



Regulations for the NSCPM Course project

The NSCPM is aimed at doctors in the forefront of palliative medicine in the Nordic countries. These physicians will play an important part in developing the field in their countries. Research should therefore be an integrated part of their specialist training, and a limited research project is included in the course.

Aims for the course project:

The student should

1. acquire basic knowledge about research in palliative medicine, including main research topics, designs, and methods
2. develop a positive attitude to research in palliative medicine as well as an understanding of research ethics and of the challenges related to research in a palliative care population
3. be able to plan a limited study, do literature searches, critically appraise the literature, write a protocol, carry out the study according to the protocol, and summarize, analyse and present the results.

Nature of projects

The project can be a research project, or a project related to quality assurance or implementation. The methodology may be quantitative or qualitative.

Three types of projects are recommended:

- An audit
- A literature review, or a clinical guideline based on a systematic literature review
- A limited research project

Students already having an ongoing research project related to palliative medicine, may use this, provided it is their own work.

Two students may work together on a project, but not more than two.

Work and follow-up on the project

Module 1: Introduction to the course project (2 days)

Aims: To be able to read and analyse scientific literature. To have an understanding of research ethics. To be prepared to plan a simple study in a palliative medical subject, write a protocol, find a tutor, and start the study.



Norwegian Association for
Palliative Medicine



Finnish Association for
Palliative Medicine



Danish Association for
Palliative Medicine



Icelandic Association for
Palliative Care



Swedish Association for
Palliative Medicine



Topics: Introduction to evidence-based medicine. Research methods in palliative medicine. Introduction to quantitative and qualitative research methods. Research ethics. Critical reading and literature review. How to write a protocol. How to plan your project.

In addition to lectures and group work, former students tell about their experiences with the course project. Examples of protocols are shown and discussed. Project ideas are discussed in plenum and in groups several times during the week, including a final group session on the last day of the module.

The assignment after Module 1 is to find a tutor, make an agreement with the tutor and write a description of the project (protocol). A **summary of the project description** should be submitted within two months to the steering group member(s) responsible for the projects. The summary should be 1-2 A4pages, divided into the following sections: Background, Aims and objectives, Materials and methods, Timetable and program, A few important references.

The student has the responsibility to find a tutor. The tutor should preferably have a PhD degree or other relevant research experience, but the choice of tutor also depends upon the nature and topic of the project. The student may well have two tutors, e.g. one experienced in palliative medicine and one in relevant methodology.

The National Associations for Palliative Medicine should assist the students in finding a suitable tutor.

The project is the responsibility of the student, with the help of the tutor(s).

A Tutor Agreement Form has been developed, and we expect the students to use this template. The form is attached as an appendix to the present document, and gives guidance for the student's work on the project.

Modules 2 and 3

Students should be asked about their projects during these two modules, and be encouraged to contact the Steering Group in case of problems.

Module 4

A group session is devoted to follow-up of the projects. All students report on the progress of their projects in the group, and the responsible Steering Group member visits all groups. The main objective is to identify students having problems and give them assistance as needed.

Module 5

The same procedure as in Module 4.

Module 6

When coming to Module 6,

- A clinical audit should be completed, with a written report
- A literature review should be completed, with a written report



- Clinical guidelines based on a literature review should be completed, with a written guideline
- A research project should have an approved, written protocol, and some patients must be included in the study

During Module 6, all projects are to be presented by a **written abstract** of one page and an **oral presentation** in a scientific session. A full written report on the project is not required.

The abstract and presentation should be structured as follows:
Background, Aim, Methods, Results, Short discussion, Conclusion

The abstract is to be submitted at least 10 days before the start of Module 6.

The students are divided into two groups for the presentations. The sessions are chaired by members of the Steering Group, mimicking real conference sessions.

The oral presentation should be given as a power-point presentation. Each student is given 12 minutes for the presentation, followed by 7 minutes for discussion. Two students working together will have 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

The abstracts and presentations are evaluated by two members of the Steering Group. Both the abstract and the oral presentation must have acceptable clarity and quality, and show what the student actually has done.

A completed project is a requirement to pass the course.

After Module 6, each student is presented with a CD containing all abstracts and power-point presentations. This is made by the course secretary.

The students are encouraged to submit their work to an EAPC conference or other scientific meeting. It is also a goal that the results from some of the projects are published in scientific journals.



Tutor Agreement Form

Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine (NSCPM)

This form is a proposal for a Tutor Agreement Form. The content can be modified individually. Prior to filling in this form, the student and tutor have agreed on the subject and method of the project.

The responsibility for the completion of the project lies entirely with the student!

Initial phase

1. **The student** sends a proposal for the protocol to the tutor in due time (at least 4 weeks) before the deadline for submitting the study protocol to the course leaders
2. **The tutor** reviews this protocol thoroughly with a focus on relevance, feasibility, and scope of a project for the NSCPM, in time for the student to make necessary changes
3. **The student and tutor** agree at this time upon a time table with milestones for the tasks of the project. (The tasks will vary according to the type of project, e.g. literature search, preparing intervention/data collection, data collection, data analysis, writing study report, writing abstract, preparing presentation.)

Study period

4. **The student** sends a status of the work on the project according to the time table to the tutor, at least before each module 2 - 5 of the NSCPM
5. **The tutor** reacts and gives guidance if the student gets behind the agreed time table

Final phase

6. **The student** sends a full study report to the tutor according to the agreed time table
7. **The tutor** approves the study report. (The full study report is not approved by the course leaders)
8. **The student** sends a proposal for the abstract and presentation to the tutor in due time (at least 4 weeks) before Module 6 of the NSCPM
9. **The tutor** reviews the abstract thoroughly with a focus on form, presentation of the project and coherence between aim and results / conclusion, in time for the student to make necessary changes
10. **The tutor** reviews the presentation thoroughly together with the student with a focus on form, presentation of the project and time limit, in time for the student to make necessary changes

Overall

11. The cooperation between the student and the tutor can be terminated from both tutor and student if the above agreement is not followed.

Other specific agreements:

Place and date:

Place and date:

(Signature of NSCPM student)

(Signature of tutor)