

**FORUM FOR DOCTORAL STUDENTS**

**NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES**



**ANNUAL REPORT 2011**

## **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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 representatives in 2011**

The Annual General Meeting was held March 9<sup>th</sup> 2011, and the following board members were elected:

Stine Huseby, IPM (leader)  
(Hanna Helgeland, IHA, acting leader until June 2011)  
Mohamed Abdelhalim, IPM (leader of social committee)  
Lars Kåre Grimsby, Noragric (leader of academic committee)  
Ole Mathis Opstad Kruse, IMT (treasurer)  
Daniel Mania, IKBM (1. deputy)  
Hans N. Adam, Noragric (2. deputy)

The following representatives were also elected at the AGM 2011:

FON (Research Committee): Anders Myhr, IMT  
Deputy: Lars Kåre Grimsby, Noragric

SN (Study Committee): Ole Mathis Opstad Kruse, IMT  
Deputy: Vinh Phung, IKBM

Ethics Board: Vinh Phung, IKBM  
Deputy: Kashif Khan, Noragric

NOVA: Lars Kåre Grimsby, Noragric  
Deputy: Daria Markina, IPM

Each department and research institution with PhD students has had their own FODOS contact person. At the time of writing the contact persons are:

Bioforsk: Merete Wiken Dees  
Nofima mat: Anne Rieder  
Nofima marine: Adrijana Skugor  
Skog og landskap: Siri Bjoner  
Noragric: Hans N. Adam  
IKBM: Davide Porcellato  
IHA: Kristin Sivertsen Storli  
ILP: Gro Koppen  
IMT: Ole Mathis Opstad Kruse  
INA: Jens Thaulow  
IPM: Daria Markina  
IØR: Elias Jorge Saiden Nunez

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 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 FODOS board wishes to give thanks to all contact persons, committee members and others who have supported FODOS work in 2011!

## **Activities 2011**

Here we present the activities of the Social and Academic Committees, the board in general and other the other committees and organizations where FODOS/PhD-candidates have representatives.

### **1) Board meetings**

There have been a total of 6 board meetings in 2011. Minutes from all meetings are available on the FODOS website.

### **2) Meetings with rector and the university administration**

The board has had one meeting with rector and the central administration, November 28<sup>th</sup> 2011. These meetings are important for information exchange and vital for FODOS to raise issues that concern the PhD students. The following issues were discussed in the meeting:

- FODOS activities 2011-2012
- Guide lines on duty work
- Appraisal interviews for PhD candidates and students
- Economical guidelines
- PhD student housing
- Transferable skills as part of the PhD education

Minutes from the meeting are available in full on the FODOS website.

### **3) Social committee**

The members of the Social Committee (SC) in 2011 were: Mohamed Abdelhalim (leader of the committee, FODOS board member, IPM) Daniel Mania (IKBM) Anna Rybarczyk (IPM) Anne Rieder (Nofima) Arezoo Soltani (INA) Davide Porcellato (IKBM) Daria Markina (IPM).

In 2011/12 the Social Committee organized the following events:

- Cabin trip in the "Mustardkroken" forest in April 2011, 12 students attended
- Bike trip to Drøbak in June 2011, 7 students attended
- Summer BBQ at the lake Årungen in July 2011, 15 students attended
- Summer party in August 2011, 20 students attended
- Trip to Fredrikstad in October 2011, 5 students attended
- Autumn Party in November 2011, 48 students attended
- Winter party in January 2012, 35 students attended
- Ski trip to Hafjell in February 2012, 56 students attended

The SC has had regular meetings throughout the year. We made use of the facilities at UMB and had several events in the canteens at IPM. The canteens are big enough to accommodate 30-40 people and provided seating options and fully equipped kitchens to warm up food and clean dishes.

The destination for the annual ski trip was Hafjell again, the last time was a big success and Hafjell provides the most slopes and excitement out of several choices. We hired the same bus company as last year but we had dinner. The price for the trip was NOK 200 for quota students and NOK 300 for stipends. Participants were of all nationalities.

#### **4) Academic Committee**

The FODOS board is happy to report that in 2011 the Academic Committee (AC) has been very active. A high activity level may however be an indicator that not all has been as it should in for UMB's PhD candidates.

The AC is a forum where representatives from various UMB councils convene to share information, discuss and agree on how to go about issues relevant to the academic life of UMB's PhD candidates.

In 2011 the AC has had the following members: Lars Kåre Grimsby (leader and member of the FODOS board), Anders Myhr (FODOS' representative in Research council), Ole Mathis Opstad Kruse (FODOS' representative in UMB's Study council), Vinh Phung (FODOS' representative in UMB's Ethics council), Daria Markina (deputy AC member) and Kasheef Khan (deputy AC member).

#### **Frequent lunch meetings**

The high level of activity is partly due to a high frequency of lunch meetings. The AC has tried to convene every two weeks, and this had made it easy to follow up on tasks and to share information. The AC lunch meetings have also functioned as a forum for arranging events. Members of AC have been compensated for their active involvement in FODOS matters by having lunch covered by FODOS budget in these meetings. This has been fruitful. Minutes from each meeting have been prepared and sent to members of AC. These reports serve as a log of events and doings of the AC in 2011.

#### **Housing situation**

The housing situation became critical for many PhD candidates with small monthly allowances (quota stipends and similar groups) during the spring of 2011. SiÅS and UMB had had a deal that although accommodating PhD candidates was strictly speaking not the responsibility of SiÅS, quota stipends could be accommodated in SiÅS apartments. The agreement between SiÅS and UMB came to an end in 2011, and SiÅS sent out a letter telling stipends to find other accommodation from the summer of 2011 and onwards. This was critical for many. FODOS had several meetings with SiÅS and UMB administrative personnel, and conducted a housing survey among all PhD candidates at UMB to clarify what the status was. The report was sent to an *ad hoc* committee with members from UMB and SiÅS (FODOS was not invited) established to sort out the problem.

UMB agreed to continue sponsoring the poorly paid PhDs as before for another year. It is still unclear what will happen in 2012 with this issue.

#### **Economic situation of quota and similar groups of PhDs**

Quota stipends are not entitled to allowance between submission of doctoral thesis and the defense. Because quota stipends are in a worse-off condition economically speaking, than several other groups of PhDs, FODOS tried to address this issue.

Several meetings were held between PhD coordinators at UMB and FODOS to clarify what the problem was. The issue was raised in the Research council. But UMB had already tried raising this problem with SiU (Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education). FODOS wrote a

letter to SiU with complaints. This was met by rejection, and we sent a letter of complaint to the Norwegian Ministry of Education. This was also rejected, and FODOS let the case lie.

In the latter half of 2011, FODOS again started discussing the issue of the very large gap in allowances between different groups of PhD candidates. The issue was brought up in a meeting with the Rector and administration at UMB in December 2011. There is consensus in the AC that this is an important matter, but addressing the issue opens a process of Kafkaian dimensions.

### **PhD candidates as a research resource**

FODOS' representative in the Research council, Anders, was appointed to sit in a sub-committee established with the objective to implement recommendations in the report 'PhD-studenter som forskningsressurs'. FODOS' representative brought the report to AC, and a list of prioritized points was prepared for the sub-committee. Several of the issues addressed in the report have subsequently been taken up at departmental level; this is where most of the activity in fact needs to be done.

More on this point in the section covering the Research council's (FON's) activities, later in this report. In general, the AC is satisfied with UMB's active engagement the working environment of its PhD candidates, although it seems FODOS needs a strong hand in the Research council to make the recommendations happen.

### **Commentary to national research policy 2013**

FODOS was invited to respond to a hearing of a report (NOU) prepared by the Fagerberg committee. The report is meant as a basis to prepared the next national research policy. Based on lively discussions in AC a response from FODOS was prepared. In short FODOS criticized the report for being too production-oriented in its view of what research should be; too focused on getting value for money in research.

It needs to be said that there were conflicting views on this policy direction within the AC. Also, FODOS commended UMB's openness to collaboration with the PhD candidates in making their every-day life better; it is our belief that this in turn provides the most fertile ground for an active research community at any university.

### **Participation in NOVA**

FODOS has a member, Lars Kåre, in The Nordic Forestry, Veterinary and Agricultural University Network (NOVA). NOVA provides funding for arranging courses across the member institutions; this provides a platform for international exchange of people and the newest research in the given subjects. Three meetings have been arranged this year to discuss how to improve quality and quantity of courses to be provided in the Nordic countries. One of the meetings was arranged in Oslo through collaboration between members from The Norwegian Veterinary College and UMB representatives.

### **Arranging an ethics seminar**

FODOS' representative in UMB's Ethics council, Vinh, took the initiative to arrange a seminar on 'whistle blowing'. UMB's ethics professor Deborah Oughton held a lecture on the subject together with UMB's in-house lawyer. It was interesting and is an initiative that is commendable for continuation in the years to come.

### **Arranging a career seminar**

UMB has recently hired a professional career expert and established a career centre. The centre and the expert had mostly been involved with making arrangements for students at master level, but approached FODOS in mid-2011 with the idea to have a career seminar. AC's very active deputy member, Daria, collaborated with Audun to make the event happen. Audun is gone, but those who attended the workshop are left with new insight.

### **Excursion to the solar observatory at Harestua**

Harestua solar observatory is a great place to open the mind to new ideas for PhD candidates who are usually stuck within one narrow niche. A bus-full of PhD attended the event, where hot dogs were eaten, a presentation on northern lights was held, and galaxies and northern lights were seen.

### **PhD comics movie showing**

Previous year's talk show by the author behind 'PhD comics' had been a great success, and when a movie was produced based on the comic strip, FODOS was keen on arranging a showing at UMB. About 50 PhDs came, and it was a fun event with pizzas served afterwards.

## **5) FON activities**

FON has in 2011 worked on the following issues concerning PhD candidates:

### Reaching for UMB's vision of "More and Better Research – Mer og Bedre Forskning":

A small committee appointed by FON was working on the topic during the fall and winter of 2011/2012. The important findings include, a proposition for FON to prepare an upcoming case on how the research funds (matpakkepenger) for PhD-candidates can be increased.

### PhD-students as a research resource:

The final report presented early 2011 have been a returning topic for follow-up work. FON has discussed the findings thoroughly and found that several of the issues addressed should be taken up at the relevant department or organization in charge directly. FON also concluded that most of the remaining issues could be improved through a rework of the follow-up and documentation system for the PhD-Candidates. A small committee was appointed to work with this topic. This is still a work in progress, and is currently focused on developing an electronic system (much similar to a studweb+) where all necessary information, formal tasks, progression, publication and so on are both displayed and alterable. The system will be introduced to a test group and go through thorough evaluation before eventual implementation.

#### Other notable activities:

- Established support for a new PhD-program in philosophy at IØR.
- FON will work to encourage open-access-publication
- Small change in the PhD-regulations with respect to the cover-page of the PhD-thesis and accreditation of the involved partners
- FON is also positive to an increase in the research funds (matpakkepenger) allocated for each PhD-candidate, as also suggested by rector at the rector-meeting

### **6) SN activities**

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 considering issues delegated from the University Board. Some issues relevant for PhD candidate:

- Changed the regulations for who shall be credited for a scientific paper
- Discussed the study programs and courses at UMB. There is a need for more and better courses at 300- and 400 levels.
- Ensured that the PhDs are mentioned where they should be mentioned!

### **7) Ethics Board activities**

The Ethics Board has held two meetings in 2011 (March 2<sup>nd</sup> and November 25<sup>th</sup>). In May they attended the National seminar regarding ethics in academia. Our representative, Vinh Phung, arranged a Whistleblower seminar for PhD students at UMB, October 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **8) SiN activities (Association of Doctoral Organizations in Norway)**

Stine Huseby took over for Hanna Helgeland as FODOS's representative in SiN at the AGM May 18<sup>th</sup> 2011. Important issues for SiN this year:

- Funding, SiN is looking into ways of getting funding from external sources that could finance a secretariat position and increase the effectiveness and influence of SiN.
- Offer doctoral candidates at University Colleges without PhD organizations help in the initial phase of starting their own doctoral organization.
- Representing doctoral candidates
- Representing Norwegian doctoral candidates in Eurodoc (European doctoral organization).

- Promoting results from the Eurodoc survey on working conditions for PhD students in twelve European countries.
- Looking into the situation for students on Quota Scholarships across Norway.

For additional information on SiN, please visit their website <http://www.stipendiat.no/>

### **9) FODOS on the web and the information brochure**

The FODOS web page is continuously updated with minutes and contact details. It is an important starting point for new students looking for information about FODOS and should be used for advertising all of our activities, also regarding academic issues. E-mail and Facebook has this year been our main channels of communication and the e-mail lists seem to be working fine at all departments. Our Facebook group currently has 123 members.

FODOS updated our information brochure this year and it was handed out at key events.

Informing PhD students about FODOS and our events at courses and seminars held by UMB did also prove very successful. It is a good way of promoting FODOS other than just on the web and by e-mail.

### **10) Information meetings for new PhD students**

Twice a year an information meeting for new PhDs is held by the central administration at UMB. This is a good opportunity to make new PhDs aware of FODOS and its activities. Hanna Helgeland and Stine Huseby presented FODOS at the information meetings held in 2011. We found this to be a good opportunity to advertize for upcoming events and several new people joined us on the first party following this meeting.

### **11) Other seminars**

FODOS was invited to speak at the University Board's seminar in August. It was a session about how to increase the publication rate at UMB, and we spoke on role of the PhD candidate in this work.

### **12) Committee on Gender equality**

Stine Huseby is now representing PhD students in the committee for gender equality. This is an important discussion forum for career development and equal opportunity at UMB and in academia, FODOS should work for PhD candidates holding a position in that committee in the future.

### **13) Collaboration with Naturviterne**

FODOS has initiated collaboration with Naturviterne (Norwegian association of Natural Scientist). We will host a seminar on presentation technique together in 2012 and if proven successful it will be held on a regular basis. There is also possibilities for funding for other seminars and activities.

### **14) Collaboration with DIOV**

DIOV (PhD organization at the Veterinary College) will in the future be moved to Ås with the merging of the two institutions. We invited DION's board to one of our bbqs for a chance to get to know one another and the initiative was appreciated. DIOV is a much smaller organization than FODOS and expressed interest in being invited to our academic activities as well. For several of these we have limited space and need to put our own members first, but this is something we should remember in the future and use the opportunities we have to facilitate communication between the organizations.

### **15) Compensation for FODOS work**

The FODOS board members receive compensation for the time spent working for FODOS, the leader up to one month, and board members up to two weeks. 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## **Accounts 2011**

	Budget 2011	Result 2011
Support from UMB	50,000	50,000.00
Academic committee	20,000	21,657.82
Social committee	40,000	46,471.02
Annual general meeting	3,000	2,037.50
SiN membership	2,000	2,000.00
Miscellaneous	5,000	3,128.79
Sum expenses	70,000	75,295.13
Balance	-20,000	-25,295.13

Bank balance 31.12.11	85,176.44
Estimated expenses before AGM 2012	-35,000.00
Estimated bank balance after AGM 2012	<b>50,176.44</b>

## **Budget 2012**

Support from UMB	50,000
Academic committee	13,000
Social committee	40,000
SiN membership	2,000
Annual general meeting	3,000
Miscellaneous	2,000
Sum expenses	60,000
Balance	-10,000