

Meeting: 13th October 2021 at 13.00-15.00
UN-meeting, LICS

Minutes

Present:

UN members:

Ethan Weed (chair of the meeting), Alexandra Kratschmer, Cordula Vesper

UN LICS

Observers:

Johan Valentin Keller (student representative), Emma Riisgaard Olsen (student representative), Mina Almasi (student representative), Kristian Tylén, Peter Bakker, William McGregor, Mikkel Wallentin, Karsten Olsen, Rebekah Baglini, Riccardo Fusaroli, Anna Zamm, Andreas Højlund, Lau Møller Andersen, Ross Deans Kristensen-McLachlan, Joshua Skewes (head of department), Kristina Duun (student counsellor), Sabrina Bækkelund Larsen (Department consultant), Camilla Mark Thygesen (SNUK, minute taker)

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MINUTES:

1. Approval of agenda and follow up on the minutes from last meeting

The agenda was approved and there was no follow-up on the minutes from the last meeting.

2. Briefings (orientation)

2.1 News from the Board of Studies

Ethan Weed gave the following briefings:

- There had been a small presentation from Director of Studies about the changes to the quality assurance policy, which is also on the agenda for the UN meeting.

2.2 News from the Institute Forum

There has not been a meeting since the last UN meeting, so no news.

2.3 News from the student guidance

The representative from the student guidance informed:

- Studiepraktik is coming up in week 43, and they are working on getting that ready.
- Semester meetings are coming up soon.

2.4 News from fagrådet and student forum

From Cognitive science student council:

It was informed that there has been held a student driven business/industry meeting with guest from different organizations and companies, which gave the students some good insight into how the the degree programme is relevant to

the job market. The meeting was a success and will be organized again next year. Several of the present teachers asked to be invited as well.

From Linguistics student council:

Johan Keller Jensen mentioned that he is still working on finding students for the election for the board of studies.

2.5 News from staff

It was asked what the upcoming faglig weekend for the students at Linguistics was. Head of department explained that this is part of the *re-boarding* funding given to support for the third semester students after Corona.

At cognitive science something similar has been arranged. The weekend will have both a social and an academic content.

2.6 News from the study administration

Camilla Mark Thygesen presented the Arts Studier Newsletter which is publicly available at: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/fakulteter/ar/til-undervisere-paa-arts/nyhedsbrev-fra-arts-studier/>

Degree Programme Zoom and Learning Barometer surveys this autumn:

Head of department informed that it is important that students answer the survey, so the data becomes accurate. It is especially important that the students are informed about what is meant by the question on study activity, so they include all their activities and not only the hours of teaching each week.

3. Status of the action plans from *Årlig status* (decision)

Head of department presented some of the actions in the action plans and the status of these after they have been approved by the Director of Studies. A lot of the actions are being worked with ongoing at the department. E.g. a social life ambassador has been hired.

There is not much that the UN needs to do right now, since a lot of the actions are already being dealt with in other fora.

Decision:

The UN thinks that the department is living up to the action plan, and there is nothing specific that UN wants to work with. Things seems to be going well.

It was suggested to invite the social ambassador to a meeting to get an update on this in the next semester.

4. Assessment of teaching environment (item for decision)

Head of department explained the background for these action plans. The assessment in some way resembles a workplace environment assessment (APV). The results show the environment for the students at the department. It is a legal re-

quirement that this assessment be conducted once every three years. The objective is to identify any areas in which require a special effort to develop and ensure a good teaching environment for the students. The students have answered a long list of questions, including questions about harassment, violence and discrimination.

The department is working on a variety of actions to create a safe and good study environment and are looking at how to ensure a safer environment for especially vulnerable students.

Head of Department informed that his main priority in the action plan has been on creating a safe environment, where students know who to contact if anything happens, and are not afraid to contact either Head of Department, teachers or the student guidance. Accessibility both from Head of Department and other organs that can help students are very important.

The UN agrees that knowledge about who to contact is important, and is something that needs to be worked with both at the department, and at higher levels at the University.

It was mentioned that the student guidance does not directly help students who have been exposed to harassment or similar, since they are not trained for this, but they can help students get in contact with the right people, so it is a good idea to contact them.

It was mentioned that the university is working on a whistle blower arrangement, where students can report incidents anonymously. Head of Department and the rest of the UN supports this idea, and will make sure, that the knowledge of this is spread, once it is up and running.

Overall, the numbers in the surveys look good, but Head of Department informed that one out the 96 students, who have answered the survey for the Bachelor's Degree Programme in Linguistics, has reported daily violence from a teacher. This is something that the department takes very seriously. By creating a better environment for reporting incidents like these, the department hopes that students who experience this will come forward.

In addition the focus points mentioned above, the drafts of the action plans have been informed by conversations the Head of Department has had with both teachers and students prior to the UN meeting.

Decision:
UN approved the action plans.

The next step

- Sabrina will submit the action plans to the Board of Studies who will discuss these with a focus on sharing examples of good practice and ideas for initiatives across degree programmes.
- The action plans are approved by the director of studies and the vice-dean and published on the study portal.
- In parallel with the assessment of the teaching environment, the faculty management team and the schools will discuss the process for handling specific cases of bullying, harassment and discrimination among staff and students.

5. **New academic regulations for the Master's Degree Programme in Cognitive Science**

Head of Department shortly presented the process and the changes made in the regulations. Most of the changes are only minor and has come from suggestions from students.

It was mentioned that there is a mistake in one of the course descriptions. Kristian Tølen will send this to Head of Department after the meeting, so it can be corrected.

The UN had no further comments.

6. **Suggested changes for current academic regulations**

A suggested change to the course Social Media and Communication at Social Minds were discussed. It has been suggested to change the form and description of the exam.

The number of pages for the exam paper were discussed and the UN agreed that the number of pages for group exams shouldn't just be doubled per student. But besides that, it has to be up to the concrete course what the best model is.

Two different models were suggested:

Model 1 (+7-10)

1 student: 10-12 standardpages

2 student: 17-22 standardpages

3 student: 24-32 standardpages

Or:

Model 2 (+7)

1 student: 10-12 standard pages

2 student: 17-19 standard pages

3 student: 24-26 standard pages

Coordinator for the course Alexandra Kratschmer will decide on the best solution for the course.

The suggested change will then be sent to the Board of Studies, who will decide if they can recommend it for approval by the vice dean.

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7. Ny kvalitetspolitik for uddannelse på AU (drøftelsespunkt)

Ethan Weed shortly presented the changes to the quality assurance policy. The policy is understood as the set of values that AU strives to make the hallmark of our degree programmes. Ethan explained that the new policy only contains four sub-policies, where the former policy contained five.

The four sub-policies are:

Sub-policy 1: Getting students off to a good start

Sub-policy 2: High-quality, coherent degree programmes

Sub-policy 3: Motivational teaching and learning environments

Sub-policy 4: Highly qualified graduates with relevant competencies

Camilla Mark Thygesen informed that the changes to the policy right do not seem to change the indicators that the UN will be discussing at the yearly status in April. But after the approval of the AU policy, there will be a process at the faculty about how to implement this new policy, and if anything changes in the way the UN are asked to work with the yearly data, this will be informed.

Comments from the UN:

To sub-policy 1 it was mentioned that the requirements to the students after the first year of studies are very high. The first year should contain much more than focus on the academic content of the study. Making the actual study start more academic will all so put extra requirements on the tutors, which they do not get paid for.

To sub-policy 3 it was mentioned that the requirements for supervision and an ongoing dialogue between students and teachers do not match the economic savings in this area. The teachers do not get hours enough to provide this type of supervision.

Next step:

UN-chair person (Ethan Weed) passes on the comments from the UN to Julie Zederkof at j.zederkof@au.dk on the 28th October at the latest.

8. Election

The UN wish to remind students of the upcoming election. The dates for the elections period (opstillingsperiode) are now official, and will be from the 14th October to the 26th October. This information has been sent around to UN members and student representatives before the meeting. More information can be found at www.au.dk/valg

It was informed by Valentin that there are candidates for cognitive semiotics and cognitive science but there are not many from Linguistics. The list of candidates is ready to be sent in when the election opens, but the hope is to get a couple of extra students for linguistics.

9. News from Head of Department (Orientation/discussion)

9.1 Update on economic situation following the regionalization of Danish study places:

Head of Department informed that over summer the Danish government decided to move 10% of study places away from the city universities and to regional centers, or to cut study places to shift financing over to other forms of education that are required in/suited to regional centers. This will come at an economic cost to the universities. There is still much uncertainty associated with this decision and the processes that follow, but it seems like everything will happen very quickly and be decided by summer next year.

Head of Department provided the UN with some information and context as to how he projects that it will concern AU, Arts, and LICS.

The changes will have a long implementation phase, and will probably be done by 2030.

The changing economic situation is likely to have consequences for the number of staff, but due to the long implementation phase, it is the hope that this will be done by natural resignation e.g. via retirements which will not be reoccupied.

Head of Department informed the UN about what he predicts will be looked at from the faculty and university when making decisions:

- There will probably be a pressure to reduce number of dropouts – this is one of the places where the University can make money. But this is currently not a large problem at the department – except for the corona cohort.
- Employability will also be a factor, so the department will have to keep an eye on that, but in general it looks alright for the department.
- Digitalization – not a problem since this is already an integral part of the department.

It is not yet known if any programmes will be cut or changed in organization, but there might be a reduction in the number of supplementary subjects.

There might be a push for external funding. Head of Department does not want to create a culture where people write articles just to get funds. Head of Department will focus on helping staff apply for funds by doing things they are actually interested in.

