

Meeting date: 17 May 2021 10:00-12:00

Meeting place: Zoom

Meeting subject: PhD-programme committee - Biology

Attendees:

VIPs: Bente Aagaard Lomstein (BAL), Kurt Thomas Jensen (chair) (KTJ), Wolf Eiserhardt (WE), Volker Loeschcke (VL)

PhD-students: Solvei Mundbjerg Jensen (SJ) (Aquat Biol), Michael Bjerre Pedersen (MP) (Zoophys), Magnus Aaskov (MA) (Zoophys), Anne Aagaard Lauridsen (AL) (Gen, Ecol & Evol), Candice Power (CP) (Ecoinf & Biodiv); Rhys Lemoine (Gen, Ecol & Evol)

PhD-programme secretary: Benita Nordentoft Hyldgaard (BNH)

Declined:

VIP: Mark Bayley (MB);

PhD students: Kris-Emil Mose Jørgensen (KEJ), Ann-Sofie Dam (ASD), Stefano Scilipoti (SS), Clemence Krystel Marie Rose (CR) (Gen, Ecol & Evol)

Part 1 (with PhD students) 10:00-11:00:

1. News and information (KTJ)

1.1 Suggestions for PhD courses and ECTS activities? (See App. 4; Feb 2021 + App. 5; Feb 2021 from last meeting)

- KTJ asked all to send suggestions to PhDprogram@bio.au.dk. KTJ will soon ask all BIO VIP staff to consider planning PhD courses.

1.2 PhD events

1.2.1 *Career workshops after the summer holiday (App. 1) (KTJ/BNH)*

- KTJ informed about two career workshops to be held after the summer holiday.
- Nobody opposed to the suggested dates: 14th and 28th of September 2021. BNH will send Outlook invitations to all PhD students and postdocs at Biology soon.

1.2.2 *Social events – if restrictions allow it (CR/BNH)*

- CR shortly informed her idea about a picnic for PhD students at Biology in the University Park in June as the first PhD event. Date is not decided yet. Andres from Aquatic Biology will help planning the PhD events.
- CR also suggested to include a social event after the AU Career workshops in September.
- The purpose is socializing and networking across the department.

1.3 Corona-status

1.3.1 *PhD students are back at Campus*



- KTJ will attend a meeting in GSNS this Friday (May 21 2021) about the corona status for PhD students. KTJ asked for input and issues to bring forward.
 - o BL pointed out that many supervisors are still working from home and it is not entirely “back to normal”.
 - o BL also mentioned that many PhD students have been unable to go abroad. CP told that she needs to fit several things into the final 6 months: going abroad, thesis writing, project work etc.
- KTJ informed that it is still possible to apply for extensions. PhD student and supervisor must write an e-mail with arguments to KTJ – and he will forward it to GSNS. There are no general rules regarding the extensions (who, when and why) – it will be an individual evaluation.

1.3.2 *PhD defense – current restrictions*

- KTJ informed that PhD defenses must be online. *This has changed since the meeting was held. Supervisors and Danish members of the assessment committee, plus colleagues from AU are allowed to physically attend the PhD defense. Restrictions about distance, face masks and negative test still apply*
- WE pointed out that PhD defenses still needs to be online in some form due to international assessors

2. Coaching (information)

2.1 Coaching sessions for PhD students: What, when and why (Maria Blach Nielsen)

- MBN shortly presented PhD coaching at Biology. The purpose of coaching is to support change and a discussion of what is most important to the PhD student. Coaching is about asking questions and guide the PhD student to make an overview or a plan themselves.
- MBN can help with stress management and time management, motivation and matching expectations (from themselves and from supervisor).
- Matching of expectations between supervisor and PhD student is key. MBN has done this at the first coaching session. BL argues that it is relevant to do it in the very beginning of the PhD studies, especially for foreign PhD student. The PhD committee and MBN agrees, that this should be done in the beginning of the PhD studies (between supervisor and PhD student and discussed with mentor). MBN will revisit the matching of expectations form at the first session after 3-4 month to check if there is a need for adjustments
- Approx. 35 PhD students have received a coaching session until now. The number of sessions in total spans from one to eight. If there are more sessions the PhD student may have assignment(s) to work on between sessions. A session is 1 hour.
- MBN contact new PhD students 3-4 month after the PhD study is initiated and contact PhD students again after the part A exam, since MBN has experienced that some PhD students need coaching at these two stages in their PhD study.

- KTJ asked if there are any key points that MBN have noticed during the coaching. MBN points out that the supervisor sometimes needs to be reminded that the PhD students may hesitate to ask questions and highlights the importance of listening
- MBN informs that PhD students can always reach out if they need a coaching session: <https://bio.medarbejdere.au.dk/research-support/coaching-of-phd-students/>

3. Mentor (discussion)

3.1 Mentor obligations and responsibility (App. 2)

- KTJ points out that the mentor should inform new PhD students about course work, teaching obligations and salaried work
- KTJ informs about a new obligation: formation of a PhD committee for the PhD student
- WE argues that the mentor role should be about mentoring – not administrative stuff (i.e. rules and regulations). A mentor should be an experienced VIP that the PhD student can contact regarding e.g. scientific and practical questions, collaboration issues and strategic considerations (e.g. thoughts about career)
- BNH suggested that she can inform about rules and regulations at the introduction meeting. KTJ argues that supervisors sometimes forget the rules and regulations and need to be reminded. BL points out that the things listed can be used as a checklist and that the mentor should make sure that the student has been informed.
- MBN points out that administrative information etc. can be an “ice breaker” to initiate a relationship between mentor and PhD student
- SJ argues that it is relevant with a physical meeting with the mentor so that the new PhD student knows who their mentor is and the mentor role. KTJ informs that it is now mandatory for the mentor to invite to an introduction meeting.
- MBN sends a link to a homepage with advice on mentoring: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/administration/hr/kompetenceudvikling/styrk-talentet-mentorordning/>

Conclusion: BNH will revise the document describing mentor obligations or mentoring role

4. Half year meetings (discussion)

4.1 Revised model description (App. 3)

4.1.1 *Proposed process: 1) Optional for all PhD Students; 2) Evaluation (and adjustments) in Spring 2022*

- Half-year meeting model: Meeting two times a year with PhD student and PhD committee (Supervisor + “external” VIP, i.e. VIP not directly involved in the project, but with knowledge within the area). Agenda: Scientific discussion

of progress + PhD study as a whole (Project work, PhD courses, teaching, stay abroad, conferences etc.). After the meeting the PhD student writes a short summary (text to be uploaded to the PhD planner). Summary meeting with PhD student, supervisor and mentor to ensure that all agrees about the PhD plan and adjustments.

- BL informed that she has conducted seven “summary meetings” (approx. 30 min) as mentor. BL has received only positive feedback about the inclusion of an external VIP.
- BL pinpoints that stress-related issues may not be discovered at the half-year meeting. But that it is likely, that is will be discovered at the summary meeting with the mentor.
- BL also mentioned that the summary written after the half-year meetings highly increases the quality of the text uploaded to the PhD planner.
- PhD students were asked to comment on the model: AA thought that it sounded comprehensive when reading the document, but supports the idea and would like to try it. All PhD students attending the PhD programme meeting approved the presented model.
- WE asked whether the PhD committees will be official and argued that it would be relevant to younger scientists to add to their resume. The mentor should inform KTJ and BNH about the members of the PhD committee at the beginning of the PhD studies – which makes it official to some degree. It will not be posted anywhere.

Conclusion: KTJ will inform the management board that the PhD programme committee members support the presented model for the half-year meetings

5. Any other business

Nothing

Part 2 (without PhD-students and BHN) 11:00-12:00

1. Incoming applications