



Minutes from PhD Programme Committee meeting

Time: Wednesday, 21 February 2024 at 10.00 – 11.00

Place: Universitetsbyen 81, 1872-547

Participants: Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen, Daan van Aalten, Kasper Røjkjær Andersen, Christian Kroun Damgaard, Pia Møller Martensen, Jan Trige Rasmussen, Rajlakshmi Sawale, Anna Hvarregaard Christensen, Magdalena Pyrz, Knud Larsen, Helle Homann (minute taker).

Absent: Anni Hangaard Andersen, Nanna Birkmose.

Item	Minutes
1.	<p>Welcome and presentation of new members and guests</p> <p>Kasper Røjkjær Andersen joined the PhD Programme Committee in February. He has replaced Knud Larsen who was part of the committee for ten years. Ditlev Egeskov Brodersen thanked Knud for his excellent work in this period and welcomed Kasper as a new member of the programme committee.</p> <p>Kasper is associated to the Plant Molecular Biology section which has not previously been represented in the PhD Programme Committee. Thus, his participation is in train with the ambition that all sections in the department are represented in the committee.</p> <p>Furthermore, Ditlev introduced Magdalena Pyrz, course coordinator, teacher and head of teaching laboratories at MBG. She was invited as guest to the meeting to share information about item 2 on the agenda. In future, Ditlev plans to invite guests to the committee meetings on a regular basis to shed light on various subjects.</p>
2.	<p>Local anchoring of pedagogical development activities from the Science Teaching course (guest: Magdalena Pyrz)</p> <p>It is mandatory for all PhD students with teaching obligations to participate in the course Science Teaching which aims to improve the students' teaching skills. One of the key elements in the course is a practical project where students must develop a teaching activity to implement in their own teaching. However, these projects often go unnoticed by the course coordinators. The PhD students do not draw attention to their projects, and the course responsible teachers at the department do not always know how to make use of the projects.</p> <p>According to Magdalena, to change this would be a great advantage. Magdalena implements projects and activities developed by the PhD students in her own courses and finds it highly beneficial from a didactical perspective. Therefore, she suggests that a format is found in which the PhD students can share projects with course responsible teachers and other PhD students, so that all their fine ideas can be harvested and put into use in the various courses at the</p>



	<p>department. A poster day was highlighted as a suitable option in this respect. Possibly held at the foyer and lasting no more than an hour.</p> <p>It was also suggested that PhD students should be awarded 0.5 ECTS for presenting their projects from Science Teaching. This would earn them a total of 3 ECTS credits for the Science Teaching course given that they acquire 2.5 ECTS for participating in the course.</p> <p>At TECH, PhD students are already being awarded the extra 0.5 ECTS for presenting their projects locally.</p> <p>The issue has been debated in the NAT PhD Committee, and in this forum it was decided not to have any general rules about acquiring 0.5 ECTS for extra activities. However, it was pointed out that it should be possible for the individual programmes to decide if they want to award extra ECTS, provided of course that the PhD students request this option.</p> <p>Overall, the programme committee members supported the idea of a poster day where PhD students can present their projects and teaching activities. The suggestion of awarding PhD students extra credit for their presentation, like it is done at TECH, was also supported. Therefore, it was decided to proceed with both suggestions.</p>
3.	<p>The future of our well-being meetings and advisory committees</p> <p>At MBG, PhD students are invited to participate in a well-being meeting once a year with a member of the PhD Programme Committee. The purpose of this meeting is to give the PhD student a possibility to talk with someone other than their supervisor about anything that might influence their well-being (whether work related or not).</p> <p>Twice a year the PhD students also participate in advisory committee meetings. The advisory committee consists of the supervisor and at least two other members, one of which must be a scientific staff member who is not involved in the project. The meetings should include current process in the PhD project as well as discussions about which direction the project should take.</p> <p>As a starting point for the discussion of the future of well-being meetings and advisory committees at MBG, Daan van Aalten mapped out how thesis committee meetings are held at the University of Dundee. These meetings are also held twice a year, but unlike the advisory committee meetings at MBG, only the PhD student and two scientific staff members participate. The supervisor is not included in the thesis committee meeting. Moreover, the thesis committee meeting not only focuses on the PhD student's project. It also touches on well-being. The student is asked how they are doing, and this subject is easier to approach because the supervisor is not attending. The thesis committee meeting is perceived as a safe space where the PhD student can communicate anything about well-being issues as well as project matters. A written report based on a standard form is produced after the meeting with input from the PhD student and the scientific staff members and submitted to the head of programme.</p> <p>Thesis committee meetings worked very well at the University of Dundee, and Daan accordingly proposed that this format, or aspects thereof, are considered at MBG. Instead of having two</p>



	<p>separate types of meetings for well-being and advisory committee, these would be combined into one meeting and involve all faculty members at MBG.</p> <p>Pros and cons of this suggestion were discussed, especially what the absence of the supervisor in the proposed meeting format would mean. On one hand, this could potentially lead to the students feeling more ownership of their projects. On the other hand, the risk of the supervisor missing out on key input from the advisory committee would increase. Furthermore, Ditlev raised the concern that a combination of advisory committee meetings and well-being meetings might not leave sufficient time to discuss and deal with serious problems or lack of well-being.</p> <p>It was concluded that a combination of advisory committee meetings and well-being meetings is a good idea. However, the consequences need to be thought carefully through before a complete change is made. For this, Daan will provide examples on written reports from thesis committee meetings to be circulated in the PhD Programme Committee.</p> <p>In addition, it was decided that the procedure for setting up advisory committees is looked into. At present, supervisors and students are not given a whole lot of information about advisory committees in spite of the fact that it is mandatory for all PhD students to have an advisory committee. Ditlev and Helle will discuss the best way to communicate how and when to set up such a committee.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Compulsory management course for supervisors</p> <p>Management training for supervisors is a topic that is of great concern to the PhD students. The topic has been discussed on several occasions, including the PhD Conference in October, and the PhD students have suggested that management courses for supervisors are made mandatory. The purpose is to ensure that supervisors have a solid basis for supervising PhD students in relation to both professional and personal development.</p> <p>The subject has also been discussed in the MBG management committee.</p> <p>In general, the programme committee members were supportive of the PhD students' suggestion. However, the consensus was that compulsory management courses is not the best way to move forward in this connection. Especially in the case of experienced supervisors. Forcing PI's on courses will not solve anything. Another approach must be considered. According to Ditlev, it is better to work towards a gradual shift in culture to a place where fewer problems occur. Therefore, efforts should be made at the department to identify poor working environments at an early stage and act on them in order to support a fair treatment of all PhD students.</p> <p>Furthermore, to future-proof good PhD supervision at the department it's important that new group leaders are asked to participate in management courses. Ditlev will discuss the question of how this is put into practice with Jens Stougaard, Acting Head of Department.</p> <p>Further discussion of management courses for supervisors will be postponed to the next PhD Programme Committee meeting in August. In the meantime, Ditlev will attend a meeting in the</p>



	<p>PhD Association in May to learn more and discuss options for a sustainable solution with the students.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>Student member Nanna Birkmose has handed in her thesis and is leaving the PhD Programme Committee. A replacement must be selected. Preferably, a Part A student. Anna Hvarregaard Christensen and Rajlakshmi Sawale will inform the PhD students and try to recruit a new student member for the committee.</p> <p>Later in the year it will also be necessary to find new VIP members for the committee. Several selection criteria were proposed: Gender balance in the composition of the committee is very important as well as representation of the department's various sections. Furthermore, it would be beneficial if younger staff in the early stages of their career at MBG joined the committee.</p>