

Health PhD Committee (Health PhD Committee  
meeting)

14-05-2024 14:00 - 16:00

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

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## **Punkt 2: Constitution of the committee**

Malene Kærslund Hansen is the new co-chair for the PhD Committee

No one is signing up to be on the subcommittee for credit transfer and exemptions. The subject will be raised at the next meeting.

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

The list in the case presentation shows that there are a number of options already available at AU. This is good, however the PhD Committee will discuss whether the possibilities on the website are clear enough.

The PhD Committee would like the list to be expanded more widely and propose that the well-being initiatives be given a more prominent place on the graduate school's website, where the many initiatives will be collected in a road map.

The PhD Committee also discussed the final evaluation as a tool for the well-being initiatives. It is debatable how useful it is for students, as it is only available when PhD students submit their thesis. However, it is still important as it gives the graduate school an insight into ongoing trends, and the students have the opportunity to voice their opinions anonymously.

Follow up on the next meeting: The graduate school will look at the possibilities for a road map on the website to reach a wider audience with the list in the case presentation.

## **Punkt 4: Promote Change of research environment abroad**

PhD students regularly experience challenges when planning a change of environment and when they have to reach out to a visiting university. The PhD Committee would like to make a letter template which PhD students can use to reach out to a visiting university. It should state what the expectations are for both parties. Rubens examines the possibilities of a template for such a letter.

Another point on this subject is that the Committee would like to promote the benefits of a change of environment for PhD students. Change of environment is a compulsory part of the PhD education in Denmark. Therefore, the PhD Committee is discussing how to spread the positive message about environmental change and help PhD students.

The Committee would like to clear up the misunderstandings. A change of environment does not have to be 3-6 months, as the requirement from the graduate school is 1 month, ie. 30 consecutive days. The graduate school also approves that a change of environment takes place in Denmark, if the stay takes place in another region. In addition, change of environment may also involve other things than laboratory work. The most important thing is that PhD students experience a different research environment and here the Committee highlighted journal clubs.

The focus should be on emphasising the benefits of a change of environment to the PhD student. It will improve their CV significantly and improve their career opportunities after their PhD studies. Further to this, it is recommended that PhD students plan an international change of environment.

The Committee does not want to devote more work to the PhD student, but it should be the PhD student who takes the initiative in planning their change of environment.

Follow up: When Rubens is ready to present a letter template, the subject will be addressed again.

### **Punkt 5: Report on sexism from VIVE among PhD students**

The report shows that there is an issue among PhD students regarding sexism. The impression is that sexism is part of the culture in the environments where the PhD students work.

The report shows that the younger the PhD students are, the more vulnerable they are to sexism. The fewer women in a group, the more vulnerable they are. In addition, international PhD students are more exposed to sexism. Cases of sexism often happen in social contexts.

The PhD Committee discussed how the report should be handled and what the Committee can do. The Committee would like to investigate why and where this sexism is taking place. Likewise, how to ensure that all cases are heard before such a report is made.

Often it is people with a lot of power who are the problem and often the offender does not realize that the person is inappropriate. The PhD Committee therefore agreed that it is important to discuss and talk about the issue.

Suggestions: Presentation at the PhD Day, presentation at the welcome day, compulsory course day for all supervisors/VIPs and PhD students in appropriate behaviour, PhD student - counsellor.

Follow-up for the next meeting: The graduate school is investigating initiatives from the other faculties at AU and whether similar studies have been carried out in other countries.

### **Punkt 6: Briefing from the chairperson**

Chairperson Stine Sofia Korreman announced increased focus on gender when approving assessment committees.

The chairperson has seen an increase in the number of committees that consisted only of men. The chair has therefore decided to address main supervisors when assessment committees consist of only one gender every time this happens. If it is not possible to include both genders on the assessment committee, what have main supervisor done and what are the considerations? The chairperson emphasises that the same procedure applies if an assessment committee consists only of women.

Since then, it has been decided to add an extra field to the template for assessment committees, where the main supervisor must tick off and thus at least must decide on the gender issue. There is also a box for comments .

An question may be whether the procedure might mean a lot of extra work for female associate professors and professors if there is to be one woman on the assessment committee every time? The Committee adds that there may be an experience that female assessors reject due to busyness more often than men.

There may also be a challenge regarding climate and travel costs. An example is if a good female assessor lives in Australia but an equally good male assessor lives in Germany. The Committee is aware of this issue.

Chairperson Stine stresses that the Committee cannot be passive about this topic. If the Committee wants to be proactive in the area of gender equality, you have to start somewhere.

Follow-up for the next meeting: Questions about climate and travel costs in connection with the assessment committee.

## **Punkt 7: Briefing from the PhD Association**

The PhD Association still faces the challenge of the number of people joining, especially now that association have many people submitting their theses. During the discussion in the PhD Association, they addressed the report on gender sexism, noting the absence of PhD students as representatives working on this issue. To remedy this, the association have internally established a working group to develop strategies to address this concern. Furthermore, the association identified the lack of representation from the PhD Association in the Equality Committee (<https://health.medarbejdere.au.dk/organisation/moedefora-og-referater/ligestillingsudvalg>), which could assist in these efforts. Additionally, within the Inflammation Network and the PhD Association, the association debated the feasibility of getting ECTS credits by attending seminars in the Inflammation Network.

## **Punkt 8: Briefing from the advisory committees**

Course Committee:

- They have had eight courses for approval since the last meeting

Committee for Credit Transfer and Dispensation

- They have had two cases since the last one. The cases have been as usual.

## **Punkt 9: Briefing from Head of Graduate School**

A lot of work is being done on the three new subject specific programmes.

New PhD students and PhD students with more than a year left will have the opportunity to enrol in one of the subject specific programmes. In order to pass a subject specific programme during their PhD studies, PhD students must have completed five

compulsory elements. Once the PhD students have passed their PhD programme and subject specific programme, they receive an appendix to their original PhD diploma.

### **Punkt 11: Any other business**

There was a question whether a PhD student may attend the PhD Committee's meetings even if she or he has not been elected. The meetings are public (point 8 - Standard rules of procedure for the PhD Committee at HE), so people are welcome to attend.