Minutes from the PhD committee opening meeting and ordinary meeting

Time: Friday, 19 January 2018 at 12.30-14.30
Place: Building 1520, room 737, Ny Munkegade 120, 8000 Aarhus C

Present: Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, Kurt Thomas Jensen, Rasmus Kock Flygaard, Laura Stidsholt, Anders Møller, Carmina Falcato Cabral, Alice Puk Skarbye, Frederik Thorning Frederiksen, Lisa Bjerregaard Jørgensen, Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Marianne Hammershøj and Jes Madsen

Apologies for absence: Henrik Stapelfeldt, Jibran Khan, Steffen Fredslund Hansen, Daniel Søndergaard Skov, Lotte Victoria Winther Stagsted, Amanda Andersen and Laura Agneessens

GSST secretariat: Rikke J. Ljungmann

Agenda – opening meeting:

1. Rules of procedure for the PhD committee
2. Information concerning the PhD committee’s tasks
3. Election of chairman
4. Election of vice-chairman
5. PhD Committee meeting dates in 2018

Agenda – ordinary meeting:

7. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting – 14 June 2017
8. Approval of agenda
9. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 7 June 2017 to 11 January 2018
10. Discussion of extensions
11. Debate concerning the PhD Questionnaire
12. Thesis format – suggestions for changes to GSST Rules and regulations item 11.1
13. Approval of PhD courses: Write Here, Right Now and Science Teaching

Minutes from the opening meeting:

Ad 1. Rules of procedure for the PhD committee
The retiring chairman of the PhD committee Kurt Thomas Jensen informed the committee members of the Rules of procedure for the PhD committee.
There are 12 members, namely 6 members of staff and 6 PhD students. The former are elected for three years and the latter for one year at a time. The members meet regularly – usually three to four times a year – and can invite other people to the meetings as observers if necessary, however the latter do not have the right to vote. Agenda for the meeting will be sent to the members four days before the meeting.

All members can submit items to be discussed at the meetings. When voting on a subject, it is a question of simple majority. At least half of the statutory members must be present to make the PhD committee quorate.

It is a special situation this coming year as only two of the PhD student members have been elected. The other PhD student members therefore have the role of observers with no right to vote.

All members and observers are subject to confidentiality.

**Ad 2. Information concerning the PhD committee’s tasks**
The retiring chairman of the PhD committee Kurt Thomas Jensen informed the committee members of the PhD committee’s tasks. These include for instance:

- Approving GSST transferable PhD courses
- Approving applications for credits, exemptions, etc.
- Making recommendations regarding the composition of assessment committees
- Discussing various matters relating to the PhD school and making recommendations hereon to the head of PhD school.

The chairman and the vice-chairman prepare the agenda for each meeting and can also make decisions in between meetings, if necessary.

**Ad 3. Election of chairman**
Associate professor Kurt Thomas Jensen (Department of Bioscience) was re-elected.

**Ad 4. Election of vice-chairman**
PhD student Alice Puk Skarbye (Department of Animal Science) was elected.

**Ad 5. PhD Committee meeting dates in 2018**
Kurt Thomas Jensen suggested that the PhD committee meetings would be held in connection with the heads of programme meetings.

**Ad 6. Misc.**
The GSST website will be updated with info on the new PhD committee and with info about which PhD programmes the committee members represent. GSST also sends out news to the PhD students in a news e-mail each time a PhD committee meeting has been held and the minutes uploaded to the GSST website.

**Next meeting:** Discuss how best to get info to the PhD students on election to the PhD committee.

**Minutes from the ordinary meeting:**
Re 7. Follow-up from the PhD committee meeting – 14 June 2017
Approved

Action points:
- Send lecturer’s contact details and price to Rikke J. Ljungmann
Done

- General follow-up on the quality of the Science teaching course
Done. See also item 13 Approval of Science teaching course

- Check whether it is possible to get AU figures from the Ministerial analysis relating more specifically to the flexible scheme
Not possible

Re 8. Approval of agenda
Approved

Re 9. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 7 June 2017 to 11 January 2018
Appendix 3 – one PhD student from Food and one from Animal Science. Marianne Hammershøj and Alice Puk Skarbye will e-mail Rikke J. Ljungmann regarding the names.

Otherwise approved.

Re 10. Discussion of extensions
Every second year, the committee looks at the figures on study time extensions to see if any tendencies can be detected. The committee only looks at extension of actual study time, not on extensions due to maternity/paternity leave or long-term illness.

This time the period examined was 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017. The figures for this particular period show that 24 % of the PhD students get a study time extension, although it varies from programme to programme.

The committee debated the figures and compared them to figures from the recent PhD questionnaire, table 11.2, in which the PhD students were asked whether they were able to finish within the stipulated time. For those not being able to, foremost reasons were given as:

- The project has become too big and difficult to manage
- Fear of not being able to perform
- Practical problems relating to experiments and the like

It was mentioned that it is important to focus on finishing within the stipulated study time both in connection with the half-year evaluations and the qualifying exam, and to start writing the PhD thesis earlier in the process.
**Action for next meeting:** Kurt Thomas Jensen will look at the figures for earlier years to compare with the 2016-17 period in relation to the international PhD students. To be debated at the next meeting.

**Decision:** The committee will continue looking at the figures for study time extensions every second year.

**Re 11. Debate concerning the PhD Questionnaire**
The results of the PhD questionnaire were debated.

Jes Madsen mentioned that in general the figures for both ST and AU look good. The PhD students are satisfied with the education that they get, including various constituent elements such as supervision.

However, it is important to note that there is an increase in number of PhD students that experience severe stress symptoms despite the fact that various initiatives have been launched since the PhD questionnaire in 2013.

In connection with the above, the PhD students’ work obligations were discussed since some PhD students felt more under pressure in connection with the workload. It was also mentioned that another reason for the stress symptoms could be that PhD students compare themselves more to one another and therefore perhaps suffer more from anxiety pressure and stress. Two ways to alleviate this could be that PhD student and supervisor(s) discuss matching expectations and to try and include all PhD students in the PhD student community, the research groups, etc.

Workshops on stress and tools to deal with stress were also debated as well as how to reach the PhD students in that connection.

Finally, courses, especially the scientific ones, were debated as the figures here could be higher.

**Re 12. Thesis format – suggestions for changes to GSST Rules and regulation item 11.1**
The changes were debated and agreed to.

**Action:** The changes will be incorporated in GSST’s Rules and Regulations.

**Action:** GSST will issue a news item in the following GSST news e-mail.

**Re 13. Approval of PhD courses: Write Here, Right Now and Science Teaching**
The course Write here, Right Now was approved.

The course Science Teaching was approved in its new format.

**Re 14. Misc.**
The application process was debated. Would it be possible to have all information in one single PDF file? The impression to some was that at the moment information was somewhat scattered and in different places. And could information on remaining Master’s courses for PhD students enrolled on the basis of a Bachelor’s degree (with credits, if any) as well as how to explain credits be included.

**Action:** Check up on information on the application website.
The meeting ended at 14.15.

**Action**  
Look at the figures for earlier years to compare with the 2016-17 period in relation to the international PhD students  
Kurt Thomas Jensen

Changes in the text regarding thesis format will be incorporated in GSST’s Rules and Regulations.  
GSST

Issue a news item in the following GSST news e-mail on the Rules and regulations changes  
GSST

Check up on information on the application website  
GSST

**To be discussed at the next/future meeting:**  
- Discuss how best to get info to the PhD students on election to the PhD committee  
- Discuss the figures for earlier years compared with the 2016-17 period in relation to the international PhD students