Installation in office of the Council 2022

In 2022, as something new, the Academic Council has had an academic staff member as Chairperson. This was decided after a good discussion between the individual election groups in the Council, including on the legitimacy in the scientific hinterland, the structure at other UCPH faculties and the transparency of the Council's decision-making processes. The Dean, a student member and a member of the academic staff group all made themselves available as Council Chairperson.

In addition, the Council has updated its procedure for preparing the agenda, which now, in principle, has an equal distribution of items that the Dean wishes to discuss and items brought up by the other members of the Council. The agenda is prepared by the Council's Executive Committee, consisting of the Dean, the Chairperson, a student member and a technical and administrative staff member. In the preparation of the agenda, it is endeavoured that agenda items which primarily concern briefing are given less time and are replaced by written material to a large extent. This leaves more time for the items for which a proper discussion is required. The Council finds that there has been an increase in the level of commitment in the business transacted at the meetings, which is presumably linked to the above measures and increased agenda ownership.

Set-up of assessment committees

In 2022, the Academic Council has, together with the Associate Dean for Research, prepared and launched a set of rules for setting up assessment committees for permanent academic staff positions at the Faculty. A number of requirements are now made, including for a full CV, a curated list of publications as well as a motivation from the department for the election of the nominated candidates. This has simplified and unified the process, which is one of the Council's key functions.

The Chicago principles

The Council sees it as a joint task for the whole of UCPH to discuss and implement the Chicago principles for free academic dialogue at all levels and in all aspects of the University's activities as well as a depoliticisation of the University, except in matters pertaining to the University itself. The Council has requested the Senate to follow up on written communications from the Rectorate and hold an orientation meeting with Daniel Diermeier, former Provost of the University of Chicago. The Council will be following the handling of this matter in the Senate in the coming year.
Academic co-determination

In the past year, the Academic Council has contributed to the consultation on ‘academic co-determination’. The Council is primarily in favour of the new proposal to introduce more academic co-determination at all levels at UCPH. In particular, increased academic co-determination at department level was highlighted as a potential significant improvement for academic staff, especially after the department councils were abolished back in 2018. Some departments at SCIENCE have councils/committees which provide academic insight to some degree, but not co-determination to the extent envisaged by the new proposal. The Academic Council regards it as an excellent solution, within the framework of the current Danish University Act, that academic staff at the departments will now have an opportunity to submit disagreements on academic priorities to the Dean. The Council hopes that this opportunity will result in increased focus on the need for academic co-determination among the departmental managements. The Council also suggests that a coming ‘Academic Council’ at UCPH level should not only be filled with professors, but also with associate professors, as the associate professor layer will obviously also contribute to shaping the future academic landscape at UCPH.

“Work-life” balance

One item in particular in the WPA surveys from 2022 for SCIENCE’s departments has been of interest to the Academic Council. This concerns the responses regarding the balance between working hours and workload for academic staff and managers, which stand out as being particularly negative. Follow-up on the WPA surveys clearly belongs under the collaboration committees, but the Academic Council finds that this item is also highly relevant in relation to the academic conditions. In many ways, this item is in stark contrast to the predominantly positive response to whether the same group feel that they have adequate influence on their own work situation. The Council has discussed whether there should be increased focus on task prioritisation and recommends that the requirements for recognising merit in the new promotion programme for academic staff not be presented as a list of set criteria, but more as areas and examples that may be taken into consideration in qualification for promotions. The Council also decided to propose the addition of a number of sub-questions – like the questions framework for offensive behaviour – in future WPA surveys.

PhD programme revision

The Academic Council welcomes the initiatives described by the Associate Dean for Research regarding the reform of the PhD programmes at SCIENCE. In general, the new initiatives aim to harmonise conditions regarding teaching workload and course activity for PhD students. They also address the problems with the range of courses offered in terms of both programme and research contents.

Joint SCIENCE narrative

The Associate Dean for Research presented the work with creating a joint narrative for SCIENCE through five core narratives directly aimed at the Faculty’s surroundings such as foundations and cooperation partners. This presentation triggered a good discussion in the Council on the narrative also being suitable as an internal narrative within the Faculty itself. It has elements and descriptions of SCIENCE which, for the first time, address the interfaces between departments and centres from the two old merged faculties. In this way, the Council finds that this narrative will constitute the first actual attempt to gather the current SCIENCE.
ITX Exams

The Council discussed with the Faculty Secretariat’s Study Administration Office (SCIENCE Study Administration) a number of problems with ITX exams concerning the use of special programs, drawing tools, etc., and the attempts made to solve them. As the basis for the discussion, SCIENCE Study Administration provided information about the future use of ITX exams and whether there will be leeway for introducing this exam form going forward. It was also argued by the Council that ITX exams may, in some cases, be challenging for the students and unsuitable due to the above limitations. In future, the Council recommends focusing on providing communication and instruction about the ITX exam form in the teaching and on the students’ well-being and exam situation, including home exams, taking into due consideration the risk of exam cheating.

Course evaluations

The Council discussed an optimisation of course evaluations at SCIENCE. Challenges with low response rates, lack of transparency in relation to ranking of courses in A, B or C and its significance, including a lack of uniform guidelines for this division. In a discussion about adapting the contents of the evaluation, the Council wanted the Faculty to set up a working group, including with a broad representation of students from the Faculty’s study programmes and their organisations, which can work to improve the structure of the course evaluations.

Academic Council in figures 2022

Ordinary meetings | Doctoral degrees awarded | Assessment committees
---|---|---
5 | 3 | 54
Extraordinary meetings | PhD degrees awarded | Distributed on:

Tenure track assistant professors: 12
Associate professors: 18
Professors: 18
Vacant positions: 6