

Health PhD Committee (Health PhD Committee  
meeting)

11-12-2023 15:00 - 17:00

Jens Baggesens Vej 53, bld. 5220, room 014 (basement level -  
lunch room)

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## Punkt 1: Meeting information

Additional absence: Shokouh Arjmand, Malene Kærslund Hansen, Mette Vestergård Pedersen, Lise-Lotte Kirkevang, Ole Ingemann Hansen.

## Punkt 2: Career services at AU for Health PhD students (20 min)

AU Career PhD and JR (Junior Researchers) is a central service with two full-time employees. Learn about the service: [AU Career PhD & JR](#). AU Career PhD and JR offers events, company visits, individual career counselling, PhD courses (Health), taking part in onboarding programmes, mentor programme (pairing current PhD students with former PhD students or researchers with affiliation to AU).

Health in numbers (based on 2023); how Health PhD students use the AU Career PhD and JR services:

- 16 events with a total of 210 participants, of which 96 PhD students from Health (e.g. company visit at NMD pharma)
- 3 onboarding workshops of which 2 focused specifically on PhD students. 55 participants from Health. From 2024, there will be 4 workshops.
- 4 talks at the graduate school's "Welcome to the PhD study" to create awareness of the services. Approx. 180 PhD students from Health.
- Career counsellors do local presentations (e.g. Health HR, GRASPH, DCA, local groups) - outreach approx. 80 PhD students from Health
- PhD course "Prepare yourself on the movement from a PhD in Health to a career in non-academia" with 24 seats (all seats taken)
- Mentor programme: 5 PhD students from Health out of a total of 20 seats for both PhD students (with at least nine months left) and postdocs. Many post docs use this service. Most of the PhD students entering the programme is half way through their PhD programme. Valuable service to both mentee and mentor. AU Career PhD and JR is part of the same unit as the Alumni service, but there are no coordinated/shared services regarding the mentor programme.
- Individual coaching sessions: 230 in total of which 27 for PhD students from Health. Subjects:
  - Career paths and options - can I find work within my area of research?
  - How do I improve chances for a career within Danish academia, including pro/cons of a postdoc position.
  - Career development according to type of career path pursued.
  - Competency mapping (skills versus requirements)
  - Individual coaching is considered a safe space where PhD students can share their career thoughts - which can be difficult to do with a supervisor. PhD students are however encouraged to include their supervisor for commitment. Most Health PhD students using the coaching sessions are from Biomedicine or Public Health. In sessions with PhD students with a medical background (only a few), the motivation is doubts about whether to go back to the clinic. If PhD students come for a session early in their PhD programme, they most often come back after e.g. one year. Most of them come within their last year, and the vast majority of Health PhD students get a job quickly after finishing their PhD programme.

It is expected that the career ambassadors at the departments will make a difference locally, and Vibeke Broe will collaborate with these ambassadors. There will be a meeting in February 2024 to coordinate e.g. what PhD students need from their supervisor/PI etc.

### **Punkt 3: Status on the faculty's work with gender equality (30 min)**

Clinical Prof. [Ida Vogel](#) attended the PhD committee meeting to present the work within gender equality, both centrally at AU and locally at Health (and all other AU faculties). Learn more about the local committee and local actions at Health: [Gender Equality Committee \(au.dk\)](#).

It was highlighted that the Dean at Health (who is chairing the committee at Health) is very determined to make a difference within gender equality. At Health, the committee is firstly focused on gender equality (or equity due to the fact that some people need more help than others), next diversity.

The committee is focused on concrete actions within [four strategic key areas](#) in line with the [central AU strategy](#) covering 2023-2025:

#### **1. Recruitment (search committees)**

Concrete actions: Highlighting positive role models for younger researchers at Health, and articulating the challenges related to different career pathways and how the role models create a work-life balance. Also, a long-term effort of the committee is guidelines for the composition and further professionalization of search committees.

#### **2. Career (career dialogues)**

Concrete actions: Informing about and making the path to a research career at Health visible - both "the straight path" and the alternative ways. Interviews with women that could potentially take up a professor position have been conducted and found very helpful - and highlighted the obstacles for women in pursuing a research career (e.g. time, money, loneliness). Also, a focus on new formats for career guidance and mentoring at the faculty, e.g. discussions about research careers (and obstacles for pursuing such career) during the SDDs ('MUS').

#### **3. Leadership (inclusive dialogues and decision-making processes)**

Concrete actions: The last three hirings have been 'tested' at Dept. of Odontology and Oral Health to promote inclusive leadership. Peer leaders were asked to evaluate the hirings, while the leader who hired did a self-evaluation. Evaluations were based on a number of elements (money, square metres, TAP/resource distribution etc.), and with the purpose of creating transparency. One of the incentives to do so is the conclusion from an internal study, where leaders (most often) consider themselves non-biased even though they in fact might be biased. AU target figures and the workplace assessment (APV - next time: 2025) will be ways to measure the (expected) progress.

#### **4. Workplace culture (inclusion)**

Concrete actions: The majority of the experts listed on the website "Find an expert" are men. Efforts have been made to include women (hand-picked) on the list to secure a 50/50 gender representation. The committee is curious to see if this 50/50 division will survive. It was highlighted that this 50/50 division has not been addressed as a matter of quotas, but rather based on qualifications. AU does not practise quotas. Other actions: from January 2024, the gender-specific terminology at AU will be neutralized, e.g. chairperson instead of chairman. Dilemma games will continue to be used as a tool for creating awareness of gender equality. The committee has made a manifesto to be used as a guide for "where are we going"

AU target figures will be used to measure the effect of the actions towards creating gender equality.

The gender equality-discussion is also met in the work on the AU/AUH research strategy, where Ida Vogel is part of the implementing group on talent development/career pathways. Another source of measurement within gender equality is the Ministry's and Universities Denmark's report "Talentbarometeret": [Mænd og kvinder på de danske universiteter – Danmarks Talentbarometer 2022 — Uddannelses- og Forskningsministeriet \(ufm.dk\)](#) which is a tool for supporting the efforts to include more women in research at the Danish Universities. The report is only available in Danish.

The PhD committee agreed to follow up on the subject "gender equality and diversity" in 1.5 or 2 years time. Also, the committee found it important that the subject is discussed broadly across different committees both at a local and a central level.

#### **Punkt 4: Well-being initiatives for PhD students at Health**

AUPA has made a small survey among international PhD students, which shows that social interaction is the biggest challenge when it comes to inclusion. Solution suggested: a mentor/buddy programme. A mentor-programme was discussed by the graduate school and the PhD Association in 2021 (inspired by a mentor-programme for medical students ("Mediciner-skabet")). The PhD Association was encouraged to discuss this with the board, including that the PhD Association/PhD students will be the driving force behind such initiative.

The PhD Association at Health aims to collaborate with AUPA (including attending AUPA meetings), as the same challenges are met in the two groups. One common item of interest is onboarding for international PhD students. The committee discussed whether the University International Club still exists (*note added after the meeting: The International Staff Office (ISO) host different social events: [Events and activities of the International Staff Office - Aarhus University \(au.dk\)](#)*).

Examples of episodes with language barriers and lack of inclusion of international staff were shared. E.g. at a local talk (AUH), the speaker held the talk in Danish, despite being aware that a non-Danish participant was present. Even though the situation was not positively received by the committee, it was recognized that AUH has another culture (not at academic environment in the same way as the university) and that we - as representatives of AU - can only recommend AUH personnel to keep the inclusion of all - despite language skills/preferences - in mind. It is expected that all talks etc. in context of the university is held in English, and all AU employees are expected to adjust their choice of language to the present setting (international/non-international working environment), both in formal and informal contexts. Examples from the departments:

- Biomedicine: Meetings are held in English per default, and participants can choose to reply in both Danish and English.
- Clinical Medicine: Meetings are mostly held in English, but in the clinic there might be groups (e.g. nurses) who are not comfortable in speaking English, as this is not their working-language.

The general picture is that the more international PhD students/staff at a department, the more incentive to do e.g. meetings in English. It was discussed how to motivate PhD students to speak English. Suggestions: write down "good conduct" in e.g. canteens or other informal settings. A suggested compromise is to let colleagues, who do not feel

safe in speaking English, speak in Danish and receive an answer in English from their international colleagues (= a mix of English/Danish conversation).

It was suggested to include this subject in the 'Dilemma game'. E.g. "How to be a non-speaking English in the lunch room".

### **Punkt 5: Briefing from the chair**

N/A

### **Punkt 6: Briefing from the PhD Association**

The PhD Association will meet with the graduate school in January 2024. The parties meet bi-annually.

It was noticed that slides were in Danish at the (mandatory) course Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). It was questioned whether the course had two versions, which the graduate school did not recognize. The graduate school will look into why (some of) the slides are in Danish.

### **Punkt 7: Briefing from the advisory committees**

Status of the advisory committees since the last meeting (Sept.):

- The Course Committee has accepted two new courses for the course portfolio of 2024.
- The Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation has had two cases (and are currently working on one of them).

### **Punkt 8: Briefing from Head of Graduate School**

Head of Graduate School Helene Nørrelund informed of the following:

- The graduate school has increased the amount of financial support for stays abroad to 15,000 DKK (formerly 10,000 DKK), which was highly appreciated by the committee. In relation to this, the PhD Association is currently working on mapping the most common obstacles for going abroad (e.g. accommodation is expensive).
- PhD students actively participating in the work of the PhD Association (e.g. coordinating events, talks, workshops etc.) is offered to register up to 15 hours of dissemination. This was appreciated by the PhD Association. Hopefully this can be an incentive for recruitment to the association (currently, most of the board members are international, so the association strives to recruit more Danish PhD students).

### **Punkt 9: Briefing: AU Elections 2023**

Louise Nygaard briefed the committee about the new (and continuing) members of the PhD committee. Since only three PhD students ran for election (6 mandates), the PhD association was encouraged to identify "observers" for the committee meetings. Fernando Bitencourt will continue as an observer, and will look for two more PhD students.

The current PhD committee is in effect until 31 January 2024 (including the advisory committees). The current members thanked each other for fruitful discussions, insights and a pleasant atmosphere.

The first (constituent) meeting of the new committee will take place in late January or early February 2024. Louise Nygaard will send our meeting invitations soon.