

PhD Committee Meeting No 3



MINUTES

3 SEPTEMBER 2024

Forum PhD Committee Meeting

Meeting held September 5th 2024 13:15-15:00

BÜLOWSVEJ 17

Place Thorvaldsensvej 40, Frederiksberg

FREDERIKSBERG C

Minute taker Charlotte Krenk, PhD Committee Secretary

DIR 45 35 33 37 32

Present

phd-committee@science.ku.dk

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/NBI), Lisa Anita Gotzmann (deputy member, FOOD/NEXS/IFRO), Victoria Thusgaard Ruhoff (deputy member, NBI/CHEM), Max Frank (deputy member, PLEN/BIO), Morten Arendt Rasmussen (member, FOOD/NEXS/IFRO)

Guests

Lise Arleth (Vice Dean for Research/Head of the PhD School), Ingelise Lundgaard (FS), Marie Louise Holm (FS/PhD administration)

Apologies

Teresa Klara Pfau (member, NBI/CHEM), Nena Battenburg (member, MATH/Computer Science/Science Education), Andrew David Harold Stratton (member, IFRO/FOOD/NEXS), Courtney Horn Herms (member, PLEN/BIO), Debby Schmidt (member, IGN/History Museum)

Agenda

Ad 1) Presentation of Agenda

David B. Collinge, Chair, opened the meeting by presenting the agenda. No comments were made to the agenda. David initiated a short round of presentation.

Ad 2) Approval of the Minutes from the Meeting June 12th 2024

No comments were made to the minutes from the previous meeting and these were thereby formally approved.

Ad 3) Status of the Implementation of the Vision Project

a. Presentation: Status of the Implementation of the Vision Project

Lise Arleth, Head of the PhD School and Vice Dean for Research, gave a short status of the implementation of the Vision Project. Lise presented the scope of the Vision Project and gave an overview of the main goals and outcomes of the project (see slides).

David asked about the progress of the implementation of the STÅ-model which will ensure that teaching at PhD courses is rewarded in the same way as teaching at MSc and BSc courses. Lise answered that it is under implementation here in 2024. The specific way of implementing it may be affected by the administrative reform, but the aim is to maintain that PhD courses are somehow incentivised.

Lise thanked Max and the rest of the PhD students for their high degree of engagement and contributions to ensure the course development through the extraordinary PhD meeting about PhD courses, which is greatly appreciated.

Lise presented the new organisation of the PhD administration from March 1st 2025, which is part of the result of the administrative reform. The PhD administration will be located at Nørre Campus with Annedorte Vad as head of the PhD administration. Below her will be two sections lead by Jeppe Bjørn Pedersen and Marie Louise Holm, respectively. Lise spoke of the benefits of a strong PhD administration and the positive prospects in the new management of the PhD administration.

b. Discussion: Evaluation of the new course concept

Lise introduced the evaluation of the new course concept. The PhD Committee was invited to discuss the purpose and of the two course concepts (toolbox courses and specialised courses).

General comments:

What works well:

- The definitions works well as they can help students understand how a course fits into each category.

What needs/could benefit from improvements:

- The phrasing of the generic course category descriptions could be improved.
- Improving FrontPlanner planner for easier access to courses. The current entry makes it difficult to obtain an overview. When searching for courses, different results come up depending on how you enter (search function or looking it up in the directory). Some courses are now displayed in certain ways of search. A clear overview of courses would be a significant improvement.
- It should be clearer what the differentiation of the two course categories is. Currently ‘recurring’ and ‘stable’ are mentioned in the definitions of both course categories.
- There is some confusion regarding the requirements for the different types of courses.
- A wish was expressed to have an overview of the toolbox courses and the MSc courses which are relevant for PhD students.

The Toolbox courses:

What needs/could benefit from improvements:

- It could be stated more clearly whether they are offered every year.
- It should be underlined that these are methodological courses.

The specialised course (more having the character as a master class):

What needs to/could benefit from improvements:

- Phrasing should be improved to avoid confusion with MSc courses (both level and character).
- It should be underlined that it is specialised.

c. Discussion: Establishing an efficient and productive course evaluation

Henriette presented suggestions for establishing course evaluations which are both efficient and useful (see the slides), which she had prepared with Debbie.

The presentation had a best practice focus with hands-on advice to create an efficient and effective course evaluation with eye on differences in perspective, student and teacher respectively.

The premise of the suggestions presented is to use the evaluation as an opportunity to make improvements. The suggestions are presented in a practical framework: before, during, and after the evaluation. Henriette finished off with giving an example of a short evaluation with specific and targeted questions.

Lise found the suggestions very useful, and the rest of the Committee agreed. It was commented that it is important to consider what type of feedback is useful for the teacher versus the other parties involved. Henriette agreed.

Ad 4) Follow up on the study published in March regarding sexism, offensive behaviour and stereotyping attitudes in the workplace

The PhD Committee discussed whether it was possible to do more as a reaction to published findings of a high degree of experienced sexism, offensive behaviour, and stereotyping among PhD students at KU.

Lise gave a short recount of the action taken after the publication in March where she and rector among others sent out public responses to the findings.

Max mentioned that some of the PhD student members have met to discuss the topic. They have a strong wish that action is taken to improve the framework for getting help in these cases and for prevention.

Lise pointed to the juridical challenge in handling the cases as not all PhD students are hired but reassured that the services for getting

help and the focus on the students' wellbeing are topics which are included in the scope for the new administration.

Morten pointed out that the problem of sexism and offensive behaviour reaches further than the PhD students. It also includes postdocs, and therefore – he argued – it is important that the measures taken are anchored more broadly in the organisation. Lise supported this viewpoint and spoke in favour of having the Deputy Heads for Research (VILFs) and departments on board.

Max pointed to the fact that the study was made specifically among PhD students and that in the study there referred examples of PhD students who had experienced that the only measure that had been taken from management when the PhD students had reported the incidence was to give warnings to the offending party. This was not seen by the PhD students as a sign of the matter being taken seriously.

Henriette added that there is also a challenge in the jurisdiction on the topic which means that depending on the character of the incident, the responsibility to act lies in different parts of the organisation. This fact adds to the complicity.

Marie Louise said that there is a learning potential in the new administration to terms of learning from best case practices across the faculties.

There was a brief discussion on how to take this further. The PhD Committee agreed that next step is to get the VILFs involved. However, the first step will be that the PhD Committee's Working Group for Wellbeing will give their suggestions to what specifically should be changed. Max will communicate the task to the group.

Ad 5) Discussion: Online Participation for the PhD Committee Meetings

David introduced the point and invited the PhD Committee members to air they views on the suggestion coming from student PhD Committee members who find it challenging with the current requirement to participate physically in the committee meetings.

The different viewpoints were presented and discussed. The arguments in favour of physical presence had partly to do with the experiences with technical difficulties with hybrid meetings, and partly a question of symbolic value. Several committee members saw the physical presence as a sign of prioritizing the work done by the committee and that it was 'part of the job' to be present.

Max was spokesperson for the group of PhD student members who had presented the wish and suggestion to be able to participate online. He presented the argument that the students who run for the PhD Committee is also the same who are engaged in other activities, and it is challenging to fit the activities in with the requirement of online presence. The students find the requirement discourages people who consider running for the PhD Committee. Also, the challenge with PhD students in the committee who need to go away for a period (e.g. COSE) as part of their studies were brought up.

The arguments for allowing online presence did not gain favour in the broader part of the committee and the requirement for physical presence still stands.

Ad 6) Discussion: The Current Areas of Representation for the PhD Committee and Perspectives in Future Adjustments

Lise introduced the point and invited the PhD Committee to discuss the possibility to adjust the current structure of representation by moving IFRO so it will not be in the same group as Food Science, Human Nutrition and Exercise and Sports Science but rather together with areas which is more obviously academic associated with that of IFRO, in particular IGN.

It was made clear that in case of support for an adjustment it would not be implemented until after the coming election.

The suggest found wide support in the PhD Committee and it was decided to bring the suggestion forward to the involved departments/VILFs as the next natural step.

Ad 7) Election is coming – call-to-action

David reminded the PhD Committee members that election is coming up. It is only student members who are up for election for

2025 (the staff election period includes 2025). It is very important to take action locally in order to let it be known among PhD students to ensure candidates are found and registered within the deadline.

Last year only two representation areas out of the 5 managed to successfully register candidates and therefore the rest of the candidates had to be found and elected outside the official election. That situation is not ideal and include quite a bit of extra administrative work. So, it is very important that PhD students are found and registered within the deadline. Details about the election can be found at KU-net.

Ad 8) Status from the Working Groups

WG for Dissemination:

Courtney is head of the group. There is a great task as quite a bit of information is not disseminated properly. There is no news from the group.

WG for Wellness:

No news was reported.

WG for Mentorship:

As representatives from the WG Henriette and David presented input from the WG on the purpose of and how to cultivate mentorship in relation to the PhD students (see the appended slides).

They started with the definition and purpose of mentorship. At KU there are no (official) mentors. When asked about who is actually mentoring specific PhD studies, PhD students variously refer to supervisors, coordinators, and teaching colleagues, PhD course teachers, career councillors, office and lab colleagues, and other PhD students.

David presented the WG's suggestions on how to introduce, improve, and cultivate a mentorship culture (see slides for details).

The PhD Committee was invited to comment and ask questions. Morten asked how the suggestion of a mentor is supposed to solve the minority/diversity issue. David referred to some of the points made at a seminar regarding international inclusion where

mentorship had enhanced the cultural understanding by decreasing the potential misunderstandings stemming from a cultural gap.

Lise commented on the suggestion to review the introductory course for PhD supervisors to create awareness around the part of their role that considers mentorship and to offer training to established faculty as part of the course catalogue for VIPs. Lise found this important and suggested that they are to be invited into the process.

Max commented that as much as he understands the benefits of, or idea behind, the current structures, it can be difficult to bring criticism or problems to a supervisor in the same way as a mentor, who has a more neutral position. Stergios commented that there can be other ways to come forward with critic or problems wherein the supervisor has a role. David commented on Max' point that there should be a change starting locally.

Victoria pointed to an experience of lacking information about how to find a mentor and equally a lack of a mentorship culture. Henriette pointed to the impact it would have if sharing such an experience at a Fundamentals course.

Henriette shared a worry of how to govern and anchor such a mentorship structure in order for it to make an impact.

Next meeting Henriette and David will do an evaluation to see if it is still relevant.

Ad 9) Dates for the upcoming year PhD Committee Meetings

Dates to marked in the calendar for 2025.

February 20th at 10:00-12:00

June 5th at 13:00-15:00

September 4th at 13:00-15:00

December 11th at 13:00-15:00

Next meeting: 12/12 from 13:00 to 15:00 in A126, Bülowsvej 13

Ad 10) A.O.B

David mentioned that the annual PhD celebration had been held on 20th September, and thanked Stergios for his role in the celebration event.