

Health PhD Committee (Health PhD Committee
meeting)

06-02-2024 15:00 - 17:00

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

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Punkt 2: Constitution of the committee and welcome to new members

Chair and co-chair

- Stine Korremann was re-elected as chair of the PhD Committee. The chair holds the role of moderating the meetings, evaluation and approval of all assessment committees of PhD dissertations and defence (approx. 180 assessment committees per year of which more information is requested in 25% of the cases (e.g. CV, academic title, publication/collaboration). Most cases turn out fine, while only 5-6 cases per year calls for a replacement. Less cases of partiality/disqualification appears now compared to three years ago, but the theme should still be raised among the supervisors to create awareness and transparency about the rules and expectations, especially for new academic staff members who are expected to chair assessment committee work. Suggested actions:
 - Have a representative from the PhD Committee attending the supervisor course on this matter (not only "black and white")
 - Discussing (im)partiality in journal clubs, as it is a common item for discussion ("when do we see a conflict of interest?").
 - The Faculty has suggested the graduate school to create an online supervisor course (follow up-course), which could include partiality/conflict of interest as a theme.
- Viola Burau was elected as stand-in for Stine Korremann (during vacation/absence or in case of impartiality in relation to evaluating the composition of assessment committees).
- A PhD student is encouraged to take up the co-chair position, which in practice includes contribution (on behalf of the PhD students) to the agenda of the PhD Committee meetings. The committee's PhD students (Malene Hansen and Leonardo Rothmann) would consider this possibility for the next meeting.

Advisory committees

- Course Committee
(one meeting in August to assess the total course portfolio for the coming year, and case-by-case assessment of other courses on an ongoing basis, handled by e-mail)
Members: Rubens Spin Neto (academic staff), Naiara Codina (academic staff) and Malene Hansen (PhD student).
- Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation
(approx 2-4 cases per year handled via e-mail. Intro meeting with the PhD administration)
Members: Rikke Jentoft Olesen (academic staff), Kasper Hansen (academic staff), Ole Graumann (academic staff), Fernando Bitemcourt (PhD student - until 31 May 2024).

In general, the members of the PhD Committee are encouraged to keep physical attendance for the meeting. If not possible, attending online is a possibility. The day of the meeting varies.

The time slot of the meeting was discussed, and it was decided to place the upcoming meetings from 14:00 to 16:00 instead of 15:00 to 17:00. Louise Nygaard will update the meeting invitations of 2024, which are already sent out. This discussion will be revisited

every year (constituent meeting) to make sure that all members are able to attend meetings in the given time slot.

Some agenda items will appear on every meeting (e.g. briefings from Head of Graduate School, Chair of Committee, PhD Association, Well-being of PhD students incl. diversity/gender equality and visits by the PhD counsellor), while other items are put on the agenda on a running basis to keep transparency on what is going on at the university in relation to the PhD study programme, which initiatives to create awareness about etc. (e.g. [the 2021 International Evaluation](#) that called for a statement from the PhD Committee, AU/AUH strategy, or other themes that the committee members come across in their daily work).

Punkt 3: Well-being initiatives for PhD students at Health

The Well-being Committee consists of Heads of the 5 Graduate School at AU as well as PhD student representatives, and was initiated to keep focus on PhD student well-being based on the results of the [2021 PhD Survey "Quality in the PhD Process"](#). Topics discussed include: Conditions of international PhD students, Staff Development Dialogue ("MUS") for PhD students and the conclusion of the PhD study period (with a focus on stress reduction).

As the committee was intended to be a temporary initiative to advise the local PhD committees, it has been decided to discontinue the well-being committee (cross-faculty) and instead keep the well-being focus on a local level through the PhD committees (and PhD associations, when possible).

Measures of well-being among PhD students:

- Survey among PhD students at AU every 4th year (next up: 2025) - ["Quality in the PhD Process"](#). It was suggested to put this survey on the agenda for a PhD committee meeting during the fall.
- Final evaluation (questionnaire) for all PhD students at Health who either hand in a PhD dissertation or discontinue their PhD study before handing in a PhD dissertation. Answers are collected bi-annually, and has a low response rate. It was suggested to include the questionnaire in relation to the 30 month evaluation, but it could lead to lack of honesty from the PhD student in cases of e.g. low psychological safety, as the PhD study is still ongoing at that point.
- Responsible parties: supervisor, employer, graduate school, PhD counsellor.

It was suggested to make a 'road-map' on how to react when experiencing difficulties as a PhD student. An outline of support/services available for both PhD students and their supervisor. This will be an item for the agenda of the next meeting (May), and could include considerations about the course for experienced supervisors, PhD Day and PhD courses as platforms for raising awareness about well-being (and where to get help), discussions about career perspectives, and other local and central resources. The graduate school website contains information about "preventing stress", which could be extended to include well-being issues in general (and a 'road-map').

Also, it was suggested to revisit the 2021 survey when the 2025 survey becomes available - for comparison.

Ole Graumann informed about an article from Nature concerning PhD student well-being (mental health problems being in focus). Louise Nygaard will forward the article to the PhD committee after the meeting.

Punkt 4: Briefing from the (retiring) chairperson

(Included in item 2 of the agenda)

Punkt 5: Briefing from the PhD Association

Recruitment of PhD students for the PhD Association board is a big issue at the moment. Currently, the board consists of 5 PhD students, of which 2 are last-year PhD students submitting their PhD dissertation this summer and thus are stepping down at the General Assembly on 7 March 2024. 3 PhD students remain to cover 8 working group, including covering seats in the PhD committee.

It was agreed to raise awareness about the PhD Association among both PhD students and supervisors.

Measures taken/to be taken:

- The graduate school offers 15 dissemination hours to register in MyPhD for members of the board
- A spot for PhD Association activities, news etc. in the [graduate school's monthly letter](#) (coming out the first Thursday of every month)
- PhD Association presentation at the "Welcome to the PhD study" as well as a mention in the welcome-letter from the graduate school upon enrolment
- The graduate school will forward an 'SOS'-e-mail from the PhD Association to all Health PhD students during February
- The graduate school will reach out to Health communications department to raise awareness about the PhD Association among the supervisors through the Department newsletters
- The graduate school will make sure to mention the PhD Association at the supervisor courses ('new' supervisors).
- PhD Association representatives can attend local research group meetings.

Punkt 6: Briefing from the advisory committees

Course Committee:

- Nothing since the last meeting, but 4 courses are awaiting the committee's evaluation and will be sent to the committee after this meeting.

Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation:

- No cases since the last meeting (December).

Punkt 7: Briefing from Head of Graduate School

Helene Nørrelund informed about the recent Annual Meeting on PhD Education ("FoFu" - Forum for Forskeruddannelse) held on 20 December 2023. Different topics were up for discussion, but particularly the topic "change of research environment" was heavily discussed.

The graduate school requires a change of research environment lasting minimum 30 days (while the Ministerial Order asks for a stay lasting 3-6 months, *preferably* abroad). This change can take place nationally (e.g. at one of the other Danish universities) or abroad. The graduate school encourages all PhD students to go abroad, but offers the

flexibility of a stay in Denmark in cases where a stay abroad is not possible. It was noted that the supervisor (also) holds the responsibility of conveying the possibilities, and it is thus important that the supervisor is aware of best practices. The graduate school offers financial support for PhD students going abroad for at least 30 consecutive days. To fund family (child care etc.), PhD students are referred to external funding/research councils etc.

It was noted that supervisors might experience problems in the pursuit of arranging a stay abroad at a partner institution, as the international colleagues do not always understand the importance and expectations of the stay. This leads to a need of more clarity on what is the gain for the partner institution (e.g. fully financed labor/research stay for X months), and it was suggested to make a formal paper outlining the expectations for the host institution. Another suggestion was to include an international co-supervisor and to arrange the PhD student's research stay at the institution affiliated with the co-supervisor.

To create security and understanding from the supervisor regarding a PhD student stay abroad, the following could be elaborated on:

- Why go abroad?
- What does the PhD student gain from a research stay abroad?
- What is expected from the supervisor - at AU and the hosting part?

It was discussed what was the most common obstacle for PhD students to go abroad, and according to the Heads of Graduate Programmes at Health, family conditions are the dominant obstacle. This led to a discussion on where to get support for the stay abroad/going OUT. The International Centre (IC) at AU offers a large range of services for students/staff going IN, but seems to offer less services for AU staff/students going OUT. It was suggested to contact the IC regarding the situation of PhD students going abroad - and what IC has to offer.

Punkt 8: Items for the coming PhD committee meetings in 2024

Items to be discussed at the coming meetings in the PhD Committee:

New:

- Well-being incl. road-map (May?)
 - Course for experienced supervisors
 - Follow-up supervisor course (online)
- PhD survey "Quality in PhD education" - to be conducted in 2025, bring up for comments in the PhD committee when the timing is right (September/December?)

Already planned:

- The AU Health/AUH strategy for health-scientific research - update on the relevant implementing group's work w/ Prof. Thomas Vorup-Jensen (September)
 - Including a discussion of the Health research networks and how to integrate in the PhD education at Health
 - Scientific PhD programmes in the making (committee members representing e.g. cardiovascular and cancer network)
- Approval of course portfolio (September)

Punkt 9: Any other business

N/A.