



Datum: 2023-04-24

Time: 19.00 March 24th - 20.30 March 24th

Place: Zoom

Attendees: 13 (see Appendix)

Welcome and opening

Ole Kristian Dyskeland greeted all the participants, everyone introduced themselves

Consultations

- 3 consultations so far
- one consultation on public's commission proposal for a new admission system for undergraduate students
- second consultation on Norwegian language as professional language in academia; delicate topic, balancing international research with the national identity part; different ways to balance; SiN has the opinion that if the government will insist too much on the Norwegian language in academia, it will only dissuade internationals
- third consultation on accreditation of universities
- recently received a consultation on professional training which was evaluated as not relevant by SiN as non-research related
- Friederike: we do our best to include local organizations and we kindly ask to respond to consultations; better to send a line than nothing; we would like to represent the opinion of all local organizations and not only the board
- next consultation will be about open publishing and open science; consultation is due in the beginning of the fall semester; as this topic is relevant for everyone, we are going to ask for input in the middle/end of June

Working groups

- 3 working groups: finances, mental health and career
- finances group: SiN is in a not good financial situation; we will have to make some cuts compared to the decisions made at the AGM; implemented much stricter



internal control in the board regarding traveling and conference attendance (approval by the president required first); looking for alternative revenues; things are progressing slowly; hopefully we will be able to sponsor some local events or host some events on our own accessible to all local organizations (in autumn)

- career group: get a broad overview on the courses targeted towards development of transferable skills at Norwegian universities; we kindly ask to spread the survey once again as not that many replies; we are going to make a statement based on the results (evaluation during summer); hopefully we are going to offer an event devoted to the development of transferable skills mental health: there will be a survey on mental health in connection to supervision; asking for anecdotal evidence to identify which kind of problems people have with the supervision and their mental health in connection to that; based on the results there will be a position statement or we will bring up examples in the media; reasoning behind the survey is that problems with supervisors and mental health are very common at Norwegian universities; universities in Norway have issues with recruiting PhDs; a lot of PhDs are dropping out
- Ole Kristian will be present at the yearly conference of National Research Ethics Committee, submit in August and ask for opinion (?)
- Ole Kristian: mental health numbers are very bad and universities are slowly aware of it

PhD supervision

- Friederike is a member of the UHR working group related to supervision and supervision training
- the group is working on the report about the current situation and what would be important
- what should supervisors learn and know in order to supervise PhD candidates and PostDocs
- this time focus is on the mental health and conflict management
- this part of the report will be prepared in the next week, the report is due after summer, Friederike would like to finish her part in June
- kind request to provide a written summary next week
- question to local organizations on **existing regulations on conflict management**
 - UiBdoc: regulations in place



- UiA: 6 different schools, regulations are decentralized, PhD coordinating team, no external mediators but there are internal ones, who are not related to the project
- UiO: differences between departments, change of a supervisor is a difficult process
- NHH: PhDs are employees and are considered as such, i.e., conflicts with a supervisor should be treated similarly to other conflicts at a work place, it is not very well known and understood resulting in problems because supervisors are trusted more than the PhD candidates; HR or head of the department is considered as mediator
- UiS handbook doesn't contain regulations, HRS handbook is only in Norwegian, in case of a conflict recommended to talk to the head of the department who is the manager of both, the supervisor and the candidate, privacy is not good; therefore, important to have at least 2 supervisors, in case of an unsolvable conflict a possibility that a third supervisor gets on team or the co-supervisor became the main supervisor, however, name of the former supervisor is kept
- question to local organizations on **supervisor training**: Should professors be trained to become a supervisor and if yes what should be the part of that education?
 - UiS: already one week seminar in place; new supervisors are attending seminars
 - NTNU physics department: one day seminar and workshop session on supervision, this training is raising existing issues as e.g. how to handle situations when candidates are not able to go to conferences due to financial limitations, emphasizing the importance of having at least two co-supervisors; ideally there should be a mentor for a PhD candidate as e.g. PostDoc or assistant professor, someone who is closely working on the same project
 - NHH: important to have a talk with the supervisor regarding expectations, e.g. should the research be industry or research oriented; set of workload; important to gradually build new supervisors, e.g., would be beneficial to first be a co-supervisor and gain some experience before becoming supervisor on your own; sense of insecurity in new supervisors
 - NMBU: training existing, half a year course, not obligatory and not all supervisors attend this course are a result

Costs due to residence permit

- different universities handle residence permit costs arising for temporary employees from non-EU countries in relation to their employment differently



- NTNU: according to NTNU International Research Support it is not covered by NTNU for temporary employees, possibility to get an advanced salary payment to cover the costs, some supervisors are accommodating and cover these costs from project money, differences between NTNU campuses
- UiS: agreement with the organization *Relocation ES*, will help to apply for visa and cover the fee and costs, provide help with visa extension due to contract extension, costs will be covered, hotel costs for one month upon arrival can also be covered, previously housing on campus for 6 months was available
- UiA: agreement with *Relocation Adger*, university pre-pays and then deducts the costs from the first salary, very efficient process
- UiO: very good guidelines when coming to Norway; however, no mention of reimbursement of visa related costs
- Ole Kristian: we will have to argue about it as we put some additional costs on PhD candidates from non-EU, if university hires someone from non-EU they should cover these costs
- Anum: it would be beneficial to have a starter package for employees coming to Norway (e.g. how to open an account in a bank), as it is sometimes challenging to get guidance, also PhDs often do not know about some benefits they have and they get to know about them too late, NHHdoc has such a document, UiO has a very good documentation about coming to Norway, SiN could combine these documents and provide something similar on national level

Funds for language refinement

- it should be supported by the university to have the thesis proof-read
- NHH provides up to 10000 NOK
- UiO: people are advised to go through the proof-reading and they can set some funds aside, should contact their department regarding the available funding, probably the same situation as with Norwegian language courses - some faculties cover it, some not
- USN: questions regarding money should be handled with HR, upon request one can get an updated Excel file, in case of large expenses approval in advance is needed, proof-reading falls in category of the same expenses as travelling, candidates themselves can choose what to prioritize
- Ole Kristian: What is our conclusion? Do we need a policy document? UiBdoc thinks it is not a top priority, other local organizations agree

Any relevant topics for local organizations



- NMBU: budget cuts, applications for Norwegian course from PhDs are more often rejected; question whether university is obliged to provide these courses for PhDs; based on university initiative, permanent employees are prioritized and funding for temporary employees was cut
- NHH: introduction of a new Norwegian course aimed at permanent staff, but PhDs are encouraged to take it; usually 10 people every year who take this course, NHH plans to extend it, however, priority is given to permanent staff; PhDs are allowed to take the course intended for master students, Norwegian class is not considered as a working duty
- NTNU: various Norwegian classes during the day, only the last level after working day; previously PhDs were prioritized for the classes, new language policy since January 2023 according to which PhDs won't be prioritized anymore; source of payment for the courses varied previously: either department or the PhD funds, however, with the new policy some departments already refused the payment
- UiO: Norwegian courses are very expensive; issues with funding, depends on the department whether the costs will be covered; some departments fund temporary staff, e.g., for 2 semesters; one has to apply fast for the course to get a spot
- UiS: difference between PhDs based on the funding source: stipendiat (employee) and scholarship holders (student), employees get courses free of costs and scholarship holders not, may also look for courses outside university



Appendix: Attendies

Ole Kristian Dyskeland (SiN, NHHdoc)
Regina Paul (SiN)
Friederike Schäfer (SiN)
Yucong Ma (SiN, UiSDC)
Dimitris Polychronopoulos (SiN, USN SPO)
Anum Masood (SiN)
Nicolas Gibney (SiN)
Jareef Bin Martuza (SiN)
Roxana Pop (UiOdoc)
Ram Srinivas (UiAdoc)
Diana Giovanni Magnano (DION)
Runa Falck (UiBdoc)
Olga Mikhailova (SoDoc)

Absent

Zihao Wang (SiN)
TODOS
PhD Forum
NIHSPO