

PhD Committee Meeting no. 1 2024



## MINUTES

MAY 15<sup>TH</sup> 2024

**Forum** PhD Committee

**Meeting held** PhD Committee Meeting no. 1 2024, March 22 2024

BÜLOWSVEJ 15

**Place** Bülowssvej 17, 1870 Frederiksberg, A126

1870 FREDERIKSBERG C

**Minute taker** Charlotte Krenk (PhD Committee Secretary)

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### Present

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#### *PhD Committee Members and Deputy Members*

David B. Collinge (Chair, PLEN/BIO), Henriette Steiner (member, IGN/History Museum), Niels Martin Møller (member, MATH/Computer Science/Science Education), Stergios Piligkos (member, CHEM/Physics), Debby Schmidt (member, IGN, History Museum), Johanna Marie E Ettingshausen (deputy member for Courtney Horn Herms, BIO/PLEN), Andrew David Harold Stratton (member, IFRO), Nena Battenburg (member, MATH/Computer Science/Science Education)

REF: CHK

#### *Guests*

Lise Arleth (Vice Dean for Research/Head of the PhD School), Ingelise Lundgaard (FS), Signe Lange Jespersen (FS), Marie Louise Holm (FS), Lisa Anita Gotzmann (deputy member, FOOD/NEXS), Max Frank (deputy member, PLEN/BIO), Iben Treebak (FS)

### Apologies

Teresa Klara Pfau (member, NBI), Morten Arendt Rasmussen (member, FOOD/NEXS), Courtney Horn Herms (member PLEN)

### **Ad. 1 Presentation of Agenda**

David B. Collinge, Chair, opened the meeting and presented the agenda. It was decided to add a point to the agenda where the Committee could share views on the results published on March 20<sup>th</sup> of a survey done by The Danish Centre for Social Science Research showing the extent to which PhD students at UCPH experience sexism, sexually offensive behaviour, and gender stereotyping attitudes.

### **Ad. 2 Welcome to the new PhD Committee Members**

David, Chair, welcomed the new members of the PhD Committee followed by a round of presentation.

### **Ad. 3 Roles and Purpose of the PhD Committee**

David made a short presentation of the roles of members and deputy members of the PhD Committee, respectively. David stated the purpose of the PhD Committee as securing the influence of the PhD students and the academic staff on the PhD education and thereby on the life of the PhD students. The PhD Committee meets four times annually.

In addition, David, in the role of Chair of the Committee, carries out a range of tasks including reviewing and approving PhD plans and meeting every second week with Lise, as Head of the PhD School, to discuss and resolve relevant topics in relation to the PhD School. These tasks are part of the delegation planned to be implementation of the Vision Project which has been presented to the PhD Committee at previous meetings and at this meeting (reference to Ad. 7).

### **Ad. 4 Purpose and Principles for Approval of the Minutes**

David explained that he had felt called to clarify the purpose and principles of the minutes following the last meeting. David pointed out that the minutes are to be understood as an extract of what has been said at the meeting and not as a precise transcript of what has been said. The phrasing of the minutes is purposefully chosen to be as neutral as possible – this also goes for accounts of discussions from the meetings where different viewpoints have been shared.

The meeting participants has the right to comment and require corrections to the phrasing, again with purpose to ensure that the minutes reflect what happened at the meeting. However, exercising this right is not to be taken as a right to dictate the content or phrasing of the minutes.

There has been a challenge with incorporating comments in the minutes after the previous meeting as there seemed to have been multiple understandings of the form and purpose of the minutes. This has taken a lot of resources without resulting in an agreement on a final version. This is not sustainable. As a result, David has decided to establish a new process for approval of the minutes.

As the challenges came as news to most members of the Committee a few clarifying questions were posed but the PhD Committee supported the decision to make the necessary adjustments to ensure a smooth workflow.

The new process will be as follows; Charlotte as secretary will draft the minutes and send it for the PhD Committee to comment before the next meeting. Charlotte will incorporate comments as best as possible. In cases where it is not possible to reach a common understanding of the final wording of a given paragraph within a reasonable timeframe, Charlotte will include the comment as appendix to the draft of the minutes which will be sent out for approval by the PhD Committee before the next meeting. At the next meeting the PhD Committee will have a final opportunity to comment the minutes in which case the comments will be added in the minutes of that meeting.

#### **Ad. 5 Approval of the Minutes from the Meeting December 13th 2023**

The minutes from the meeting on December 13<sup>th</sup> was presented with the comments adjoint. No further comments were added, and the minutes were approved in the version sent forward with the agenda.

#### **Ad. 6 Introduction of the Vision Project for the New Members**

Lise Arleth, Head of the PhD School and Vice Dean for Research, made a short introduction to the Vision Project to the new members of the PhD Committee. (slides included in appendix 2).

Lise answered clarifying questions regarding the presentation. A committee member asked for a status regarding the timeline of moving items for approval from David's PhD Planner flow to the VILF approval flow in PhD Planner. Marie-Louise Holm from the PhD administration answered that the timeline has been aligned with the progress in the administrative reform, thus it is not possible to be more specific at this point.

#### **Ad. 7 Approval of Delegation of Tasks (The Vision Project)**

The PhD Committee was asked to approve that a number of tasks are delegated from the PhD Committee to the Deputy Heads of Departments for Research and to the PhD Administration.

Currently, following the rules of the University Act the PhD Committee has the responsibility for a lot of the operational tasks concerning PhD students and their studies. However, the University Act dates back to a time when there were only a few PhD students, thus the number of tasks were significantly fewer. Now the number of PhD students has increased significantly and so has the number of tasks. This has some negative consequences both in terms of the distribution of workload, and in terms of preventing unnecessary bottlenecks in the workflow.

Therefore, the Vision Project includes a delegation of these operational tasks from the PhD Committee to the Deputy Heads of Departments for Research and to the PhD Administration. This is now being presented to the PhD Committee as a request for approval.

This delegation of tasks has been presented at previous Committee meetings with the possibility to discuss and ask questions. No questions for the content or purpose of the delegation were asked. Though Stergios pointed to the importance of assessing the results of the implementation of the delegation of tasks to see if it works as intended. He suggested that the PhD Committee is given this opportunity. The suggestion gained wide support in the Committee as well as with Lise as Head of the PhD School. Signe Lange Jespersen from the administration suggested that this could be done with inspiration from the assessment framework of the SCIENCE Study Boards. The Committee agreed on this point.

The PhD Committee approved the delegation with the agreement that the Committee will get the opportunity to assess the effects of the implementation.

#### **Ad. 8 Orientation about the Career Management Programme for PhD students at SCIENCE (Part of Fundamentals)**

Career consultant Iben Treebak presented the learning objectives, structure, form, and content of the career management programme, which is part of the “Fundamentals” course (slides included in appendix 3).

The rationale behind the programme stems from statistics showing that a large majority of PhD students leave academia shortly after completing their

degrees. Many are unaware of the numerous career opportunities available outside academia, and translating their skills and competencies into non-academic careers can be challenging, often leading to stress. Thus, the course aims to address these challenges.

The PhD Committee expressed appreciation and endorsed the initiative. One inquiry was made regarding the involvement of individuals who have successfully transitioned into careers outside academia. Iben explained the logistical difficulty of involving alumni frequently and explained that the course will include video recordings and podcasts instead.

Another query was raised regarding the inclusion of career opportunities outside Denmark in the programme. Iben clarified that the exploratory tools taught in the programme are applicable globally. However, it is the responsibility of individual PhD students to apply these tools to their preferred countries, as the course does not provide detailed knowledge of specific job markets for PhD holders in different countries.

A question arose regarding the relevance of all modules in the program for PhD students from various academic fields. Iben confirmed that all modules are relevant to all PhD students at SCIENCE. Additionally, she confirmed that the programme accommodates those interested in pursuing careers in academia.

It was asked whether it is feasible to join the programme if already enrolled as a PhD student and thus not part of the Fundamentals course. Currently, this option is unavailable, but Iben will explore ways to share the online modules with already enrolled PhD students. Lise Arleth mentioned the possibility of scheduling individual career guidance sessions with Iben as an alternative.

#### **Ad. 9 Election of New Vice Chair of the PhD Committee**

The position for vice chair of the PhD Committee is up for election. Teresa is not running again this term, so the PhD student members has chosen Courtney Horn Herms (PLEN) as their candidate for the Vice Chair position. The PhD Committee is asked to vote for the new candidate.

Courtney was officially elected as vice chair. As Courtney is currently abroad Johanna Marie E Ettingshausen (deputy member for Courtney Horn Herms, BIO/PLEN) is stepping in while Courtney is away. The Committee endorsed this.

### **Ad. 10 Points for Discussion in the PhD Committee the Coming Year**

David invited the PhD Committee to give input and discuss relevant topics for to work on in the coming year.

The following topics were suggested:

- **Career Management** – Henriette suggested that Iben comes back to discuss the topics relating to career management further in dept.
- **Dissemination** – the Committee wants to continue the working group for dissemination. They would like to organize an event where the different department networks meet. See list of working groups and its members below (Ad. 11).
- **PhD students' mental health** – continued work to improve the wellbeing of the PhD students through continuation of the working group (see details on the group in Ad. 11). Addressing the results from the recent study of PhD students' experience of sexism, offensive behaviour, and gender stereotyping attitudes is included in this category.
- **The power imbalance between PhDs and their Professors** (#dontstealmywork...)
- **Increased support for the PhD students to finish on time** – the consequences of not finishing on time can get the PhD students in a precarious situation e.g. related to home and visa.
- **Supervisor review mechanism** – making it possible for aspiring PhD students to do initial research on potential supervisors before starting a PhD.
- **PhD support to minimize administration** (for example external stay, help with visa reimbursement ect.)
- **Increased transparency in salary negotiations**

### **Ad. 11 Status from the Working Groups**

The working groups are self-organizing. They do not have a mandate to make decisions but will be working more in dept with some of the

subjects, which the PhD Committee find relevant. As such the working groups can inform the rest of the PhD Committee and make specific suggestions for the PhD Committee to endorse.

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- WG for Dissemination – the purpose of this group is to increase knowledge of the PhD Committee.

Members are:

- Niels Martin (MATH)
- Courtney (PLEN)
- Nena (MATH)?

More are welcome to join.

- WG for Improved Wellbeing of the Ph.D. students – including Addressing the results from the recent study of PhD students' experience of sexism, offensive behaviour, and gender stereotyping attitudes is included in this category.

Members are:

- Henriette (IGN)
- Teresa (NBI)
- Debby (MATH)
- Nena (MATH)
- Johanna (BIO)
- Max (PLEN)
- Lisa (FOOD)
- Niels Martin (MATH) as guest

## **Ad. 12 A.O.B**

### **Sexism, offensive behaviour and stereotyping attitudes in the workplace**

David introduces the point, which is added to the agenda to give the PhD Committee an opportunity to respond to the results – just published – of a study done among PhD students at UCPH regarding experiences sexism, offensive behaviour and stereotyping attitudes in the workplace. The numbers are significant, and thus, the PhD Committee felt inclined to discuss it.

Lise gives a brief orientation of the background of the study, which is a follow up on a previous study done a few years ago, where a follow up study was done. Local measures were taken.

In the light of the current study the PhD Committee finds that action must be taken. Henriette has experience from working on this and points to two aspects of cases of sexism and offensive behaviour, namely the cultural aspect and the legal aspect and especially on the sexism issues it quickly moves to the legal area. As a consequence, the cultural aspect falls into the background, which is reflected in the measures taken to prevent it. There needs to be management measures put in place for doing something regarding these issues. Henriette stated that in her view the issues should not fall into either category (cultural/legal) and called for the working group for wellbeing to be used to put power behind a push for action.

Nena called for personal experiences with these issues being taken into account, when addressing it. A discussion followed regarding how to do that and the potential repercussions it could have for the people coming forward. The last part needs to be a focus point for instance it needs to be clear what exactly will happen if stepping forward. Also, the issue of a lack of consequence in these cases was identified as barrier for PhD students to coming forward. What incentives do the PhD students have if they risk all the repercussions and nothing happens?

Debby shared her view, that the PhD Committee can press on a top-down push for action on the challenges with imbalance in the power structure, which the PhD students find themselves in.

The discussion will continue in the working group.

### **Appendix to the Minutes**

Appendix 1 – Minutes from December 13 2023

Appendix 2 – Slides of the Implementation of the Vision Project (these are the extended version which was shown at the PhD Coordinator seminar on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2024)

Appendix 3 – Slides from Ad. 8 Career Management Programme