization of one of the two PhD courses given
- All partners nominate a TRAIN coordinator/representative for their institution

Organization of network

The network is governed by a committee consisting of one person from each participating partner. The committee appoints a chair within the committee. The chair's mandate runs for one year. The committee holds its annual meeting at the TRAIN symposium, and holds Skype meetings in-between. The committee is responsible for making sure one partner is taking the responsibility for arranging the TRAIN symposium, and it is responsible for making sure that PhD courses are given as planned. The committee, furthermore, makes decision on whether to add new members to the network.

³ Up until now, the classics course has been given four times (2010, 2012, 2015 and 2018), and the contemporary debates course twice (2014 and 2017).

The TRAIN coordinator and his/her duties

Each participating institution appoints one person to be the TRAIN-coordinator for that institution. The duty of the TRAIN-coordinator is to

- be the main point of contact for TRAIN-related information at the home institution;
- disseminate any and all relevant TRAIN information to PhD students and other staff at the home institution;
- be responsible for registration of home institution PhD students to TRAIN courses and the TRAIN symposium.

The TRAIN coordinator should also attend the annual TRAIN meeting, as outlined in the previous section. If the TRAIN coordinator is unable to attend or otherwise unable to perform his/her duties for a period of time, it is the responsibility of the TRAIN coordinator to nominate a replacement and to notify other committee members of the change.

Becoming a member of the network

In order to become a member of the network, a written request has to be sent to the TRAIN committee. In the request, the potential member institution must guarantee that it will be able to fulfill the requirements of the network, as outlined in this charter. If all committee members find that the application addresses all the responsibilities set out in this charter in an adequate fashion, the department becomes a member of the network.