

MEMORANDUM

19 FEBRUARY 2015

Re: Action plan for the PhD committee follow-up on APV (workplace assessment) 2012 in relation to the PhD students of the faculty. Approved by the board of directors 12 January 2015.

PHD SCHOOL

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The Associate Dean for Education Jens Erik Mogensen has in his capacity as chairman of FAMU (the faculty's committee on working environment) asked the PhD committee to follow up on the workplace assessment of 2012 in order to improve the general well-being of the PhD students. A number of focus areas have been concretized, and the PhD committee has been tasked with addressing these (appended as annexe 1). This memorandum is the committee's response.

REF: MD

Background:

The PhD School was founded in 2008 on the basis of the Act to Amend the University Act and the PhD ministerial order of the time. The education was then rooted in interaction and cooperation between departments, research education programmes, and the PhD School. Since then the research education programmes have been discontinued as a result of evaluations and reorganizations. Today the PhD education is anchored at the individual departments and the PhD School. In addition, the development of the PhD education is continuously discussed in the PhD committee, the PhD course committee, and at the PhD coordinators meetings under the management of the head of PhD School and the responsibility of the Dean. Moreover, repre-

representatives from the PhD School take part in the evaluation and discussion of the PhD education at university level within the framework of KUFIR, the research and innovation board of the University of Copenhagen, and we participate in course collaboration with the other faculties of humanities in Denmark. We also cooperate with a number of international partners on courses and related activities.

We regularly carry out work place assessments at the faculty, and in this connection we have followed up with more investigations of the PhD field. We have conducted an investigation into the general well-being of the students in 2010, an assessment of the entire field of PhD education in 2012, and a survey of the research education programme structure, also in 2012. Afterwards a working group under the dean's office was set up, leading to a reorganization of the PhD structure, including discontinuation of the research education programmes, attaching the PhD education to the departments and the PhD School, and a placement of the PhD coordinators as links between supervisors, department management, and the PhD School. At the same time all course activity was assembled within the framework of the PhD School.

The latest APV (workplace assessment) from 2012 has brought about a special plan of action with the purpose of further improving the general well-being of the PhD students.

The PhD Committee's response:

Since the 2012 APV a number of organizational changes to the PhD education as well as changes as regards content have been made, and the result is that the conditions for the PhD students have been significantly improved already.

For instance, an early harmonization of expectations between supervisors and PhD students now take place at the introductory seminar. Here the parties are asked to discuss respective expectations and prepare a plan for the PhD supervision process. In addition, a continuous plenum dialogue between supervisors and PhD students take place, enabling everybody to get acquainted with supplementary suggestions for a successful supervision process.

A conference on working life and career paths was held in the autumn of 2012 in collaboration with DM (the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs) to inform PhD students as thoroughly as possible about their options.

The deadlines for submission of the evaluation reports have also been changed. Previously reports had to be handed in biannually, but now they must be submitted after 10, 22, and 30 months. Prior to submission of re-

ports an evaluation meeting must have taken place, and the report must be sent to the head of the PhD School and the PhD coordinator, so that the latter is kept informed.

Moreover, the PhD coordinator's role has been specified and rendered more visible on the PhD School website, and a process has been instigated by which the departments will follow up on this on their individual websites. In this way the purview and task portfolio of the PhD coordinator become more clearly defined, so that PhD students know which problems and/or questions may be directed at the coordinator.

The reorganization of the PhD programmes has also occasioned funds from the faculty to be earmarked for PhD student beneficial activities at the individual departments. Thus it must be expected that the PhD coordinator uses these funds for seminars, master classes, courses, and similar pursuits, while at the same time encouraging students to propose additional activities and involve themselves in the arrangement thereof. This will contribute to the professional and social environment of the PhD students at the departments.

Thus, much has been done to improve the PhD students' situation. The committee will continue the current initiatives and maintain the positive development by launching further initiatives to ensure every PhD student the best possible conditions and improve the general well-being.

Therefore it has been decided to implement the following:

PhD plan and evaluation meetings

1) That the individual department managements decide whether the PhD coordinator can or should facilitate the first of the three evaluation meetings, that must take place between the supervisor and the PhD student in connection with the preparation of the scheduled evaluation reports after 10, 22, and 30 months.

That both PhD students and supervisors at the faculty are made aware of the possibility to involve the PhD coordinator in any of the evaluation meetings.

For the use of the evaluation meetings, an interview guide has been drawn up with a view to covering all aspects of the supervision process, in order to ensure positive progress in the PhD project.

The interview guide is used in connection with all three evaluation meetings to ensure a continuous harmonization of expectations throughout the PhD process, which will benefit the progress of the PhD project as well as the PhD programme in general.

The PhD committee points out that in cases where the supervisor also is PhD coordinator, both student and supervisor may want another relevant

person to participate in the meeting. This person may be a deputy head of department, a head of department, or the head of PhD School.

Group meetings with the PhD coordinator

2) That the PhD coordinator arranges group meetings once per year in March with the PhD students at the department – with anonymous accounts supplied in writing to the head of PhD School and the head of department no later than 1 April. The purpose of this meeting is to assess the general well-being of the PhD students. It has been decided that the head of department contributes with a presentation to these meetings, and that the department's research strategy, goals, and visions, as well as the PhD students' career perspectives are included in the presentation.

The PhD coordinator is tasked with facilitating the interview and apprising the parties of rights and obligations. The PhD coordinator is also tasked with attempting to handle any conflicts that might arise and deal with challenges uncovered during the interviews that may threaten individual PhD students' completion of the PhD programme. Based on the meetings, the coordinator must assess the scope of the challenges and determine how to manage them as well as possible. Serious problems must be discussed and examined by the coordinator, head of department, and the head of PhD School together. Less serious problems may be handled through other initiatives, and the group meeting may, if necessary, be followed by individual discussions with supervisor and PhD student, respectively.

Good supervision

3) That two-day supervisor course will be offered to supervisors of new PhD students, prior to the introduction seminar each year. The course will be mandatory for new PhD supervisors; that is, supervisors who have begun their first PhD supervision process in January 2014 or later, as well as supervisors who have not conducted supervision in the last three years, but have begun new supervision processes in January 2014 or later.

The supervisor course will be thematically organized and will make use of both internal and external expertise. Relevant subjects would include rules and organization, professional integration and internationalization, establishing good supervision relations, research environment comfort, stress prevention, and career options for PhD students.

Lunch will be served and provisions will be available.

In connection with these courses, a set of guidelines for PhD supervision at the Faculty of Humanities will need to be drawn up.

4) That a seminar, a workshop, or exchange of experience meetings will be held once or twice annually for all PhD supervisors at the faculty, with a view to enriching the PhD supervision by contributing new inspiration, knowledge, and the possibility of exchanging ideas. In addition to lunch etc. it would be possible to conclude these activities with a dinner.

Professional integration

5) That PhD supervisors as part of their supervisory obligations assume increased responsibility for integrating the PhD students into the research environments, locally at the department as well as nationally and internationally.

6) That the research committees at the individual departments assume responsibility for integrating the PhD students into the research environments and provide directions for how this can be done.

Responsibility for performance appraisals

7) That the PhD committee submits a request to the heads of departments that performance appraisals will be held for all PhD students (in-house employees, external employees, jointly funded PhD students, and PhD students in joint or double degree programmes) each year. A plan for performance appraisals will be prepared, which must be clearly communicated to the PhD students via the department homepage – and here it will be made clear that persons conducting the performance appraisals must have management skills. It has been decided that the heads of departments after the performance appraisals submit a list to the PhD committee with information on who has conducted performance appraisals with which PhD students and when.

The only valid reason for not conducting performance appraisals is if the PhD student in question is abroad for a prolonged period of time, on maternity/paternity leave, or absent because of illness.

To ensure that also externally employed PhD students undergo performance appraisals at their place of work, it will henceforth be stated in the cooperation agreements that annual performance appraisals must be conducted.

The PhD committee will furthermore keep a close eye on this field after each round of performance appraisals to secure a positive development. The PhD committee expects that the next workplace assessment in the autumn of 2015 will reflect that all PhD students take part in performance appraisals.

Exchange of experiences and dialogue meetings

8) Finally, it shall be noted that the PhD committee was encouraged to support the exchange of experiences with especially well-functioning PhD environments. It is the PhD committee's opinion that the exchange of experiences on what constitutes well-functioning PhD environments takes place continuously at the PhD committee meetings and in the PhD coordinator group. In addition it will be further qualified in the future through input from the PhD coordinators on the basis of their participation in the PhD group meetings at the departments and their possible participation in the evaluation meetings between the supervisor and the PhD student, as well as through the general compilation of experiences in the shape of the annual workplace assessments and satisfaction and well-being assessments.

9) The PhD committee supports a dialogue meeting between the PhD students and the Associate Dean of Education Jens Erik Mogensen, the head of PhD School Sune Auken, and HR officer Peter Wedel Bay because of a gender-related discrepancy in the answers in the 2012 workplace assessment. The meeting should ideally address these themes (cf. annexe 1):

- The feeling of being stressed and the imbalance between working hours and workload.
- What is expected of employee management and immediate superiors?
- What is expected of feedback at work – what kind of feedback: professional and general acknowledgement?
- Working with change in positive ways: in which situations/ new thinking/ ideas?
- Aiding and supporting each other – what does this imply (professionally and socially)?
- Expectations of beneficial cooperation on research assignments.

Additionally, the PhD committee would like the following themes to be elucidated:

- Harmonization of expectations – career paths
- Stress prevention instead of stress treatment

The dialogue meeting is scheduled to be held after the results of the next satisfaction and well-being assessment on 27 January 2015.

PAGE 7 OF 9

Culture alterations and advancement of career thinking

10) Finally, the PhD committee will proceed to change the culture among supervisors and PhD students, so that potential and actual career paths are rendered visible to all. This requires:

- a) An investigation into the career paths of the PhD students: where do they get employed and how do they use their education? This has been discussed in KUPE (the university's specialist group on PhD related issues represented by heads of PhD school, PhD students and administrative officers from all faculties), and since then KUFIR, the research and innovation board, has decided to initiate a survey of PhDs in order to map their career paths.
- b) To convert knowledge into advantageous and trustworthy guidance and improved communication – partly within the framework of the PhD School and the coordinators, and partly from supervisors, who must be equipped to counsel their students on other career possibilities than the very specific university researcher path. This element must therefore become part of the faculty's supervisor instruction, and the PhD School will host a number of recurring career-related events. For instance, a reprise of the career conference, which was organized in collaboration with DM (the Danish Association of Masters and PhDs) in the autumn of 2012, has been scheduled for March 2015.

Annexe 1: E-mail from Peter Wedel Bay to the PhD committee on 26 November 2013

Dear all,

Regarding APV follow-up for the faculty's PhD students (item 5):

The Associate Dean for Education Jens Erik Mogensen has, in his capacity of chairman of FAMU, the overall responsibility for the mental work environment at the faculty.

That is why he asks the PhD committee to work with the initiatives mentioned, to improve the general well-being of the PhD students.

The PhD committee, however, may choose to pass the task of concretizing the initiatives on to other competent people, if such a move would make better sense. It is, though, important that an accountable person from the PhD committee is appointed and that the PhD committee follows the proceedings closely.

The Associate Dean for Education Jens Erik Mogensen, chairman of FAMU, has the following recommendations to the PhD committee regarding the follow-up on APV 2012 for PhD students:

- a) The PhD committee draws up a plan of action describing how to ensure increased focus on continuous harmonization of expectations with PhD students during the programme. This should include focus on stress prevention and avoidance of excessive pressure of work (for instance by addressing the level of ambition in connection with the dissertation and reflections on career opportunities outside the university world).
- b) The PhD committee draws up a plan of action outlining how to ensure an amplification of the acknowledgement and appreciation of the PhD students – including focus on increased professional and social involvement in the local environment (most often the department) and other professional milieus.
- c) The PhD committee prepares a briefing of the departments, emphasizing that all PhD students must participate in the annual performance appraisals. This implies, among other things, that each department clearly states with whom the students conduct their performance appraisals and how follow-up at management level is ensured in cases where this person is not the head of the department.

Additionally, the committee will provide continual focus on supervision of good quality.

Jens Erik Mogensen furthermore encourages the PhD committee to support the exchange of experience with especially efficient PhD environments (such as MEF).

For each field of action the committee will appoint a person responsible, and the committee decides how to monitor the development of each initiative.

Because of gender-related discrepancies in the assessment of the general well-being, the committee is encouraged to arrange a dialogue meeting with the students where everybody (i.e. PhD students of both sexes) is invited to comment on selected APV areas, cf. above, and comment on the discrepancies in the responses – especially with regard to the following issues:

- The experience of stress and imbalance in terms of working hours and workload (9 and 10)
- Expectations in terms of good HR management and who the manager is (immediate superior in the APV questionnaire) (17)
- Expectations in terms of feedback – what kind of feedback, professional and general acknowledgement
- Working with change in a positive way: in which situations/ new thinking/ ideas (27)
- Helping and supporting each other – what does this imply (professionally and socially)? (31)
- Expectations in terms of collaboration on research tasks (55)

The numbers in the parentheses refer to the questions in the APV 2012 questionnaire.

Best regards,

Peter