

Annual report of the PhD Council, 2023

Date: Adopted by the PhD Council 30 October 2023

1. The PhD Council for 2023

In 2023, the PhD Council consisted of the following people who represented the PhDs and Post Docs in the mentioned committees:

- Tomas Midttun Tobiassen (IOR): Leader, representative on the Faculty Board
- Trygve Harlem Losnedahl (NiFS): Secretary
- Sandra Petersen (SMR): Finance
- Maja Vestad (IKRS): Representative in PFF
- Daksha Sriragulan (IfP) (December 2022–August 2023) and Marina Hiller Foshaugen (IKRS) (August 2023–December 2023): Representative in LiMU
- Pernille Sandberg Drtina (IOR): Representative in IVA
- Naureen Rahim (IKRS) (December 2022–August 2023) and Ole Boye (IOR): Social coordinator

The PhD Council represents the PhDs and PostDocs in various boards and committees, and initiates some work apart from that as well. In 2023, priorities for the PhD Council have been to (1) improve the midterm assessments, (2) creating social arenas for PhDs and PostDocs to meet, (3) implementing on-boarding initiatives from 2022, such as mentorship program and teaching opportunities for the PhDs, (4) support PhD Fellows applying for extensions in PFF and (5) securing funding for the PhD Council.

2. PhD Council Activities 2023

2.1 Boards and Committees

2.1.1 The Faculty Board

A member of the PhD Council has served as representative for the temporary academic staff (PhDs and Post- Docs) on the Faculty Board in 2023. There are four meetings pr. year See minutes [here](#). The Faculty's long-term budget has been an important topic. The Faculty's budgetary situation has been strongly improving in recent years and is solid, mostly due to low levels of activities under and after Covid and increased external funding. Presently, the Faculty is in the process of decreasing our "capital" (underforbruk).

An important topic for the Faculty Board this year has been to reach the goals for employment of PhDs and post-docs, ref. Annual Report 2022. The Board has been unanimous on this, and this has led to more PhDs being employed in recruitment rounds (e.g. four PhDs in the fall of 2023). This work is still ongoing, but the Faculty has been employing more PhDs and post-docs this year, and are on track to meeting its goals. On the last Faculty meeting of 2023, the Board will discuss what the target number for PhDs/post-docs pr. Semester (2 or 3) will be for 2024.

2.1.2 Likestillings- og mangfoldsutvalget (LiMU) / “The Equality and Diversity Board”

A member of the PhD Council has served as representative for the temporary staff (PhDs and Post-Docs) in LiMU. LiMU works to ensure that the composition of the law faculty's students and staff is to a greater extent a reflection of the general population, and that both students and staff are guaranteed equal opportunities for achievement regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, minority background, sexuality or other reasons. There have been five meetings, the first in January. The work in LiMU in 2023 has concerned design for universal accessibility, [the award for best master thesis on racial discrimination](#), and events for international scholars. The issue of taking care of young female academic staff and administrative staff has also been raised. One more meeting is scheduled for 2023, in December.

2.1.3 Programråd for Forskerutdanning (PFF)

The PhD Council is represented in the Programme Committee for Research Training / Programråd for forskerutdanning (PFF). PFF has the overall responsibility for the PhD program at the Faculty of Law, including organising the PhD courses.

In 2023, the PhD Council has worked with PFF in four main areas: 1) improving the PhD programme, 2) adjusting the midterm assessment guidelines, 3) COVID-19 extensions, and 4) improving the mentorship programme. They are all described in the following:

1) The Faculty of Law is home to projects that utilise a range of different scientific methods, and it has long been the view of the PhD Council that this diversity should be reflected in the courses offered to PhD candidates. Improving the PhD programme by offering alternative methods courses tailored to projects that do not utilise legal methodological frameworks (which is particularly common for projects at the Department of Criminology and Sociology of Law, and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights), has therefore been a central task for the PFF in 2023.

An internal review of the PhD programme is currently underway, conducted by members of PFF. An external review of the PhD programme is planned.

For now, PhD candidates who do not have a legal educational background can replace JUR9010 (*Philosophy of science, scientific theory and research methods*) with [SOS9008](#) (*Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis*). Please see the Law Faculty's [guidelines for replacing compulsory courses](#).

2) The PhD Council and PFF has worked towards improving the midterm assessment guidelines. For more information, please see 2.2.2.

3) While PFF has continued to approve most applications for extensions relating to the COVID-19 situation, the final deadline for submitting applications where COVID-19 is the main reason for extension is 31.12.2023.

4) The PhD Council has actively sought to improve the mentorship programme. To receive a mentor, PhD fellow may now ask either Professor Tone Wærstad (t.l.warstad@jus.uio.no), PhD Coordinator Birgit Abfalterer (birgit.abfalterer@jus.uio.no), or the head of the candidate's institute during the annual employee meeting. More information, also in English, is available [here](#).

2.1.4. Innstillings- og tilsettingsutvalet (IVA)

The nomination and appointment committee (Innstillings- og tilsettingsutvalet) has conducted all its tasks over e-mail the last year, and there have been no noteworthy cases or topics. The committee has come to an agreement with the assessment committees (bedømmelseskomiteer) in all cases.

2.1.5. Meetings with the Dean

Representatives of the PhD Council meet with the Deans once per semester. This year we met in May and will meet in November. In addition, we have regular contact with the Deans and the PhD Coordinator.

The main goal of the meetings is to discuss matters of importance to PhDs and PostDocs and to discuss implementation of different policies. In the May meeting, the main topics were making sure PhDs and PostDocs get to teach the topics they want to, on-boarding, “driftsmidler” (annual sum), the mentorship program, funding of the PhD Council, and extension of contracts because of care duties.

2.2 Implementation of PhD Council Goals

2.2.1. Improving Social Arena (Events)

a. Overview

PhDs have expressed a need for socializing following the difficult Covid times. Especially new PhDs hired during the pandemic have had a hard time getting to know their colleagues and finding social support and advice from other PhDs. To meet this need, the PhD Council has hosted regular events during the spring and fall semesters.

b. Informal Shut-up-and-write events

The PhD Council organised informal shut-up-and-write events for PhDs in February, April, May and September of 2023. Another one is planned for December, in addition to the Lysebu-seminar (see below). These events not only provided a conducive space for progressing on writing, which is central to the success of any PhD project, but also provided an opportunity for PhDs to socialise and to get to know one another and each other's work. Lunch was served by the PhD Council. With limited space in meeting rooms at the faculty, the numbers had to be limited to usually around 15 participants, and there was high participation and enthusiastic feedback for these events every time.

c. Seminar on Research Stays (March 2023)

The PhD Council hosted a seminar on research stays abroad for PhDs (and postdocs) Thursday March 9th. Professor Peter Scharff Smith at IKRS and PhD Student Tomas Midttun Tobiassen discussed why to go and provided some tips on how to.

d. Summer party (June 2023)

Before the summer holiday, the PhD Council hosted its annual Summer Party at Domus Juridica's Rooftop with pizza and drinks. 25+ people attended the event.

e. Seminar on how to write the introduction (kappe), (November 2023)

The PhD Council will organize a mini-seminar on how to write the introduction (“kappe”) for article-based PhDs on November 2nd, targeted at legal doctrinal research. This event will be in Norwegian, but another could be arranged in English targeted at other forms of research.

f. Welcoming Event (November 2023)

The Dean of Research will host a Welcoming Event at the end of November, and the PhD Council will be represented. To be announced.

g. Getaway shut-up-and-write (16-17 November 2023)

The PhD Council applied for funding from Lovsamlingsfondet and the Deans to arrange an overnight research stay at Lysebu. The event will happen after the Annual Meeting. 35 showed interest by signing up

2.2.2 Improving the midterm assessment

The PhD Council initiated a revision of *the Guidelines for the Midterm assessment*. Several PhD fellows have expressed to the Council that their experiences of the Midterm assessment (the announcement of the seminar and the execution of it) did not satisfy the purpose of the Midterm assessment – bearing in mind that the assessment is primarily intended to be a learning area for PhD fellows. The Council has paid close attention to this feedback, as the Council represents the PhD fellows’ interests. With that as a backdrop, the Council discussed different options and suggestions for possible improvements to the Guidelines. The Council thereafter presented multiple suggestions of improvement to the PFF, which was later relayed to the institute leaders, before being finally agreed upon in the PFF. While there is still work to be done, our proposals were successful in most areas. Below, we have pointed out our suggestions and the response/decisions from the PFF.

1) The Council proposed a wording in the Guidelines to be inclusive of the fact that many PhD fellows have article-based projects. This language adjustment was approved by the PFF.

2) We suggested for there to be two evaluators instead of one as a main rule. This suggestion was not approved by the PFF. However, the response was not entirely negative and the new guidelines do not exclude the possibility of having two evaluators as such. The response was that two evaluators can be appointed if that is seen to benefit the candidate, for instance if a project is of an interdisciplinary character.

3) We proposed that the PhD fellow could choose whether the evaluator is to give their comments before or after inputs from the audience, in the latter case without an audience – the idea being that harsh criticism may be better received if it is not in a public forum. This suggestion was not approved by the PFF. The view of PFF was that the work of the evaluator is valued and important and should therefore be presented in a public forum and before the floor is opened to the audience. The Council was also informed that the general practice is to hold back serious concerns about the project’s viability until the closed meeting after the seminar. We also suggested that the evaluator should be required to send their views/comments about the submitted text before the actual seminar, in order for the PhD fellow to plan accordingly and not be

confronted with unforeseen criticism during the public event. This suggestion was not approved. It is instead recommended that the PhD fellow request written feedback in their communication with the evaluator prior to the midterm assessment. In addition, we suggested that the evaluator send their summary to the PhD fellow after the seminar.

4) The Council suggested a change regarding public announcement of the midterm assessment, in force from 2024. Normally, the seminar is supposed to be announced publicly and be open to all. We proposed that the particular PhD can choose for herself whether or not to announce the seminar and/or that the first half of the seminar (for the public) only be open to faculty staff or other specifically invited participants. The PFF did to a certain extent approve this point. The new wording in the Guidelines is that the “Midterm assessment should normally (“som hovedregel”) be announced in-house (“internt”) at the faculty and be open for all the faculty staff. The particular PhD can choose for herself whether or not to publicly announce the seminar and for it to be open to outside participants. As an exception, the *Forskningsdekanen* has the authority to decide that the seminar is not to be announced.”

2.2.3 Support candidates with Covid-related extensions.

While PFF has continued to approve most applications for extensions relating to the COVID-19 situation, the final deadline for submitting applications where COVID-19 is the main reason for extension is 31.12.2023.

2.3 Other work

2.3.1. Ad hoc newsletters

The PhD Council has sent out ad hoc newsletters twice this year, to keep the PhDs and postdocs updated on our work and to provide relevant information more often than only through the annual report.

2.3.2 Work on extensions because of care duties

The PhD Council cooperated with another PhD Fellow and the trade union (Juristforbundet) to argue for a policy change regarding extensions for care duties (e.g. children). The pursuit was successful, but there are still some questions about how to implement the rules and about “retroactivity”.

2.3.3 Improving on-boarding

We have been working on implementing the initiatives from 2022 and to improve the on-boarding experience of new PhDs, but some of this work has been slow because of implementation issues in the administration.

2.4 Proposed areas for work in 2024

In addition to the projects that the PhD Council was able to implement in the course of 2023, there are other areas of concern and interest which time constraints prevented the Council from developing in full, but which we would like to bring to the attention of the new Council, for follow-up, as they see fit. These could be expanded on in the process of “overlap” and knowledge sharing from the 2023 Council to the 2024 Council.

- Work on the having a good external evaluation of the PhD Program, which is planned for 2024.
- Help make a good National PhD Seminar in Oslo in 2024, leading by example on how to integrate other methods than “doctrinal research”.
- Follow up on the measures that are adopted in the on-boarding process and improve it.
- Keep improving the social arenas for the PhDs.
- Work on improving the psychosocial work environment for the PhDs.

3. Finances and account for 2023

In 2023 the Council received commitment from the Law faculty to continue the funding of regular council activities and events to a sum of 15 000 NOK for each semester, a total of 30 000 NOK for the year. This funding is not formalized as a fixed yearly sum, however, it has been a support given by the Law faculty to the Council over the last years. Although, the Law faculty has been very positive to support these events aimed to both enhance social interaction and the working environment, as well as support to academic writing and development, the Council do advise to get this in writing and more formalized for times when faculty budgets are tighter than today and for foreseeability. Expenditure of the Law faculty funding must be in line with the UiO rules and routines.

In addition, based on a written application the Council received funding of NOK 80 000 from Lovsamlingsfondet for a shut up and write event that will be arranged later in November 2023, and an additional NOK 35 000 from the Faculty has been dedicated to this event. These, and also the funds for regular council activities and events, are funneled through the Department of Public and International Law and audited in the University system, and only available to the Council through staff at the University support.

It is estimated that the own funds accumulated by the PhD Council as “own funds” over the years will be transferred to next year, but that the remaining fund from the Law faculty will be used in social and academic activity that remain in 2023, and that the funds from the Lovsamlingsfondet will be spent as budget.

An overview of the funds is provided below, and a detailed overview of expenses is attaches as appendix 2.

INCOMING FUNDS	INCOMING FUNDS	Used	Remaining funds per 06/11-2023
Source	Amount (NOK)	Amount (NOK)	Amount (NOK)
Carry over from last year's budget (PhD Council own funds)	6348,53	424,20	5924,53
Event funding from the Faculty of Law (Event funding)	30 000	17151,89	12848,11
Lovsamlingsfondet	80 000	0	80 000
Funding for Lysebu-SUAW from the Faculty	35 000	0	35 000
Total	151 348,53	17 576,09	133 772,64

4. Annual Meeting

The Council annually hosts a statutory meeting in line with the Statutes of the PhD Council, which may be found here:

<https://foreninger.uio.no/stipendiatradet/om/statutes-2020-phd-council.pdf>.

The PhD Council will host its Annual Meeting followed by a social event on 6 November 2023.

5. Appendices

1. Statutes of the PhD Council (Statutter for stipendiatrådet)
2. Detailed overview of expenses.

Appendix 1

Statutter for Stipendiatrådet ved Det juridiske fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo

1. Formål

Stipendiatrådet skal fungere som et talerør for stipendiatene ved Det juridiske fakultet, Universitetet i Oslo.

Rådet skal fremme synspunkter og problemstillinger som er aktuelle for stipendiatene, gjennom ulike representantposisjoner i fakultetets og instituttens organer. Rådet skal også formidle informasjon fra disse organene til stipendiatene.

Rådet skal slik fylle en tillitsvalgtfunksjon for stipendiatene på tvers av fagområder og institutter, og samtidig bidra til å forbedre kommunikasjonen mellom stipendiatene og fakultetsorganene.

2. Rådets sammensetning

Om mulig skal rådet bestå av fem medlemmer som representerer fakultetets institutter og senter, slik at hvert institutt og senter er representert med ett medlem.

Medlemmene velges ved allmøtet i oktober eller november hvert år, slik at det er tilpasset nominasjonsperioden til Fakultetstyret. Som valgt anses den som får flest stemmer. De valgte medlemmenes funksjonstid er ett år.

Rådet konstituerer seg selv på første rådsmøte etter valget men de sentrale funksjonene av én lederen og sekretæren skal velges under allmøtet. Det er et mål at Rådet har nært samarbeid med representanter som bekler verv for midlertidig ansatte i alle fakultetets råd og utvalg. Der representanten er stipendiat, er det et mål at representanten også er medlem av Rådet.

3. Rådets møter

Stipendiatrådet avholder møter etter behov. Som hovedregel avholdes møte én gang i måneden i vår- og høstsemesteret.

4. Allmøtet

Hvert år avholdes allmøte for fakultetets stipendiat, hvor Rådets arbeid presenteres. Allmøtet etterfølges av et sosialt arrangement.

For øvrig avholdes allmøte når dette kreves av minst tre av stipendiatrådets medlemmer eller minst 20 av stipendiatene. I begge tilfeller skal stipendiatrådet kalle inn til allmøte som avholdes i løpet av fire uker etter at krav om allmøte er fremsatt.

Senest tre uker før allmøtet skal stipendiatrådet sende innkalling til møtet. Innkallingen sendes stipendiatene per e-post med varsel om at saker som ønskes forelagt allmøtet til vedtagelse etter pkt. 4.2, må sendes inn til stipendiatrådet senest to uker før allmøtet. Dersom stipendiatrådet mottar saker som nevnt, skal Rådet sende ut en endret saksliste senest én uke før allmøtet.

5. Referat mv.

Rådets sekretær fører referat og sender referat fra rådets møter og allmøter til stipendiatene.

Representanter som også sitter i fakultetets øvrige organer, skal i rådsmøtene informere om aktuelle saker.

Appendix 2

OUTGOING EXPENSES			
Date	Purchase Type	Amount (NOK)	Funding Source
January 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 27/1	1546	Event funding
March 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 3/3	1988	Event funding
March 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 31/3	2581,23	Event funding
April 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 24/4	221.4	Event funding
	Drinks and snacks	300,20	Own funds
May 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 19/5	794,3	Event funding
	Extra sandwiches	124	Own funds
June 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 16/6	1436,37	Event funding
June 2023	Food and drinks for Summer Party 22/6	4360,39	Event funding
August 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 24/8	1187,97	Event funding
September 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event 28/9	1312,3	Event funding
Totally used:		17576,09	Event funding and own funds
Activity remaining and planned:			
November 2023	Shut-up-and-write event all-inclusive two days, Lysebu	TBC	“Lovsamlingsfondet”
November 2023	Food and drinks for Annual Meeting 6/11	TBC	Event funding
November 2023	Social activity Annual Meeting 6/11	TBC	Event funding
November 2023	Academic event (Kappe seminar) -	TBC	Event funding
December 2023	Lunch for shut-up-and-write event	TBC	Event funding