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Final*

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Minutes of SAMU meeting on June 3, 2024

Participants: Working environment committee representatives: Jiri Srba, Ulla Øland. Employee representatives: Lene Even, Lisbeth Juhl, Andres Masegosa, Hans Hüttel. Management representatives: Peter Axel Nielsen, Helle Westmark, Rene Rydhof Hansen. Not present: Henning Pohl. Observer: Stine Larsen. Minute taker: Diana Plejdrup Frank.

Item 1. VIVE report about sexism

Appendix: See material about sexism in academia

SAMU is recommended to discuss the main conclusions of the report 'Sexism and Career Paths at Danish Universities' prepared by the Danish Centre for Social Research and Analysis (VIVE). The report will be discussed in management fora, committees, and councils at AAU. The Main Joint Consultative Committee (HSU) is informed on June 26.

What is the problem?

If we look at academic careers at universities, there is a lack of female positions in academia which might be connected to sexism. It seems there is a problem with discrimination, working environment and sexism. This is a result of universities having hierarchical structures, competition in academia career paths and short-term employment contracts.

Method of the study

The study is focusing on PhD students. On AAU level we are close to sector percentage in terms of gender and sexual demeaning behavior and unwanted physical contact and coercion.

Where and who?

Particularly young people and individuals with children and bisexuals are vulnerable. What about homophobia? Why only bisexual? It was discussed that it might be the translation in the report that is wrong. The behavior comes from senior colleagues with seniority, managers and supervisors.

Consequences

It influences retention of staff and can result in mental health problems after their employment here.

Discussion

- According to the Head of Department the report has been discussed with the coordinators and he expects to address the issue later in fall. He will attend a meeting with Rector at some point. Until then it requires that we are aware of this type of behavior.



- According to Jiri Srba the working environment questionnaire done in Autumn 2023 at CS 1 out of 112 have answered yes to this. There might be more employees who experience this kind of behavior. Maybe we should use the questions from the VIVE report to find out.
- There are different kinds of sexism. It might be good with examples, so it is completely clear what the level of severity is.
- Currently we have other pressing issues at the department that we must focus on first. But in terms of recruiting, it is our business to do something about this.
- We can also use the tool on “how to talk about sexism” (see appendix) – maybe on some research group events or meetings. Maybe also use the guide in the way we talk to each other and use some of the cases. We could also adapt the cases with “non-gender” examples (diversity).
- The CS code of conduct also says something about this and what to do about if there is an incident.
- Question is what we are doing at the department about this. Jiri Srba suggests to adapt the questions from the guide on how to talk about sexism and use it in small groups so people get aware once they talk about. He also suggests to add some of the questions from the VIVE study to our internal survey so we can make distinctions.
- According to Hans Hüttel we need to be aware of possible “power dynamics” in these talks about sexism. It requires mixing of the groups for the discussion. Both aspects could be considered. Maybe a facilitator of the talks would be good.

Conclusion: We will work with the subject this autumn. The internal working environment survey will be adapted with questions from the survey. The research groups will be tasked with discussing the subject in the groups. The administration could also talk about how to do work with this (e.g. VIP talking to administration) and if it would make sense to either discuss it separately or with research groups.

Item 2. Notification of holidays for the coming holiday year

Appendix: See email with notification for the coming holiday year

The notification of holiday is decided by the Head of Department and sent to staff in September, but SAMU is informed on May meeting. Lisbeth Juhl informed about the holidays in 2025.

The one day that is “left over” is planned for June 6, the day after Ascension Day. This might be a problem seen in terms of exams. CS HR has now received input. It was agreed that the overview with the special holidays should be added to the overview with the default holidays. The mail notification about the special holidays will come in January.



Item 3. Psychological and physical work environment

Appendix: See appendix about working environment survey (APV)

Fixed item on the agenda as The Working Environment Committee is an integrated part of the SAMU Committee. It deals with points about the mental and physical work environment that are important to the employees.

According to the yearly cycle SAMU will discuss the working environment survey (APV) on May meeting. The CS working environment committee presented an action plan, which is based on the working environment survey done in October 2023. The result of the survey will be communicated to staff.

The quantitative results from Survey Xact be seen [here](#).

Discussion

Physical environment issues

1. *Office environment:* There were some issues about the office environment in terms of noise and some issues, lights and better chairs. In general, physical work environment issues should be addressed to Ulla Øland. As for good practice in terms of behavior seen in relation to the noise issues this should be addressed in the research groups (via group coordinators) and the administration (via head of administration).
2. *Two few seminar rooms and auditoriums for large classes.* Alternatives could be to split courses into two or use other auditoriums at campus east. Large lectures are unsuitable for any kind of teaching. The design of lecture rooms is in general not optimal (theater style is not good). NOVI8 auditorium was very good.
3. *Workload and Worklife balance are considered poor in particular for junior staff:* Management is focusing on this and one way is to invite a stress coach. HCC has set up a series of meetings with a business psychologist. This is one example. Dealing with stress is a constant issue. We need to limit the time spent on teaching and it can never be more than half of the time. It is hard to regulate in terms of the balancing between research and teaching.

Working overtime is a personal choice but not for younger staff. If they do not invest in overtime they do not have a permanent position. There is also an issue with the way permanent staff talk about working load and the rhetoric will influence younger staff.

As for PhD students not performing maybe talk more about expectations to PhD students including clarifying expectations of their supervisors (e.g. make plan for papers and what happens if they are delayed). PhD plans can be improved. If a PhD fall behind, he/she will stop showing up.

Maybe phd students could benefit from more shared meetings. A junior club is on the way. Good with initiatives that start up from the bottom.

In Copenhagen the issue is how to supervise smaller groups (maybe adapt expectations). Be aware of teaching norms. The way we do onboarding – maybe more onboarding for PhD students. It could be the research group coordinator that do this (e.g. what does it mean to be a supervisor).

Bottomline is that there are more actions than we see here. Stress coach is just how to treat symptoms. In terms of teaching, it has also something to do with more experience among young staff.

Action: Bring it up to a level where we are more concrete. Supervisors should work on how to work with PhD students. Supervisor workshops on working styles might be an idea. Maybe a group of supervisors could get together in a research group and look at how to do it.

4. Lack of transparency: There is staff that do not know how decisions are taken. It is a balance as a department to which level staff is to be informed and involved in decisions. Staff are encouraged to participate in councils and committees at the department.
5. Language barriers: Issues related to language diversity and communication are raised (e.g., meetings that start up in English and switch to Danish. We strongly suggest to switch to English and follow the AAU policy. Meetings with students should always be in English.
6. Attitude towards phd students: Report any denigrating attitude toward PhD students.
7. Copenhagen vs. Aalborg: Difficulties in aligning decisions/ different operational styles: Management has visited Copenhagen campus to address this.
8. Teaching norms: Separate item on the agenda today
9. Smoking areas: Item is addressed via no smoking signs and reminder to staff and others using the building.
10. Physical working environment: We have already addressed this under item 1.

Item 4. Teaching norms

Input from the B-side members

Status of the new teaching norms that were introduced from autumn semester 2023 and how do they affect the working environment now and in the future.

The data for the fall 2023 shows that the capacity of the department is still about 3000 hours less than the number of teaching/administration hours that we have to deliver. One would expect that the reduced norms should have had an effect, but it does not look so.

Discussion:

- Question is what was the effect of new norms? When you look into the system we are over teaching. The whole department is still 3000 hours over teaching. What to do about it.
- What do we know about student figures? The activities are more or less the same and the student population is growing. The Dean says we have too high teaching norms. We have had a long discussion and brought it down to where we are now. We are paid for ordinary students, but we give hours for teaching PhD students and we do not get income for this. It will never balance on who we are. We are hiring constantly, and some are leaving. We are overteaching and it gives us the chance to hire – but there is a delay in the hiring.
- When someone are leaving us, it leaves us with 500 hours unanswered for. We have extra DVIP (external lecturers and teaching assistants) to help us create a buffer zone. However, we should limit this. Some of the groups are hiring research assistants. It does not affect the quality of teaching. If you look

at the course responsibility lists. It is not an even distribution. The problem is that there are more students and in particular in Copenhagen. Solution is to hire more DVIP's as part of answers.

- Is the 3000 hours including phd students. So, we are not creating an income for phd students in terms of supervision hours.
- Leave also influences the numbers of in and out traffic. Leave is taken out of the equation.

Conclusion: UPU and management will deal with the issue. We can discuss the subject in SAMU later, but we need to be more specific.

Item 5. Lack of turn-up to teaching activities

Input from the B-side members

There is a growing tendency among students not showing up for teaching activities. Background: The experience is based on input from teachers but also from feedback from students in the recent year's evaluations. It also seems to affect the study environment and quality of teaching for the students that actually show up. Students are a different generation today than years back, which might give way for thoughts on how we can give both teachers, supervisors the best possible frames for their work (and the students the best possible teaching quality).

Discussion

- According to Hans Hüttel this is a major issue. Many students stop attending and it is not a local phenomenon. It is a larger problem. How should we approach this?
- It seems there is a post corona tendency, and it is big issue. We can put it into the right discussion also with students. There are different views among teaching staff whether the tendency is good or bad.
- Students today can choose how to learn. It has to do a lot on how they would like to attend teaching activities. We should maybe look at in another way.
- We have discussed this the study management group and with study programme coordinators. There is a consultant Rune Mastrup Lauridsen who gives talks about generation Z across universities. We might hire him to give a separate talk on a meeting where this can be brought up.

Item 6. News from SAMU members

Fixed item. Any news from SAMU members?

The third project economist started in project economy today. Stine Larsen started as the new strategic advisor to the Head of Department. She will attend this meeting as an observer but is not member of SAMU.

Item 7. News at the department

The Head of department informed about recent news.



Hirings are in place before summer holiday. 9 open positions. 4 in Copenhagen. The professor positions are also in process, and it will be clarified who will be going to interviews late June.

Item 8 Environmental considerations

Fixed item on the agenda as The Working Environment Committee is an integrated part of SAMU. It deals with items about the environment.

No smoking signs have been set up as mentioned earlier on the APV discussion.

Item 9 AOB

Any Other Business?

None.