

PhD Committee Meeting no. 2 2024



MINUTES

JUNE 12TH 2024

Forum PhD Committee

Meeting held PhD Committee Meeting no. 2 2024, June 12th 2024

BÜLOWSVEJ 15

Place Bülowssvej 17, 1870 Frederiksberg, A126

1870 FREDERIKSBERG C

Minute taker Charlotte Krenk (PhD Committee Secretary)

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Present

PhD Committee Members and Deputy Members

David B. Collinge (Chair, PLEN/BIO), Henriette Steiner (member, IGN/History Museum), Debby Schmidt (from 13.35 - member, IGN/History Museum), Andrew David Harold Stratton (member, IFRO/FOOD/NEXS), Courtney Horn Herms (member, PLEN/BIO)

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REF: CHK

Guests

Lise Arleth (Vice Dean for Research/Head of the PhD School), Ingelise Lundgaard (FS), Marie Louise Holm (FS/PhD administration), Lisa Anita Gotzmann (deputy member, FOOD/NEXS/IFRO), Johanna Marie E Ettingshausen (deputy member, BIO/PLEN)

Apologies

Teresa Klara Pfau (member, NBI/CHEM), Morten Arendt Rasmussen (member, FOOD/NEXS/IFRO), Nena Battenburg (member, MATH/Computer Science/Science Education), Niels Martin Møller (member, MATH/Computer Science/Science Education), Stergios Piligkos (member, CHEM/NBI)

Ad. 1 Presentation of Agenda

David B. Collinge, Chair, opened the meeting and noted the poor response rate for the meeting and the presence of only two VIP members. David called for an increased awareness among the committee members to answer the meeting invitations.

All new members and deputy members were called to check their access to the group room at KU-net. The meeting material is placed in the group room, so it is vital to have access in order to prepare for meetings and following the workflow of the Committee. Please let Charlotte know if you have problems.

David initiated a short round of presentation followed by approval of the agenda.

Ad. 2 Approval of the Minutes from the Meeting March 22nd 2024

No comments were made to the minutes from the last meeting March 22nd and thus were formally approved.

Ad. 3 Review of the Revised Recovery Procedures

Lise Arleth, Head of the PhD School, presented the point (Appendix 1.a-c) explaining the purpose of the recovery process which is to handle cases where a PhD project does not progress as planned. There can be many different reasons for this. A recovery process is initiated so the project can come back on track.

There are only a few cases a year, *i.e.* not many compared to the hundreds of projects at SCIENCE. The process always starts with a meeting at Lise's office. The PhD student is present, Lise, the PhD Coordinator, and the Deputy head department for research (VILF).

Until now there has been an obligation to include an external person in the recovery process. This setup has proven to be challenging. Firstly, because it has been difficult for the external person to contribute to the process due to lack of experience with these rare cases. Secondly, it has been difficult to find external people for the task. This can cause delay which is not very pleasant for the student who will have to wait.

Thus, the Committee is asked to support a suggestion to change the setup which brings in the VILF in the place of the external person.

Andrew asked if there is also an appeal process. Lise answered yes and explained the process. After the initial meeting a three month-rectification plan is made. The coordinator will be able to qualify the plan to see if the plan looks realistic and doable. The student will be asked comment on the plan and state whether they perceive it as fair and realistic. The student has up to two weeks to suggest changes to the plan or object. A second change for complaint will be possible later in the process as well.

If progress is not made or the plan is not met within the three months the students will be expelled after the three months. A large fraction of the PhD students do in fact manage to get back on track with their project. It is often at this stage that the student activates the co-supervisor. Both Lise and David stressed the value in having a co-supervisor from the beginning.

Henriette noted that since the VILFs now play a more active role in monitoring the PhD's progression, it is very sensible to include the VILFs in the process. However, it strengthens the hierarchy in the room given that supervisors, VILFs and PhD-coordinators also are colleagues. However, since PhD students also are allowed to bring their own external person to the meeting (bisidder), Henriette stressed the importance of informing the PhD students about the opportunity.

The Committee had no objections to the suggested adjustments of the recovery procedures.

Ad. 4 Discussion of a Suggestion to implement an Advisory Committee for each PhD student

Johanna Ettingshausen presented a suggestion on behalf of the PhD students of the Committee that each PhD student should have an external mentor. The external mentor could be somebody that works within the same academic field as the PhD student, but that does not need to be project specific. The role of the mentor is to help with project progress and wellbeing.

The PhD Committee was invited to discuss the suggestion and how to proceed. Johanna presented two specific initiatives.

1. *Establishing a mentorship team:*

The idea derives from the current role of the PhD coordinators as mentors. Today most PhD coordinators have many PhD students making it next to impossible to have a personal relationship with the PhD students and foster a fruitful student-mentor relation. Therefore, the PhD students suggest a mentor team as an alternative consisting of a PhD Coordinator and an external person with no personal ties to the PhD supervisor. The mentor team meet on a scheduled basis to discuss topics of both academic and personal character.

2. *Evaluation questionnaire* for the PhD students to answer after they have finished their PhD. The questionnaire is to include questions regarding experienced harassment.

The suggestions were discussed. Lise found the initiative and suggestions interesting. She informed that there is also already an established practice for sending evaluation questionnaires. David suggests that they will look at the current questionnaire. David suggested it to be included in PAR. Lise objected to the last part as the PhD plan should be strictly for the project content.

Henriette found the suggestions for improved mentorship very important, however, she found it important to work at the basis of the existing format. She also pointed to the PhD coordinators' responsibility to do MUS (performance and development review) at least in some departments as a valuable outset for the PhD coordinator to act as a mentor given that the coordinator is not involved in the funding or the project.

Also, it could be considered to look into the possibility of supplement for responsibility as part of the solution to lift up the coordinator role. A possibility which is not in use today.

Andrew pointed out that it is not set in stone that the one who handles MUS is the PhD coordinator. The Head of Section could also take this role, resulting in a different relation.

David pointed out that the number of coordinators has changed a lot, in some departments it has almost doubled so something is happening. Johanna noticed that in the same period the number of PhD students has also increased.

Lise added that the vision project includes lifting parts of the administrative load lifted off from the PhD coordinators which will free time for the more academic supervision when implemented. However, the administrative reform has meant delay in this process. She confirmed David's statement that there is initiative to increase the number of PhD coordinators. She said that an effort shall be made to clarify the role of the Deputy head of department for research in this regard. Also that they will look into the possibility of following the example of the Faculty of Health to assign a contact person to these issues for the PhD students to contact.

Henriette commented that an effort should be made now to ensure that the structural framework is in place and that this work for improved mentorship is happening. She mentioned training of the PhD coordinators as important and part of this. GRUS could be a possible way. Debby shared their experience at IGN of establishing GRUS.

The PhD students should also be informed more clearly about this topic.

Marie Louise from the PhD administration highlighted that the PhD Schools page at KU-net has information regarding wellbeing for the PhD students. Johanna pointed to the importance of including this information in the PhD introduction folder.

Henriette suggested that the coordinator role shall be put on the PhD Committee's agenda. David suggested that is discussed with the VILF's (the Deputy Heads of Department for Research).

The Committee decided to establish a working group focusing on the coordinator role. The group includes David, Johanna, Henriette, Max, Debby and Lise is to be held up to date. The group will meet before the next committee meeting. They will invite some of the VILF's, e.g. Michael Poulsen (BIO), Nanna Viereck (FOOD) and Jytte (IGN) to engage in a dialogue.

Ad. 5 Evaluation of the Course Approval Process

David introduced the point. The PhD Committee has had their first round of course approvals. The committee was invited to evaluate the process and give input to ensure an efficient and productive feedback loop:

- **Evaluating the recent round of course approvals**

David shared Max' experience from the course approval meeting: Max found it very productive, the input was well received by the administration and directly implemented in the course description. He was very pleased.

Andrew commented that it would be good if the deputy members could be included as the courses are very unevenly distributed over all the fields. Also, it should not be, e.g., him from IFRO commenting on FOOD courses. This resonated across the committee.

Henriette commented that the course approval meeting was good but there seems to be a need for an administrative structure around it.

Lise found the input very helpful! But there is a point in how the representation areas are distributed which will be discussed under a different point on the agenda. Also, it will be better to have the input to the courses in writing as a lot of the comments are very topic specific and it can be a difficult task for the administration to grasp and transfer this to the teachers.

Andrew added that there is a point in the structure where it should not be left on one person's shoulders to transmit for instance Max as PhD students.

- **Establishing an efficient and productive course evaluation**

This is postponed to the meeting in September. Before then Henriette and Debby will prepare the point for the coming meeting.

Ad. 6 Hearing: Is there a Need to adjust the Areas of Representation for the PhD Committee?

David presented the point. The PhD Committee has been asked if they have any wishes for changes regarding the current representation areas for the upcoming election year (2025).

Lise presented her suggestion to move the representation of FOOD to a different group so that it is more field related. However, there is an issue with the timing as this is best implemented when both the students and academic staff are up for election which will not be until 2025.

There was a widespread support for suggestion as well as an understanding of the timing. The Committee agreed on initiating a discussion of the suggestion with relevant parties including the VILFs. For now, no changes will be suggested but a process for a change will be initiated for the next election period where both VIP's and PhD students will be up for election.

Lise will raise the question to the VILFs with the time frame for the next election period.

At the next meeting the committee will discuss the representation areas. Lise will be presenting the point.

Ad. 7 Status from the Working Groups (WG)

- *WG for Dissemination (increase knowledge of the PhD Committee)*
Courtney reported that they tried to have a 'Friday at Akacievej' (a social gathering) where the PhD students are responsible. They are still working on engaging all the PhD student members to meet PhD students so they can meet them.
- *WG for Improved Wellbeing of the Ph.D. students*
No further news apart from the point the above mentioned initiatives to improve the structure for PhD students for handling issues of personal issues.

Andrew asked if there was an official statement from the PhD Committee as answer to news early this year regarding the number of harassments among PhD students at KU. Lise answered that no, not yet but she is working on it and the Committee can be included.

Ad. 8 A.O.B.

Debby asked if it will be possible to attend the PhD Committee meetings online with arguments of urgency (falling ill on the day of the meeting) or being abroad. The topic was discussed and though there was a common understanding of the challenges of both urgency and being abroad there was also a strong will to insist on a meeting culture with physical presence.