



**Datum:** 2023-02-30  
**Time:** 20th February  
**Place:** Zoom

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**Attendees:** 11 (see Appendix)

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## Welcome and opening

Ole Kristian welcomed the participants

- Introduction of SiN board members
- Introduction of the leaders of the local organizations

## Scheduling future meetings

Ole Kristian asked whether the timing for meeting (Monday evening) works for everyone, no objections

## Communication platform

- Slack was introduced last year
- everyone from the local organizations has access
- Regina asked the leaders of local organization to make sure that the access and info about SiN is passed when the board composition is changed
- Joanna (UiBdoc) asked to send out a calendar invitation next time, will be done

## Presentation of the working groups

- Finances working group was found due to the financial issues last year
- Career Development & Transferable Skills
- Mental health in connection with supervision
- Ole Kristian asked the leaders of local organizations whether there are any other topics, which they would like to have addressed
- Viktor (TODOS) is interested in the event life after PhD, he contacted SiN about it and SiN is eager to cooperate with UiT



- Ole Kristian commented that we would appreciate if local organization contact us regarding cooperation e.g. for events
- Dimitrios would like to address mental health of PhD candidates and PostDocs coming from countries with domestic strife (e.g. war or any other issues in the countries of origin) as it can affect their well-being enormously
- UsN SPO doesn't have any practice so far regarding handling conflicts between PhD candidates and supervisor, one candidate ended up having a heart attack due to the conflict with the supervisor, Dimitrios would like to see the university to come up with guidelines and regulations
- UsN SPO made suggestions to the university regarding the regulations, but the organization is new, not really taken seriously, and the university is new as well
- Joanna (UiBdoc): no proper representation for PosDocs, same time at the university as PhDs
- Ole Kristian was confronted with this issue already, he sees one part of the problem PostDocs being not really engaged with us at the same level as PhDs do
- Dimitrios's commented that PostDocs are not handled by PhD coordinators, and it is difficult to track down who the current PostDocs are. UsN is pushing toward better system to have an overview who is a PostDoc. There is a strategy meeting at the UsN regarding the process of a career planning, but only 3% of PhD candidates are invited to this meeting
- Ali (representation for Yucong, UiSDC) talked about the initiative from UiSDC called "Meet your potential employer", in cooperation with Stavanger commune. Local stakeholders are invited to the seminars for PhDs, where they have a discussion on a chosen topic, monetary contribution to the seminars from the local stakeholders. Ali doesn't have a concrete suggestion but maybe it is something to look into for SiN to as the more people we can reach the better
- Ole Kristian comments that his department mainly talks about career in academia
- Ole Kristian highlights how different some procedures are the universities are

cultural differences between the PhD candidate and supervisor; many PhD candidates are from abroad while most supervisors are Norwegian or from another

## Supervision

### Background on that topic

- SiN started to work together with a working group of UHR on a report mapping the current practices of PhD supervisory training at universities and university colleges in Norway



- the goal is to show the existing forms of PhD supervisory training at Norwegian higher education institutions, highlight best practices, and give recommendations to the institutions on how to implement supervisory training in the future
- SiN will write one chapter of the report giving the insights into the relationship between PhD candidates and supervisors
- chapter should be based on the information from the member organizations
- there will also be a survey from this working group of UHR sent out to local organizations in the spring
- unique opportunity for SiN to work directly on a report by UHR

### **Challenges PhD candidates face with respect to supervision**

- cultural differences between the PhD candidate and supervisor; many PhD candidates are from abroad while most supervisors are Norwegian or from another country than the PhD candidates' home country
- nature of relationship: PhD candidate is dependent on the supervisor in very aspect of the PhD
- PhD candidate and supervisor are unaware about the responsibilities and duties with respect to each other
- the supervisor might be unexperienced
- scientific conflict: when and what to publish; how owns intellectual property?
- PhD candidate and supervisor may have different goals within the research project either due to own scientific and personal goals, bound by funding, doesn't value the PhD candidate's interests in something else than the supervisor's own goals
- knowledge gap between PhD candidate and supervisor - PhD candidate needs time to learn and understand advanced concepts and methods within the PhD project
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- departments are small: when issues in the supervision relationship arise, it is difficult to talk with a non-partial person/mediator from the same department about
- difficult to change supervisor due to niche PhD projects and qualified supervisors and project funding
- one case at UiSDC involving serious conflict between a PhD candidate and the advisor, resulting in the change of the supervisor, and an extension, but an extension of 3 months only. Solving this situation was already very time-demanding
- miscommunication between the PhD candidate and supervisor

### **Influence of supervision on time needed to finish a PhD within the time of the PhD contract**

- miscommunication of duties and responsibilities within the PhD project and duty work can lead to delays in research work
- supervisors should be responsible for the strategic management of the PhD project since they have more experience in estimating time needed for certain research tasks
- supervisors should set one ambitious goal and several realistic sub-goals to ensure constant progress and scientifically useful output by completion of the PhD
- a 3-year time frame for finishing a PhD is a very ambitious goal limiting PhD candidates to go deep into their research field
- open and clear communication between the PhD candidate and the supervisor is needed to keep the PhD candidate within the schedule of the PhD project
- regular, qualitative supervision meetings with clear communication between the PhD candidate and the supervisor are needed
- research field, the topic itself (how established it already is) and expectations of the supervisor influence the time needed for PhD
- some supervisors require a high number of publications, but do not plan thoroughly with the PhD candidate how to achieve this goal
- a change of supervisor leads to a delay since the scope of the project gets changed to some extent or completely
- industrial PhDs/PhDs in the public sector face difficulties in satisfying the demands from their supervisor from a higher education institution and their main employer. Goals between them might be different which can lead to delays
- supervisors and co-supervisors of a PhD candidate may have different goals such that a PhD candidate cannot satisfy the demands of all of them. This leads to non-stringent research and is likely to delay finishing the PhD project
- important to be able to reach your supervisor easily: more clear rules and communication needed when supervisors are on leave (sick leave, parental leave, sabbatical), retire, get promoted within the department/faculty/university, or when they change their workplace

### **Influence of supervision on a PhD candidates mental health**

- little available data on this topic but many PhD candidates know of peers struggling with their supervision and having mental health difficulties which may be connected to their PhD



- most universities lack an ombudsman for PhD candidates
- some universities offer an ombudsman for students and/or employees, but PhD candidates are not counted towards either of those groups
- UiB has recently employed a full time psychologist for PhD candidates
- SiN's survey on mental health with a main focus on influences on the corona pandemic might also give some insights on mental health issues due to supervision

## Transferable Skills

### UiT

- PhD candidates at UiT have accesses to the courses of High North Academy
- High North Academy offers intensive PhD courses that provide PhDs with marketable (transferable) skills
- courses as for example Scientific writing or Academic entrepreneurship are offered
- courses are open to PhD candidates from all faculties at UiT, regardless of scientific background
- PhD candidates from outside UiT, postdocs and others can participate if there are available places
- all courses are conducted in English
- courses are credited and recognized
- TODOS organizes a writing retreat (no speaker, people are sitting and writing at the same location) organized twice a year, Malangen Resort as location, 50% paid by the participants and 50% by the organization; approx. 60% of the budget is spent for these 2 retreats

### UiS

- no credited courses for transferable skills
- one day career development workshop for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers "One day career development workshop for postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers"
- course "PhD Skills Course: Open Innovation" mandatory for candidates of UiS' PhD-program in natural sciences and technology
- other PhD-candidates must apply for admission to the course
- idea for an event: presentation on something random in a social manner to develop presentation skills and overcome shyness, for now only an idea



## NHH

- Academic writing course for 2.5 ECTS “Academic Writing in a Research Setting”
- the course is also open to PhD students from other institutions who are able to attend lectures physically at NHH
- different courses in transferable skills available at NHH as it is a business school
- seminar series about career planning, but only offered at the Department of Strategy and Management
- NHHdoc is a young organization, in process of establishing them and making themselves legitimate for the university, then they can take action and be politically active at the university level and & career development

## UiB

- 5 ECTS are mandatory in transferable skills
- extensive course “Theory of Science and Ethics” with two written assignments
- career center offers academic writing courses (writing for different purposes e.g. for the public sector)
- course “Academic Writing for Master’s and PhD Students in Language and Linguistics” is open to all PhD students
- exchange programs with other universities which allow to participate in transferable skills courses, e.g. entrepreneurship course in Graz
- Universitetsbiblioteket organizes so-called “Shut-up and write” seminars, where people come together and work on their assignments

## DION (NTNU)

- differences between faculties in recognizing the courses
- transferable skills courses are not recognized at Faculty of Natural Sciences (NV) and Faculty of Engineering Science (IV)
- NTNU’s library offers some courses on academic writing and publishing, the course consists of 2-3-hour lectures in Zoom over a period of 4 days
- NTNU has an agreement with “Nature Masterclasses”, which offer professional development training for researchers via online courses and workshops, they also offer tailor-made workshops
- at the faculty of Medicine and Health Science all PhD candidates need to take the course “Scientific publishing and research” communication (5 ECTS)



## UiO

- different courses on transferable skills offered, among other course in Adobe Illustrator
- course in science communication, which helps to develop skills one need to communicate science to fellow scientists and to the public “Communicating Science”, 5 ECTS, poster, oral PowerPoint presentation and paper writing are covered; this course is open to all faculties and departments
- course “Entrepreneurship Research” about foundations, recent developments, and emerging topics of the entrepreneurship research field, additionally various tools for data collection and analysis as well as strategies for presenting and publishing research papers are covered
- other courses “Innovation and Intellectual Property Rights” & “Teaching in STEM”
- also career development courses are offered, e.g. at the MN faculty once a year PhD candidates can have their CV checked
- UiOdoc organizes PhD&PostDoc breakfast, for which they invite people from different departments to give 1 hour seminar

## PhD funds

- a survey about available PhD funds will be sent out by SiN
- different cuts in the PhD and Postdoc budget have been known to SiN
- PostDocs could be more affected by these cuts than PhDs

## Events

- Ole Kristian was invited to a local event from UiBDoc
- Ole Kristian has a goal to travel across Norway this year and meet the local organizations
- Ole Kristian asked local organizations to share with SiN the streamed events

## Additional questions and discussion

- Viktor (TODOS) is interested in the event “Life after PhD”. Have similar events been organized by SiNbefore? Any structure, how-to?
- NHH has quite a lot of these kind of similar events, the best strategy is to find an interesting institution where alumnis work, they have an honest opinion



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Zoom

- Ali (UiSDC) is going to share information about the event “Meet your employer”
- Anna (UiOdoc), SiN’s event manager last year, last year there was an event “Life after PhD”, professional speaker (cost 8000 NOK), who talked for 1 hour, was invited; former PhD candidates who are working in different sectors were invited as well, they were provided with a template with questions, there is a document on the Googel Drive with some suggestions

## Meeting closing

Ole Kristian declared the meeting as closed at 21.00





SiN Quarterly Meeting 2023-02-20  
Zoom

## **Appendix: Attendees**

### **SiN**

Ole Kristian Dyskeland

Regina Paul (DION)

Zihao Wang

Friederike Schäfer

Dimitrios Polychronopoulos (UsN SPO)

Anum Masood

### **Local organizations**

Anna Piterskaya (UiOdoc)

Joanna Spyra (UiBdoc)

Ali Alkaraly (UiSDC)

Olivia Kim (NHHdoc)

Minh Nhat Pham (TODOS)