

# **The Egghead Club: Agroecology Junior Researchers Association**

## **Course description**

In response to an identified need for inter-departmental collaboration amongst Junior Researchers within the Department of Agroecology, *The Egghead Club* was formed as an initiative, focused on the scientific and professional development of Ph.D., PostDoc, and exchange students.

Since many students within the Agroecology department are stationed far from Aarhus's main campus, we recognize that fewer opportunities exist to participate in networking events, short courses, and workshops. However, we believe that there is *a lot* that Junior Researchers can learn from one another.

### **Objectives of the course:**

*The Egghead Club* aims to benefit students by building leadership, communication, and scientific skills while creating space for collaboration and sharing of useful information. During the course, Ph.D. students will put into practice the competencies acquired during the compulsory Science Teaching course. Students will also have the opportunity to increase productivity and creativity by stepping out of their comfort zone investigating topics that give a broader perspective of science.

Individuals or groups of students take turns hosting hour-long weekly workshops on subjects of their choosing. Meetings address a diverse range of topics relating to both scientific and professional development. To inspire participant interaction, we encourage meeting leaders to use a diverse range of tools (i.e., incorporating media, guest experts, short videos, PowerPoints, journal articles, games, and discussion).

### **Club learning outcomes:**

Depending on the student's role during a workshop, they will:

1. Plan and implement activities that support and engage participants;
2. Demonstrate skills in the presentation of works both in and outside of their field;
3. Interact productively with colleagues from diverse backgrounds with integrity and professionalism;
4. Apply methodologies, tools, and knowledge creatively while interacting with diverse topics;
5. Organize and manage club activities responsibly and effectively;

### **Compulsory program:**

All course participants and course coordinators must actively participate in the workshops hosted by their peers; at times this may require completion of preparatory readings or assignments.

Course participants take turns leading weekly workshops. It is expected that each student enrolled in the course will lead at least one workshop per semester; students may also work in teams to plan and deliver workshops. To maintain consistency, each workshop leader must prepare a detailed agenda that serves to guide and structure their meeting. Leaders must also incorporate at least one teaching element that requires attendee's participation; it is essential to get all students involved and interacting with the material in some way.

Course coordinators are responsible for planning the semester, maintaining the course schedule, distributing and cataloging course materials, communicating and guiding participants as needed, as well as filling in to lead workshops when there are gaps in the schedule. Coordinators may also need to enforce rules of the club, and must make sure that workshops meet quality standards. Coordinators must also keep a record of each member's participation and award ECTS fairly at the end of each semester. Course coordinators must lead at least one workshop per semester, either individually or as a team. There may be a maximum of three-course coordinators per semester.

To earn the minimum ECTS offered, participants must attend at least 50% of meetings and lead one workshop. Additional credits are awarded to individuals who serve as course coordinators and to those who participate in and lead a greater percentage of workshops. Please see the ECTS section of this course description for more detail on requirements for earning credits.

### **Type of course/teaching methods:**

Since student participants lead this course, we strongly encourage everyone to consider employing creative teaching methods; in fact, formal lectures are discouraged. In every workshop, leaders must incorporate teaching elements that get participants to interact with the subject in a meaningful way; therefore, group investigation, brainstorming, feedback, problem-solving, discussion, and game play are all possibilities. Because this course's format is intentionally open to interpretation, teaching methods and assignments are likely to change from week to week.

## **Course parameters**

### **ECTS credits:**

Members will be able to accumulate hours to earn ECTS in three ways, (a) by participating in workshops, (b) by leading workshops, and (c) by serving as a club coordinator.

- (i) Workshops are held once a week for at least one hour. Depending on the activity, some preparation work might be required before the meeting; thus, the participant's average time is estimated to be 2 hours.

- (ii) Weekly workshops are organized and hosted by volunteer members of the club, and the average time spent by a student to plan and host a meeting is approximately 6 hours.
- (iii) Club coordinators are responsible for organizing workshops with club members, attending to meeting logistics, filling in to lead workshops when required, and tracking member participation for reporting on ECTS earnings at the end of each semester. The time required to serve as a club coordinator is approximately 15 hours per semester. A minimum of two, and up to three coordinators is suggested.

Two club semesters are held each year, consisting of 20 meetings in both the Spring and Autumn, following the AU Academic calendar. ECTS will be awarded to Ph.D. students based on participation as showed in the following ECTS earning scheme:

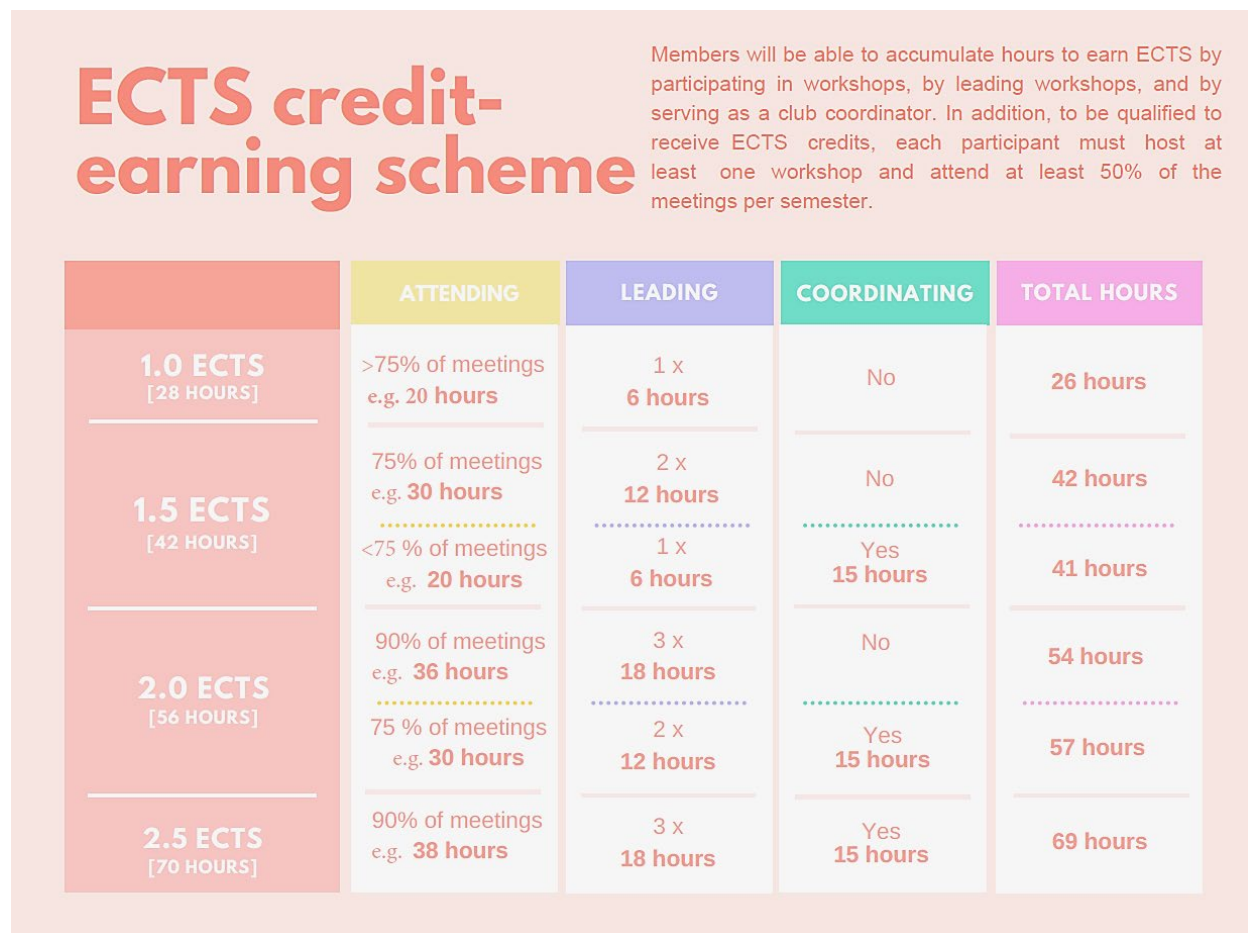


Figure 1. ECTS credit-earning scheme based on hour calculation for meeting attendance; attending less than 75% of meetings (mts): e.g. 10mts \* 2h=20h; attending 75% of mts but less than 90% mts: 15mts \* 2h=30h; attending 90% of mts or more: 18 mts \* 2h=38h.

Note that an upper limit of 2.5 ECTS is set per semester, and a maximum of 5 ECTS can be earned during the three years Ph.D. program. ECTS earned for participating in The Egghead Club are qualified as credits for *PhD activities other than regular courses*. For more information, please click on the following link: [ECTS credits for PhD activities other than regular courses](#)

**Language:** English

**Level of course:** Ph.D. students are eligible for earning course credit; however, we encourage participation from all Junior Researchers, including Postdocs, Master's students, Ph.D. students, and exchange students.

**Time of year:** Autumn semester (August – December) & Spring semester (January – May)

**No. of contact hours/hours in total:** Please see ECTS credit-earning scheme for more detail. The number of contact hours may range from 20–40 hours; the total course hours may range from 25–70 hours.

**Capacity limits:** Approximately 20

**Place:** Meetings are held in-person at the Flakkebjerg Research Centre, Aarhus University, Denmark; however, students not employed at Flakkebjerg are also welcome to join via a video-link connection. Students interested in joining virtually should coordinate their attendance with club leaders ahead of each meeting. A permalink in Zoom is established through which all meetings will be taking place. It can be found in the announcement mail for the Introductory Meeting of each semester.

**Registration:** We ask that PhD students who wish to receive ECTS credit for their participation in The Egghead Club please register with course coordinator, Olivera Topalovic, e-mail: [otopalovic@agro.au.dk](mailto:otopalovic@agro.au.dk) . However, please note that all are welcome to attend The Egghead Club meetings, and if you would like to begin attending half way through the semester you are more than welcome!

**Prerequisites:** None

## **Course content**

Course content and learning outcomes of each activity will change each semester depending upon the group's interests and needs. Topics covered in previous semesters have included:

- How to communicate your research using video and YouTube
- Practicing and perfecting the 30-second elevator pitch, describing your own research
- How to build a better, more effective PowerPoint presentations
- Show-and-tell the most influential paper in your field
- CV, LinkedIn, cover letter, and Garuda focus profile workshops
- Tips for successful planning and organization of a research project
- How to peer-review like a pro
- Grant writing workshop
- Graphical abstract workshop
- R programming workshops
- Discussion on co-authorship and the publishing process
- Three-minute thesis challenge
- Maintaining mental health and productivity during COVID
- Scientific communication and networking on Twitter
- Film screening of *Picture a Scientist* and discussion on gender equality in STEM
- Mock Ph.D. seminar and defense for graduating students

### **Names of current leaders**

Olivera Topalovic, PostDoc, Department of Agroecology, Entomology and Plant Pathology

Aristotelis Azariadis, PhD Student, Department of Agroecology, Crop Genetics and Biotechnology

### **Course homepage**

None

### **Provider**

Department of Agroecology