

Meeting: 21st April 2021 at 11.00-13.00

In Zoom

UN-meeting, LICS

Minutes

Present:

UN members:

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

UN LICS

Dato: 21.04 2021

Observers:

Johan Keller Jensen (student representative), Helle Skjøth Sørensen (student representative), Mathilde Hyldal (student representative), Kristian Tylén, Peter Bakker, William McGregor, Mikkel Wallentin, Mads Jensen, Karsten Olsen, Riccardo Fusaroli, Rebekah Baglini, Jakob Steensig, Ross Deans Kristensen-McLachlan, Josephine Brunsgaard (student counsellor), Joshua Skewes (head of department), Sabrina Bækkelund Larsen (Department consultant), Camilla Mark Thygesen (SNUK, minute taker), Sophie Stenderup Korch (tutor), Bastian Laurens Solås (tutor)

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Side 1/8

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

The agenda was approved, with smaller changes to the order of the items due to guests. 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 orientations:

- The Board of Studies (SN) had chosen to keep the 11 obligatory questions for teaching evaluations for the next 4 semesters. The question about midterm evaluation might change if the process for this evaluation changes. Currently, the midterm evaluation is used in different ways, at the different departments.
- The internal organization of Arts was also discussed. The head of the SN had chosen to focus on the issues for the SN and made the discussion about what the best organization for the SN could be. The SN agreed that decentralization seems like the best solution for the problems described in the note about the suggested new organization. It was also mentioned that although many of the tasks in the SN are administrative tasks that need to be taken care of, the SN would like to prioritize proactive initiatives and reflective discussions. Student participation was also discussed, as many students feel disconnected from the democratic process at the university. The SN hopes to provide some sort of incentive to make participation more attractive; this could involve shifting the focus toward active discussion of issues relevant to students.

2.2 News from the Institute Forum

- The internal organization was also discussed here. In general, the Institute forum does not support making a fourth institute, and at lot of the same points as from the discussion in the SN were broad up at the meeting.

- Research integrity: recently, certain areas of research have been attacked, especially on the social media and by politicians. The institute is working on a way to make it possible to report such attacks. Head of Department mentioned that these attacks actually are very common in some research areas. It should be taken seriously if any one experiences this, and it was noted that the legal department at the university provides great support in these cases.
- Institute economy: everything looks good at the moment. This might make it possible to get funds for different initiatives regarding returning to campus.

2.3 News from the student guidance

Josephine Brunsgaard reported that:

- It is a quiet period due to exams.
- Student guidance is in the process of holding meetings with the mentors at the different programmes. There have been some problems with the study groups on the second semester at cognitive science. They are looking into solutions for this, e.g. by having more focus on learning them how to work in a study group.

2.4 News from fagrådet and student forum meeting:

Linguistics (Johan):

- the students really value the evaluations of the courses, and would like to have more time to do these, e.g. 20 min., so they have the time to do it right.

Head of Department supported this.

- Students have asked for a clarification about the page number for group assignments. Students are wondering why some of the assignments double in the number of pages, while others do not. It was mentioned that the UN could look at this when revising academic regulations. It can also be taken up again in August, where the UN can discuss the need for any changes to current academic regulations that have had a full cohort of students.

2.5 News from staff

The union representative (Mikkel) reported that the work time agreement is currently being discussed.

2.6 News from the study administration

- The Arts Studier Newsletter is publicly available at the teacher's portal at Arts: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/fakulteter/ar/til-undervisere-paa-arts/nyhedsbrev-fra-arts-studier/>

It was asked why the poor solutions for international students on their third semester was not mentioned in the description of the published profile courses. To this it was answered that both Head of Department and representatives from the SN bring these problems up as often as possible, so that they are not forgotten. But changes to the third semester is up to the institute, and we can

only continue to try to focus the institutes attention on these issues. The study administration newsletter merely describes the current courses as they are. The UN briefly discussed whether the department should offer a profile course, but this idea did not get much support.

3. Annual status review 2021 (discussion)

At the previous UN meeting, the overall lines were discussed. Head of Department had, prior to this meeting, made a draft of the new action plans, on the basis of the discussion at the last meeting.

Status on last year´s action plans (taken from the action plans and approved by the UN):

BA linguistics:

Completed or nearly completed actions to improve retention: update and improve web material about the program, including pages linking to the program, development of alumni profiles for webpages, module in applied linguistics dedicated to working in a second language, development of an “uddannelsesjækker” survey for our webpage.

Completed actions for program development: employment of an assistant professor in computational linguistics.

MA linguistics:

Hire an assistant professor in computational linguistics to develop computational and technical aspects of the MA.

Develop a database of internship opportunities and develop greater support for internship placements.

Support and encourage students to write corporate theses.

Complete revision of the MA program, with a complete overhaul of all courses.

BA cognitive science:

Over and above coping with coronavirus, most of the quality development work this year has been focused on implementing the new BSc regulations. This is relevant for the policies relating to retention, structure and progress, learning environment, and relation to the labor market. The most salient changes to the program, and the specific policies they relate to, are as follows:

1) A new applied cognitive science course on second semester, to emphasize the relevance of the program, and to engage students in thinking of applications of their field (retention and relation to the labor market)

2) Re-naming and elaboration of descriptions of our methods courses, so that progress on mathematical, statistical, and computational topics is made clearer for students and potential employers (structure and progress and relation to the labor market)

3) *Revision of Methods 2: the General Linear Model, to focus on more fundamental mathematical topics, to provide a more solid basis for upper level methods courses (structure and progress)*

4) *Moving neuroscience to later in the program, so that students are more qualified to learn and apply the necessary data analysis methods (structure and progress)*

5) *Revision of some examination forms to better re-inforce learning goals.*

The first class of the new program started in fall 2020. Given the coronavirus lockdowns, it will be extremely difficult to evaluate the success of the changes, so we will need to consider these actions as ongoing for some years yet.

In addition to these changes, we also continue our focus on retention, with some actions that are still in earlier implementation stages:

Actions to improve retention: development of career days and other outreach activities to demonstrate relevance of program; establishment of a student mentor program; establishment of a study cafe.

MA cognitive science:

The program began in E19 and so there are no completed actions.

MA cognitive semiotics:

It was a requirement of the recent process of downsizing of English language study places in Danish universities, that the language of instruction in the MA in Cognitive Semiotics be changed from English to Danish. There is no BA program with legal right of access to Cognitive Semiotics, and many of the programs' students have historically been recruited to the program from abroad. Thus the School was concerned about recruitment not being sufficient to make the program economically viable. To address these concerns, the program was completely revised for 2020. The main changes were as follows:

- *The number of courses co-taught with the MA in linguistics was increased from two to three. This was done to reduce costs on the program.*
- *Courses on experimental and computational topics in cognitive science and linguistics were re-introduced into the program. These topics have historically been of great interest to applicants to the program. We expected their re-introduction to make the program more attractive generally, and to also make the program more attractive to overflow students from our own linguistics and cognitive science bachelor degrees.*

At present cognitive semiotics is performing well in most areas. The main issue to address in the mid to long term is employability. We have attempted to address this with revisions in the academic regulations, and with other measures taken across the department, including increasing emphasis on internships, and

more recently, industrial MA theses, and increasing use of career days and other career profiling measures. These efforts are not measurable in the statistics yet due to time lag but we expect them to have a positive effect. Actions related to these measures are copy-pasted from linguistics, because they are derived from a strategy that is shared across the department.

Semiotics is currently a well performing, low-cost program. If employability improves like we expect, we will have navigated the reduction of English places extremely well. Following instructions to focus only on problematic areas under the current circumstances of the coronavirus lockdown, and given the otherwise good performance of the program, further analysis of possible areas of improvement will be postponed until next year.

2021 action plans:

Head of Department explained that in general these are long term action plans, and therefore it can be difficult to see the effects from year to year. Additionally, this means that they will not change a lot from year to year. Especially for cognitive semiotics, where a lot of changes have happened over the last couple of years, we have yet to see the effects of these changes, and therefore the action plan remains more or less the same.

First year dropout – this has a yellow indicator for BA linguistics and BA cognitive science. Head of Department and the UN did not find the numbers worrying, since the indicator changes from green to red by just a couple of students. It was suggested that we focus on helping students with their study groups, since there have been some issues with that this year, which might also have affected the drop out.

Unemployment – this has a red indicator for both MA linguistics and MA cognitive semiotics. Here too, we cannot yet see the effects of changes that have already been implemented. This has been highlighted in the plans, and many of the initiatives will continue. In general, Head of Department is not worried.

Although the percentages are high, they reflect only a small number of students. In previous years, the MA linguistics programme has been lumped together with other small programmes, and this has affected the numbers. It is not known whether this has been the case again.

It was suggested that the problems for the international students in the third semester should be highlighted in the action plans.

Study intensity – this has a red or yellow indicator for both BA linguistics, MA linguistics, BA cognitive science and MA cognitive semiotics. As was discussed at the previous UN meeting, the department will focus on letting students know what to register as study activities.

Decision:

The UN approved the draft for the action plans, with the comments above. There are small typos, which can be sent to Head of Department. The action plans will be sent to SN.

4. Yearly status report from the co-examiner Chairmanship (discussion)

The yearly status report from the co-examiner Chairmanship was discussed by the UN. It was mentioned that one of the main issues in the report is the fact that the small number of exams with external co-examination makes it difficult for the chairmanship to participate actively in the development of the degree programmes. This decreases their contact and therefore knowledge about the programmes.

5. Approval of programmes for the study start (decision)

Linguistics:

The Head tutor for linguistics presented the draft for the programme. The specific times for the different events will be updated later. There are still some uncertainties due to possible corona restriction, so some of the social events might be changed a bit.

Comments from the UN:

There were no specific comments for this programme.

Cognitive Science (Sophie):

The Head tutor for cognitive science presented the draft for the programme. There are still some small uncertainties about the programme, e.g. who will be doing the academic events during the week.

Comments from the UN:

It was asked whether students should pay for their admission fee to Djurs Sommerland. To this it was answered that the students pay 400 kr. for this trip including transportation and entry.

General comments for both plans:

It was mentioned that both programmes look a bit packed. It was asked that they remember time for breaks, especially for the days on zoom. To this it was mentioned that the programmes are based on the basis of last year's programmes, which received good feedback from the students. The evening programmes are voluntary, and students who might need a break can stay at home.

It was mentioned that the department and the tutors are also working on programmes for the study start for the Master Programmes. These are shorter and

the students come in at a different time. The programmes for Master programmes do not have to be put online before the summer holidays like the programmes for the BA programmes. It will probably be 2 days of social events, and 3 days of introduction to academic computing skills. It was discussed whether these 3 days of introduction was a good idea, since it might be a bit much right at the beginning. The organizers responded that the workshop is being taught by the Centre for Humanities Computing, who have experience teaching these sorts of skills to students with no background in them. The goal of the workshop is to provide the students with the basic skills they will need, and will not be 3 days of intensive work with Python. The workshop is being offered because experience from the previous cohort of students suggests that it will help the students get the most out of courses later in the programme.

Decision:

The UN praised the work from the head tutors, and approved the programmes for the study start.

6. Orientation about new academic regulations for 2022

The UN was informed that there will be a process for revision the academic regulations for MA Cognitive science for 2022. The UN will be included in the process in August (overall learning outcomes and study overview) and in October (approval of the entire regulations). Head of Department explained that the revision will mainly consist of structural changes, which will lead to minor changes in some of the courses.

7. Commencement of studies exam on Master's degree programmes – pilot project

Ethan Weed informed the UN that prior to the meeting the official members of the UN had decided to choose the survey model for all three Master's degree programme. It was explained that the administration cancels the enrolment of students who do not answer the survey, and that students who do not intend to come to class, but still want to take the exam, also need to fill out the survey in order to stay enrolled.

8. News from Head of Department (orientation)

(1) UPDATE – POSITIONS

- IKK – Assistant Professor in Cognitive Science (No update)
- No plan to negotiate for new positions this round

(2) UPDATE – LINGUISTICS EXAM LANGUAGE

- Exemption from rule added to regulations for students enrolled prior to 2021
- No update – awaiting meeting with Director of Studies, Head of School, and a Faculty adviser

(3) INFORMATION – PROCESS FOR ASSIGNING BACHELOR ADVISERS

(4) INFORMATION – VISIT FROM THE DEAN

- June UN meeting
- To discuss Arts organisation

(5) INFORMATION – INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN DIALOGUE WITH LUND UNIVERSITY

- Discussion about cognitive science programs
- Next August
- Me, a teacher, and student

(6) UPDATE – COLLABORATION WITH RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

- Exchange with Radboud AI
- Rotating PhD school on developing cognitive models
- Yearly visits from Iris van Rooij
- Joint applications on cognitive modeling and philosophy of science

(7) DISCUSSION – CORONAVIRUS UNCERTAINTIES AND FOLLOW UP

Head of Department informed that right not the different forums are trying to find out what it means that 20% of the members of staff are allowed to come to campus after the 21st May. These are without PHD students and teachers being there for teaching and exams. So it will be 20% who can use their office. It was discussed to make an event for the staff when returning fully to campus.

(8) SECOND ATTEMPT FOR MASTER'S THESIS

Head of department informed about the rules for administration of second attempts for the Master thesis. The university has come into trouble with the way they interpret the law about the second attempt for the Master's thesis. The authorities interpret the rule much more strict, than the university has been doing. The procedure has to be followed more strict from now, and there has to be made a new contract with a new description of the thesis. It does not have to be on a new topic, but there has to be made a new plan to secure that the student can hand in their thesis after the three month extension.

9. Issues for upcoming meetings

- 11.1 Issues for upcoming UN meetings
- 11.2 Issues for upcoming meetings suggested for the Board of Studies

10. "Rondvraag" (short questions/comments before the closure of meeting.)