



Datum: 2023-09-12

Time: 20.00 Sep 12th - 21.45 Sep 12th

Place: Zoom

Attendees: 13 (see Appendix)

Welcome and opening

Ole Kristian Dyskeland greeted all the participants, everyone introduced themselves

Updates

- Forskerutdanningskonferansen 2023: Etikk i forskerutdanning on 13th and 14th of September in Oslo
- UiODoc is joining
- Forskningsetisk forum 2023 on 19th of September with focus the relationship between a PhD candidate and a supervisor and on the ethical aspects of supervision

Ethics in supervision of PhDs

- Ali (UiSDC): Is there any action or systematic way to handle conflict situation between supervisor and PhD candidate, involving consequences? Words can be ignored, but if there would be official consequences, it would be more difficult to ignore. At UiS are many talks about it, but no specific actions. Is there a way to push towards conflict resolution in more systematic way?
- Ole Kristian: the most common answer we get when we advocate for necessity of PhD *ombud*, who would facilitate conflict resolution, is that we are employees and have to solve conflict situations as employees. However, this is not 100%-applicable as we are in between two roles - student and employee, and there is clearly power imbalance between PhD candidate and supervisor, although both are employees. PhDs are often worried to file an official complaint and change of a supervisor is scary for most of us. However we have to admit that making changes is not scary, but necessary.
- Ali (UiSDC): feedback system required, e.g. experience exchange with current or former PhDs about a supervisor; it is common that in groups with many PhDs, a noticeable number of PhDs quit. Can it be a signal that maybe this professor is a good researcher but not a good supervisor?



- Ole Kristian: kind of an exit interview would be beneficial to establish such feedback system
- Roxana (UiODoc): UiODoc had a survey with ca. 700 respondents (PhDs and PostDocs), questions about supervision, input with complaints, a few hundreds of queries; possible for SiN to use the results
- Anum: from her experience in DION, at NTNU no guidelines for change of the supervisor exist, no rules whom to contact, where to go next, but such rules are essential; at physics department: workshop for PhDs and PostDocs which facilitates open discussions every semester
- Olga (NMBU): at NMBU the official recommendation is to talk to the dean or HR in case of conflict, but the problem is that professors collaborate and it is difficult to find someone unbiased; additional complication is that each topic is very unique. Idea about establishing a system with feedback/review of your supervisor, so potential PhDs and PostDocs can read experiences of their predecessors and understand for themselves if the supervision style of their potential advisors suits them
- Ole Kristian was also thinking about it, especially in the context of an exit interview
- Gabriela (DION): discussions about ombud for PhDs and PostDocs at different levels at NTNU: in the Research Council, where the vice dean is present, however, even if they are presented with numbers and cases of unhappy PhDs and PostDocs, they are still able to neglect the fact that an ombud would be very beneficial. Mostly they say that there are already good guidelines and established procedures in place, and they do not understand which problems we you talking about. Gabriela promised them to get some statics
- Viktor (TODOS): ombud is forgotten as the university got cuts in budget: *driftsmidler* of 70000 NOK instead of previous 120000 NOK for 4 years of contract, there is a deal with a psychological institution, TODOS tried to promote it by putting it in the PhD guidelines. However, there have been severe issues with confidentiality

Mental Health And Supervision

- Friederike is part of the working group of UHR on supervision
- they are preparing report mapping the current practices of PhD supervisory training at universities and university colleges in Norway
- the goal of this report 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



- the report is to be submitted by 1 December 2023
- when it is ready, we are going to distribute it among our member organizations

Working groups

Mental Health and Supervision

- Nicolas: only 27 respondents in the survey on supervision so far; most respondents from UiT
- more responses needed, a lot of interesting things to talk about

Skills

- 178 respondents in the survey
- evaluation in process
- report is going to be distributed soon
- webinar on digital presentations "Digital Communication that works" 14th of September at 16.15; more advertisement would be beneficial

PhD candidates from countries at risk

Zohreh (USN SPO):

- PhD candidates from countries at risk (Iran, Pakistan, Russia, China)
- sizeable number of PhDs and PostDocs from these countries in Norway
- if PhD/PostDoc is born in one of these countries - negative impact on your career
- PhDs and PostDocs from these countries, therefore, have difficult time – mental health burden

Ole Kristian:

- it is difficult for SiN to take an action as it outside of our power: we cannot influence assessment of geopolitical risk for Norway
- we can take care of mental health of PhDs and PostDocs
- How do local organizations or institutions handle this situation?

Gabriela (DION):



- number of cases known where people from these countries have been denied a work contract even if they have another additional citizenship; rejected based on the birth place
- in her department (Department of Materials Science and Engineering) there is a long history of employing Iranian and Chinese PhDs/PostDocs, now it is impossible
- the department tries to take action during hiring process: when the decision on a candidate was made, they write in the report that is not the best candidate but the best available
- a lot of motion at NTNU from Iranian community
- support at the collegial level, no alienation
- ongoing discussion by the head of the department on how to support, but nothing really solid

Nicolas (SiN, NHH)

- leader of KiF – gender balance in university and research – Dean of law faculty in Oslo, maybe we can raise his attention
- we cannot change the situation, as such decisions are coming from the state security services
- worth to focus on the mental health aspects

Viktor (TODOS):

- support community events, e.g. potluck with Chinese PhD candidates, so people can learn the culture Anum (SiN, NTNU):
- we don't have any control
- it is important to support people around you who are affected
- make people aware of this issue because colleagues are often not aware Zohreh (USN SPO):
- all departments are aware as they got new regulations

Ole Kristian (SiN, NHH):

- probably still different regulations in nuclear physics and economics departments
- we can present this issue to the press as exclusion/discrimination due to not being Norwegian

Zohreh (USN SPO):



- USN moved this discussion to the national level
- if every university would contact the national security level, it potentially could have an impact
- action from more universities is need to make it possible

Ole Krisitian (SiN, NHH):

- best way is to reach out to the local organizations, so they contact leaders at their institutions
- SiN cannot take this battle, but the local organizations can make difference

Gabriela (DION):

- these restrictions apply not only to universities, but also to your future career path
- How should PhD candidates from these countries have motivation to finish PhD if they do not have any career options in Norway?
- even if a person was born in one of these countries and moved at the age of two to a country not considered as risk are still affected by the new regulations
- we need to encourage all local organizations to reach out to their departments heads

Ram (UiAdoc):

- local organizations should be united and should come up with some kind of a document on this matter and present it to our universities Zohreh (USN SPO):
- will share the documents which will be distributed with local organizations

Other

Dimitris (USN SPO): Any advice on best practices to run the elections

- Teams, Nettskjema to secure the identity but still keep the elections anonymous
- Regina: DION used Mentimeter and it raised complaints as you can vote multiple times

Olga (SoDoc):

- some students are using AI
- Are there any existing practices?
- Viktor (TODOS): students can use it, but not during the home exams



- Ole Kristian: educational law which determines the PhD education: we cannot be expelled for use of AI to plagiarize something in a source context

Roxana (UiODoc):

- UiOdoc is trying to negotiate with the administrations extensions for the board
- they want to have at least short extensions to motivate people to join the board
- UiBDOc was asked to make an overview of institutions which provide contract extensions for serving in a local organization to make a case: it is pretty hard to recruit new members as for now it is voluntary work and PhDs/PostDocs are already very busy
- DION: 1 month extension for a regular board member and 2 months for the president; part of DIONs mandate to represent PhDs is to represent them in Research Council and Innovation Council, which is a lot of work, extension might be related to this fact
- NIHSPO: leader gets reduction of teaching hours (20-40 hours per year), which is a good solution
- USN SPO: very new organization, so far no extension, but were offered to take some amount from the funding as a compensation; however, it would be more valuable to get e.g. a week extension
- NMBU: get monetary compensation, extensions was too much work for various departments, every position has their monetary compensation
- UiS: either monetary compensation or extension, 1 month for regular board member and 2 months for president
- Ole Kristian: SiN has a survey from 2021 with the replies from local organizations regarding that matter

AGM 2023

- AGM in Trondheim this year
- 11 & 12 November
- SiN is in a bad financial situation, therefore, we can cover attendance of only 1 delegate from a local organization
- suggestions for changing the statutes will be presented
- agenda will be sent out later together with invitations
- all the positions are up for election



SiN Quarterly Meeting 2023-09-23
Google Hangout

- Olga (SoDoc): Whom is beneficial to send to the AGM: a person who is a candidate for SiN board or a person who knows the existing issues
- Ole Kristian (SiN): your decision, but it is beneficial to be physically present at the AGM if a candidate, however, also possible to present on Zoom; elections will be online
- Gabriela (DION): Is the board membership compensated?
- Ole Kristian: yes, but we will reduce the compensation; also probably the same budget will be allocated for the next year, not accounted for inflation



Appendix: Attendies

Ole Kristian Dyskeland (SiN)
Regina Paul (SiN)
Dimitris Polychronopoulos (SiN, USN SPO)
Anum Masood (SiN)
Nicolas Gibney (SiN)
Jareef Bin Martuza (SiN)
Minh Nhat Pham (TODOS)
Ingeborg Ljødal (NIHSPO)
Roxana Pop (UiOdoc)
Ram Srinivas (UiAdoc)
Gabriela Kazimiera Warden (DION)
Ali Alkaraly(UiSDC)
Muntequa Ishtiaq Siraji (UiBDoc)
Qquillaccori Lopez (NHHdoc)
Olga Mikhailova (SoDoc)
Zohreh X(USN SPO)

Absent

Zihao Wang (SiN)
Friederike Schäfer (SiN)
Yucong Ma (SiN, UiSDC)
PhD Forum