SLUSS PhD student Board meeting minutes

Meeting of the 16th of March 2015

Location(s): Alnarp, Aulan. Ultuna,Sal Q. Umeå, Sälgen A.

Attendees:

Name	Position
Arnis Jurevics	Chairperson
Andrea Miller	NOVA
Christoffer Johnsson	SHS
Faraz Muneer	ASK
Lotta Hansson*	SLU (secretary FUR)
Martin Palmqvist	FOMAR
Sarah Säll	ULS

1. Meeting opened at 15.05
2. Proposed agenda approved by all present
3. Arnis elected chairperson, Christoffer as secretary and Sarah elected to approve the minutes
4. The protocol from last meeting was sent out along with the invitation to the meeting and Arnis stressed that, as many are new to the organization, it should be studied to become familiar with previous activities
5. The notice to attend was found to have been sent out suitably far in advance.
6. The participants briefly introduce themselves and their background.
7. Information from Ph.D. Councils
    a. ULS
    1 brief meeting has been held since last SLUSS gathering and one more is planned after the FUR and FUN meetings.
    The council has organized a nice pub, with quite a few students attending.
    Effort has been put into discussing the Ph.D. student salaries (doktorandstegen) and there has also been a small conflict with the Vice Chancellor regarding SLU courses held in cooperation with a Ugandan institution that have posed problems for members of the HBTQ community due to Uganda's restrictive laws on homosexuality.
    b. SHS
    SHS had their annual meeting in late January, most of the positions were appointed, with a couple of additional ones to be filled during the course of this semester. A first meeting has been planned but postponed due to difficulties in organizing a time.
    c. VMF
    No representative present
    d. ASK
    ASK had a first meeting on the 3rd of March where one new member was elected.

There is currently no representative in Fakultetsnämnden (FN) so the secretary of that council has been asked to get information and share it with the representatives in ASK.
The council is working on bringing back "PhD-lunches", where different speakers are invited to give short presentations to students over food.
The budget for this year has been approved.
During the last meeting there was a discussion regarding many supervisors lacking information pertaining to PhD student education and the need for supervisors to be better informed.
Two representatives from ASK will attend the SLU strategy meeting on March 19th.
FUN:There has been one meeting of FUN where issues of course evaluation of PhD-courses was discussed.
Docent board: has had one meeting last week, there were five applicants.

8. Arnis has attended an SLU board meeting in January and described it as very interesting as everything was new to him. Discussions were focused on budget for the coming year and Arnis had to sign off on last year's annual report.
   There was a lot of information to read and absorb.
   All board members are aware of the problem of declining numbers of PhD-students.
   Arnis pointed out that PhD student have a decent level of representation in the council and the views of students can be brought forward.
9. No representative present
10. Martin informed on the activities and mission of FOMAR (Rådet för Fortlöpande Miljöanalys). This council discusses allocation of funds earned by SLU performing environmental monitoring for the government. Among other things, there has been discussion of increasing efforts for method development as environmental monitoring is a service SLU provides for profit and which would therefore be beneficial to advance.
11. NOVA meeting planned for Wednesday 18th of March, no new info thus far.

An intermittent discussion on the process of hiring a new vice chancellor:
Arnis informs that there were only two candidates and that some on the hiring committee thought that neither were an optimal choice.
There is a need to commence the process of recruiting a new pro-vice chancellor soon.

*At this time (15:26) Lotta Hansson joins the meeting and informs on the activities of FUR:

- The next FUR meeting (17th of March) will address issues of new templates for PhD theses of students with joint degrees, i.e. where two universities will get credit on the/in the publication. She points out that it's a minor issue but one that needs to be sorted nonetheless.
- One faculty board has highlighted a problem with validating the quality of external PhD courses when students are to graduate and want to receive input from other boards on how they handle this kind of problem.
- There is an upcoming evaluation of different research schools at SLU. Research schools are thematic, educationally supportive, organizations which arrange courses, visits etc. which are relevant to the participating students and as they are funded

mainly by internal SLU funds they need to be evaluated to guarantee that they conform to guidelines and that the quality of the education they offer is up to standard. This will be discussed in both the meeting on the 17th of March and also in May.

- It has been two years since the guidelines for doctoral education were heavily revised and the time has come for a scheduled evaluation of these changes. Lotta expects that the introductory essay which was introduced with the revisions will be a major point of discussion, as it has been suggested that it may be excluded in the future.
- There will also be a report from Doktorandombudsmannen (DO) to the FUR meeting on March 17th regarding various PhD issues and also some statistics regarding the number and type etc. of such issues, in order to try and see if there are any trends in what issues PhD students at SLU are facing.
- The meeting will also be presented with statistics on the number of admissions and examinations of PhD students.
- Lotta highlights two major information points to be presented: Policies for prolongation of PhD studies and Doktorandstegen.

At this point Sarah brings up a question regarding a guideline issue where some students have found themselves in a situation where their supervisors are also responsible for the PhD education at their departments and also heads of their respective departments, leading to the students having no one to discuss potential problems they may have with their supervisors. She suggests this should be discussed at the FUR meeting and will contact the DO representative to alert them to the situation.

12. Arnis takes us through the draft strategy for SLUSS, no major discussions at this point.
13. No information shared on SLU board or FUR meeting schedules
14. No other issues
15. Meeting ends at 16:45, time and place of next meeting to be decided and announced later this spring, there is an agreement that a frequency of 2 months between meetings is alright and that the next one could be placed in conjunction with the upcoming FUR meeting on the 26th of May.

Sarah Säll - Member to approve minutes

Arnis Jurevics - Chairperson

Christoffer Johnsson – Secretary