

## **Graduate School of Natural Sciences (GSNS)**

### **PhD committee meeting – opening and ordinary meeting**

**Time: Monday, 24 January 2022 at 9.30-11.00**

**Place: Online**

## **Minutes**

### **1. Meeting information**

Participants:

Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer, Anders Møller, Louise Marie Dalskov Kjærulff (during the opening meeting), Henriette Rübsam, Clémence Rose, Mads Blichfeldt Amdisen, Erik Asbjørn Mikkelsen Jensen, Ragnhild Ørbæk Laursen, Joanna Martin Davies and David Lundbek Egholm

Apologies for absence: Henrik Stapelfeldt and Irfansha Shaik

The secretariat:

Maria Fauerby Iversen and Rikke J. Ljungmann

First, there was an opening meeting (items 2-12) followed by an ordinary PhD committee meeting (items 13-21).

### **Opening meeting:**

### **2. Round of introduction**

There was a round of introduction to meet and greet everyone.

### **3. Approval of minutes from the PhD committee meeting on 1 December 2021**

Before the new PhD committee initiated its work, the old committee was asked to approve the minutes from the last PhD committee meeting.

Follow-up from last meeting:

- The secretariat will report back on distribution between programmes with regard to number of screening grants applied: In process.
- The secretariat will look into whether it is possible to provide an estimate of the cost of the Planner system: In process.

The minutes were approved.

#### **4. Rules of procedure for the PhD committee**

The retiring chairman of the PhD committee Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer informed the committee members of the Rules of procedure for the PhD committee.

There are 6 members, namely 3 members of staff and 3 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, if necessary, invite other people to the meetings as observers, however, these do not have the right to vote. Agenda for the meeting will be sent to the members no later than four working 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 – only members can vote. At least half of the statutory members must be present to make the PhD committee quorate.

All members and any invited observers are subject to confidentiality.

To broaden PhD student representation, the committee decided that also substitutes should participate in all committee meetings. Furthermore, the retiring chairman Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer proposed that we also invite PhD student representatives from the remaining two departments that are not represented to participate in the meetings.

The committee also have representatives in the joint NAT and TECH course committees, and in the well-being committee.

The public can participate in meeting (unless items are closed). The retiring chairman suggested that it might be a topic for discussion later how this can be made clear to the public.

Finally, the retiring chairman also mentioned that in case of long-term absence, i.e. if a member is indisposed for more than 2 months, the substitute can take over. This will probably only be relevant in case of long-term illness, and if so any such member is urged to contact Rikke J. Ljungmann, if possible.

#### **5. Information concerning the PhD committee's tasks**

The retiring chairman of the PhD committee Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer informed the committee members of the PhD committee's tasks. These include for instance:

- Approving GSNS 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.

## **6. Election of Chairman**

As per the Rules of procedure, a Chairman must be elected from among the academic staff of the PhD committee.

Ernst-Martin Füchtbauer was elected as Chairman.

## **7. Election of Vice-chairman**

As per the Rules of procedure, a Vice-chair must be elected from among the elected PhD student members of the PhD committee.

Mads Blichfeldt Amdisen was elected as Vice-chairman.

## **8. Election of representative to participate in the NAT-TECH Course committee**

As per the Terms of reference for the joint Course committee between the two graduate schools GSNS and GSTS, a joint Course committee is set up. The Chair and Vice-chair of each of the two PhD committees are born members. One other member from each of the two PhD committees must be elected.

Clémence Krystel Marie Rose was elected.

## **9. Election of representative to participate in the 'Well-being Committee'**

By the end of 2021, a well-being committee was set up to discuss and ensure the well-being of all AU PhD students – in Danish 'Trivselsudvalg'. The committee consists of all five Heads of school at AU, representatives of AUPA (Aarhus University PhD Association) and one PhD student representative from each of the five PhD committees. Thus, one PhD student member must be elected.

Henriette Rübsam was elected.

## **10. PhD Committee meeting dates in 2022**

In order to find dates for the PhD committee meetings, Rikke J. Ljungmann mentioned that it would be very helpful if people's Outlook calendars could possibly be kept updated.

## **11. For your information**

- The Graduate School would like to include information (name and programme) concerning the PhD committee members on the GSNS website ( see: <https://phd.nat.au.dk/about-us/organisation/> under The GSNS PhD committee), and, if necessary, in agendas/minutes from the PhD committee meetings. Due to GDPR legislation, the Graduate School needs a consent form in order to do so, and the PhD student members were therefore asked to consider if they will sign such a declaration of consent. It was stressed that it is of course voluntary, and if preferred not to sign such a declaration, other solutions can be found in order to comply with GDPR regulations. Rikke J. Ljungmann will later send an e-mail giving PhD student members time to consider.

- Last year, the PhD student representatives introduced themselves in the GSNS news e-mail to all PhD students following the opening meeting. The Graduate School would like to repeat this initiative. Rikke J. Ljungmann will later send an e-mail, including last year's example, giving PhD student members time to consider.

## **12. Any other business – end of opening meeting**

Louise Marie Dalskov Kjerulff was greatly thanked for her work in the PhD committee over the last three years.

## **Ordinary meeting**

## **13. Approval of agenda**

The agenda was approved.

## **14. Announcements – Overview of assessment committees, exemptions, etc. for the period 25 October 2021 to 13 January 2022**

At each committee meeting an overview is presented concerning the following:

- Defences – assessment committees and re-submissions
- Qualifying exams
- Requests (incl. credit transfer granted during the PhD study)
- Credit transfer granted in connection with admissions process
- Covid-19 extensions applied for and approved during the period

David Lundbek Egholm explained that in principle the committee should approve all these matters, however in practice this has been outsourced to the Heads of programme and the Head of school, but the information is brought back and to the attention of the PhD committee via these overviews. It was mentioned that the procedure could be changed so that the committee should approve each individual

case. It was decided, however, to keep the present procedure, and then the Head of school will point out important cases at each meeting.

**Next meeting:** David Lundbek Egholm will say a few words about the approval procedure.

**Decision:** It was agreed that information on re-submitted theses should be found In the Defence appendix.

## **15. News from the PhD students**

Any issues that the PhD student members might wish to bring forward for discussion.

Here it was mentioned that an important topic to discuss in connection with the action plan is the teaching load. Some PhD students had been advised by supervisors to prepare less for the teaching sessions in an attempt to ease the teaching workload, however, it was pointed out that this would not solve the problem, instead it might reduce the quality of the teaching, and increase stress from not feeling properly prepared.

It was mentioned that if PhD students were told this it was important to take it to their Head of programme, but it was also agreed that it was part of a structural problem and therefore important to discuss in connection with the action plan.

## **16. Follow up on any corona-related issues**

David Lundbek Egholm mentioned that he has been in touch with all Heads of department to ask if the PhD students have had the necessary access to labs, etc., during the semi-lockdown in January. The impression was that this was the case, and this was supported at the meeting.

As for defences and qualifying exams, until 1 February these are in principle to be held online, but can be hybrid, if necessary.

The Graduate School continues the extension programme. David Lundbek Egholm mentioned that we also see applications from PhD students having been affected by the first and second lockdown coming in now. Furthermore, he mentioned that the applications are all well justified.

## **17. Discussion of new transferable skills PhD courses for autumn 2022 and other course-related matters**

At the Course committee meeting 16 December 2021, a couple of new courses and other course-related matters were discussed. Below, the course committee's recommendations and the PhD committee's comments can be found:

### **17a. Courses: 'Introduction to Python for Data Science' and 'Basic Data Science in Python'**

*Recommendation:* The course committee recommends that the two PhD committees approve the course descriptions and that the courses are organised.

This was approved.

#### **17b. Course: 'Applied Statistics'**

Due to unforeseen circumstances, it was not possible to present a course description at the meeting.

*Recommendation:* The course committee recommends that the course description be discussed as soon as it will be available, if necessary through a written e-mail hearing first in the Course committee and then in the two PhD committees.

This was approved.

#### **17c. Course: 'Statistics Laboratory for Scientific Application'**

It was agreed that the course looks interesting and ambitious, but to postpone the decision to the end of 2022. At the moment, priority should be given to creating a solid base of basic statistics courses before setting up more advanced ones.

*Recommendation:* The course committee recommends that the two PhD committees postpone discussion of this course.

This was approved. It was mentioned that a possible set-up of the course might be one run as a joint course where individual students bring their projects to be discussed.

#### **17d. Evaluation of statistics courses:**

*Recommendation:* The course committee recommends that the two PhD committees approve that all the statistics courses are evaluated by the end of 2022 to provide a thorough and coherent picture of the entire transferable skills selection of statistics courses at GSNS and GSTS.

This was approved.

#### **18. Suggested new template for NAT-TECH transferable skills PhD courses**

Due to lack of time, the item was postponed till the next meeting.

#### **19. GSNS news e-mails**

Due to lack of time, the item was postponed till the next meeting.

#### **20. For your information**

Minutes from the last Course committee meeting on 16 December 2021: In the minutes, it was stated that the Course committee asked to see future course evaluations concerning the Science Teaching course after each held course in order to be able to follow changes and improvements of the course. Rikke J. Ljungmann follows up.

## **21. Any other business – end of ordinary meeting**

David Lundbek Egholm gave a brief status on the work concerning the development of a new onboarding programme, which should include an Introduction day and several specific workshops on important topics for the PhD students.