

MINUTES – AUPA BOARD MEETING  
September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10-12 am, 1540-K33



Members present: Sabrina, Mathias, Karsten, Morten, Sara, Sanne, Byron, Helene

1. Welcome and introduction of members

Karsten, ARTS. In AUPA for a year's time to represent ARTS. PhD in cognitive neuroscience. Has experienced trouble getting responses from department leaders in relation to the teaching load problem.

Morten, Political Science, BSS. Research in citizen satisfaction, handing in PhD in March.

Sara, HEALTH. Started PhD in May. Joined AUPA just before the summer holidays. Research in nervous system. Might join the PhD association at HEALTH.

Sanne, HEALTH, childhood vaccinations. Second AUPA meeting.

Byron, ARTS, PhD in contemporary history, second AUPA meeting

Helene, president, third meeting since joining AUPA. Molecular biologist, Science and Technology. Two years left on PhD.

Sabrina, Mathematics, as new as Helene, a year left.

Mathias from ST, former president

2. Formalities

- a. Election of Chairman
- b. Election of minute taker
- c. Approval of minutes from last meeting

Helene is Chairman, Sabrina is minute taker. There are no objections to the minutes from the last meeting.

3. News from the four associations

ST (PHAUST): PHAUST has its general assembly next week, so a lot of work will be handed on to the new board. They are in contact with Eoin Galligan from TTO (Technology Transfer Office) who would like for PHAUST to spread out the existence of the TTO.

PHAUST has had an international evaluation of the PhD school. They will be getting back to the graduate school on possible improvements based on the report from the evaluation.

PHAUST has been looking a bit into the rules regarding paid/unpaid work alongside the PhD studies. They would like clearer rules for this and maybe negotiate some of the terms.

ARTS: Just two people attending the last PhD network meeting. The PhD association, however, reports: all PhD courses are now taught in English by default. Mandatory courses in research ethics and PhD supervision.

BSS: Morten is not part of PHABUSS, but they report no news. There is still some chaos with the re-organization of the departments. Helene will meet with Sylvia on Thursday to get updates from PHABUSS.

HEALTH: Discussed the PhD day in January, which is a 1-day conference/workshop: all PhD's can submit an abstract, and you can present either a poster or do a talk. Rewards 1 ECTS. The day is arranged by the PhD association in collaboration with some scientific personnel. Funded by the PhD school. They have also planned the content/topics of after-work-meetings.

4. Follow-up on course with PhD school leaders
  - a. Work environment improvements

The PhD school leaders meet four times a year. AUPA is allowed in for the first half hour, after which the doors are closed. PhD school leaders generally seem positive about having AUPA at the meeting.

AUPA mostly brought up topics about handling stress and challenges that PhD students experience. The PhD project management course was discussed. AUPA would like course to continue in the future.

We would like more options for stressed PhD students. Maybe a counselor/coach at each faculty – HEALTH has already employed a psychologist, and ST provides workshops on stress management, so they both have something going on. The PhD school leader from ARTS is concerned about the funding; the PhD school leader from BSS did not see the relevance. Helene plans to take it up again on the next meeting. At HEALTH, an associate professor and psychologist gets six hours a week for stress coaching (not only PhD students). Maybe other faculties can buy some of her time?

There is also the issue of people actually needing stress coaching but not reaching out for help. If it is better advertised, we are concerned that six hours is not enough if all PhD students were aware of the

existence of a stress coach. Moreover, the PhD school leaders find it difficult to address the problem because they do not experience that PhD students ask for it.

There is a tool for discussion developed at HEALTH, colleague supervision. It sets rules for a discussion where people can join in later on in the discussion. There has to be a discussion leader. We discuss the possibility of AUPA inviting PhD students to attend these sorts of discussions. It does not have to be a regular thing; even one discussion could be very rewarding. Continued participation makes people open up more and might discuss more personal issues. Moreover, the group talks will be a way of dealing with both stress and loneliness. If AUPA can organize such a meeting and get good feedback, it would be a useful argument to bring to the attention of the PhD leaders.

We need to discuss how to do this in practice.

A sub-committee of Karsten, Byron and Sanne will discuss a potential format and how this could potentially be carried out. Potentially, we can bring it to each faculty, but as an AUPA thing: AUPA monitors and collects feedback. To start up, we could invite to a half-hour meeting: all PhD students come to learn about the tool from AUPA. It could be an open offer: meet every (second/third/...) Friday at Dale's Café, and people are grouped up for the discussions.

**Conclusion:** We have another board meeting in a month. In the meantime, we bring the topic to the local PhD associations. We need input on whether this would be a good idea in general, and then whether people would prefer it to be for all PhD students or locally at the faculties. We would like suggestions for a name for the meetings. We can also ask the PhD associations whether they have input for other work environment improvement offers for PhD students.

## 5. PhD Project management course

AUPA took the initiative to start up a course for all PhD students based on a course at HEALTH, and it ran as a pilot this spring. The course was evaluated last week: generally positive, good tools. There will be a follow-up meeting soon to discuss how to get more slots for the course. Probably not a good idea with more participants for each

course, but more courses could be an option. The PhD school leaders seemed positive about the course.

People liked that the course was interdisciplinary/interfaculty.

In AUPA we should spread the word about the course; maybe posters. There could be a flyer in the welcome letter for PhD students, but we discuss whether it is relevant at the very beginning of a PhD study.

## 6. Work load evaluation

We have done a small survey to get an impression on teaching loads in different departments and faculties. Responses from the questionnaire differ a lot: some people teach a lot; some teach very little. Some teach more than their contracts require. Helene feels PhD students teach far too much: they should of course get some teaching experience, but there should be time for research.

We discuss what AUPA can do: it is not easy to negotiate even terms for all PhD students because this would mean worse conditions for some PhD students relative to the current situation.

AUPA could maybe look into the problem of PhD students having to find the teaching hours themselves. The exact interpretation of the rules at each department is probably easier to handle for the local PhD associations. Sometimes PhD students have to run their own courses; others only have TA duties. Sometimes work duties are divided into departmental hours and teaching hours where you need a bit of both.

HEALTH seems to have trouble handling the 4+4 PhD students. Also, there are different rules about salary.

**Conclusion:** The discussion belongs at the local PhD students, but AUPA can help by finding out what the rules are for each faculty. The PhD associations can then use this information if they feel like continuing with the issue. We should ask them if they are interested in this.

Helene will look into the rules at each faculty.

## 7. Getting in contact with all PhD students

It is very difficult to get in touch with all PhD students. There are Facebook groups, but people need to sign up. IT safety rules prevent us from sending out emails to all PhD students. Thus, the best

alternative is to create our own mailing lists, but there is still the issue of them having to sign up.

At HEALTH, permission for a maillist has been given. They cannot use it often.

Helene is looking into the possibility of getting a little tick-box in the PhD planner so people can sign up for emails from associations there.

## 8. Any other businesses

- Agenda for the next meeting

Suggestions for general discussions: International evaluation outcome; possibilities to take courses cross faculty; collaboration of Aarhus University with private (public?) businesses

People think the topics seem interesting

- Time of meetings

Afternoon meetings are better for some people.

- Next meeting

Will mainly be about the colleague discussions.