

Date: 22 April 2020

Minutes

Place: Zoom

Meeting on: ECON Departmental Forum

Present:

Niels Haldrup (chairman, Head of Department), Sune Lauth Gadegaard (Deputy Chairman), Charlotte Sparrevohn, Karin Vinding, Jonas Nygaard Eriksen, Steen Andersen, Nicola Maaser, Timo Trimborn, Trine Munk-Olesen, Kristoffer Holst Ibsen, Katrine Studsgaard Albrektsen, Bjørn Aagaard

Absent:

Christel B. Mortensen, Alexander Overdal Kjærsgaard Marin

Moderator:

Sune Lauth Gadegaard

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Note taker:

Solveig Nygaard Sørensen

Observer:

Anja Zimmerdahl

Additional participant:

Deputy Head Thomas Quistgaard Pedersen

1. Approval of the agenda

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes from last meeting (17 February 2020)

The minutes were approved.

3. Discussion point according to annual cycle

Financial statement for 2019

The Head of Department briefly informed about the financial statement from 2019 where the department ended up with a minor deficit even though a larger deficit was expected from the 2019 primo budget. The improvement in the result is caused by a number of factors which all have been favourable to the department. The accounts for external funds were smaller than expected but will improve the balance in 2020.

In addition, the HoD explained that due to the COVID-19, the department may expect reduced running costs in 2020, i.e. travels, seminar and other expenses may become lower than budgeted and hence resulting in a budgetary improvement. For 2020, other factors that may have an impact in a less favourable direction include the production of STÅ which is difficult to predict. It is a concern that the educations will see increased dropout rates which affect the financial statement for 2020.

The COVID-19 does not affect the plans for recruitments in 2020 at either the assistant or associate professor level.

4. **Corona and its implications for the department**

The HoD expressed his acknowledgment of the difficult current situation that department members face. At the moment, the management deals with the situation on a day-to-day basis and there are many uncertainties affecting our work life in a challenging way.

Feedback on teaching

A member of DF raised a concern regarding the senior members of staff in the so-called “risk group”. Specifically, the question concerned whether there are any plans for protecting staff in the coming semester’s lectures. The HoD informed that the university and faculty management teams presently concentrate on the current situation regarding teaching and exams in accordance with the official guidelines. If the current situation continues, there may be concerns about having lectures in big auditoriums as well as many other challenges that have to be addressed.

Another issue raised was about the difficulty of keeping students engaged during virtual classes. This was followed by a discussion whether it is possible to make adjustments such as giving extra assignments in order to make students more involved. The HoD acknowledged that necessary adjustment are welcome as long as we meet the course requirements stipulated in course descriptions.

The HoD then proceeded by noting that we have to take advantage of our current experiences gained during the COVID-19 crisis that can be utilized positively in the future. It was mentioned that we should consider how to benefit from using new technologies and remote teaching: if we include periods with remote teaching in course curriculums, this can affect lecture room capacity at the benefit of everybody.

Feedback on supervision

There have been some concerns about supervision and handing in the thesis on time; this has been especially difficult for PhD students with children. Another issue raised was concerned with the possible need for employment extension for PhD students and others due to the university lockdown. The HoD informed that the university is aware of the challenges for non-tenured faculty and PhD students. The university is presently awaiting a reply from the ministry about this particular problem.

5. Input from student representatives

Feedback regarding the COVID-19 period from students representatives

TA sessions and teaching

- Some TA sessions have been getting poor feedback and students have complained about the lack of instruction especially in relation to assignments.
- Some teachers only upload their slides on Blackboard with no comments.
- The quality of the teaching has been considered lower than usual.

The general reply to this is to address the teacher directly and if this is not possible, then contact the Head of Study.

The HoD mentioned, that there is awareness that not all distant teaching has been equally successful. The overall impression is positive, however.

Master thesis defence

- Big concerns about carrying out the thesis defence via Zoom and if possible, in case there is an opening towards physical presence, this should be a prioritised area to begin with.

The HoD informed that the BSS task force is dealing with all these issues and that the management team has a full understanding of the situation. The Study Councils will make a final decision about the format of thesis defences.

6. Miscellaneous

One question was raised about the announced opening of certain labs. The HoD replied that the management awaits the list of named labs. The outcome is not expected to affect the department.

Next meeting takes place 11 June 2020, 13:00-14:00 in 2632-L242 if the university has reopened. Otherwise, the meeting will take place on zoom (at the aforementioned time and date) and the deputy chairman will arrange for the meeting.