Minutes from the PhD committee meeting

Time: Monday, 15 September 2014 at 9.15-11.00
Place: Bygning 1431, lokale 021 og 023, Nordre Ringgade 1, 8000 Aarhus C

Present: Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, Kurt Thomas Jensen, Anders Møller, Jan Tind Sørensen, Marielle Babineau, Heidi Gytz Olesen, Thue Bording, Christian Andersen, Marianne Aarø-Hansen og Jes Madsen. During item 6 and 7: Chris Kjeldsen (for Lis Wollesen de Jonge), Marianne Hammershøj, Lars Bojer Madsen, Søren Wandahl (for Peter Gorm Larsen), Jens Ledet Jensen (for Bent Ørsted) and Ida Marie Gerdes.

Apologies for absence: Kristine Engemann Jensen, Guilherme de Moura Maciel, Lis Wollesen de Jonge and Henrik Stapelfeldt.

GSST secretariat: Bente Lynge Hansen, Karen Konradi (during item 4) and Rikke J. Ljungmann (for the minutes).

Agenda:
Time: 9.15-9.45:

1. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting – 16 June 2014 (appendix 1)
2. Approval of agenda
3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 7 June to 4 September 2014 (appendices 2, 3 and 4)
4. Location – Courses in Introduction to R and Basic Statistical Analysis (appendix 5)
5. Misc.

Time: 9.45-11.00 – with Heads of programme:
6. Follow-up on Questionnaire Survey
   a. Impressions from the department tour
   b. Action plan
7. International evaluation of the PhD school

Minutes:

Re 1. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting – 16 June 2014
Minutes had been circulated before the meeting. They were approved.

Action points from last time:
- Talk to Department of Mathematics about the possibility of offering any advanced courses in statistics (Jes Madsen): Jes Madsen reported that the Department of Mathematics is positive towards offering advanced courses in statistics, however actual organising will depend on various other plans over the next year. Therefore, they cannot say anything for certain yet.

Concerning the future items:
- Discussion of the Questionnaire survey and the action plans related hereto again at the next meeting: Will take place at the present meeting.
- Discussion of a figure showing extensions divided into PhD students enrolled based on a bachelor’s degree and a Master’s degree, respectively (Kurt Thomas Jensen): Postponed till next year until more data are available.
- Discussion of 5+3’s having too little time to finish their PhD: Postponed till future meeting.
- Discussion of whether grading of PhD theses would be something to consider – e.g. Cum Laude: Postponed till future meeting.

Re 2. Approval of agenda
Agenda was approved.

Re 3. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 7 June to 4 September 2014
There were no comments to the announcements. They were approved.

Re 4. Location – Courses in Introduction to R and Basic Statistical Analysis
It was discussed whether to have the courses 1) Only in Aarhus, 2) Both in Aarhus and Foulum, or 3) A rotation between various ST locations. Jes Madsen mentioned that this topic might also be discussed further under item 6.

It was agreed that this semester’s courses will take place in Aarhus.

It was suggested that the courses be held as a condensed week-long course instead of stretching over several weeks.

Action: GSST discusses with lecturer Rodrigo Labouriau if it would be possible to have the courses either as a condensed course or as a remote course (the latter not ideal).

If the courses could be held as a condensed course, it was agreed that all the courses could be held in Aarhus in the future.

Re 5. Misc.
No items.

Re 6. Follow-up on Questionnaire Survey
Joint meeting with heads of programme.

Re. 6a. Impressions from the department tour
Before the Summer holiday, Jes Madsen went on a department tour. He met with almost all departments except Chemistry and Molecular Biology and Genetics (the Genetics part). The latter meetings will be held later. Jes Madsen first said that the meetings had been very successful and useful, and he wanted to thank everyone involved. He then summed up the main points discussed at the meetings:

- The questionnaire Survey: The general impression was that there has been very good follow-up already in the departments.
- Alignment of expectations between supervisor and student, and in some cases also concerns relating to the local research environment. As per the latter: Feelings that the PhD students were not considered part of the employees.
- Lack of PhD courses.

**Re 6b. Action plan**

Jes Madsen had prepared an action plan with items covering both faculty level and local/department level. He suggested that the various actions were debated at the present meeting, and he would then afterwards write up a new document including any changes. The rewritten Action plan should be discussed at the PhD committee meeting and the Heads of programme meeting in December.

The following actions were then debated:

**Actions at Faculty level:**

- **Item 1. Supervisor courses:**
  There is still room for more people at the supervisor courses this Autumn. Lecturer Tove Hedegaard Jørgensen also offers other services in relation to competence development of supervisors. As for making the supervisor courses obligatory for new staff members, it was clarified that it should be new permanent staff members. Furthermore, Jes Madsen suggested that the supervisor course concept was evaluated in a year or so to better be able to judge the concept.

- **Item 2. Intro mini-workshop to PhD Planner:**
  GSST offers to visit the programmes/ST locations and talk about the Planner, half-year evaluations, etc., e.g. 30 minutes/1 hour, focusing on two elements, one practical, how to operate the system, and one more overall, what can the system be used for. Could be held jointly for PhD students and supervisors, or separately as preferred.
  **Action:** GSST will send out info hereon to the heads of programme and arrange with the departments/programmes how to do it. When: soon.

- **Item 3. Generic skills courses:**
  To develop the portfolio of generic skills courses further, Jes Madsen suggested that the PhD student committee members look into this first. Following that, the topic should be discussed again at the January or March PhD committee meeting. Any suggestions from the heads of programme should be sent to vice-Chair Christian Andersen.

- **Item 4. Scientific PhD courses:**
  GSST will support new Scientific PhD course initiatives. A financial model is to be decided upon.

- **Item 5. Quick guides:**
  Jes Madsen mentioned that five new Quick guides are in the planning stages.
  **Responsible:** Jes Madsen and in some cases the GSST secretariat
  **Suggestion:** A quick guide for the defence. Animal Science and Engineering have already made such a quick guide – GSST will have a look at them for inspiration.

- **Item 6. Financial support to student activities (PHAUST):**
This is already provided by GSST, but Jes Madsen wanted to emphasise this possibility, especially in relation to the support of relevant activities in Roskilde, Flakkebjerg and Årslev.

- Item 7. Increased focus on alignment of supervisor/student expectations during Intro day, etc.: PHAUST has an item on the Introduction day about alignment of expectations. It is an ongoing activity.

Suggestions relating to the welcoming e-mails:
- To have a welcoming e-mail to supervisors
- To have a welcoming e-mail to both student and supervisor – two-fold purpose: welcome and please discuss alignment of expectations with each other
- To put the supervisor CC on the welcoming e-mail to the PhD student – it would make it easier for the PhD student to discuss alignment of expectations with the supervisor

Comments in generel: GSST newsletter for PhD students – should also be sent to the heads of programme.

**Actions at Programme/Department level:**

- Item 8. Scientific PhD courses:
  Heads of programme should provide a summary of current status and future plans
  Timeframe for action: The December meeting
  Responsible: Heads of programme

- Item 9. Communication to the PhD students about local practices:
  To be done locally at the departments
  Timeframe: Now
  Responsible: Heads of programme

- Item 10. Focus on alignment of expectations – for instance through formal meetings between student, supervisor and head of programme:
  Head of programme should be facilitating this. The word “for instance” should be removed. Furthermore, it should say head of programme/member of programme committee (i.e. could delegate to a member of the programme committee), also insert “start-up meeting”.

- Item 11. Regular follow-up meetings:
  Some programmes already do this. Those who do not should set up similar procedures.
  Risk: Take away some of the responsibility from the supervisor – skip the word “regular”
  Action: At the December meeting: Discuss how it works in those places where they already have such procedures.
  Responsible: Heads of programme – PHAUST might also discuss it

- Item 12. Heads of programme should make sure that PhD students and supervisors use the planner as an active tool when making half-year evaluations.
  Responsible: Heads of programme

- Item 13. Follow-up on programme-/department-specific issues from the Questionnaire Survey not covered by the other action points.

Comment on MUS:
Action at programme level: Encourage use of MUS for all PhD students.

Jes Madsen will prepare a new version of the Action plan, including deadlines and responsibility. It will then be discussed further at the December meeting.
Re 7. International evaluation of the PhD school
Jes Madsen gave an orientation concerning the international evaluation of GSST to be held in Spring 2015. This derives from the University Law stating that International evaluations of the PhD schools should take place from time to time. Each PhD school will be evaluated individually based on a written self-evaluation.

Jes Madsen also pointed out that it is not an accreditation, but an evaluation with focus on improvement. With regard to the self-evaluation: A writing group consisting of Bente Lynge Hansen, Ida Marie Gerdes and Jes Madsen has been set up. It will later be expanded to include the PhD committee Chair and vice-Chair.

The self-evaluation will be presented at the PhD committee meeting and Heads of programme meeting in December. An evaluation committee – with committee members being appointed by AU - will visit in Spring 2015 to meet with various Heads of programme, members of the programme committees, PhD students, members of the PhD committee and staff from the GSST secretariat. Jes Madsen will prepare a schedule later. After the visit, the committee will prepare a document with their comments.

Heads of programme are welcome to suggest members for the committee. Members should be experienced in PhD education. The committee will be appointed late this year.

The meeting ended at 11.00.

**Action**

| GSST discusses with lecturer Rodrigo Labouriau if it would be possible to have the courses either as a condensed course or as a remote course (the latter not ideal) | GSST |
| GSST will send out info about planner visits to the programmes the heads of programme and arrange with the departments/programmes how to do it | GSST |

Provide a summary of current status and future plans for scientific PhD courses

Communication to the PhD students about local practices

**December meeting:**

- Discussion of the rewritten Action plan
- Discussion of the use of follow-up meetings
- Discussion of the self-evaluation for the international evaluation of GSST

**Future items:**

- Discussion of 5+3’s having too little time to finish their PhD
- Discussion of whether grading of PhD theses would be something to consider – e.g. Cum Laude
- Discussion of the generic skills portfolio