

Intended development of the scientific field of Psychological Sciences under the UK – Cooperatio programme

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Background and context of the development of the scientific field of Psychological Sciences

Psychology, as addressed at Charles University, will be developed in the Cooperatio programme through several programmes, but the largest concentration of departments and staff will be accumulated in the Psychological Sciences programme, which includes several psychological disciplines, both theoretical and applied (General and Developmental Psychology; Pedagogical, School, and Counselling Psychology; Social and Work Psychology).

The intentions of the development of the scientific field correspond with the profiles and traditions of the departments involved and their research and publishing experience, as well as the professional perspective of individual researchers, while responding to the outputs of the international evaluation of psychology at Charles University and take into account the recommendations of independent evaluators. The basic idea we would like to pursue is to create a collaborative network that will counterbalance the fragmentation of science that has been highlighted in the international evaluation. The collaboration should take place at the level of cooperation within the university. Scientific work in the field of psychology should be represented in an integrated way externally too. There should also be support for quality publication outputs and methodological support for science and research, using processes and results in the preparation of new researchers from the ranks of doctoral students.

The current state of the scientific field of Psychological Sciences

The field of Psychological Sciences, as designed for the Cooperatio programmes, will involve a relatively large number of academics and researchers and doctoral students from eight departments from four faculties of the university – the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Faculty of Science. This will lead to relatively high demands on the coordination of activities and also on avoiding fragmentation of outputs.

In setting the objectives of the programme, the results of the international evaluation, through which stimuli were obtained to reflect on the current situation but also to improve the situation in the field of psychology at Charles University, were taken into consideration. In addition, a survey was conducted among the members of the board of the Psychological Sciences programme, which gives us a basic framework for designing the starting points, goals, and objectives of the programme and the expected outcomes.

One strength of the proposed programme seems to be the effort and goal of connecting psychological departments at Charles University so that on the one hand, there is mutual enrichment and on the other hand, forces are joined in presenting the results of psychological research. Numerous research projects have been carried out in the recent past, which confirms that we have something to build on for future work. The field of science has a relatively large

number of researchers with varied and diverse experience who are active in basic and applied research, with publication production in both the domestic and international contexts. They can thus become key actors in the development of the scientific field, especially by participating in the training of doctoral students and future doctoral students as well as new academics in the form of mentoring or tutoring.

In some of the topics which we will address, networks of international cooperation have already been created; in others, there is potential for it. For the field of pedagogical, school, and counselling psychology, a number of Czech journals which are included in international databases, and which enable professional contacts abroad are available. Cooperation within the framework of local research activities and publishing activities with a significant application impact for practice (especially in the field of pedagogical, school, and counselling psychology) is perceived.

We see it as a strength that the ideas of connecting research teams in psychology at Charles University are not limited only to the Cooperatio programme and are not only a reaction to the international evaluation. On the contrary, they spontaneously appeared earlier and opportunities for cooperation among university departments and individual academics and researchers were sought.

We perceive it **as a weakness** of the Cooperatio programmes that it was not possible to unite all branches of psychology at Charles University into one programme. In addition to our programme, Clinical Psychology is included in Health Sciences and Neuropsychology in Neurosciences. It will therefore mean that out of all the topics of psychology, psychology addressing topics in/for healthcare will be separated.

Furthermore, regarding some research topics, the division is unclear and arbitrary (e. g. the development of diagnostic methods such as questionnaires and tests). Although our goal is interdisciplinary cooperation (e. g. clinical and counselling psychology), it will be more difficult to enforce it precisely because of the affiliation with different programmes in Cooperatio.

The currently set structure of the three sub-disciplines under Psychological Sciences does not fully reflect the range of psychological disciplines which should be represented in this scientific field. Although it is true that the disciplines were designed in the preparatory Cooperatio programmes with respect to the disciplines existing in the publication reporting database, "living" psychological disciplines such as cognitive, evolutionary, or behavioural psychology are not included in the existing Cooperatio discipline names. It will be necessary to find space for them within an interdisciplinary solution or to use a looser assignment to specific sub-disciplines of our programme.

The current fragmentation of activities and outputs at Charles University, which was pointed out in the international evaluation, also applies to the field of psychology. There is no platform that could enable us to share information and experience. Academics/researchers in individual departments and faculties cooperate on the basis of personal contacts rather than within a system. Therefore, the results of the research can be perceived as random or fragmented, not showing psychology at Charles University as a meaningful whole.

Another problem may be that, although we have a relatively large number of academics with experience in research and publishing, only a small part of them are already prepared for the international context of research and publication in higher-rated journals – i.e. in impact journals and journals included in the WoS and Scopus databases.

What can be perceived as a strength – the connection of research to solve practical issues and the fulfilment of the third role of the university – is also proving to be a possible limitation of

the scientific field. In particular, it is a time constraint for academics who might not be able to manage both the recommended research domains in terms of the application of outputs. (i. e. international publications vs. local)

Funding may also be an issue – academics have a relatively heavy teaching load, which may prevent them from increasing their involvement in research through projects and grants, which would be needed, given the expected increase in publishing activity. For the recruitment of researchers who would be funded exclusively from project funds, as the international evaluation suggested, space and the material equipment of departments may be a limitation.

However, the Cooperatio programmes can be seen as **an opportunity for change**. The aim is to create a platform that would enable communication between departments and faculties within Psychological Sciences, but also cooperation with other branches of psychology included in Cooperatio's medical programmes. This network will allow greater sharing of information and experience, but also direct collaboration and participation in research projects across departments and institutions.

The university research community could help with the scientific training of the next generation of researchers by supporting doctoral studies at Charles University. The research plans of postdoc and postgraduate students could be expanded and shared along with the research experience and regular meetings of psychologists working at Charles University could be set up, e. g. in the form of regular scientific seminars or seminars for further methodological support for programme preparation and publishing outputs. The planned preparation of collective outputs is also a challenge, both in the form of journal articles and other publication outputs, as well as international conferences, summer schools, etc.

With regard to current world developments in psychology, one cannot fail to mention the chance for greater commitment to the principles of Open Science (transparency of research, access to scientific information, management of research data and its sharing, use of the Open Access publishing model, etc.). It can be a platform through which research procedures in psychology at Charles University will be unified.

The risks associated with the set conditions of the Cooperatio programmes may be related to the excessive regulation of the activities of individual research groups. A good intention may not be achieved, as some academic staff may not share the ideas with the large psychology community at Charles University. They may fear comparison, competition, and loss of their unique position.

Some problems with the financial setup of the programme can also be expected. Each faculty will approach the financial evaluation of research activities in its own way. All academic staff are affiliated to the workplace which obtains financial resources. Within Cooperatio programmes, a system of fair reporting will need to be established so that interfaculty teams and faculty interests do not conflict, and so that there is no concern that the registration of a collective output will reduce its significance and the subsequent financial reward.

Although we agree on the need and importance of foreign publications, this can bring risks. Staff may lose interest in preparing research outputs for higher education and psychological practice. So far they are the least evaluated according to the new methodology for the evaluation of science, and it would be a mistake to abandon them completely.

Main research directions and goals of the Psychological Sciences programme

Several facts are reflected in the formulation of research directions and goals in the Psychological Sciences programme. First, there is the division into partial psychological areas

that were included in the programme and the number of experts in working groups, but also the already-achieved results of creative activity in the field, which are the starting point for further development. The topics presented are only examples of possible solutions. Concretization will take place during the preparation of the programme itself and after the clarification of the involvement of specific persons.

Planned areas of research and involvement of faculties

On behalf of **General and Developmental Psychology** (involvement of the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Science) with about 35 academics/doctoral students), we mention the topics addressed in the programme:

- a) stages in human life in terms of developmental factors and developmental tasks and their variability (e. g. perinatal factors and child development, cognitive and metacognitive development, temperament and mental development, social-emotional development, the psychology of health in adolescents, parental competencies, adulthood and senior years, etc.);
- b) social interactions, behaviour and cognitive processes from an evolutionary, ontogenetic, and comparative perspective (partner and social relationships and interpersonal communication from a developmental and evolutionary perspective, sexuality from an evolutionary and socio-psychological perspective, research on cognition and animal communication, the use of modern technologies in research on human sexuality and interpersonal communication);
- c) research on mental processes, e. g. cognitive, emotional, etc.

The area of **Pedagogical, School, and Counselling Psychology** will be covered by the largest group in terms of the persons involved. Three faculties will participate (the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Arts, and Faculty of Humanities), with an estimated number of at least 30 academics/researchers and at least 15 doctoral students). Topics addressed in this area:

- a) psychological aspects of school learning, maximization of pupil potential, specific topics of motivation, memory, metacognition, self-regulation, values, pupil identity, cooperation between family and school, etc.
- b) the development of pre-literacy, literacy, and related language skills, including cross-linguistic perspectives, mother tongue and foreign language acquisition, intervention and diagnostic procedures and tools in the educational context; participatory approaches in research on children and young people
- c) the educational trajectories of specific groups of pupils, comprehensive studies of internal and external factors influencing decision making and behaviour at school; inclusive education, changes in education during the Covid-19 period and after it, pedagogical-psychological diagnostics
- d) social and motivational determinants of the development of educational potential and giftedness, self-regulated learning, game-based learning environments, school class sociomapping
- e) high demands of teaching, teacher professional development (development of self-reflection/metacognition and communication/cooperative skills), work stress and teacher well-being
- f) parenting styles and practices, e. g. in relation to the regulation of children's screen use or concerning the specificity of family models

The Faculty of Arts applied for the **field of Social and Work Psychology**, probably with ten academic staff/doctoral students. This is the smallest working group with about 10 academics/doctoral students. The topics addressed will relate:

- a) acculturation and intercultural competencies,
- b) social behaviour and psychological mechanisms of play behaviour,
- c) communication and cooperation in work teams,
- d) working conditions and occupational health
- e) quality of life, well-being, mental health, and coaching.

Expected benefits of the Psychological Sciences programme

In terms of publication outputs, the main goal of the programme is the greatest possible support for academics/researchers in relation to publishing activities in international impact journals and journals included in international databases. This goal has been set by the majority of the members of the Psychological Sciences Board. This corresponds to the international evaluation, which showed that in psychology at Charles University more publications are local than international. In this respect, international publication production should have increased significantly in five years' time.

From the point of view of the further development of psychology as a scientific discipline in the Czech Republic, we do not consider it appropriate to completely retreat from targeted scientific production geared towards the psychological community in the Czech Republic. We consider it very important that academic and scientific psychology in the Czech Republic intensively build functional frameworks for linking research results and their application in the field of the practical performance of the profession of a psychologist.

Psychology must respond to changes in society and create a breeding ground for the development of the professional competencies of experts in various areas of psychological practice. At the same time, we want to look for further ways to introduce scientific knowledge into practice. Exclusively academic (theoretical) psychology without implications for practical application was already being criticized a hundred years ago.

Psychology as a field largely deals with the preparation of diagnostic tools (questionnaires/tests). These outputs are not yet directly appreciated in the current methodological guidelines on the evaluation of scientific outputs and creative activities at Charles University but are of great importance for the methodology. Therefore, we want to support the preparation of diagnostic tools (ideally certified), certified methodical instructions and educational applications, or popularization articles for practice.

We are also aware of other benefits of the programme, in particular, the creation of a platform for sharing information and experience and, at the same time, the creation of a space for cooperation in selected topics. Some of them are still tied to a particular faculty, and it is desirable that in building a "unifying line of psychology at Charles University" (recommendations of the international evaluation), research results are obtained on the basis of cooperation between experts from across faculties. Each faculty can bring its own specific view into the implementation of the programme. It is also important that knowledge and procedures, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate educational activities, are shared between departments and faculties. We expect that we will be able to create interfaculty teams in some

areas (examples of groups at Charles University can be comparative psychology, literacy research, partnerships, etc.).

The new platform should be a support element for participating experts across faculties. We will organize regular seminars focusing on new research topics, but also on already achieved research results, which can stimulate new research, including the possibility of interdisciplinary interconnection across topics in our Cooperatio programme.

To support cooperation between the faculties, a website will be used to serve as an information, coordination and presentation environment for all participants. Preparation of the website will begin in the first year of our cooperation.

Doctoral students should also benefit from the programme. The involvement of doctoral students in the existing team of researchers, today a common principle of foreign science and research, brings benefits not only in terms of scientific results achieved but also publication outputs. The platform that is created should enable the involvement of a doctoral student in a research team from another faculty according to his/her professional interests, which could also support publishing activities in international journals, which were found to be problematic in the international evaluation. Something related to this is the issue of study periods abroad – doctoral students, but also all academics/researchers who will participate in the programme, and this is an expected benefit of the programme t. Conversely, the programme should also enable greater involvement of international experts with the participating teams on the basis of common professional interests across faculties and strengthen international cooperation.

Through the programme, we would like to support the transfer of research results into practice, which could be achieved by creating a formalized system of connecting the academic, professional (professional organizations and associations), and commercial spaces (laboratories, publishers) in psychology. We also anticipate close cooperation with the Karolina publishing house, which is currently creating space for the existence of an edition for publishing psychodiagnostic tools.

Benchmark institution

As the Psychological Sciences programme includes theoretical and applied psychological disciplines and four faculties with seven departments will participate in the implementation of the programme, but also with regard to the hitherto diverse practices at these faculties in the context of science, research, and education, it is very hard to identify one or more higher education institutions with which we intend to benchmark.

No comparison can yield completely valid results. It should always be remembered that science and research in the local environment of universities, and also at Charles University, has completely different conditions. The ratio of teaching and research work is different, the financial support for science and research, the possibility of mobility increasing international cooperation with an impact on science, etc., differ as well. However, this does not mean that we do not take into account recommendations and inspiration for improvement.

In the international evaluation of psychology at Charles University, the reference university was the University of Leuven, which, however, as stated in the description of the evaluation, is one of the top 20 universities in the field of psychology. There were also departments at the universities of Heidelberg, Copenhagen, and Vienna, and these universities are also among the most prestigious in the international rankings. Therefore, through the programme, we would like to focus more on monitoring foreign trends in science and research in psychology in order to identify which institutions we can consider relevant or as a reference for us. The

planned international cooperation with experts and departments of other universities should also contribute to this, as we have already selected them (e. g. universities in Bangor, Wroclaw, Leuven, Hamburg, Sao Paolo, Bordeaux; Eötvös Loránd University, etc.). There will also be departments involved in 4EU +.

A set of activities and measures for the development of the scientific field

Support for doctoral studies, postdoctoral students, and inbreeding

The platform of the unifying Psychology Sciences programme created will bring the formulation of topics that will be offered to doctoral students to address all the doctoral study programmes of the cooperating faculties. So far, it has not been very common for applicants for doctoral studies to look for another faculty with doctoral studies. They are recruited more from their home faculties or, conversely, from other universities. Experts from other faculties can become supervisors if the cooperation that is established works. A clear formulation of topics to be addressed through the programme website, with the presentation of research intentions and goals of the programme, as well as the possibility of involvement in scientific work and creative activities, could contribute to this.

More working groups in psychology at Charles University can also have an impact on the unification of views on doctoral studies and their course, complexity, and expected outcomes. This can act to support methodological training for the benefit of doctoral studies, the presentation of topics addressed, the planning of foreign internships, and also for publishing activities (including international impact journals). The aim will be to make the doctoral studies as close as possible to the practice abroad and focus on the doctoral project and complete the doctoral studies in a standard period of study and in connection with existing teams. At present, doctoral students (to their detriment) are sometimes too "independent". Linking their projects with already-addressed topics would help not only in their training (what they need to know and who will teach them), but also slightly reduce the burden (greater potential for cooperation), and in the end, it would lead to more valuable results (the possibility of solving larger projects, help with publishing).

Therefore, we would like to organize semester doctoral seminars (training schools), in which the participating faculties will regularly propose extending research topics to support postgraduate studies. We plan the seminars to be methodologically oriented or with examples of good practice (creative, publishing, research). The network created for PhD students in our Cooperatio programme can be an important motivating factor for doctoral studies and their completion. It can be supportive for future academic and research careers as well.

Setting and revising doctoral rules could prevent more inbreeding. If postgraduate students have the opportunity to join university research teams, after completing their studies, they can work at another faculty or another university – they have a better idea of the activities of the non-home faculty. They will also be able to do so because they have mastered the principles of teamwork in science and research in all its phases and with the support of methodological procedures used in psychological research (data preparation and implementation, data processing and evaluation, publication of outputs, dissemination).

We would like to regularly publish thematic offers of PhD positions (predetermined by the trainer/project) on the programme website, which will be prepared in the first year of the implementation of the programme. These offers would potentially be open to interested parties from abroad as well. In the future, with sufficient financial security, we would consider similar advertising of postdoctoral offers.

Interfaculty, national and international cooperation

Above all, good and non-competing cooperation between faculty departments, but also at the level of the Czech Republic, can affect the quality of the project outputs. It can bring the possibility of internships for doctoral students, academics, and researchers at other departments in the Czech Republic (including non-university ones) and gaining experience in foreign internships. Through the programme, collaborative local and international research projects can be prepared, which could increase the financial security of the development of psychology at Charles University. Appropriate forms of cooperation may include presentations of research results at scientific workshops, seminars, and conferences, as well as peer review activities.

Although the financial possibilities at the participating faculties will be different, the programme is ready to support the highest possible degree of involvement of foreign colleagues, undergraduate students, postdoctoral students, and visiting professors. The barrier to more significant and longer mobility that we face is the tremendous lack of compatibility of salaries at our university with what is common in Western Europe.

Greater systemic support for international cooperation should be created at the Rector's level with the support of all the Cooperatio programmes, e. g. in the form of methodological seminars and inspirations for finding contacts, processing grant applications and projects, etc. Many academics/researchers are not motivated for foreign cooperation because of the obstacles associated with international arrivals/departures.

Support for publishing activities

The programme will support the publishing activities of all the persons involved, including academics and researchers, but also doctoral students, in the form of both direct financial evaluation of outputs (according to the rules set at individual faculties) and indirect forms. These include, for example, the organization of methodological seminars, which can encourage and motivate the search for suitable forms of output, including the publication of articles in international journals. They will also be used for the development of skills in the field of academic writing in various genres of scientific work. The programme funds can also provide support activities, such as editing and proofreading services, financial participation in publishing, travel support for attending international conferences, etc.

Conclusion

We perceive the Psychological Sciences programme as an opportunity to connect and integrate research taking place at seven departments of four faculties of Charles University. The programme covers research in the field of general and developmental psychology, pedagogical, school, and counselling psychology, and social psychology and work psychology. We agree on the necessary direction of development towards international research. At the same time, we want to continue with the research focused on current topics with an impact on practice, where psychology has the potential to enrich practice with evidence-based knowledge.