

Meeting date: **28 June 2021**
Meeting place: **ONLINE via TEAMS**
Meeting subject: **AGRO Department Forum**

Participants: Arnaud Jéglot, Helene Saltoft Kristjansen, Iris Vogeler Cronin, Isaac Kwesi Abuley, Johannes Ravn Jørgensen, Johannes W. M. Pullens, Jørgen E. Olesen, Kirstine Skaarup-Lykkegaard, Margaret Rose Mc Collough, Mette Balslev Greve, Niels Holst, Per L. Gregersen, René Gislum, Shubiao Wu, Birgit S. Langvad, Anna Dorthe Østergaard
Not present: Anne Sofie Nielsen, Karen Rose Elsgaard, Mette Vestergaard Odgaard,

1. Welcome by JEO

All AU departments are obligated to have a department forum. JEO informed that we will address strategy, academics, hiring new staff, etc. – so welcome to everyone.

A brief presentation round:

Iris Vogeler – senior scientist in Foulum
Per L. Gregersen – senior scientist in Flakkebjerg
Niels Holst – senior scientist in Flakkebjerg
Johannes Pullens – postdoc in Foulum
Johannes Ravn – associate professor in Flakkebjerg
Isaac Kwesi Abuley – postdoc in Flakkebjerg
René Gislum – associate professor in Flakkebjerg
Margaret Rose Mc Collough – PhD student at Flakkebjerg
Arnaud Jéglot – PhD student in Foulum
Mette Greve Balslev – academic employee in Foulum
Shubiao Wu – associate professor in Foulum
Kirstine Skaarup-Lykkegaard – bachelor student in Aarhus
Helene Saltoft Kristjansen – technician in Flakkebjerg
Birgit S. Langvad – not part of the council, but participated as a guest.
Anna Dorthe Østergaard – coordinator/minute taker of this Department Forum

2. Election of vice chairperson

JEO needs a deputy in case of his absence. Johannes R. Jørgensen pointed out that not anyone can be appointed vice chairman – it must be a scientific employee according to the rules. Per L. Gregersen volunteered to be appointed vice chairman and he will be co-chairing in collaboration with JEO, and chair alone in JEO's absence – no objections from the other participants.

We will convene for 2-4 meetings per year, additional meetings can be held, if deemed necessary.

Members can request certain topics to be addressed at our meeting.

Our meetings are also public meetings.

The council agreed to have one physical meeting per year.



3. **Content and work procedures** - <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/strategy/au-rules-and-regulations/standard-rules-of-procedure-for-departmental-councils/>

Tasks of this council can be seen on above website.

We can put forward actual questions and proposals to the dean.

Johannes: how do we work together with other committees? JEO: Chairpersons of other committees are also invited on occasion for the department leadership meetings, and the same could be the case for the department forum.

If a member is absent for a longer period, a substitute can be appointed.

Minutes will be available within 8 days and uploaded to our homepage:

<https://agro.medarbejdere.au.dk/en/committees-in-agro/department-forum/>

Action points should to be listed at the bottom of the minutes.

Annual cycle of work topics comprising:

4. **The department's strategy**

We have over the past two years had a process to draft a strategy for the department. However, this has not yet been finalised, and it rests with the head of department and the secretariat to finalise the strategy. The faculty has put pressure on all departments to complete their strategy. The department secretariat will revise the strategy and draft a new version for discussion in the department leadership group to be ready by the end of 2021.

Niels: who is going to use the actual strategy? JEO: the strategy should form the basis for detailing annual action plans. Every year we revise our action plan with inputs from all our committees – so the strategy is our guide on the most important issues within AGRO. We will revise our strategy every 3-4 years.

René: a lot of focus has been put on collaboration with other departments.

Our disciplinary centres also emphasize the importance on collaboration.

JEO: we also need focus on efficiency of collaboration within the department despite the fact we are situated on different locations.

AGRO department's revised strategy and action plan will be shared at our next meeting.

5. **Appointment and recruitment policy**

There are several critical issues, including 1) How do we attract academic staff? 2) How do we achieve gender and diversity balance among our academic staff, and 3) How do we ensure motivation among younger researchers?

René Gislum is a member of the academic council and can bring questions forward to this council as well.

JEO: a key instrument for the recruitment procedure is that we draft a list of potential positions within AGRO for the upcoming year – and this list will be discussed at our meetings. Recruitment is an active step we can do to decide on our employee composition. How do we get more transparency about our recruitment procedure?

Within the leadership group, we will draft a proposal and this proposal (list of permanent positions) will be presented to the Department Forum at our autumn meeting. This sharing of the action plan is highly welcomed.

Margaret: will there be more transparency about the actual applicants? JEO ensures that the application procedure and the announcement procedure will be transparent, but we must, of course, ensure integrity with the application procedures.

An important part of the recruitment procedures are *search committees*. This is currently not working effectively, but this will be a good tool. JEO: we have been ignoring this search procedure, but this must change.

René: The academic council discusses the assessment committee for each application very thoroughly.

JEO: The independency of the assessment committee is important, but we believe those processes are in place for AGRO. However, the issue of the search committee is different, and this is an extremely important part of the process to ensure a good and balanced set of applicants.

Mette: in connection with potential, internal candidates, the announcement process may still create tension/confusion.

JEO: We must always select the best candidate for each position.

Johannes R.: It should not be the same person who is chairing the search committee and the assessment committee.

JEO: The job announcement process is also important and, currently it is not attracting sufficient candidates for our permanent scientific positions. There is a need to better target the potential candidates and networks.

Johannes P: Does HR headquarter offer to draft the wording in the job advert?

JEO: HR can help with some wording assistance, but our experience is that we are already in a good place with this, so this is not the problem. However, the description of the scientific position is often too narrow. we need to make sure the position is properly and broadly described.

René: We don't have a huge pool of candidates for our job openings compared to finding proper candidates. The wording is crucial to attract candidates.

When JEO puts his recommendation forward to the dean, JEO needs to know what the search committee has done in this search process.

JEO: The search committee procedure will be implemented and used properly going forward.

Johannes P: Do we need diversity in the search committees as well to cover gender issues.

Johannes R: Let's evaluate after one year when we have implemented the search committee.

JEO: As we don't have gender equality in the department now, there is the risk that we overload women with committee work to try to even out the gender balance. So, this is a balance that also involves consideration of expertise.

Margaret: Do we have gender and cultural diversity? By using the search

committee template, we should be able to cover this. We need to promote using this template.

JEO: The search committee's task is to find qualified candidates and proper networks for job announcement, not to find and appoint a candidate

Iris: have we not been able to find qualified staff previously?

JEO: we have been struggling to attract candidates resulting in few applicants, or simply no applicants. Therefore, we sometimes have to re-announce the posts, which we should avoid.

Our recruitment policy should attract a broad variety of candidates.

Isaac: How broad should the advertisement be? JEO: we need to look at the individual job opening regarding where and how to attract a broad pool of candidates.

6. Education and study environment

The government has decided that we need a new reform resulting in a reduction of 10% of students in university cities, including in Aarhus. How this will be implemented is uncertain. If AU moves some of the studies outside of Aarhus, we don't have to reduce, and as a result the veterinary studies might be relocated to Foulum. We need to consider, if we can move some of our educational activities from Aarhus to Foulum to forego the 10% reduction.

Johannes R: Flakkebjerg has a lot to offer and should be considered as part of the changes in study environments. It is not attractive to move AU-students to Foulum, as they need the synergy from other students, etc.

JEO: I have focus on both Flakkebjerg and Foulum and will consider what to do. If we want to move out of Aarhus, the study environment must be sustainable, so there are many considerations. JEO concluded that we need to see opportunities rather than limitations. How can we attract more students? We have the capacity for many more students than we currently attract.

Kirstine argued that as they are only 20 students, it would not be good to be relocated to Foulum as the students thrive in the student environment in Aarhus. Social aspects would be lessened by moving to Foulum. Kirstine will ask fellow students on what can be done to attract more students. JEO would like to be invited to attend a student board meeting, and Kirstine will facilitate this.

Study environment by Kirstine: As we have not been able to spend much time at AU due to COVID, she has little to report on the student environment. We are starting up new activities now we are back. The online teaching was reduced. During the last two months, we have only been allowed to come to campus on certain days before exams and to attend a few study groups. No lessons on campus unfortunately. Consequences: we are starving for normalcy. Online studies have not been praised by any of her fellow students, we all miss going to campus. New

students have not been able to form social relations, which is crucial.

7. **AOB**

Mette: what have we learnt about working from home during the COVID period? This issue is addressed in LSU and LAMU, but we can also discuss this here in our forum. JEO informed that we have already sent out a questionnaire, but perhaps we need to send out a new questionnaire concerning the working from home during COVID. The pros and cons on working from home. JEO agrees that we need to consider a survey on this topic.

Arnaud: we have some constraints here in Foulum. What can we change, and what can we not change? The education committee could evaluate this. JEO replied we need to rethink our studies in the context of the many ongoing changes.

ACTION POINTS:

	Facilitator
Revision of AGRO strategy	Jørgen
JEO would like to be invited to attend a student board meeting	Kirstine
Working from home during COVID – pros and cons – possible new survey	Jørgen
Kirstine will ask fellow students on what can be done to attract more students.	Kirstine