



Minutes from PhD Programme Committee meeting

Time: Tuesday, 21 May 2024 at 13.00 – 14.30

Place: Universitetsbyen 81, 1872-547

Participants: Anna Hvarregaard Christensen, Daan van Aalten, Kasper Røjkjær Andersen, Anni Hangaard Andersen, Christian Kroun Damgaard, Pia Møller Martensen, Jan Trige Rasmussen, Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen, Helle Homann (minute taker).

Not present: Rajlakshmi Sawale.

Item	Minutes
1.	<p>Updates from the NAT Programme Chair Committee, NAT PhD Committee, and NAT Course Committee</p> <p>The updates from the above-mentioned committees were presented by Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen, Head of Programme.</p> <p>The NAT Programme Chair Committee consists of the chairs of the various PhD programmes at NAT. Ole Bækgaard Nielsen, Vice-Dean and Head of Graduate School, also partakes as well as the GSNS administration.</p> <p>The NAT PhD Committee, on the other hand, consists of four members elected from among the permanent academic staff and eight members from among the PhD students. Ditlev is currently chair of the NAT PhD Committee, and as such also chair of the NAT Course Committee.</p> <p>One of the subjects discussed at the latest meeting in the NAT Programme Chair Committee was the importance of early career clarification for PhD students. To promote early career clarification AU Career PhD & JR offers to arrange career days once a year at the different departments for Part A and Part B students as well as postdocs. The career day aims to increase career awareness by providing PhD students and postdocs with knowledge and understanding of how they develop their career skills at different stages of their research training. At MBG the latest career day took place on 21 March 2024.</p> <p>Also on the agenda in the NAT Programme Chair Committee was the faculty's new economy model, including GSNS and its funds for support of PhD projects.</p> <p>In the NAT PhD Committee the recent report from VIVE (the Danish Center for Social Science Research) about PhD students' experiences of sexism was discussed. The report shows that for a significant number of PhD students, Danish academia is an environment where they encounter sexist discrimination and harassment that has negative repercussions for their work, health, and career choices. Such encounters with sexism are particularly widespread among female PhD students.</p>



	<p>The findings in the report are taken very seriously, and in the NAT PhD Committee work has begun to create a code of conduct to prevent sexual harassment. Initiatives to establish a forum, in which PhD students can discuss problems with well-being and harassment, are also under way.</p> <p>In the NAT Course Committee requests had been made about courses for PhD students in Bachelor student supervision as well as data visualization. Seeing that some courses overlap each other, the suggestion was also made that course descriptions are made clearer so that it is easier to find out what subjects the courses actually deal with.</p>
2.	<p>Updates from the MBG PhD Association</p> <p>Updates from the MBG PhD Association were presented by PhD student Anna Hvarregaard Christensen. The latest meeting in the association was held in May with the participation of Ditlev.</p> <p>In relation to item 3 on the agenda (The future of our well-being meetings and advisory committees), Anna stated that the PhD students had discussed the suggestion of combining advisory committee meetings with well-being meetings into one meeting without the participation of the supervisors. The PhD students supported the idea of excluding the supervisors from the meetings. However, it would be beneficial if the supervisors were allowed to attend in the latter part of the meeting (approx. 15 minutes) in order not to miss out on key input from the advisory committee.</p> <p>Moreover, the PhD students had pointed out that they basically appreciate participating in well-being meetings and would like to keep them separate from the advisory committee meetings.</p> <p>In addition to this subject, it was also related that there is a general need for specific guidelines in regard to advisory committees. PhD students lack information about how advisory committees are organized and how meetings are conducted.</p> <p>At the latest meeting in the PhD Programme Committee on 21 February 2024, the subject of management courses for supervisors was discussed. The topic is of great concern for the PhD students and has been discussed on several occasions, including the PhD Conference in October 2023 where the PhD students requested that management courses for supervisors are made mandatory.</p> <p>The subject has previously been on the agenda in the MBG management committee as well. The consensus is that little is to be gained by forcing experienced PI's on compulsory management courses. However, to future-proof good PhD supervision at the department it is important that new group leaders are reminded to participate in management courses. In agreement with the management, Ditlev will start contacting junior group leaders and ask them to complete the course "Foundational course in PhD supervision" provided by the PhD School in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Development (CED).</p> <p>The topic concerning compulsory management courses was taken up again and discussed by Ditlev and the PhD students at the recent meeting in the PhD Association. The outcome of this</p>



	<p>discussion was a new idea on how to approach the subject of good PhD supervision among both experienced and new group leaders. The PhD students suggested that they should come up with examples of different dilemmas that they have experienced in their interactions with supervisors, and that these dilemmas (in an anonymous form) should be put on the agenda and discussed at PI meetings. Potentially, the discussion of dilemmas could clear the way to a broader discussion among the PI's about the challenges of being a supervisor – thus raising awareness about what constitutes good PhD supervision. The suggestion is to be considered further.</p> <p>Among other subjects discussed at the meeting in the PhD Association was the possibility of obtaining ECTS points by participating in parts of master courses and using these parts as outset for a journal club or common interest group, such as the EMCIG.</p> <p>Furthermore, the PhD students had talked about the challenges that they experience as supervisors for Bachelor students. Some PhD students mentor two or even three Bachelor students. That is too many. Student supervision is time consuming, and there must be a limit for the number of Bachelor students that PhD students are expected to mentor. Only one Bachelor student per year is feasible. This suggestion was supported by the members of the PhD Programme Committee.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>The future of our well-being meetings and advisory committees</p> <p>As a starting point for the discussion of item 3, Ditlev gave a short recap from the meeting in the PhD Programme Committee on 21 February 2024 where it was suggested that well-being meetings and advisory committee meetings are combined into one meeting. In this format only the PhD student and a number of scientific staff members would participate. The supervisor should not be included in the meeting.</p> <p>The suggestion was brought forward by Professor Daan van Aalten and is based on his experience with the way thesis committee meetings are conducted at Dundee University.</p> <p>Since the meeting in February, Ditlev has tested the suggestion in different connections, and dominant in the feedback he has gotten is a major concern that this format will not leave sufficient time to discuss and deal with serious problems or lack of well-being. However, it is considered to be a positive change that the supervisor does not participate in the meeting or at least not in the full length of the meeting. As mentioned under item 2, the PhD students suggest that the supervisor should participate in the last 15 minutes of the meeting.</p> <p>During the following debate among the members of the PhD Programme Committee, Anni Hangaard Andersen stated that she supports the idea of the supervisor attending for 15 minutes in order to be informed about the key points from the discussion between advisory committee and PhD student. However, as an alternative Anni suggested that supervisors only attend meetings on Part A and are excluded from meetings on Part B.</p>



	<p>Furthermore, all members agreed that more has to be done to put the PhD students in the driver's seat and let them take ownership of their projects. The absence of the supervisor will help to facilitate this.</p> <p>It was also remarked that in a combined meeting format it might be hard for the PhD students to address well-being issues at all. It takes time to open up, and it is difficult to discuss sensitive subjects with scientific staff members that the PhD students do not know very well.</p> <p>Therefore, it seems to be the best way forward to keep well-being meetings separate from the advisory committee meetings.</p> <p>Moreover, it was discussed that advisory committees need to be set up in a more structured way. The organization of advisory committees are not handled in the best way at present. Some supervisors don't even know that they have to set up an advisory committee.</p> <p>It was decided that Ditlev will produce a draft for a set of guidelines for advisory committees. The draft is to be circulated among the members of the PhD Programme Committee and discussed at a future meeting in the committee.</p>
4.	Guidelines for Part A and thesis assessments and procedures Ditlev will start working on a formal set of guidelines for chairs in connection with Part A exams and thesis assessments and procedures. The aim is primarily to assist new members of the PhD Programme Committee.
5.	Update on compulsory management course for supervisors The subject was debated under item 2.
6.	AOB/Changes in the PhD Programme Committee Anni Hangaard Andersen is retiring. Hence, the meeting on 21 May was her last meeting in the committee. Anni has been part of the committee since 2003 and will be replaced by Lotte Bjergbæk in August 2024. Ditlev thanked Anni for her excellent work and valuable input to the discussions in the committee.