**PhD committee meeting at ITS, 07.03.2024 - Meeting Minutes**

*All members were present at the meeting:*

 *Paal E. Engelstad (head of the committee)*

 *Torbjørn Skauli*

 *Ulysse Teller Masao Côté-Allard*

 *Sebastian Zieglmeier, (PhD candidate)*

 *Yvonne Baade (adm., PhD coordinator)*

**Discussion points and decisions**

**1. Discussing and defining the role of the PhD committee (table round)**

The concencus in the PhD committee is that our role is to facilitate the processes. The committe will focus on an easy "serve yourself"-approach (giving PhDs and supervisors sufficient info), and on developping good processes and tools/procedures.

**Decisions:**

* **Our role:** It was decided to adopt the decription text of IFI. Paal was asked to publish it on ITS web. This was carried out right after the meeting and the resulting text was added on the ITS page (under "More specifically:") right here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/about/organisation/phd-committee/>
* **Physical meetings vs email:** We will continue with the same mix as before of physical meetings combined with handling processes by email, in contrast to IFI who handles most processes only in the meetings. We will evaluate this mix in the coming future, and make adjustments if required.

**2. Web-pages for PhD candidates at ITS (paal)**

**Decisions:**

* It was decided that the web-page is good enough to be published (even though small modifications are desired - see bullet points below). The publication was done right after the meeting, and the web-page can be found here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/index.html> This page is now also linked directly from the front page of ITS.
* It was decided that the description for "Your first day at ITS" needs to specify people also with surnames. This was fixed right after the meeting, so now all people have both names and links for more contact info.
* It was decided that we need a better process for the preparation of the first day. There should be a process starting 3 weeks before, at the same time as the process with the laptop purchase starts. The process should allow the PhD coordinator to be involved with the candidate and the supervisors, so that the coordinator can set a plan for the first day, and also book the necessary meetings. (The PhD coordinator will at the same time also facilitate that a PhD mentor is allocated to the new PhD candidate, see next bullet point). It was decided that Yvonne and Paal devolops a draft/proposal for this process. (Hopefully something is ready to be discussed already at our next PhD committee meeting.)
* It was also decided that we will test out mentorship, and start it using only a one-week mentor period, where the newly arrived PhD candidate has an established PhD candidate at ITS as a mentor for the first week after arrival. The PhD coordinator will then set up this mentoring as part of the preparation process before the date of employment, described in the previous bullet point.
* It was decided that the "For new employees at ITS" document at the web-page should contain more info about the local facilities, like the facilities in the building (Gym, Sauna, Unikum, pub, etc), and other local info (e.g. Lillestrøm Bike service). After the PhD committee meeting, this was addressed, and the new text is here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/welcome-as-a-new-employee-at-its-2024-03-07.pdf> and the source file is here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/welcome-as-a-new-employee-at-its-2024-03-07.docx> . Ulysse was committed to check the text, and contribute if needed. Members are given seven working days after receiving these meeting minutes to produce inputs to the document, until the current version is considered agreed upon and settled.

**3. Third semester reporting**

**Decisions:**

* It was discussed whether we need a web-form with short questions to catch lack of progress or other problems in a timely manner before (or even after) the 3rd semester evaluation, but it was concluded that the PhD coordinator will obtain this info prior to the third semester evalutation. Yearly evaluations will also be a tool to catch this. It was therefore decided that the PhD coordinator take responsibility of being roughly updated on the status for each PhD candidate before the third semester evaluation. If it turns out that the PhD candidate is exposed to problemic circumstances, the PhD coordinator might be present at the actual evaluation meeting. If there are serious problems, another representative from the PhD committee might also step in.
* Thus, it was decided that the guidelines document should be updated with a sentence to reflect that the PhD-coordinator and/or another representative from the PhD committee can be present at the evaluation, in addition to the two regular evaluators: The committee shall be composed of two external members (i.e. not part of the supervisor team), and at least one of them must be external to the research group of the PhD candidate. The PhD coordinator and/or a representative of the PhD committee at ITS can also be present at the third semester evaluation meeting.
* It was decided to strengthen the research evaluation part of the third semester evaluation meeting (like at IFI), where the PhD candidates can get inputs from the evaluators on their actual research. Thus, it was decided to write in the guidelines that the presentation should be 20-30 minutes (IFI use 30 minutes), instead of the 20 minutes that has been mandated by ITS up until now. This range gives the PhD candidates the opportunity to decide for themselves how much effort to put into this part of the evalution.
* It was decided that the evaluation form should be pre-filled with given facts about the candidate before sent to the evaluators. In the PhD committee meeting, it was suggested that the PhD coordinator does this, but since the PhD coordinator does not have info about published paper, the committee should consider that the PhD candidate does it, which was also proposed. The guidelines is updated with a few sentences covering this pre-filling, and the evaluation form is also updated to point out the pre-filling. The evaluation form should probably be considered in more detail in an upcoming PhD committee meeting as well.
* The updated guidelines document is here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/3rd-semester-evaluation-guidlines-at-its-2024-03-07.pdf> while the corresponding evaluation form is here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/3rd-semester-evaluation-form-at-its-2024-03-07.docx> . The PhD committee members are given seven working days after having received these meeting minutes to produce inputs to the document before the the current version is considered agreed upon and settled.

**4. The "PhD Expectations Dialogue"**

* An update of the "PhD Expectation Dialogue" form/document was sent to the committee members priort to the meeting, and discussed at the meeting. The committee supported the format, but requested adding a point about responsibility for deciding the composition of the superviors team, and preference for using a supervisor team vs individual supervisors. After the meeting, the document was updated with the requested inputs. A link to the docuement is found here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/expectation-dialogue-at-its.pdf> . The PhD committee members are given seven working days after having received these meeting minutes to produce inputs to the document before the the current version is considered agreed upon and settled.
* It was decided that the deadline for completing the dialogue should be set for 1 week after the employment date. The PhD coordinator will ensure that this is carried out for future PhD candidates.
* It was also decided that recently employed PhD candidates, employed over the past months (e.g. all in 2024), should conduct this dialogue as soon as possible. The PhD coordinator will contact these PhD candidates, to get the dialogues completed.

**5. The PhD programme application**

**Decisions:**

* It was decided to update the project decription template in Word. Torbjørn provided a draft version of an update to the meeting, and several changes were proposed and discussed during the meeting. After the meeting, Torbjørn provided a new version based on the inputs. The current template is found here: <https://www.mn.uio.no/its/english/phd-education/phd-project-description-template-at-its-2024-03-07.docx> . The PhD committee members are given seven working days after having received these meeting minutes to produce inputs to the document before the the current version is considered agreed upon and settled.
* It was decided that a Latex template would also be desireable, especially since PhD candidates need to familiarize themselves with Latex for later publications anyway. It was desided that the PhD committee does not spend time on developing such a template at this time, but instead wait to ask a PhD candidate that has developped it for his own project description.
* It was commented that the current project description example is outdated, so this is now pointed out on the web. The PhD committee will wait for incoming PhD applications, and later ask PhD candidates for permission to publish their project descriptions as templates.
* Sebastian will check with the PhD group if there are old PhD project descriptions that can be published as examples on the Web-pages. Even though they use an outdated format, parts of the text might still serve as useful examples.

**6. Status of current PhD candidates at ITS (yvonne)**

There was nothing in particular to report. However, it was pointed out at the meeting that we need to work with the PhD candidates in an objective way (not based on our personal relations), and that we thus need to get this status into a good structure. Perhaps we need to work on the reporting format?

**7. Upcoming work items**

**Decisions:**

* The need for 5th semester evaluations was discussed, and it was decided that 5th semester evaluations will be carried out only if there are specific problems calling for it, for example if there has been problems discovered in the 3rd semester evaluation.
* It was decided to consider 5th semester evalutions, and hwo to to carry them out, in our next meeting.
* We should wait to update the "New PhD Researcher" pamphlet until the permanent PhD coordinator position is settled.
* The PhD group, headed by Sebastian, is welcome to propose updates to our web-documents (e.g. for new PhD candidates or new employees at ITS) to include general information that is often needed by new PhDs. However, the proposed text should be first worked out the the PhD candidates themselves.
* Procedures related to the "Finishing your PhD" part on the web-page, as well as the documents there, was not discussed in the meeting and should instead be dealt with in an upcoming PhD committee meeting.

**8. AOB**

It was decided that the next PhD committee meeting is set for 12 april at 12:30

*The members of the PhD committee have seven working days after receiving these meeting minutes to respond and provide inputs for changes to the minutes, before these minutes are considered agreed upon and settled.*

*Kjeller, 2024-03-08*

*Paal Engelstad*

*Head of the PhD committee at ITS*