

Report for «FODOS meets PhD-coordinators»

- Tuesday, 04.06.2013, «Blue room» [economy building] -

attendent:

Daniel Mania	FODOS leader
Hans Adam	FODOS leader
Marian Schubert	Leader of the academic committee (FODOS)
Kyle Elkin	1st deputy (FODOS)
Mona Bye	Department of Academic Affairs
Vilma Bishof	Department of Academic Affairs, SiT
Lise Thoen	PhD-coordinator for HH
Sheena Lisland	PhD-coordinator for ILP
Kari Thue	PhD-coordinator for INA
Grethe Delbeck	PhD-coordinator for INA
Mirian Wangen	PhD-coordinator for IPM

not-attendent:

Anne Toril Golten	PhD-coordinator for IHA [<i>excused</i>]
Ingunn Andersen	PhD-coordinator for Noragric [<i>excused</i>]
Wenche Johnsdod	PhD-coordinator for IKBM
Marianne Skjervold	PhD-coordinator for IMT
Eivind Norum	Department of Communication

The meeting was initiated by FODOS to increase the visibility of FODOS during the admission process of new PhD students and possibly also from the beginning of employment/scholarship. Aims were the standardization of the admission process among the departments and to exchange experiences from between the different coordinators.

1. Input from Ph.D-candidates

Prior to the meeting all PhD-candidates were asked to give their input on the challenges they faced during the admission process. Marian Schubert presented a summary of those challenges:

- the whole process is too bureaucratic, time consuming and complicated to understand
- many candidates get confused by the parallel application/admission processes regarding the employment/scholarship on the one and admission to PhD studies on the other hand
- regarding duty work, neither the amount nor the type of work is regulated and it lacks a separate contract

A common demand from the PhD-candidates was that the departments should take a more active role in informing the students on all necessary steps during the admission process.

It was emphasized that the PhD information meeting is very helpful for new PhD-candidates. Furthermore it is very helpful that all necessary forms needed during a PhD's career are located on a single website [however, the whole navigation through UMB's websites is very difficult]. The PhD handbook contains all necessary information, but obviously most PhD-candidates find it hard [too much?] to read.

2. Timeline hand-out

Kari Thue presented a one-page hand-out that she had designed for PhD-candidates at INA. It contains an easy to understand time line with all necessary dates during the bureaucracy of the PhD study at UMB. The single dates contained hyper links to the relevant forms. Even though that hand-out is not an official document, a revised version will be included in the PhD handbook and/or on the PhD web page to simplify the access to the admission process and to motivate PhD-candidates to read relevant parts in the handbook. Mona Bye will design the revised version.

3. Foreign candidates

Foreign and especially Quota PhD-candidates need a lot of help to manage the administrative challenges at Norwegian authorities and other institutions (including visa, residence permit, work permit, registration numbers, bank accounts etc.). Responsibility of assisting non-employed PhD-candidates, e.g Quota PhD-candidates, lies with the Student Information Centre (SIT), especially with Vilma Bischof. However, PhD-candidates that are employed by UMB should get help through the Department of Personnel and Organisation. So far this is not the case and Vilma has not the resources to assist all foreign PhD-candidates. Therefore it was commonly agreed that the Department of Personnel and Organisation should provide more human resources to assist foreign PhD-candidates in issues regarding their stay in Norway. FODOS will increase the pressure on the rector and the department to reach this goal.

After the meeting Vilma send out the information that Christian Elind from the central administration (SA) is probably a person already working on the mentioned issues. Marian

Schubert will clarify Elind's work responsibilities.

4. Norwegian courses

Everybody agreed that the UMB should offer a satisfying, multi-level Norwegian course for foreign PhD-candidates (and researchers). Again the responsibility lies with the Department of Personnel and Organisation to provide courses that are designated for foreign PhD-candidates and researchers. The Norwegian courses offered for the employees of the University of Oslo could be a model how to provide proper language teaching. It is emphasized that non-employed PhD-candidates should also be able to participate in such courses. This issue is steadily discussed in the FODOS board. FODOS will increase the pressure on the rector regarding this issue.

5. FODOS visibility

The way for PhD-candidates to get to know about FODOS and its contacts at the departments is mainly through their incorporation in FODOS mailing lists. To increase the FODOS level of popularity two actions were decided:

a) At the time a (potential) PhD-candidate becomes part of the FS-database she/he gets a welcome e-mail, informing her/him about FODOS and the relevant contact at her/his department. Marian Schubert will write a template e-mail and Mona Bye will take care of its posting.

b) So far the FODOS contacts act as “e-mail forwarder”. FODOS would like to expand the role of the contacts in order to create a real FODOS “signpost” person at each department. The function of these FODOS signposts is to guide help-seeking PhD-candidates to the right persons/institutions in the administration and FODOS. It was emphasized that FODOS contacts are not able to replace the expertise of the administration, but can very well create a link between PhD-coordinators and PhD-candidates that have difficulties with accessing them. The “transformation” of the current FODOS contacts will be a major task for the academic committee (FODOS).

6. Encouragement of PhD candidates to talk to their coordinators

It was also decided that FODOS as a social network will encourage PhD candidates to seek help from the PhD coordinators and to use their expertise. Especially consulting PhD coordinators before filling out forms will prevent time consuming bureaucracy.

7. FODOS representative in PhD forum

Mona Bye proposed to re-establish the PhD forum, where all PhD coordinators are involved. The

FODOS SN-representative (currently Marian Schubert) will represent FODOS in this forum.

Daniel Mania, Leader of FODOS

Mona Bye, Department of
Academic Affairs