

FORUM FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS

NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES



ANNUAL REPORT 2009

Introduction

FODOS (Forum for Doctoral students at UMB) is an independent and nonpolitical interest organization for PhD candidates receiving doctoral education at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). FODOS was established February 26th, 2003. The purpose of the Forum is to secure the interests of PhD candidates at UMB. The organization handles issues of common interest to doctoral students as a group.

FODOS focuses on:

- Study conditions and professional interests
- Economic interests
- Social benefits
- Rights and duties at the University
- Research ethics and issues regarding science and society
- Social events for improved contact

All registered PhD candidates at UMB are de facto members of FODOS. Members are free to join relevant trade unions and promote doctoral issues through these forums as well

The board and other representatives

The board and representatives in 2009

At the Annual General Meeting held March 23rd 2009, the following board members were elected:

Anne Strøm Prestvik, IØR (leader)
Natasa Djakovic, IHA (leader of social committee)
Paul Okullo, INA (leader of academic committee)
Stine Huseby, IPM (treasurer)
Signe Kynding, IPM (1. deputy)
Hanna Helgeland, IHA (2. deputy)

The representatives in SN and FON was elected for two years in 2008, but new deputies were found at the AGM in 2009:

FON (research committee): Vegard Martinsen, IPM
Deputy: Anne Strøm Prestvik, IØR

SN (study committee): Maren Elise Bachke
Deputy: Helena Nordh, ILP

Other representatives:

Ethics Council: Tale Marie Drangsholt, IHA
Deputy: Bente Aspeholen Åby, IHA

NOVA representative: Hilde Hauge, IHA
Deputy: Guro Vasdal

Each department and research institution with PhD students has had their own FODOS contact person. There have been some changes during the year, at the time of writing the contact persons are:

Bioforsk: Heidi Udnes Aamot
Nofima Mat: Nebosja Perisic
Nofima Marine: Adrijana Skugor
Skog og Landskap: Nadeem Yaqoob
Noragric: Lars Kåre Grimsby
IKBM: Margrete Solheim
IHA: Guro Vasdal
ILP: Helena Nordh
IMT: Ole Mathis Opstad Kruse
INA: Jens Thaulow
IPM: Signe Kynding Borgen
IØR: Anne Strøm Prestvik

The FODOS board is grateful for the important service the contact persons have provided. The contact persons serve as a link between the FODOS board and committees and PhD students and their department. This link is important to inform new students about FODOS and continuously inform all PhD students about FODOS work. The contact persons are also helpful when PhD students need to sign up for social and academic events arranged by FODOS.

The Election Committee has consisted of Natasa Djakovic, IHA, Signe Kynding Borgen, IPM and Anne Strøm Prestvik, IØR.

The FODOS board wishes to give thanks to all contact persons, committee members and others who have supported FODOS work in 2009!

Activities 2009

An activity plan for FODOS in 2009 was discussed and approved at the AGM. The board has been able to include most of the parts in the plan in its activities, but decided to not do some of them. The board decided not to have a Facebook group for FODOS because not all board members (and very likely not all PhD student) are on Facebook and would therefore be excluded. More effort was instead put into improving the FODOS website.

1) Board meetings

There have been a total of 5 board meetings in 2009 and 1 in 2010, 17th April, 20th May, 19th August, 10th September, 27th November and 22nd January. Minutes from all meetings are available on the FODOS website.

2) Meetings with rector and the Central Administration

The board has had one meeting with rector and the central administration, 15th October 2009. Both FODOS and rector wish to have these meetings two times a year and a meeting is planned in March 2010. These meetings are important for information exchange and vital for FODOS to raise issues like compensation for students working for FODOS (mainly board members), student-supervisor relationships and other issues that concern the PhD students. Minutes from the meeting is available on the FODOS website.

3) Compensation for FODOS work

For the first time all FODOS board members have received compensation for the time they have spent working for FODOS. The amount of compensation depends on how much time they have used and the form of the compensation depends on their employment status at UMB. The FODOS board is responsible for reporting hours used for FODOS work by 1st December each year to the Department of Academic Affairs. Hours cannot exceed more than 2 ½ months of work for all board members. The Department of Academic Affairs then pays the department or board member directly.

4) Academic Committee

Leader 2008: Paul Okullo

Members: FODOS board and SN and FON representatives

The leader's words: As leader of Academic committee (AC) of FODOS for 2009 I am pleased to write a short note on our activities for the period. Academic committee recognizes the diverse challenges facing PhD students particularly for UMB with about half of PhD being internationals. In AC we believe that the role of FODOS in making PhD enjoyable and fun entails much more than course works and research. Therefore, in 2009 AC developed a dynamic and forward-looking strategy that demonstrate and reflects the current global needs of PhDs. This include among others Fodos inputs on the PhD new regulations, the re-enforced the links between FODOS and SIN, of which I was elected to represent FODOS interest. Together with social committee, we organised academic and excursion for PhD at UMB, this ensure that PhD experience at UMB is not only academic but enjoyable. We also raised the issue of fund for PhD for conferences with the administration.

I must say that the participation of PhD students admitted at UMB in FODOS activities is still low. This may be due to the little information given to new students admitted to UMB. There is a need for awareness. A recent survey by FODOS suggests that majority of students want more academic seminars to be arranged. The academic committee should take this into account when planning its activities for 2010.

I am proud that I was given the opportunity to serve PhD students at FODOS. On behalf of Fodos board I would like to invite every PhD student admitted at UMB to be part of FODOS' mission.

The purpose of the academic committee is to follow up on academic issues discussed in SN, FON and at the administrative level at UMB that are important to PhD students. In 2009 this has included giving a statement to UMB's strategy at it's early development level (June). The academic committee has also discussed the course in research ethics that all new PhD students are required to take. As the only course UMB is offering is a 5 credit course, we are concerned that this will just increase the course-load on PhD students. This concern was discussed with rector in August 2009, and FODOS was invited to participate in an evaluation of the research ethics course which was run for the first time in fall 2009. This is something FODOS and the academic committee must follow up on.

The issue of "matpakkepenger" and extra funds for PhD students has been on the agenda for the academic committee for a time. The survey that was started early in 2010 (see point 13) is meant to serve as background information for how FODOS should proceed with this issue. The survey has shown that this is a real issue for many PhD students and is something that the academic committee must continue to work on.

5) Social Committee

The members of the Social Committee (SC) in 2009 were:

Natasa Djakovic (leader of the committee, FODOS board member, IHA),

Signe Borgen (FODOS board deputy; IPM),

Diane Bahuaud (IHA),

Anna Rybarczyk (IPM)

Daniel Mania (IKBM)

Ashoka Sreedhara (IKBM)

Anne Rieder (MATFORSK)

Hanna Helgeland (FODOS board deputy; IHA)

In 2009 SC organized several events:

- Grill Evening, June 30th; 27 people signed up
- Trip to Langedrag, September 19th; ca. 55 people participated;
- Ski trip to Hafjell (February 2010); 53 students signed up.
- Seminar on Intercultural Communication, November 17th, held by Henrik Bohn from Østfold University College; followed by pizza evening; ca. 30 PhD students attended the seminar.

In 2009 the SC expanded greatly compared to previous years and we had several meetings during the year to discuss the activities to be planned during the year. The grill event was a social gathering where we also invited family members, and a few games were planned and played, among that croquet. Fodos now owns a croquet game. The location next to Samfunnet was not optimal as Samfunnet is closed this time of year. We recommend taking advantage of the available rooms available for renting at UMB.

Prior to the Langedrag trip we had discussed the opportunities to make an overnight hiking trip to Rjukan area, but opted for the more comfortable day trip to Langedrag. After seeing the nature park we offered people to take either a longer hiking trip (10 km) or to socialize with the wolves and lynx, on their own cost. The trip was open for family members/friends at an extra cost. Hiking was very enjoyable and a great activity that can be recommended for future FODOS activities (as it is also free!). Food was arranged at Dovrehallen in Oslo at 90 kr/pers all eating the same dish.

The ski trip planning was nicely divided by most members of the committee and we investigated several locations this year: Hafjell, Norefjell and Kongsberg. Hafjell was decided because it was slightly cheaper than both Norefjell and Kongsberg, but the drive is a little bit longer. The price for PhD students and post docs of 200 kr is still very affordable (though twice as much as 2008) we believe it can still be increased without losing the quota PhD student. Though people had 3 weeks to sign up the bus was almost full after 1½ weeks. Placing the skiing trip early in the season is an advantage when giving the foreign PhD student a chance to enjoy what can seem like a very cold and unpleasant time of year. Participants were of all nationalities with 15 of 53 being Norwegian. This is a success because mixing students of Norwegian nationality with the foreigners is a main goal of FODOS social activities, in addition to introducing Norwegian culture and activities to students of foreign nationality.

For 2010 SC recommends the following topics to be considered by SC (in collaboration with AC)

- Information sent out by FODOS contact persons at each department don't reach Post Docs. Institutes seem to have different rules on who is on the stipendiat mailing list. The most effective thing would be if Post Docs were put on the stipendiat mailing list when they are hired (responsibility of the institute administration)

- Explore the possibility of having the intercultural seminar in conjunction with a ski or hiking trip and thereby receiving funding from UMB administration/dean Hove. In 2007 the ski trip was partially funded “outside” of FODOS but from funds for integration of foreign students. It is important to keep the price on FODOS events low and at the same time not have to put a limit on the number of participants due to budget extension.
- Arrange parties at low cost, where people bring home made dishes, and possibly use the rooms available at UMB
- Arrange series of seminar related to Intercultural Communication, Scientific Writing, etc.

6) FON activities

Representative: Vegard Martinsen

Forskningnemda (FON) is the political organ for research at UMB. It aims at advising and suggesting strategic proposal to the University Board and rector regarding issues related to research. In addition, FON considers issues delegated from the University Board. One of the most important issues that were discussed this year was the strategy for 2010-2013. This is described in detail under in the link below.

FON distributes PhD stipends to the institutes. This was done February 2009 according to the guidelines for distribution of PhD stipends discussed in 2008 (see AGM report 2008). An important issue raised at two meetings in 2009 was the research strategy at UMB. The director of research at UMB will make a proposal to be followed up by FON in 2010. It is important for PhD students to follow up this work (the next PhD representative in FON) as it may directly and indirectly affect the research situation for PhD students. In October, FON discussed the issue of the research schools. Against FODOS’ one vote, it was decided to end the research schools as they function today from 2011 and instead transfers around 100 000 to each department earmarked for PhD-students.

Based on the preliminary plan for FON’s work in 2010, issues like the research strategy and PhD education seems to be of importance for the PhD students. In general, it is of huge importance that issues being important for PhD students (e.g. follow-up the work on research strategy and research schools, see study board) are being discussed within FODOS and the academic committee. It is also important that the PhD representative in FON gets some ideas and suggestions for issues to be discussed in FON from other PhD students. Remember, our best way of potential influence at the University is proposing issues our self! More information about the activity in FON can be obtained visiting the web page <http://intern.umb.no/forskningssavd/artikkel/forskningnemnda-fon>.

7) SN activities

Representative: Maren Elise Bachke

Studienemda (SN) is the political organ for education at UMB. It aims at advising and suggesting strategic proposals to the University Board and rector regarding educational issues. In addition to consider issues delegated from the University Board. One of the most important issues that were discussed this year was the strategy for 2010-2013. FODOS made a general statement which was the basis for the work on the issue in FON and SN. The main issues raised were: funding of PhD-students to ensure good quality of the work (fieldwork, equipment, courses etc), ensure that pure research (grunnforskningen) not will be too affected by political agenda and that a number of PhD-scholarship is kept for areas not so popular,

research freedom, enhance the students learning environment, and that the plan should not be too detailed on personnel and earning.

In the revision of the exam regulations, it was decided that all 400 courses should be evaluated as passed – failed and not with grades. Thus, this has the implications that the B average will only be for master courses and courses taken outside the university. We made comments to the study quality report for 2008 regarding the PhD-education which basically addressed the issues of the potential areas of improvement of the PhD-education at UMB, the objectives of getting a PhD which not necessarily is the start of an academic career anymore, how to ensure an academic career and to define in which areas UMB offers PhD-degrees.

One issue that is going to be very important in 2010 will be the follow-up/implementation of the decision by the University board to reduce the number of subjects given at UMB by 15%. This mainly concerns bachelor and master courses and PhD-courses are not included so far in this reduction. Other issues that have been discussed are; evaluation of master programs, admission frames for 2008/2009, division of the academic year, the study regulation, the exam regulation, different evaluations, administrative routines, schemes and forms. For further information regarding the activities of SN, please see the web page <http://intern.umb.no/studieavd/artikkel/studienemnda> .

Important work next year for the academic committee would be to follow-up both the work on the research strategy and research schools. There are developments regarding the national research schools which might be very interesting for us.

8) Ethics Council activities

Representative: Tale Marie Drangsholt

The council's activities in 2009 in short:

- Conclusion of the case between “Dyrevernsalliansen” and Department of Animal and Aquaculture Sciences
- Discussion and statement to the discussion document on routines for noticing ethical irregularities at UMB
- Giving information about the PhD course in Research Ethics
- Discussion on guidelines for research ethics at UMB

9) NOVA Activities

Representative: Guro Vasdal

The Local NOVA Team (including a PhD and a Master studies representative, Prorector Morten Sørli and the NOVA coordinator Frøydis Kvaløy) have had several meetings and discussed the activity plan for 2010. Among other, the plan for 2010 includes posting links directly from UMB websites to NOVA courses, so that more students can easily find NOVA courses that might be of interest to them. We have also taken the initiative to increase the numbers and topics for NOVA courses by talking to researchers who might be interested in producing new NOVA courses. Our goal is that as many students as possible can participate in a interesting NOVA course in one of the Nordic countries. Remember, all courses are free!

10) SiN activities (Association of Doctoral Students in Norway)

Paul Okullo went to the SiN AGM in Trondheim in May 2009. There he was elected to the board as a regular board member. SiN had no large activities in 2009 but is continuously working on improving the conditions of PhD students in Norway.

11) Coaching Seminar

On Thursday 1st October all PhD students was invited to a seminar with coach Elisabeth de Jong at Samfunnet. She talked about what coaching is, how we can coach ourselves and others. Around 30 PhD students participated and after the seminar pizza was served.

12) Winter party

The success of the winter party in 2009 was repeated in Samfunnet on Thursday 28th January 2010. This year 70 PhD students participated and had dinner in Festsalen. After the dinner and dessert, we played music, talked and some enjoyed dancing. Hopefully the FODOS party will become an annual tradition.

13) PhD funding survey

In order to finish a PhD, most candidates need extra funds for books, courses outside UMB, travel, etc. If a student do not have such funds available, it may, in the worst case, be impossible to finish a PhD and in most cases threaten the quality of the education. The amount of extra funds available for PhD students varies across department and the main funding of the student. In order to get a better overview of what funds are available and what they are used for, FODOS designed a questionnaire that was sent to all PhD students at UMB. At the time of writing about 34 % of the PhD students had answered the questions. The questionnaire also includes some questions about the content and satisfaction of the PhD education at UMB and what kind of activities FODOS should have. The results from the survey will be published on the FODOS website.

14) Information Brochure

FODOS now has an information brochure that can be given out to all new PhD students. The brochure is distributed to all the *PhD contacts in the administration* at each department. The brochure contains some general information about FODOS, a picture of the board and the name of all board members, and the name of all FODOS contact person. The brochure should be updated at least once a year so that the names are correct.

15) FODOS website improvements

Internet is probably the main source of information for PhD students (and Post docs), so in order to reach more PhD students (and Post docs), FODOS wanted to improve the FODOS web site and make it more vibrant and updated. 28th of April, Henrik Mikkelsen from the department for communication, kindly held a course for the FODOS board on how to use UMBs web publishing tool. All board members have user rights, Hanna Helgeland became webmaster, and has since been working to keep the site up to date. The FODOS web site grants easy access to information on upcoming academic and social activities, and pictures from previous events, important information and links concerning PhD studies, and minutes from board and rector meetings.

Accounts 2009

Account summary for the board of 2009:

	<u>Budget 2009</u>	<u>Accounts 2009</u>
Support from UMB	50 000,00	50 000,00
Academic activities	18 000,00	9 151,00
Social activities	30 000,00	60 200,00
SiN membership	2 000,00	2 000,00
Annual general meeting	3 000,00	3 000,00
Web site/info	2 000,00	0,00
Miscellaneous	5 000,00	445,00
Sum	60 000,00	74 796,00
Result	- 10 000,00	-14 796,00

Notes to the account summary

The summary above shows how much money the board has used from May 2009 until February 2010. The accounting year was from 26th of February 2009 till 31th of December 2009. In this period there were some unpaid expenses left over from the board in 2008 which are not included in this summary. Included in the summary are expected expenses of kr 42 315,- (expenses that cover the party and ski trip to Hafjell). These will be drawn from the bank account in 2010, but are part of the 2009 budget.

FODOS did not receive funds from UMB in 2008. This means that in 2009 we received funds for both years, kr 100 000,-. As FODOS had some money in the bank from before, it means that we had the opportunity to spend some of this money on the ski trip and party arranged in January and February 2010. This explains why the AGM in 2009 decided to have a negative result in the budget and the even more negative result in the account summary.

Bank Balance

26.02.2009:	89 684,03
01.10.2010:	107 323,00
Expected around 01.04.2010	65 008,00

Budget 2010

Income

Support from UMB	50 000
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Expences

Academic activities	20 000
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Social activities	40 000
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SiN membership	2 000
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Annual general meeting	3 000
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Miscellaneous	5 000
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Sum expences	70 000
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Balance	-20 000
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Note to the budget

As FODOS has a lot of equity (money in the bank) at the moment, we see no harm in spending this money on academic and social activities for PhD students at UMB. An increase in expenses means a higher level of activity which is good for FODOS. If the level of activity stays constant or increases in the future, FODOS will need more income. We trust future boards to deal with this if it occurs.

Activity Plan 2010

- Academic seminars
- Monthly social gatherings (combined with academic seminars?)
- Inform all PhD students at UMB about FODOS
- Reach out to Post-docs at UMB
- Arrange trips
- Continue to work to improve the funding situation of PhD students at UMB
- Work on informing PhD students about different possibilities for financing travels to conferences, workshops, etc.
- Work on 'PhD Forum web' where PhD students can discuss different topics. Also, post articles and links about PhD life, book recommendations, etc.
- Prepare a 'PhD survival guide' and distribute together with the info about FODOS to new PhD students.