

Meeting date: **11 October 2021**
Meeting place: **ONLINE via TEAMS**
Meeting subject: **AGRO Department Forum**

Attending: Anne Sofie Nielsen, Arnaud Jéglo, Birgit S. Langvad, Helene S. Kristjansen, Iris V. Cronin, Issac K. Abuley, Johannes. R. Jørgensen, Johannes Pullens, Jørgen E. Olesen, Margaret R. Mc Collough, Mette Balslev Greve, Mette Vestergaard Odgaard, Niels Holst, Per L. Gregersen, René Gislum, Shubiao Wu, Anna Dorthe Østergaard

Absent: Karen Rose Elsgaard, Kirstine Skaarup-Lykkegaard,

1. Welcome by JEO

2. Action points from last meeting

Revision of AGRO strategy (JEO):

TECH Faculty has decided that there will be a joint TECH strategy to which departments need to comply, so we need to revise our AGRO strategy.

JEO to attend a student board meeting (Kirstine): Jørgen will be invited to the upcoming student board meeting by Kirstine.

Working from home – new survey? (JEO):

We will not make a survey, but comply to new AU regulations.

Kirstine will ask how we can attract more students (Kirstine): No news, as no meetings have been held since last meeting in June. First ordinary meeting has been scheduled for Oct. 12.

The committee decided that detailed minutes are preferred.

3. Working from home – what are the rules?

New guidelines on working from home have been published: <https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/administration/hr/recruitment-and-employment/working-from-home/>

Working from home is a possibility, but this has to be approved by immediate manager and only in case of a specific task. No more than a few days – and fixed workdays at home every week is not an option. There will be a news story in AGRO, where everyone can learn about the present rules. If, and when you work from home, it is mandatory to write “Working from home” in Outlook with information about a phone number where you can be reached.

Johannes Ravn: Thanks for the information, but this topic should also be discussed in the liaison committee.



4. **Self-assessment in AGRO**

The strategy has to be aligned with the different departments in TECH. Management is filling in the template, and if you have concrete input, please send this to Birgit S. Langvad. The input from AGRO will be based on our strategy work for the past two years.

Dilemmas on page 6:

Rene Gislum: Collaboration within the department, is this an issue or a dilemma? Perhaps, we need to rephrase this sentence.

Johannes W.: We are struggling with the AgroEnvironmental Management MSc, which will be constrained in allowed number of students. JEO commented, that we need skilled people within this area; however, the statistics show that our graduates did not get jobs in Denmark. We need to "sell" our education programme to the job market. We need to allocate time to adjust our educations to match the job profiles.

Anne Sofie pointed out that she and her fellow students have managed to land jobs after their studies, but some of them are also abroad.

Issac: Employment on completion of an education can perhaps be interpreted – Statistics Denmark is just stating whether they are employed or not employed.

Looking behind the numbers will get a more diverse picture of the reality.

JEO: Students with own funding & students under Erasmus funding are not represented in the statistics either. We are the only department in TECH, which has the Erasmus Mundus students, and they are not part of the restriction on uptake.

We are considering transferring this MSc to the Agrobiography MSc, where we have no restrictions.

Dilemma 2: Young scientists do not know how to get proper assistance.

Johannes W.: There are so many rules in the guidelines.

Iris: There will always be colleagues who are struggling.

5. **Strategy of the Department**

We have not written anything down yet, but we have to come up with vision, ambition, action plan, etc., and we have to align with the faculty. Birgit informed that we don't need to fill in the field "ambition", we simply use the Faculty's drafted version. We still have to revise the old strategy.

TECH's benchmarks are based on the Faculty's prioritisation.

Prioritisation topics: Partnership with the industry – JEO's interpretation of this topic is that we need to write how we transition into the green transition with meetings, seminars, events, etc. in order to underpin the green transition.

Johannes R.: How do we navigate in this to ensure arm's length to the industry?

We need work with the private sector if they fulfil the goals (how do we see and understand the goals?). JEO: These goals are articulated in the recent

AgriFoodTure roadmap.

Niels: Green transition should also be implemented into our bachelor-, master-, and PhD programs. We need to re-design our educational program to reflect the green transition.

Iris informed about how they do in Germany with a shared partnership between the private sector and the universities.

Focal point 2 (research-based consultancy):

René: We could combine research and policy support resulting in more peer-reviewed papers. It is difficult to get money earmarked for consultancy, but the Department can also invest more in this area.

Johannes W.: The juniors tend to do the hard work, whereas the seniors publish the work. We need to involve the juniors from the early start without compromising other tasks, and this is crucial in order to attract younger staff to stay at AU. The Danish "Rammeaftale": We have a limited amount of money for this area, but we also need to produce peer-reviewed papers.

Anne Sofie: It is crucial to get the younger scientists involved in the policy support with inclusion from the beginning.

Iris: Could we arrange some policy support seminars/talks once a month to attract the younger scientists?

Concrete tasks from the Government have a designated coordinator (senior scientist) who should consider involving postdocs, assistant professors, and scientists. PhD students should only be involved to a limited extent in consultancy support as part of their duty work.

AGRO Management will draft the strategy, and it will be sent out for comments. The preliminary strategy will be presented at the Department leadership meeting. We have to finalise the strategy by the end of 2021.

6. Recruitment plan 2022

JEO presented the recruitment plan with listed "arguments". We have recruitments in all sections. The Recruitment Plan is only targeted at permanent positions (including assistant professors), and not postdocs.

Johannes W.: Job announcements should clearly argue for the positions. JEO: Job advertisements will be kept as open as possible to attract as many candidates as possible. However, they also need to clearly state the required qualifications.

Birgit: The search committee should look into the content of the announcements. We have drafted a manual for the search committee. Recruitment at this level is about employing both internal and external candidates. We still need a better gender diversity; as we are struggling to attract female candidates.

Johannes R.: How do you choose the positions. JEO informed that he asks all the section leaders of their needs (growth, succession, etc.), so it has been based on a

dialogue with the section leaders.

We have also listed professor positions, and JEO concluded that we can have approximately 4 new professor positions per year.

Mette: The LCA competence group should be considered. JEO has been in dialogue on this.

JEO: The new AU promotion programme will be used strategically and will in some cases be used to recruit and retain staff.

JEO will send the draft Recruitment Plan to the Dean for approval.

7. **Budget 2022**

The income in Budget 2022 from the finance bill is almost identical with the budget numbers for 2021 – but we are hoping that this annual reduction in the finance bill will be omitted.

External funding is increasing for 2022, and most of the funding is already in place – thank you to our active/successful scientists for landing the applications.

JEO: We also get a part of the core budget from the Ministry of Science (university funding) and it is related to how much external funding we have landed and how productive we are.

We will not increase the overall number of staff next year, but there is room for new recruitment.

JEO: We have a debt of 13 MIO DKK, and JEO is discussing with the dean how the dept can be eliminated.

JEO informed that our budget this year allows us to increase investments and to upgrade old equipment in the labs. Due to COVID, we have a backlog of unused travel provisions, but we have also gotten better coverage from our external funding.

8. **Election of student representatives**

No student representatives were present. Birgit will email the students and get the latest news.

9. **Briefing from academic council – René Gislum**

René informed that the 10% relocation of students is a concern for the university and has been discussed.

New software for the student administration is in progress.

The use of Search Committees for requirements has to be taken seriously.

Research integrity has been discussed, and AGRO is often used as an example.

Collaboration within the faculty is crucial, and how do we maximize this? This item will be on the agenda at our next meeting.

Please contact René if you have any questions to the academic council.

10. **Career committee report “Action Catalogue for AGRO Career Development”**

The career committee no longer exists, and AGRO Department Forum will take

over and address the issues.

Comments on the report:

1 C – Continuous training: JEO emphasized that this topic is important for all staff developing dialogues.

1 B – Two years abroad is a norm, which has never been applied in practice. The wording should be corrected to “a longer period of time”. If you want a scientific career, you must have been outside of Aarhus University to gain diverse experience and independence as a researcher. Many younger staff find 2 years very long.

JEO suggests implementing a procedure with “Letter of Expectation” for temporary staff (postdocs and assistant professors), which describes the expected work during the position, including stays abroad, contribution to applications, policy support, teaching etc. We are not supporting younger scientists properly, which must be improved by better management at all levels.

Issac: Staying abroad means a longer stay abroad, and it is important you prove, what you have done, what you have gained, and also see the stay abroad as a great advantage and a valuable learning curve. We need a better understanding on which criteria we value the most.

JEO: When is a candidate eligible for a certain position requires many considerations such as staying abroad, productivity, activity, interpersonal skills, etc.

Anne Sofie: When recruiting younger females, it could be good to put in what we can offer both males and females.

Per: This forum will continue to discuss some of these crucial topics from the career committee report, and the AGRO management will discuss this further.

Mette: Is it possible to change career path from academic employee to researcher? JEO is willing to negotiate in relevant cases where AGRO can offer an assistant position (short term contract), but you will go from a fixed position to a temporary position. Academic employees can teach, but not supervise PhDs. Tenure tracks cannot be formal supervisors for PhDs – seniors always have the formal PhD supervisor role. Seniors should be much better at delegating tasks to juniors and juniors should be credited for the tasks such as “main acting supervisor”.

Programme for AGRO Researcher days 2021

Birgit walked us through the programme, which has already been circulated to the participants

Day 1 is dedicated to all researchers, whereas Day 2 is split between young researchers and senior researchers.

Issac: I would like to know more about project management, application templates/cover sheets, finances, etc. René replied that a supervisor should be

able to answer such questions and show where you can retrieve the various templates/information.

11. **AOB**

Birgit emphasized that circulated documents for the AGRO Department Forum meetings should never be disclosed to colleagues. The minutes are made public and retrievable on the Intranet.

Biodiversity at AGRO – SYSTEM (Anne Sofie): *This topic will be on the agenda at our next meeting.*

Next meeting will be a physical meeting sometime in January 2022.

ACTION Points from OCTOBER 11th

	Owner
JEO will send the Recruitment Plan to the dean for approval	Jørgen
Revision of AGRO strategy	Jørgen
JEO would like to attend a student board meeting	Kirstine
Working from home - new AU guidelines	Jørgen
Kirstine will ask fellow students on what can be done to attract more students	Kirstine