

Meeting date: 11 May 2023

Meeting place: 1443/440, 8000 Aarhus C

Meeting subject: Ordinary PhD Committee meeting 11 May 2023 at 9.15-11.15 am

Attendees:

Members attending outside of Campus Aarhus: Online via Microsoft Teams

Members of the committee:

Academic representatives: Katja Brøgger, Christian Ulrik Andersen, Anders-Christian Jacobsen (chair).

PhD representatives: Catrine Sundorf Kristensen, Rithma Kreie Engelbreth Larsen, Maiken Norup, Hatice Nuriler, Alexander Ulrich Thygesen, Kalle Kusk Gjetting (vice chair).

Observers: Anders Gade Jensen (minutes) and Anna Louise Plaskett/PhD Admin team.

Apologies for absence: Jacob Lund, Charlotte Appel, Kirsten Elisa Petersen and Anne Marie Pahuus.

- 1. Welcome and approval of the agenda**
- 2. News from the Graduate School**
- 3. Evaluation of compulsory PhD courses**
- 4. Break**
- 5. The principal supervisor's role in the assessment process**
- 6. Planning of meeting on 13th September**
- 7. Internationalisation**
- 8. Any other business (evt)**

1. Welcome and approval of the agenda

Agenda approved without comments

2. News from the Graduate School

Anna Plaskett elaborated on the GSA key numbers as mentioned in the appendix. A discussion followed concerning the political decision on shortening of the MA and some of the possible implications for PhD degree programmes. She noted that a joint statement is being drafted between all heads of Graduate Schools. The situation is viewed as dire but unclear, and the committee remains available to faculty management in case political statements are required.



3. Evaluation of compulsory PhD courses

Introduction to university teaching

Students at DPU have given some remarks to the PhD programmes concerning the mandatory introductory course on university teaching.

The course content is described as a quite normative approach to teaching, and they found that some of the content was lacking in quality and generally outdated. Furthermore, they experienced no real platform for discussion of the course layout.

Anna Plaskett remarked that CED have taken over the mandatory course previously provided at Arts by the now closed faculty centre for educational development, CUDIM. The course is now aimed AU-wide and discussions on the details of the course have been discussed across the faculties. The graduate school management (the 8 PhD programme directors and head of GSA) have also discussed the remarks from the PhD students at DPU. Any changes to the course content is to be agreed on an AU level. Many PhD students at DPU have a high degree of experience in teaching as well as formal qualifications of teaching development which set them apart from regular AU students.

Students in the PhD committee suggested that the course could be framed not as an introduction to university pedagogy as such, but to official AU teaching practicalities. This might be perceived as more aligned with course content.

Anders-Christian noted that Evaluations of the course are mixed. There is also positive feedback of the courses. There are students who approach the course with a high degree of theoretic and practical knowledge, and some who start completely from scratch. Anders-Christian will discuss the issue with Anne Marie Pahuus before reaching out to CED on behalf of the committee to discuss the aims and contents of the mandatory course in terms of the quality assurance that is the responsibility of the PhD committee.

The PhD committee will not make any concrete suggestions before a more thorough dialogue with CED has provided better clarity over the issues.

Anna Plaskett noted that the question of possible exemptions for this particular mandatory course has been subject to ongoing debate in changing PhD committees ever since the DPU became part of the Faculty of Arts

Christian Ulrik Andersen, who has served on the PhD committee continuously for a decade, noted that the reasons for keeping the course mandatory for all students has centred on two central arguments: It helps setting the frame for AU teaching expectations and provides an introduction to research-based education to students regardless

of previous experience in other educational sectors. He also found that the reservations made by the DPU students and the recent change from CUDIM to CED might make it relevant to reassess the issue.

Ethics course

The evaluations match the expectations that the committee has for the course. The course on ethics is only offered once per year in English, it might make it challenging for international students to time the course for the first part of the PhD. This requires an overview of the course landscape from the PhD plan outset.

Rithma Larsen noted that students with historic or more text based projects find the course a bit lacking in terms of research ethics aimed at academics not working in areas involving fieldwork and interviews, i.e. building rapport with informants and collaborators. There are also ethical dimensions to the more text-based interpretive methods (hermeneutics, analysis, archival work, source selection etc.) which could be better represented in the course.

As a supplement to the ethics course, Louise Buchhave from the Dean's office is rolling out GDPR-specific courses. This might prove to clear some of the more GDPR-specific issues, supplementing the ethics course and leaving room for broader issues on the main course.

Anders- Christian noted that it is the responsibility of the supervisor to have the overview of the data management of the project. The ethics course at Arts is managed on behalf of GSA by PhD programme director Jakob Bek-Thomsen. He will reach out to Jakob on behalf of the committee.

4. Break

5. The principal supervisor's role in the assessment process

Anna Plaskett introduced a suggestion from the PhD management aimed at clarifying the principal supervisor's involvement in the assessment of dissertations.

Anders-Christian noted that the current draft still contains a degree of unclarity: The supervisors "sits on the assessment committee" but "may be invited". It is unusual to sit on a committee but not necessarily being invited. Possibly this is a translation issue of the Danish phrase "tilforordnet".

The committee suggests a supplementary sentence to the suggestion:

“The head of the committee has the duty to inform the main supervisor on all phases of the assessment process. “

The full wording as suggested by the PhD committee:

“The PhD student’s principal supervisor sits on the assessment committee without voting rights. Among other things, this is to allow the principal supervisor to inform the assessment committee of any factors, which may have a bearing on the academic assessment. The head of the committee has the duty to inform the main supervisor on all phases of the assessment process. The principal supervisor may be invited to any meetings held by the assessment committee for this purpose.”

6. Planning of meeting on 13th September

The committee forms a sub-committee in order to involve all parties. The overall format should be discussed as well. Rithma, Katja, Anders-Christian and a PhD programme director will be in charge of planning the meeting.

7. Internationalisation

There are two parts to this question. The first to be discussed today is the general intake of international students. The second and slightly connected questions is the dual degree programmes. The latter will be discussed at a later meeting. Lotte Meinert will be invited to a later meeting to discuss the issues and opportunities regarding formal agreements with other universities.

The current share of non-Danish students (31 of currently 233) is stated in appendix 7. The committee feels that is not up to them to state whether this is a good thing or not. International students usually come to AU because of already established international connections between supervisors. International agreements can make exchanges easier. It is important to evaluate if and at which level they pave way for clear benefits for the PhD students.

If we value being an international academic environment, there should be a level of quality assurance. We could encourage academic environments lacking qualified international applicants to engage in international collaborations on both MA/BA-level and in PhD level as guest researchers. It is important to make the distinction between these types of collaboration and formalized dual degree programmes.

There have recently been discussions on the national level regarding international schemes where foreign governments impose requirements on students with external funding (In particular CSC-funded scholarships). Danish authorities urge caution when getting involved in formalised educational collaboration financed through foreign research programmes.

A separate issue has emerged from the joint programmes including students with secondments at both AU and foreign institution. When mixing students on different international dual degree programmes, differences in wages and terms of enrolment can give rise to tensions among the PhD students.

PhD students in the anglo saxon-world usually enroll with a research project more loosely formulated. Christian Ulrik suggested a more template based application process might make the open calls more accessible for international students.

8. Any other business (evt.)

No items.
