Minutes from the PhD committee meeting

Wednesday, 1 May 2013, at 10.15 in building 1520, room 732

Present: Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, Heidi Gytz Olesen, Inge Revsbech, Peter Nørby, Kurt Thomas Jensen, Jes Madsen, Marie Grønbæk, Henrik Stapelfeldt, Søren Munch Kristiansen (for Anders Møller), Susanne Frydendal Nielsen

Apologies for absence: Andreas Stejner Sand Pedersen, Jan Tind Sørensen, Anders Møller, Elise Norberg

GSST secretariat: Bente Lynge Hansen, Rikke J. Ljungmann (for the minutes)

Agenda for the meeting:
1. Approval of minutes from the last meeting
2. Approval of agenda
3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc., for the period 17 January 2013 to 22 April 2013
4. The new Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities - in consultation
5. Psychological workplace assessment (APV) for PhD students
6. GSST’s transferable skills course portfolio for 2014
7. Misc.

Re. 1. Approval of minutes from the last meeting
The minutes were circulated in an earlier e-mail. They were approved.

The chairman Kurt Thomas Jensen mentioned that the item discussed at the previous meeting concerning statistics from the Planner on the number of PhD students who submit their PhD dissertation on time, divided into Programmes, will be discussed next time. The data came too late to be able to assess them properly.

It was agreed that in the future GSST will send a doodle to all members of the PhD committee when dates for the PhD committee meetings are to be settled.

Re. 2. Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved.
Re. 3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 17 January 2013 to 22 April 2013
The PhD committee had no comments to the overview. However, since the information in the document was not entirely complete due to technical problems, it was decided that GSST sends the adjusted document to the committee members as soon as possible.

Action: GSST sends the adjusted Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. to the committee members as soon as possible.

Re. 4. The revised Ministerial Order on the PhD Programme at the Universities - in consultation
Jes Madsen briefly described the consultation process concerning the revised Ministerial order on the PhD Programme at the Universities (the Ministerial Order).

Jes Madsen then led a debate taking its starting point in the letter from the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalization (appendix 3A). The following references refer to this letter and the related sections in the Ministerial Order.

Re. section 7: Concerning the approx. 30 ECTS course requirement. The new Ministerial Order broadens the definition of courses. The PhD committee had no comments to this section, since it will not affect the current practice at Science and Technology to a large degree.

Re. section 7: Concerning participation in active research environments. The new Ministerial Order adds that this could also take place in private research companies – also in Denmark. Jes Madsen stressed the importance of ensuring that it should be seriously research-based and relevant environments. The PhD committee agreed. Question: Should a contract be drawn up with the given company in such cases? It was agreed that a number of practical issues needed to be addressed if this section is adopted.

Re. section 7: Concerning teaching and the dissemination requirement. Jes Madsen underlined that the wording suggested in the new Ministerial order “… skal være relateret til den pågældendes ph.d.-projekt ...” can be seen as limiting the nature of the teaching and dissemination activities in which the PhD students should obtain experience. Thus, it might potentially be difficult to meet the dissemination requirement mainly through teaching activities, since these are not always directly related to the PhD student’s project. Jes Madsen said that Talentbåndet therefore suggested the following wording instead “...der er relateret til den pågældendes ph.d.-projekt eller karriereudvikling”. Furthermore, Jes Madsen pointed out that if Talentbåndet’s wording was not adopted into the new Ministerial order, it would be important to underline to the departments that the dissemination requirement should still be met regardless of the PhD students’ teaching activities. The PhD committee agreed to Talentbåndet’s suggested wording.

Comment from the PhD committee to section 12, subsection 3: Could it be suggested to leave out the requirement of including a résumé in Danish in the PhD dissertation?

Re. section 15: Deals with the increasing use of and demand for making e.g. double degrees and joint degrees with other universities. In the future, if the new Ministerial Order is adopted, the agreements concerning e.g. double degrees should be made on university level, i.e. individual agreements regarding a
single PhD student will no longer be possible, and an agreement should be drawn up before a PhD student should be allowed to make e.g. a double degree. The PhD committee had no comments to this section.

Re. section 16: The PhD committee had no comments to this section.

Re. section 19: The PhD committee had no comments to this section.

Comment from Jes Madsen/Talentbåndet on section 22: This relates to the word “kan” in section 22: “Ph.d.-graden kan tildeles, hvis der foreligger indstilling herom fra bedømmelsesudvalget”. Adding this word could in principle mean that the Academic Council can overrule a given assessment committee’s unanimous decision. Jes Madsen pointed out that to protect the PhD students’ legal rights it should be underlined that the Academic Council cannot dispense with a given assessment committee’s unanimous decision except under very unusual circumstances, e.g. proof of scientific dishonesty. The PhD committee agreed with Jes Madsen/Talentbåndet’s comment.

Re. section 23: The PhD committee had no comments to this section.

Re. section 26: The PhD committee had no comments to this section.

Comment from the PhD committee to section 13: Could it be suggested that it should become possible for PhD students to submit their PhD dissertation earlier than their PhD study end date (e.g. 2 months before) but still be paid their salary for the remaining period of their PhD study, so as to be able to receive payment while waiting for the PhD defence.

**Action:** Jes Madsen will report back to Talentbåndet with regard to the PhD committee’s comments for consideration in the current consultation process and as input to future revisions of the Ministerial Order. Finally, Jes Madsen pointed out that when the Ministerial Order has been adopted, GSST’s Rules and Regulations will also be subject to revision.

**Re. 5. Psychological workplace assessment (APV) for PhD students**

It was first commented that it could be difficult to assess the actual response rates. Originally, the psychological workplace assessment was meant to include only employed PhD students, but at some departments also PhD students with no Master’s degree yet was given the opportunity to answer. Approx. 560 out of approx. 840 have responded.

The vice-chairman of the PhD committee Peter Nørby gave a short presentation on this subject providing insights into the discussions that had taken place in the PhD association.

First, Peter Nørby mentioned that some of the questions were difficult to conclude anything from, for instance with regard to the questions concerning day-to-day management. Peter Nørby pointed out that some PhD students could be in doubt as to whether this was their supervisor, section manager or head of department.

The PhD association had focused on three topics, namely Job satisfaction, Relation to work, Stress.
- Re. Job satisfaction, in particular the topic on being satisfied with future job prospects. The PhD association noted that the figures varied quite a lot from Department to Department. Overall only 2/3 were satisfied with their future job prospects, and the PhD association found this problematic. It was mentioned that it might be related to the fact that many PhD students were unaware of the job prospects outside academia, and could something be done about that?

- Re. Relation to work: The PhD association found that the biggest problem was that only 60 % knew what was expected of them. It was mentioned that it could be important to emphasise to supervisors that a PhD is also an education, but also that the PhD student should be seen as a colleague and not as a student in that regard. The PhD association noted that the figures differed widely between the Departments at Foulum and those at 8000 C, with the former being the most satisfied. The PhD association also noted that apparently the student teaching evaluations have been suspended for a while. The PhD association would prefer to have them reintroduced as this could help provide better insights into ones teaching.

**Action:** Jes Madsen will talk to Vice-Dean Tom Vindbæk Madsen about reintroducing the student teaching evaluations.

- Re. Stress: 16% had answered that they had severe stress-related symptoms due to their work. This is an increase since the last psychological workplace assessment. This could be related to the points mentioned above about being uncertain as to what was expected. The PhD committee debated the issue, and it was mentioned that supervisor also at times might find it difficult to define these expectations. For instance how many working hours per week is enough? Success with ones project is what should count. It was commented that matching of expectations is very important, both with regard to what the PhD student expects from him-/herself and what supervisor expects. It was suggested that supervisors should be better equipped as “project managers” and would it be possible e.g. to e-mail supervisors six months before the PhD student’s end date to remind them of their tasks as “project managers” with regard to the PhD student’s project?

Jes Madsen mentioned that a questionnaire survey will be made after the summer holiday involving all AU PhD students and probably also their supervisors. The survey will be much more detailed and in-depth with regard to the above. Hopefully, the survey will provide us with better tools to discuss these matters again.

Jes Madsen also asked whether the results from the psychological workplace assessment for PhD students had been implemented in action plans at departmental level. Action plans should be made before the summer holiday. The PhD committee members commented that it differed between Departments what had been done so far. Some Departments had implemented specific PhD student related actions, whereas others had made them part of the overall Departmental Action Plan. It was mentioned that some of the international PhD students might have been lost during the process because some Departments had held discussions in Danish.

**Action:** It was agreed that these topics should be brought up again when results are available from the questionnaire survey.

**Action:** Jes Madsen meets with Jørgen Jespersen, safety-at-work manager, to discuss and ensure that PhD students are included in the actions plans.
Re. 6. GSST’s transferable skills course portfolio for 2014
First, it was debated whether a course like Introduction to R should generate ECTS. There was disagreement on the subject, but the general attitude was that it should generate ECTS.

Second, the PhD committee had been asked to consider whether GSST’s transferable skills portfolio for 2014 should be the same as the present one, or whether any changes should be made. The PhD committee decided not to make any changes to the present transferable skills course portfolio.

Re. the courses relating to statistics: The task force set up at the last meeting has met and debated various options, for instance whether to organise module-based courses and whether it might be relevant to organise a more basic statistics course and/or a refresher course. The PhD committee debated the issue of offering a refresher course, and it was suggested that this should be offered by the Programmes and not by GSST, since what was needed was a Programme-specific course. It was agreed that the latter should be suggested to the Programmes.

**Action:** To suggest to the Programmes that they offer Programme-specific refresher courses in basic statistics.

**Action:** Jes Madsen will talk to Vice-Dean Tom Vindbæk Madsen about the statistics courses on the Bachelor Programme.

**Action:** GSST talks to Elise Norberg about setting up a new Task Force meeting.

Finally, it was mentioned that the financing of scientific courses lies with the Departments.

Re. 7. Misc.
The following question was debated under this item:
Can written dissemination generate ECTS? The answer was that each programme decides in each case whether it is possible.

The meeting ended at 12.30

**Action**
GSST sends the adjusted Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. to the committee members as soon as possible

Who
GSST

Jes Madsen will report back to Talentbåndet with regard to the PhD committee’s comments to the revised Ministerial Order

Who
Jes Madsen

Jes Madsen will talk to Vice-Dean Tom Vindbæk Madsen about reintroducing the student teaching evaluations.

Who
Jes Madsen
It was agreed that the topics from the psychological workplace assessment for PhD students should be brought up again when results are available from the upcoming questionnaire survey.

Jes Madsen meets with Jørgen Jespersen, safety-at-work manager, to discuss and ensure that PhD students are included in the actions plans.

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