

**Departmental Forum Meeting: 11 June 2020, 14:00-15:00**  
**2632, L-242**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Niels Haldrup (Chairman, Head of Department), Sune Lauth Gadegaard (Deputy Chairman), Karin Vinding, Jonas Nygaard Eriksen, Steen Andersen, Timo Trimbørn, Kristoffer Holst Ibsen, Christel Brajkovic Mortensen, Alexander Overdal Kjærsgaard Marin

**Absent:**

Katrine Studsgaard Albrektsen, Bjørn Aagaard, Kristoffer Holst Ibsen, Charlotte Sparrevohn, Nicola Maaser, Trine Munk-Olesen

**Moderator:**

Sune Lauth Gadegaard

**Note taker:**

Anne la Cour

**Observer:**

Anja Zimmerdahl

Department of Economics  
and Business Economics

Date: 7 July 2020

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**1. Approval of the agenda**

The agenda was approved.

**2. Approval of minutes from last meeting (29 April 2020)**

The minutes were approved.

**3. News from HoD including reopening the department**

The head of department (HoD) opened the meeting and gave a brief statement about the gradual reopening of AU and specifically the campus facilities at Fuglesangs Allé. The HoD also briefly informed about the financial situation and first budget revision for the department. Due to COVID-19 less costs are expected. The intake of students in the autumn 2020 is also likely to increase as a result of the Corona situation and its impact on the economy in general. In connection with the implications of COVID-19, the HoD informed that the scheduling of teaching in the autumn is in process and both onsite, online and blended learning will be a necessary precondition. However, the planning is subject to great uncertainty due to the ongoing development in terms of distance requirements and other regulations. Department members asked whether IT-support both in terms of hardware, software and pedagogical tools will be offered. The HoD replied that CTL (CUL) is working of a number of different tools to facilitate and support online teaching. CUL expects to send out information about planned webinars and other support for online teaching before the summer holiday.

**4. Establishing section councils**

The HoD gave a short summary of the reason behind the establishment of section councils and emphasised that it is important to have discussions at different levels due to the fact

that the department now is organised in three relatively large sections. Some of the main tasks for the section councils include support of the section head in matters of recruitment, mentoring and development of the section including annual Staff Development Dialogues (SDD). At present it has not been decided how to appoint the councils, and it is expected that members will be tenured faculty. The department members suggested different ways of recruiting for this council. A department member noted that for some employees it is important to have SDD with the HoS. The HoD acknowledged this comment and underlined that it should always be possible to have a dialogue with the HoS.

#### **5. Consultation of action plan for diversity and gender equality at AU**

The Deputy Chairman (SLG) briefly described the process of the consultation of the action plan. Hereafter, department members raised a number of concerns and questions about the action plan. It was agreed that a joint written statement from the Local Liaison Committees (LSU) and Departmental Forum should be added to the department's consultation response. Deadline is 19 June 2020. The discussion of the action plan for diversity and gender equality at AU was quite lengthy. To get a full overview of the discussion, please see the joint statement from LSU and the Departmental Forum attached as Appendix A to these Minutes (submitted after the DF meeting).

#### **6. Corona and its implications for the department**

The HoD encouraged members to share thoughts and experiences from the last couple of months. The members addressed the need for more support and training with regards to online teaching if the management is going to schedule more online and blended learning in the future. Several members also mentioned that onsite contact is very important for both employees and students at the department. The HoD concluded that the department must conduct an evaluation at an appropriate time.

#### **7. Formation of a Learning Management System (LMS) user group**

SLG volunteered to join the user group.

#### **8. Input from student representatives**

No students were present at the meeting. Nothing to be added.

#### **9. Miscellaneous**

Nothing to be added.

## Consultation letter for

# “Action plan for diversity and gender equality at AU 2020–2021”

On behalf of  
Department of Economics and Business Economics

June, 2020

The following items were raised by staff members at the Department of Economics and Business Economics and during meetings at LSU and departmental forum at the Department of Economics and Business Economics:

1. The motivation for focusing on gender inequality on page 1 seems to be strange, at best, if not simply wrong. Diversity and gender equality should not be motivated by the fact that “the university is placed as well as possible in the competition for positions and grants”. It should be motivated by the fact that it is the only right thing to do.
2. A crucial purpose of a diversity action plan should be added: the more diverse the research context, the more diverse research output will be. Diversity at AU will assure that we can respond better to the needs of a diverse society, get closer to day-to-day reality and improve the societal impact.
3. In the motivation, further it is stated that “the highest quality of research requires more diversity among researchers”. Is this statement a political belief/persuasion or is the statement supported by evidence. If there is evidence supporting the claim, this should be cited in the motivation.
4. It is very important to ensure mechanisms, which does not favour women for positions as this can lead to the exact opposite of what “gender equality” is. In

addition, it has been stressed by several female researchers at the department, that it is very inexpedient if affirmative action leads to female staff questioning whether they got the job because they are female or because of merits and abilities.

5. The first paragraph focuses on “early career researchers at postdoc and assistant professor level, established researchers with permanent positions and research director”, yet thereafter everyone is included again and thereafter there is a focus on academic staff. Clarification on the target group is important because the bottleneck of gender equality is often the lack of internal advancement of certain groups and their flow to higher positions. For this, it is essential that a look is taken on the entire process from the “pool of talent” to any higher position mentioned. It is not unusual at all that a student or research assistant is selected for a PhD –and thus the academic career path begins. And likewise gender equality. If we want to impact diversity throughout the university all staff and research “levels” should be mentioned in the action plan.

6. It is very important that the university management considers, and decides, on what employment level and across what job categories gender balance should be achieved. For instance, does the management consider the university in balance gender-wise if there is approximately the same number of people from each gender employed at the university? Or should that be on faculty, department, or research group level?

Also, does the management want gender-balance within each job-category or across job-categories? Should the VIP-category *and* the TAP-category be in gender-balance? Or is it fine that e.g. the VIP category consists of 100 women and the TAP category consists of 100 men? The example is extreme, but the question valid.

If the management finds it important that there is a gender balance at job-category level, there seems to be a peculiar balance between men and women at the university management all the way from head of departments to the senior management of the university.

7. On page 2, the core activity where diversity is needed is listed as Research. However, it is important that Teaching and Administrative work are also mentioned here, side by side, because the same arguments for not using the talent mass optimally apply to these areas as well.
8. There are deep gender biases where Teaching and Administrative work are concerned. For instance, within social sciences, student evaluations are biased against women. How many females ever win the Golden Pointer etc. awards?

In Administrative work, it is often the opposite. Women are over-used for these tasks because a gender mix is needed in all sorts of panels etc.

9. The following items concern page 4
  - a) Regarding norms for recruitment, it says "Positions will be re-advertised if a gender is underrepresented among the qualified applicants". Some clarification here would be in order as to what "underrepresented" means. Is that relative to the full pool of, say, i) considerable applications? Relative to ii) the pool of the position from which they are applying from (e.g. PhD pool for applications to assistants). Is it relative to iii) the general population? The balances there are very different.
 

If it is the first or second option – it should maybe be phrased as relative representation to avoid confusion.

If it is the third, then it implies that, if the applicants are not equally distributed amongst the genders – there will always be discrimination against an applicant from the over-represented gender solely because of her/his gender (assuming that amongst all genders candidates have the same competence distribution – which seems like a reasonable assumption). This would be in contradiction to the premise and to the Gender Equality Act statement cited on page 1, that discriminating opportunities based on gender is prohibited.
  - b) In continuation of the previous item regarding re-advertisement: is this guaranteed to be a finite process. In a field like engineering with many more male than female researchers, is it possible to ever guarantee to generate a pool of applicants where females are not underrepresented? This re-advertisement could lead to excessively long recruitment periods.
  - c) It is stated that the job advertisement should encourage the "under-represented gender to apply". This formulation suggests that the university is not hiring or seeking the best possible applicant. Rather the university wants applicants who can improve on the gender-statistics. It seems more appropriate with the current "All interested candidates are encouraged to apply, regardless of their personal background".
  - d) In addition, the document describes that "assessment and appointment committees are broadly based, with members representing several genders". There are research fields with very few female VIPs. If they are supposed to take part in all the committees it will affect their research and consequently these female researchers will be considered "low performers".
  - e) Furthermore, it is required that "The appointment committees consider how the qualified applicants will contribute to diversity at the departe-

ment/school/unit.” This formulation suggests that the university is looking for candidates with particular personal characteristics (e.g. gender) instead of candidates who will contribute to the university’s core assignments (research and teaching).

10. The document often refer to “diversity”. It would be beneficial to have a clear, operationalizable definition together with the action plan if this is used as explicit subobjective. Is diversity in the action plan completely covered by the components mentioned in Footnote 1, i.e. gender, race, skin colour, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, age, disability or national, social or ethnic origin? If yes – then some of these categories are not as clear-cut. Simple example: In Germany, there is now a third gender entry for people who are not born with 46XX or 46XY chromosomes. In Denmark there is not. Which or whose category for gender then applies? Social origin is also a vague category for example. What about other aspects of diversity that might be equally or even more relevant related to the core activity of the university (p. 2), e.g. diversity of thought/experience etc.?
11. It seems that the interpretation of “diversity” is in the narrow meaning of gender diversity. There seems to be many more dimensions of diversity.
12. In the last bullet point under Focus Area: Recruitment, it says that the “appointment committee consider how the qualified applicant will contribute to diversity at the department...”. If “diversity” is *not* interpreted in the narrow context of gender-diversity, does this mean that the applicants are supposed to disclose their religion, skin colour, political affiliation, sexual orientation and so on? If not, how should the committee be able to consider the contribution to diversity?
13. Under career development it seems that the job category “TAP” has been forgotten.
14. That the action plan is solely focused on gender equality, which makes sense knowing this all started with the plan “More women in research”. However, to use the term diversity suggests more than just gender equality and raises unfair expectations. As mentioned in a footnote, the management is aware that the term diversity denotes more than just gender or ethnic diversity. The decision not to include other forms of diversity in the action plan – which is a missed opportunity – could be clarified by just calling the action plan by its name: Action Plan for Gender Equality 2020–2021. Moreover, it would be fair to include when other aspects of diversity can be expected to take shape in the action plan.

15. Top management should decide if diversity is important or if it is mostly just "a thing". If top management wants diversity it needs to integrate politics, norms and guidelines. As it is now, top management has created rigid structures which are inconsistent with the gender balance as the structures favors male candidates. It is harder for female candidates to fulfill requirements such as e.g. a longer stay abroad after the Ph.D. to get tenure. In general travel is difficult to do for females with small children. Further, demanding that everyone should be available (for teaching) from 8-18 is a very bad combination for the junior staff's work-life balance in general – but it deters young women to pursue a research career. The requirement of long hours of availability for teaching also distorts younger employees' opportunities depending on how much teaching the position demands.

That is, focussing solely on getting a satisfying ratio between men and women at the university, does not change the underlying problem, nor does it really result in a diverse workplace. We would like to make the university management aware of the following studies: Ely and Thomas (2001) and Ely and Thomas (1996)

16. Top management should decide what is the purpose of diversity at AU? The purpose of the Action plan for diversity and gender equality at AU 2020-2021 is not clear. Therefore it does not succeed in translating the purpose into a nuanced goal hierarchy that fulfills the purpose. It highly reflects the well known dilemma that the goals and thereby actions are rarely the same as the goals (and purpose) one wants to promote. Often it is merely quantifications by extensions.
17. On page 5 "Active use of tenure-track assistant professorships". How is it compatible with externally funded positions?
18. On page 6 "Clarification of qualification requirements". We can only welcome transparency and clarity of qualifications. However, we would highly recommend that all merit requirements: research, teaching and knowledge sharing will be actively included.

## References

Ely, R. J. and D. A. Thomas (1996). Making differences matter: A new paradigm for managing diversity. *Harvard Business Review* 74(5), 79–90.

Ely, R. J. and D. A. Thomas (2001). Cultural diversity at work: The effects of diversity perspectives on work group processes and outcomes. *Administrative science quarterly* 46(2), 229–273.