

Date: 24 September 2021

## **Annual report of the PhD Council 2021**

### 1. Council Members 2021

In 2021, the PhD Council consisted of the following people who represented the PhDs and Post Docs in the mentioned committees:

- Martine S. B. Lie, IKRS - Head of the Council, representative of temporary staff in the Faculty Board, and deputy to PFF.
- Emma Hynes Brandon, PluriCourts – Secretary, Treasurer, and Social Coordinator.
- Hanna Vik Furuseth, IFP – Representative of the PhDs in PFF and the Election Board.
- Rose Elizabeth Boyle, IKRS – Representative of temporary employees in LiMU and the Committee for the Organization of Research, and deputy to the Faculty Board.
- Trygve Harlem Losnedahl, NIFS – Representative of the PhDs in IVA, deputy to LiMU, second deputy to the Faculty Board, and representative in the Committee on the National PhD Seminar.

### 2. Summary of work of the PhD Council 2021

#### *2.1 Boards and Committees*

The PhD Council's members have represented PhDs and PostDocs and voiced their interests in several boards, committees, and working groups throughout the year.

##### *2.1.1 The Faculty Board*

A member of the PhD Council has served as representative for the temporary staff (PhDs and Post-Docs) on the Faculty Board in 2021. The Faculty's Strategy 2030 has been a frequent issue throughout the meetings. The PhD Council answered the open hearing on the issue (see attached), and was heard on several issues, such as including a commitment to assess the PhD courses regularly. Otherwise, the Faculty Board has discussed annual plans and budgetary issues.

Following the Covid situation the Faculty's budgetary situation is improved. More externally funded research projects and fewer internally funded PhD and Post-Doc positions than targeted has also contributed to improve the budget. The PhD Council's representative and other board members have commented that the Faculty should strive to achieve the targeted number of internally-funded PhDs and PostDocs, which is 47. The representative has also raised the issue of compensation for extra work related to teaching due to Covid, but was not heard on this and was instead informed that this issue is to be evaluated individually upon request.



### 2.1.2 PFF

The PhD Council is also 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.

PFF is responsible for organizing the PhD courses. In 2021, the PhD Council has worked in PFF to put in place a system for systematic evaluation of the PhD courses, where an evaluation form will be sent out after each course, and where PFF will have access to the results of the evaluation. It looks like such a solution will be in place by the end of 2021.

PFF also processes and approves applications for extension of the PhD period, and in 2021 there have been many Covid-related applications. The PhD Council has worked to make it clear to PFF that the Covid situation has been particularly challenging for PhD candidates, both due to the time limit on the PhD period and because the PhD candidates often have home offices that are less conducive to productivity than the permanent scientific staff. PFF has approved most applications for extensions, and have based several extensions on the Covid-situation. However, centralized directives at the UiO have prohibited the use of general Covid-extensions for all/larger groups of PhD candidates, even though the PFF seems to have been positive to such a solution.

### 2.1.3 LiMU

The PhD Council is also represented in the Committee for Equality and Diversity (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. LiMU's activities were somewhat hampered by the pandemic (see also the report from 2020). As mentioned in the report from 2020, UiO adopted a new strategy for the coming decade (Strategy 2030) and the PhD Council was asked to provide a representative to assist in LiMU's response to this. This process was delayed until 2021 due to the pandemic. LiMU has over the course of 2021 worked on a new detailed action plan for equality, gender balance and diversity for the coming period 2021-2023 and has provided feedback on both UiO's Strategy 2030 plan and UiO's plan for diversity, equality and inclusion 2021-2034. The PhD Council has been an active member of these discussions and provided comments specific to the situation of PhD researchers and other temporary staff.

### 2.1.4 IVA

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

### 2.1.5 Committee for Organization of Research

In 2019, an ad hoc committee on the internal organization of research activity at the Faculty was created. It is charged with collecting information on how research activity is currently organized, and what the separate institutes/centers, individual research groups, and individual researchers themselves would like to change, as well as comparing this information with other similar faculties at UiO. The committee's activity has involved the development of an online survey sent to all staff at the faculty about research activities, primarily focusing on research groups, the formulation of which the PhD Council have also provided feedback on. In addition, the committee held qualitative

interviews with representatives from each of the institutes/centers at the faculty. The PhD Council was also represented both as interviewers and interviewees. The committee has since processed the data gained from this survey and are at the time of writing working on the final report to be delivered later in October 2021. Several points of contention regarding PhD researchers came up in the survey results, revealing that many PhD researchers are 'left out' of research groups, are unsure of how to join a research group or do not have a research group relevant to their scholarly interests, particularly those hired by the faculty (open positions) and not employed via externally-funded projects. The committee's final report will take into account the particular situation of PhD researchers at the Faculty, and how to better accommodate these in a potential reorganization of the Faculty's research activities.

#### 2.1.6 Other boards and committees

The Council has been represented on the arrangement committee for the national PhD seminar, which will take place in Oslo 1 to 3 December 2021. It has also been represented on the Election Board overlooking elections of Department Leaders and representatives to the Faculty Board. Moreover, the PhD Council has been appointed an observer position to CELL's board meetings.

#### 2.2. Events

The PhDs have expressed a great need for socializing during 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 two events during the spring, and will host two in the fall. The last three events have received specific funding from the Faculty due to the great need for socializing after lockdown. In April, the Council hosted an all-digital event that gave PhDs the opportunity to ask a variety of questions on the PhD process to two Post-Doctoral Fellows who had recently completed PhDs at the Faculty of Law. As Covid restrictions began to relax at the end of June, the Council was able to host an in-person social event on the roof terrace of Domus Juridica that allowed PhD fellows to meet in person and get to know each other. In August, the Council followed up on the success of its April event and hosted an event focused on the final stages of the PhD process that allowed PhDs to ask questions on this topic to one PhD Fellow in the final stages of her thesis and one Post-Doctoral Fellow who had recently defended his thesis at the Faculty of Law. After the digital Q&A session, PhDs were able to meet on the Domus Juridica roof terrace for lunch. All events were very successful and many PhDs participated. The Council will host its Annual Meeting followed by a social event in hybrid form on October 15th, 2021.

#### 2.3. Other work

- Established a Facebook group to gather the PhDs on a platform where it is easy to connect, share information and ask questions:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/685237078833805> .
- Established a routine of sending a welcome email to new PhDs with a presentation of the Council and relevant links.
- Held a joint meeting with the deans and Gørill Arnesen in May about Covid-related issues that all PhDs could attend.
- Looked into possible funding sources for the Council. The best option seems to be to apply for funding from Lovsamlingsfondet. An alternative is to apply for a modest contribution

from the departments based on their number of PhDs, but then the events will have to be in line with the policy for internally-funded events. The Council did not apply to Lovsamlingsfondet in 2021 as the Covid situation made it difficult to plan for events before the deadlines. Instead, we applied to the Faculty for funding to be able to host social events for the PhDs after lockdown and were granted funding for hosting three events, due to the special circumstances. The PhD Council of 2022 is advised to consider applying to Lovsamlingsfondet for funding, or alternatively apply for internal funding from the departments, to be able to host future events, as the Council's budget is dwindling.

- Met with Gørill Arnesen, the Deans, Faculty Director and head of administrations in May, discussing evaluation of the PhD courses, need for information and support to PhDs during Covid, and formalization of the PhD Council. Formalization may be difficult due to the regulations of election to the Faculty Board, but there was agreement that the aim should be that representatives are part of the PhD Council, thereby representing the PhDs as a group and not individual interests. A new meeting will be held in the fall.
- Circulated a survey about how PhDs have experienced the Covid situation and their possible struggles (see attached). The survey revealed that many have struggled in their home offices, with practical issues such as access to software and with the loss of social support from colleagues and general lack of a physical working environment (see attached). The information provided to the PhDs from the Faculty and Departments regarding both the situation in general and extensions is also experienced as insufficient. Results are to be presented to the Deans in a meeting this fall.
- Delivered a thorough answer to an open hearing on the Strategy 2030 (see attached) and was heard on several points. Most importantly on including a point on systematic evaluation and follow up of the PhD program.
- During 2021, UiODoc reached out to the PhD Council at the Faculty of Law, as well as other PhD organizations at UiO seeking greater collaboration. The PhD Council was present at UiODoc's interfaculty meeting in June, which primarily centered around the consequences of the pandemic on the University's doctoral candidates. The PhD Council informed UiODoc of the (at the time) upcoming survey on the pandemic's effects on candidates at the Faculty of Law and compared experiences from the Law Faculty with those of other disciplines. The PhD Council was also represented at UiODoc's Annual General Meeting in September. The collaboration with UiODoc has so far been positive, and it is recommended that the incoming council continue this dialogue.

### 3. Budget

INCOMING FUNDS	
Source	Amount
Carry over from last year's budget	10,749.11

Event funding from the Faculty of Law	16,000 (can only be used for approved events and according to the University's rules for catering)
Total	26,749.11

OUTGOING EXPENSES	Purchase Type	Amount (NOK)	Funding Source
Date			
14-Apr-21	Thank you gifts for event speakers	330.80	Carry over from last year's budget
21-Jun-21	Snacks and drinks for June 2021 Social Event	3,185.85	Event funding from the Faculty of Law
25-Aug-21	Food and drinks for August 2021 Event	3,072.91	Event funding from the Faculty of Law
25-Aug-21	Thank you gifts for event speakers	315.80	Carry over from last year's budget
15-Oct-21	Food and drinks for Annual Meeting	5,635.85	Event funding from the Faculty of Law
15-Nov-21	Food for welcome/thank you dinner with the old and new Councils	805.00	Carry over from last year's budget
	Total	14,346.21	

REMAINING FUNDS	
Carry over from last year's budget	9,271.23
Event funding from the Faculty of Law	4,150.39

#### 4. Agenda for the Annual Meeting 2021

1. *Presentation:* Short presentation of the Council and its work in 2021.
2. *Election to the PhD Council 2022:* The PhD Council invites nominations for election to the PhD Council 2022. Candidates will be elected at the Annual Meeting by general vote.
3. *Nomination for the Faculty Board 2022:* The PhD Council invites nominations of candidates to represent the PhDs and Post-Docs in the Faculty Board. Nomination shall be for one main candidate and two deputy candidates and shall be drawn from the newly elected PhD Council 2021. Nominations to be approved by general vote at the Annual Meeting.

The event will take place 15 October 2021 in Domus Juridica and will be followed by a social event.

## 5. Appendices

1. The Covid survey forms. 
2. Results from the Covid survey (without free text answers due to privacy). 
3. The PhD Council's comments to the Strategy 2030 hearing. 
4. Statute of the PhD Council 



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