

Minutes from the PhD committee meeting

Time: Tuesday, 24 November 2020 at 15.00-16.00

Place: Online via zoom

Present: Kurt Thomas Jensen, Anders Møller, Marianne Hammershøj, Yannik Elo Roell, Frederik Thorning Bjørn, Michelle Møhlenberg, Lis Wollesen de Jonge, Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, David Lundbek Egholm and Brian Vinter

Apologies for absence: Henrik Stapelfeldt and Ida Marie Gerdes

The secretariat: Damian Goldberg, Liselotte K. Heller, Louise Nygaard Kristensen and Rikke J. Ljungmann

Agenda:

1. Introduction round
2. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting – 25 August 2020 (appendix 1)
3. Approval of agenda
4. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 18 August 2020 to 17 November 2020 (appendices 2A and 2B, 3A and 3B, and 4A and 4B)
5. Follow-up on corona-related issues
 - a. Extensions due to Covid-19 (appendices 5A and 5B)
 - b. Exemptions from research environment change and ECTS requirements in general and due to Covid-19 – new procedures (appendix 6)
 - c. Virtual research environment change – a possibility?
 - d. PhD student well-being
6. Discussion of suggested new transferable skills PhD course – Data-analysis with Python
7. Discussion of Science Teaching course - content, theory of pedagogics, etc. (appendices 7A, 7B and 7C (the latter to be sent later))
8. Status on Research planner and other PhD related IT systems
9. For your information:
 - a. International evaluation (appendix 8)
 - b. Survey: Quality in the PhD process (KIP)
 - c. Update of GSNS and GSTS Rules and Regulations (appendix 9)
 - d. No to abusive behaviour, including sexism – graduate school websites (appendix 10)
10. Misc.
11. Goodbye to GSST PhD committee

Minutes:

Re 1. Introduction round

There was a brief round of introduction.

Re 2. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting – 25 August 2020

Approved

Re 3. Approval of agenda

Approved

Re 4. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 18 August 2020 to 17 November 2020

Approved. It was noted that extensions granted to Industrial PhD students only counts in the category 'No. of extensions in month in total' as they are employed in the company and not at the university.

Re 5. Follow-up on corona-related issues

Re 5A. Extensions due to Covid-19

The items on corona-related issues started out with a debate on extensions due to Covid-19. It was mentioned that there had been a few misunderstandings among some PhD students with regard to the financing of this type of extension and when to apply.

Both Heads of school therefore clarified that extensions should be applied for purely on the basis of good scientific reasons. Financing will be a matter for discussion between Head of school and main supervisor/department and not for the PhD students to worry about. The Heads of school also stressed that the DKK 18m granted by the government to the Danish universities do not change this procedure.

The next newsletter from both schools will include communication on applications for an extension due to Covid-19 and explain that they should be based on the academic requirements and not the funding.

Action: The news item will be sent to the two remaining PhD student members of the committee and a few Heads of programme to check before sending it out to all PhD students and supervisors.

Re 5B. Exemptions from research environment change and ECTS requirements in general and due to Covid-19 – new procedures

Until now, changes/exemptions concerning research environment change and ECTS requirements have taken place in the planner system in connection with the half-year evaluations. However, it has become necessary to be able to process data more systematically on this. Thus, it was decided to introduce new procedures. They will follow the same approval flow as other exemptions and approvals, i.e. main supervisor and Head of programme must approve the exemptions. The GSNS and the GSTS Rules and Regulations will be adjusted accordingly.

Re. Research environment change:

Based on the above, it was decided that PhD students should apply for exemption from research environment change if he or she would not be able to go at all or if he or she was planning a research environment change, which did not apply with the recommendations set out (i.e. less than 3 months or more than 12 months). Furthermore, exemption should be applied for no later than one year before the PhD student's study end date.

It was mentioned that the guidelines should include the possibility of going on several shorter stays that would add up to three months in total.

Comment after the meeting re. GSNS procedures: Before the final approval of the minutes, there was a comment regarding clarification on when to apply for exemption from research environment change. Furthermore, following a consultation procedure among the GSNS Heads of programme and the PhD student members of the PhD committee from GSNS, it was decided that exemption from research environment change should be applied for no later than six months before the PhD student's study end date at GSNS.

Re. ECTS:

Based on the above, it was decided that PhD students should apply for exemption from the ECTS requirements. The decision was followed by a debate on the number of ECTS required. GSNS had previously decided that application for exemption should be applied for if the PhD student would not be able to take 30 ECTS PhD courses. GSTS would discuss this later.

Re 5C. Virtual research environment change – a possibility?

This was discussed as a possibility at some programmes and for some PhD students during Covid-19 times.

Re 5D. PhD student well-being

It was mentioned that to some extent PhD student well-being had been difficult especially during the lockdown. Things were better now after people had been allowed back to work, but it was still important to be aware of any well-being issues, especially for PhD students who are not part of a larger research group and for the international PhD students who might not have a large network.

At Agroecology, they have started having virtual meetings among the PhD students. This is particularly helpful for the new PhD students.

Brian Vinter mentioned a concern especially for the international PhD students with the upcoming holidays as many of them will not be able to go home. Both Heads of school stressed that if anyone had good ideas to avoid loneliness, etc., these were most welcome.

Re 6. Discussion of suggested new transferable skills PhD course – Data-analysis with Python

It was decided that a PhD course on Data-analysis with Python should be organised.

Action: The secretariat will follow up.

Re 7. Discussion of Science Teaching course - content, theory of pedagogics, etc.

Based on evaluations provided on the Science Teaching course, there was a debate on whether the course equips the PhD students with the necessary pedagogical tools and theories to carry out their role as teaching assistant during their PhD studies. Due to lack of time for a proper debate, it was decided that the secretariat would contact the course providers initially to let them know about the debate. Further discussion was postponed till the next meeting.

Action: The secretariat will contact course provider. Further discussion was postponed.

Re 8. Status on Research planner and other PhD related IT systems

Due to lack of time, this item was not debated.

Re 9: For your information**Re 9A. International evaluation**

All Danish graduate schools must go through an international evaluation every fifth year. The last evaluation was carried out in 2015. Due to the split of the Faculty of Science and Technology and the subsequent split of the Graduate School of Science and Technology this was postponed at Aarhus University until 2021.

The international evaluation will run from spring 2021 and involve the two new PhD committees at GSNS and GSTS, respectively.

Re 9B. Survey: Quality in the PhD process (KIP)

In March 2021, a questionnaire will be sent out to all enrolled PhD students at Aarhus University concerning quality in the PhD process (KIP). The questionnaire was first conducted in 2013 and then repeated in 2017. The results from the 2021 questionnaire will also be included in the self-evaluation reports, which will be sent to the graduate school assessment committees in connection with the international evaluation.

Correction after the meeting: The KIP questionnaire will be sent out in January 2021, and the results will be available in March 2021.

Re 9C. Update of GSNS and GSTS Rules and Regulations

Both the GSNS and the GSTS Rules and Regulations have been updated under ch. 4.5.

Re 9D. No to abusive behaviour, including sexism – graduate school websites

Due to lack of time, this item was not debated.

Re 10. Misc.

None.

Re 11. Goodbye to GSST PhD committee

Kurt Thomas Jensen was thanked for his role as Chairman of the PhD committee for the past many years.

The meeting ended at 16.15

Action	Who	When
News item on extensions due to Covid-19 to be checked before sending out GSNS and GSTS newsletters	Remaining PhD students in the committee and a few Heads of programme	
Follow up on organisation of a Data-Analysis with Python course	The secretariat	
The secretariat will contact the Science Teaching course provider	The secretariat	

Next meeting:

- Further discussion of the course Science Teaching