

Health PhD Committee (Health PhD Committee  
meeting)

17-02-2025 14:00 - 16:30

Ny Munkegade 118, bldg. 1520, room 737 (Sky Lounge)

# Referat

## Punkt 1: Meeting information

Also absent: Kamille Smidt Rasmussen, Rikke Damkjær Maimburg, Leonardo Melo Rothmann

Online: Rubens Spin-Neto, Rikke Katrine Jentoft Olsen, Sofie Abildgaard Jacobsen

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

There was a short presentation round.

Stine Sofia Korreman gave a short intro on the committee's meetings and work. The PhD Committee is the sparring partner and sounding board for the Head of school and Head's of programme. The Chair person of the PhD Committee approves all assessment committees for Graduate School of Health.

There were no other candidates for the position as Chair instead of Stine. Stine will remain the Chair for 2025 but encourages that another member of the committee will take over next year, also considering the AU election in 2026 is next time VIP members are elected for the Committee (for three years, 2027-2029).

Co-chair will be discussed in May when hopefully both elected PhD students are present.

The Advisory Committees:

- Course committee: Rubens and Naiara will continue. There are extra seats available for one-two PhD students from the PhD Committee or an extra VIP member.
- Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation: Kasper, Ole and Rikke will continue as VIP members and PhD student Nicole joins the sub-committee.

## Punkt 3: Briefing: AU Elections 2024

This was covered during the previous item on the agenda.

PhD students are elected for one year at a time.

## Punkt 4: Health Communication (25 min)

Jakob Binderup Christensen from Health Communication was at the meeting to talk about a challenge among PhD students regarding seeking funding. Currently, much of it is guidance through supervisors.

Health Communication aim to have a good [website](#) on funding applications.

- The supervisors have a very crucial role when it comes to PhD students seeking funding. They turn to their supervisors for the smallest things.
- It is hard to get an overview of where to find resources.

Health Communication asked for the PhD committee's input on their experiences and making a better website. The website is for all young researchers.

Anne Cathrine Thorup from Health Research Support let the Committee know that they don't have the resources to help each PhD student, so they would like a page to cover as much as possible.

Input from the committee:

Candidates are not fully aware of where they are in their career, whether an entry grant is relevant for them. The young researchers are losing good opportunities because they do not know where to look. They are not sure of where these grants are targeted.

It can be difficult to navigate how some funds can be used for salary, others cannot, some for going abroad, some only to be used in Denmark. The PhD students are often clueless, and if you miss a deadline, it'll be a full year. They are not necessarily aware of some very basic things.

Anne from Health Research Support suggested some kind of Q&A for this. A website for "research professionals" is too difficult to navigate.

The Committee further suggested that the website directed to "which category are you seeking to apply for funding in" and then it shows the options or further information on it.

It was mentioned that there is a challenge in thinking funding strategy, as the students are very humble, and it is difficult for them to understand the funding landscape.

Many funds are very specific to a subject area, others are not and very broad. There are also cases where the supervisor should apply on behalf of the student.

It would be nice if the website could include information on when to apply for overhead and when to include other posts. Currently the VIPs include their funding applications in a system where the head of department can see it, ReAp. But it could be interesting for others to see it for inspiration.

There was a comment on what the supervisor should provide and what the student should apply for? Who is the key player and what are the steps. Some grants are not applied for, while others get many applications. So also on the website "are you applying - are your supervisor".

It is mentioned on one page "that you if are a PhD student, read more here (link)". So more clarity on the site. Also, it would be nice if a template for the layperson's description could be made.

Another suggestion: "If you're applying for travel money, use this string" and then develop each string. There are instruction videos on a page but you need to include keywords to find what you're looking for. Also, a conversation should be had about how much time supervisors spend on seeking funding. They have to educate the students on how to do it. The students cannot work alone with it, they must learn it from the supervisor.

Mentioned again that the different research strings is a very good idea. Also that it is a learned skill to apply for funding, which should be included at the top of the page, that the supervisors should help their students to learn this skill.

An example is a PhD student who recently applied to Tandlægeforeningen, but her project is closer to neurology. So it would be nice to know which other subject areas she could apply within.

The Royal Library has a database which works quite well as inspiration.

The Committee had a conversation on AI for helping to improve language and writing. It is important not to include confidential information when using this option. It was mentioned that there are closed systems for it. But people should be aware that AI writing can be seen in the application and for some assessors it counts negatively. Anne mentioned that many applications now include "Did you use AI for this application".

There could be a top ten list of when their deadlines are.

Finally, Jakob let the PhD Committee know that Health Communication would like to get the Committee's feedback once the website is ready.

It was mentioned that the website could be advertised at the next PhD Day (January 2026).

When the website is done, Health Communication can have an item on the next-coming PhD Committee meeting for additional feedback on the website content.

## **Punkt 5: Heads of PhD programmes (20 min)**

The Head of Biomedicine, Thomas Vorup gave a short briefing on what kind of tasks he has as the Head of a Graduate programme:

There is much contact with supervisors and students. Especially when things have developed in a bad or serious way. He is on cc regarding approval of assessment committees. When there are doubts, he can approve (or not) since he knows more about the research environment.

This brought a discussion on the approval of assessment committees, where it was elaborated how there are many relations that cannot be known when receiving the suggested assessment committees. So it is a matter of disclosing when in doubt and being in good faith. The supervisor can forget that there is a recent publication (within last three years) with a suggested assessor. There is a box in the last page, "the main supervisor is not aware of any reasons for disqualification", so the main supervisor has the liability to include information which might be relevant.

As Head of a Graduate Programme, Thomas has other roles, e.g. regarding courses and "will this work in our settings?" Since Biomedicine and AUH are very different environments.

One of the Heads of ClinFO, Niels also gave a short briefing:

They do their best to be polite, empathetic and hear the students. But at the same time making aware that there are regulations to stay within. Sometimes the students think they are too difficult to work with because of this.

Especially the change of research environment is by some considered impossible as they have other obligations. Heads of GP try to tell supervisors that this is important.

The PhD student counsellor is now Grethe Andersen, as Ebba Nexø has retired. Ebba has done tremendous work. The experience is that most students work well with their supervisors but there are difficult cases every year.

From this application round, there will be interviews of potential receivers of a full scholarship (online if from abroad). The Stipend Committee meeting is the same but will now include about 20 applicants for a 10 minutes interview.

The supervisor course is mandatory for main supervisors but co-supervisors can also sign up. The course is offered two times a year but there is backlog list of 200 people who should attend. It has been changed into a two days course, and the supervisors who have not attended will be approached to ask that they sign up.

The new course for experienced supervisors has run once. It takes place over three dates, on the online day 70-80 people attended. It is a refresher course.

## **Punkt 6: Meeting dates for 2025**

The PhD Committee found that the suggested dates were not good for everyone. Instead the dates have been settled after the meeting via doodle. The dates will be:

- 8 May (Thursday)
- 11 September (Thursday)
- 2 December (Tuesday).

Every meeting will be from 14-16, as this was agreed to be a good time of day for the committee members.

## **Punkt 7: Briefing from the (retiring) chairperson**

Stine gave a briefing on the composition of the assessment committees. This past year there have been few cases where a person had to be changed from the original suggestion.

However, it can be problematic with the gender representation. It was suggested that the current wording is changed, so main supervisors must answer what they did to try to ensure that more than one gender is represented. Often the answer is that they want the best and the chosen are the best. With updated wording you can still write this.

It was mentioned that the focus of gender representation might also mean that there may be more of a workload for the VIP women at Health, if the main supervisor found two male assessors.

It was mentioned that it is a really good networking opportunity. Many PhD students become postdoc via their assessor's connection. It is a good headhunting opportunity.

As AU has a climate strategy it is also something to consider when making the assessment committee, how far people travel to come here.

Stine would like a template on the job and responsibility of being chair, to be sent out so the chair can properly inform the assessors and also prepare them for the defence, so they know what to expect in a Danish context.

### **Punkt 8: Briefing from the PhD Association**

The PhD Association is very focused on being more visible, so they can recruit more PhD students and make them aware of the association.

The bi-annual General Assembly is on 6 March. The agenda includes a translation of the bylaws into English.

The PhD Association has a number of subgroups that they are trying to rearrange. It will hopefully make people more involved and make them good ambassadors in getting more students.

The PhD Association has a new student assistant to help with e.g. becoming more visible online/on social media.

It was settled with Helene N and Birgitte that board members of the PhD Association can include 15 hours of dissemination, after two semesters on the board.

An item on an upcoming meeting in the PhD Committee could be regarding how supervisors might help make the PhD Association more visible as well.

### **Punkt 9: Briefing from the advisory committees**

The Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation has not had anything since August, so no news.

The Course Committee has not received new courses since October but has had a good learning experience with course approvals last autumn.

### **Punkt 10: Briefing from Head of Graduate School**

Helene Nørrelund gave a short briefing on how it is important that all PhD students also answer the APV. Their answers will be considered for the upcoming Quality in the PhD Process-survey in the autumn.

Stephan gave a short briefing as well as he's Head of a subject-specific programme (the Cardiovascular PhD programme). They had a great kick-off event, and are working on the peer-to-peer format. There are three subject-specific programmes:

- Cardiovascular (currently 19 PhD students)
- Neuroscience (currently 25 PhD students)
- Inflammation (currently 15 PhD students)

This is a pilot and in about two years there will be an evaluation and the possibility of beginning additional subject-specific programmes.

It was decided that the subject-specific programmes should be an item on the December agenda for the PhD Committee.

## **Punkt 11: Items for the coming PhD committee meetings in 2025**

Besides the mentioned items for upcoming meetings, a few others were added:

For the May meeting:

- Mental well-being for PhD students
- How supervisors can help the PhD Association gain more active members

For the December meeting:

- The Heads of subject-specific programmes will be invited as well as the Heads of Graduate programmes
- How the focus on diversity in assessment committees has played out so far

It was discussed how the use AI could be relevant to discuss, via a visit from Morten Pilegaard. However, the PhD Committee meetings might not be the relevant location for this, instead the supervisors should be on top of this.

## **Punkt 12: Any other business**

Kasper had been approached by a 4+4 PhD student who brought up a difficulty when being a Master degree student at another faculty but a PhD student at Health. Kasper will send an email to Helene about it.