



## Minutes from PhD Programme Committee meeting

**Time:** Thursday, 22 August 2024 at 13.00 – 14.00

**Place:** Universitetsbyen 81, 1872-547

**Participants:** Anna Hvarregaard Christensen, Camilla Gottlieb Andersen, Lotte Bjergbæk, Kasper Røjkjær Andersen, Christian Kroun Damgaard, Pia Møller Martensen, Jan Trige Rasmussen, Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen, Helle Homann (minute taker).

**Not present:** Rajlakshmi Sawale, Daan van Aalten.

Item	Minutes
1.	<p><b>Updates from the NAT Programme Chair Committee, NAT PhD Committee, and NAT Course Committee</b></p> <p>The updates from the three NAT committees were presented by Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen, Head of Programme.</p> <p>Currently, Ditlev is chair of the NAT PhD Committee, and as such also chair of the NAT Course Committee which functions as an advisory committee for the NAT PhD Committee and represents both NAT and TECH.</p> <p>In the NAT Course Committee PhD students had made requests for a course in Bachelor student supervision and for a course in data visualization. Furthermore, the fact that some existing courses resemble and overlap each other had been discussed. This creates confusion and makes it difficult for the PhD students to differentiate courses. Guidelines for ways of combining different courses was also discussed.</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 an important subject on the agenda. The report shows that for a significant number of PhD students, Danish academia is an environment where they encounter sexual harassment that has negative repercussions for their work, health, and career choices. Such encounters with sexism are particularly widespread among female PhD students. The findings in the report are taken very seriously, and in the NAT PhD Committee several initiatives are under way to remedy the situation.</p> <p>The VIVE report had also been on the agenda at the latest meeting in the NAT Programme Chair Committee in May. Ole Bækgaard Nielsen, Vice Dean and Head of Graduate School, related in this forum that a code of conduct to prevent sexual harassment has been put into practice. In addition, sexism themes have been introduced in courses for supervisors as well as the onboarding programme.</p> <p>Among other subjects discussed at the NAT Programme Chair Committee meeting was extensions of study period/PhD Programme. It was emphasized that extensions can only be given</p>



	<p>in cases where the PhD student has lost time and cannot complete his or her project in time. Other reasons, like the project being more complicated than expected, do not justify an extension of study period.</p> <p>The subject of thesis assessments was also touched upon. According to Ole Bækgaard Nielsen, some assessments appear to be somewhat unbalanced. They contain a lot of criticism which makes it difficult to see why the project ultimately is assessed to be eligible for conferral of the PhD degree and can proceed to defence. It is of course okay to criticize but overall the thesis assessment should be positive.</p> <p>Moreover, it was stated that GSNS supports the suggestion that research environment change should yield teaching exemption without a reduction in pay for PhD students no matter which time of the year the research environment change is scheduled. This suggestion has, however, not yet been approved.</p> <p>Finally, it was mentioned by Rikke J. Ljungmann, Head of PhD Administration, NAT and TECH, that several participants from MBG are enrolled in the course “Foundational Course in PhD supervision” in the fall 2024. This marks a very positive development. In the last course only one representative from NAT participated.</p>
<p><b>2.</b></p>	<p><b>Guidelines for PhD assessment and defence</b></p> <p>For the use of the members of the MBG PhD Programme Committee, it has been suggested that a formal set of guidelines for PhD assessment and defence should be produced. The aim of a how-to-guide is primarily to assist new members of the programme committee when they act as chairs. The guidelines are also meant to include Part A exams.</p> <p>According to Ditlev, there is also a need for a reassessment of the guides for the alignment of expectations meetings and the well-being meetings. Therefore, Ditlev suggested that the members of the programme committee form two working groups that will: 1) address the need for guidelines for handling Part A and PhD defences and 2) revise the documents for the well-being and alignment of expectations meetings. Draft documents are to be circulated in the programme committee before the next meeting on 21 November 2024.</p>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion of possible topics for the Sandbjerg PhD Conference</b></p> <p>This year the PhD Conference will take place on 16-18 October. According to Anna Hvarregaard Christensen and Camilla Gottlieb Andersen, both members of the PhD Association that organizes the conference, one of the main topics will be the recent report from VIVE. Through a questionnaire and a group discussion the organizers of the conference will try to investigate if MBG has similar problems with sexual harassment as the ones described in the report.</p> <p>At the latest meeting in the MBG PhD Programme Committee on 21 May a new idea of how to approach the subject of good PhD supervision among group leaders was presented. It was</p>



	<p>suggested by the PhD students 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 group leaders about the challenges of being a supervisor, thus raising awareness about what constitutes good PhD supervision. Regarding other topics to put on the agenda for this year's PhD Conference, Ditlev suggested that the PhD students should follow up on this new idea at the conference and spend some time on exploring possible dilemmas or cases to be used in the discussions at PI meetings about the relationship between supervisors and PhD students. Anna will inform the other members of the PhD association about Ditlev's suggestion.</p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>How to handle when other conferences (like CryoNET this year) conflict with the PhD Conference?</b></p> <p>The PhD Conference 2024 clashes with the CryoNET symposium that takes place on the same dates in October, thus making it impossible for PhD students to participate in both events. To solve this problem, it has been decided to let PhD students choose whether they prefer to go to the CryoNET meeting or the PhD Conference. This will mean that if PhD students go to CryoNET, participation in the PhD Conference is not mandatory. If PhD students do not attend CryoNET, the PhD Conference is mandatory as usual.</p> <p>But what can be done to prevent a clash between the PhD Conference and other important events in the future? The planning of the PhD Conference starts a year ahead of the event, and therefore it is important to announce the conference very early on in the process. Preferable, at PI meetings.</p> <p>Furthermore, Camilla Gottlieb Andersen has talked to Inge Danielsen, Head of Secretariat, about listing the PhD Conference in the department's yearplan in Outlook ("Yearplan, Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics"), and according to Inge the group leaders will at an upcoming meeting be encouraged to make use of the yearplan in Outlook and check for possible overlaps when planning activities and events.</p> <p>The PhD Conference should also be announced in the MBG newsletter as well as on the MBG website at an early stage.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Suggestions for 1 VIP + 3 PhD students to join the GSNS seminar at Fuglsø in October</b></p> <p>The GSNS seminar is held every other year and focuses on themes, that are relevant for PhD students and supervisors across the PhD Programmes at Natural Sciences. The purpose of the seminars is to share experiences and work on solutions to shared challenges. This year the seminar will take place on 3-4 October.</p> <p>From MBG GSNS has invited 1 VIP and 3 PhD students to join the seminar, and Ditlev encouraged the members of the PhD Programme Committee to come up with suggestions for participants.</p>



	<p>The registration deadline is 11 September. However, according to Anna and Camilla it will be difficult for the PhD students to suggest specific participants before the students have had a chance to discuss the matter at the next meeting in the PhD Association on 13 September. Ditlev will ask GSNS if it is possible to postpone the registration deadline to a later date.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Management courses for supervisors</b></p> <p>Management courses for supervisors have been debated on several occasions in the MBG PhD Programme Committee. The topic is of great concern to the PhD students, and last year the students requested that management courses are made mandatory for supervisors.</p> <p>Several steps have been taken to accede to the PhD students' needs and concerns in this area. As mentioned under item 3, a new idea on how to approach the subject of what constitutes good PhD supervision by way of discussing dilemmas in an anonymous form is meant to be implemented at future PI meetings. This idea is targeted especially at experienced supervisors.</p> <p>Furthermore, to future-proof good PhD supervision at MBG Ditlev contacted junior group leaders in May and reminded them to take the course "Foundational course in PhD supervision" provided by the PhD School in collaboration with the Centre for Educational Development (CED). As mentioned under item 1, several participants from MBG are now enrolled in the fall 2024 course that runs for two days in September.</p> <p>On a yearly basis, Ditlev and Helle will begin to do a follow-up in order to ensure that all junior group leaders who take on PhD students complete the course.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>AOB/Changes in the PhD Programme Committee</b></p> <p>Pia Møller Martensen is retiring by the end of August. Thus, the meeting on 22 August was her last meeting in the PhD Programme Committee. Ditlev thanked Pia for her outstanding work as a member of the committee.</p> <p>A replacement for Pia has not yet been selected.</p>