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Final

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Consultation Committee

Minutes from the meeting in BIO Consultation Committee December 13, 2023 8.30 AM to 11.45 AM

Participants: Kim Lambertsen Larsen (chair), Teis Søndergaard (næstformand), Kristian Bering, Sara Jellesmark, Susanne R. Bielidt, Morten L. Christensen, Jens Laurids Sørensen, Niels T. Eriksen

Unable to attend: Morten Korsgaard

Other participants: Item 2-3: Anders Winther Ægidiussen. Ane Louise Vendelin Olesen (minutes)

Agenda

8.30-8.35: Item 1. Approval of agenda

8.35-8.50: Item 2. Presentation of the department's budget for 2024 / Anders Winther Ægidiussen og Casper Donneborg Roed

8.50-9.10: Item 3. Discussion of the department's budget posts for 2024 / Anders Winther Ægidiussen og Casper Donneborg Roed

9.10-9.20: Item 4. Discussion of the workwise consequences for the department's budget for 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

9.20-9.35: Item 5. Presentation and discussion of Knowledge for the World 2024 and Research Indicators / Morten Korsgaard

9.35-9.50: Item 6. BIO's organizational structure / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

9.50-10.00: Item 7. Discussion regarding respect for disagreement / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

10.10-10.25: Item 8. Discussion regarding 4+4 PhD Students: How are their terms of employment different / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

10.25-10.35: Item 9. Discussion of the department's competence strategy / Morten Korsgaard and Kim Lambertsen Larsen

10.35-10.40: Item 10. Information regarding Staff Performance and Development Review (MUS) in 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

10.40-10.55: Item 11. Discussion regarding stress (and developments regarding stress) within universities / Teis Søndergaard

10.55-11.05: Item 12. Discussion regarding 'attendance culture' (fremmødekultur / working on site) among employees at the Department / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

11.05-11.15: Item 13. Discussion regarding the Lunch Room in Aalborg / Susanne R. Bielidt



11.15-11.25 Item 14. Discussion regarding the Art Committee / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

11.25-11.35: Item 15. Discussion of the committee's annual cycle 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

11.35-11.45: Item 16. Any other business (eventuelt) / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

8.30-8.35: Item 1. Approval of agenda

According to annual cycle for 2023 (approved at the committee meeting 27 October 2022), the following items should be on the agenda – some are suggested to be cancelled based on Kim and Teis' pre-meeting:

- Presentation of the budget for 2024
- Discussion of the department's budget posts (forbrugspuljer)
- Discussion of workwise consequences of the department's economy
- Discussion of themes for Staff Performance and Development Review (MUS) in the first quarter of 2024. *Not on the agenda*
- Discussion of the department's strategy for competence development
- Inputs to 'rådighedsbeløb'. *Not on the agenda*

Furthermore, the item 'annual cycle 2024' was postponed from last meeting to this meeting.

Anything to the item 'Any other business' ('Eventuelt')?

Can the committee approve the agenda?

The agenda has been approved.

8.35-8.40: Item 2. Approval of Minutes from previous meeting / Morten Korsgaard

[Appendix 2.1: Minutes](#)

Can the committee approve of the minutes, or you they have any comments?

No comments – the minutes from precious meeting has been approved.

8.40-8.50: Item 3. Presentation of the department's budget for 2024 / Anders Winther Ægdiussen og Casper Donneborg Roed

[Appendix 3.1: BIO's Budget for 2024](#)

The expected budget will be presented.

Minutes:



The 2024 budget is presented, and the content is subsequently discussed by the Consultation Committee. In 2024, the goal is to achieve a balance of zero with a total expected revenue of 160.5 million kroner. Various items are reviewed, including operating costs of 21 million kroner. Consumption costs are estimated at 10 million kroner, while equipment expenses amount to approximately 12 million kroner. Salaries, buyouts, leadership, and refunds constitute a net expense of 51 million kroner.

The item regarding rent and consumption costs is also examined. Rent has increased, and there are expenses for electricity, water, and heating consumption. This poses a challenge due to heavy costs associated with electricity. Green initiatives are deemed necessary but are set to commence only in 2025. It is emphasized that the anchor budget is locked, and changes can only occur if goals are not met. Common services, development contributions, and innovation contributions are maintained, with a decrease from 105 million to 97 million kroner.

It is stressed that the goal is to reach zero for two years, after which 6 million kroner can be used in 2026. This goal is set at the faculty level, but the dean is still open to further discussions.

It is clarified that there are many unknowns as projects are being closed, and repayments are made to funding sources. Therefore, providing a precise estimate is currently challenging.

The content of the budget is discussed by the Consultation Committee, expressing concerns about declining student enrollment in 2024, 2025, and 2026, resulting in reduced revenue. Despite this, consumption costs are increasing, causing worry.

A detail from the 2024 budget (and possibly 2026) is highlighted, showing a 12 million kroner increase in VIP salaries, a 33 percent rise. This is due to an accounting buffer, and it is explained that it is not necessarily a real increase but rather an expectation of an increase in homecoming. It is suggested that the presentation could have been more tailored to the audience, and there is a proposal to show an alternative model in the future to avoid technical discussions.

8.50-9.10: Item 4. Discussion of the department's budget posts for 2024 / Anders Winther Ægdiussen og Casper Donneborg Roed

Appendix 4.1: Department's Budget Posts for 2024

Presentation of the budget plans followed by a discussion in the committee.

Minutes:

Some of the major budget changes were discussed, including the department pool and PR, both of which have been significantly reduced. A large portion of the PR budget is allocated to "Studiepraktik", but no funds were set aside for promoting student communication.

Regarding savings through the Department pool, it was mentioned as a fund that can be adjusted, especially concerning unforeseen expenses. There was a discussion about the allocation for examiners, debating whether to use external or internal ones. However, the suggestion to opt for internal examiners was rejected, and instead, it was proposed that if savings were necessary, they should focus on which examiners to choose in terms of travel, accommodation, etc.



The summer seminar was also discussed, with a budget set at approximately 120,000 DKK. There was considerable debate on this point. Some felt it was an unfortunate place to cut costs, while others found it appropriate. The importance of the summer seminar was emphasized, particularly this year's seminar, seen as beneficial for fostering camaraderie among colleagues in Esbjerg and Aalborg.

Another topic related to the department pool was whether money could be saved on the bread, now also approved for implementation in Esbjerg. There was consensus on the importance of bread, fruit, and coffee as significant components for fostering a sense of community.

9.10-9.20: Item 5. Discussion of the workwise consequences for the department's budget for 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Are there any expected changes due to the budget.

Minutes:

The discussion on the budget and its impact on our work led to the following points:

- Overall, the budget is not expected to have a significant influence on our work.
- Strategic initiatives have been halted.
- Kim is optimistic, viewing our department as strong, and the balance between studies and research is deemed positive.

In the period 2024-2025, a shortfall in funds is expected for developmental activities, such as partial funding for PhD projects. There's no extra financial leeway, but we can support our essential activities.

No staff reductions are expected unless unforeseen circumstances arise.

9.20-9.35: Item 6. Presentation and discussion of Knowledge for the World 2024 and Research Indicators / Morten Korsgaard

[Appendix 6.1: Knowledge for the World – Målaftale 2024](#)

[Appendix 6.2: Research Indicator – Målaftale 2024](#)

Based on the workshop where the committee was represented, the management has finalized its draft for the 'Målaftaler' for 2024. The committee are invited to give input to which action should be initiated in order to meet the 'Målaftaler'.

Minutes:



Based on the "Knowledge for the World" workshop held on the 13th of October 2023, the management has finalized its draft of 'Goal Agreements' for 2024. Last year, there were 8 points, whereas this year, there are only 6, including two new initiatives: the development of a new research program and a focus on a strong security culture at AAU.

The workshop centered around several themes, primarily focusing on needs assessments for further and continuing education, as well as economic sustainability. Discussions revolved around the need for local offerings and an understanding of what the department can provide economically.

Additionally, there was mention of the previous closure of the biotech master's programme due to a lack of students. Modules ran on pre-scheduled courses, making it a cheaper alternative. There was discussion about potentially creating a master's based on participation in specific modules, but it would be more expensive and therefore require self-financing. It would also demand a higher participation rate. Hence, the focus should be on identifying the customer base (e.g., consulting engineers) and determining how to make it appealing (e.g., making PBL more visible). Furthermore, it was noted that this isn't part of the growth strategy but requires investigation on how to implement it in 2024, ideally with employee involvement.

There was also mention of how the department can contribute to various missions and how it aligns with the Department's own missions.

Another topic of discussion was AAU's "Knowledge for the World" elite program, where various perspectives were shared. Some mentioned that those at the elite level could manage on their own, and the program probably won't function as a recruitment tool. There was feedback indicating its benefits solely for networking. The discussion also touched on the risk of favoritism and the need to ensure it doesn't create imbalances.

Another topic discussed was the implementation of a strong security culture, which is already in progress. In 2024, there will be a focus on being as open, welcoming, and embracing as possible while maintaining necessary confidentiality for security and potential risks. There were discussions regarding where vulnerabilities lie, e.g., access control and data management. However, difficulties with access control through card systems were mentioned.

9.35-9.50: Item 7. BIO's organizational structure / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Since the workshop with the Consultation Committee and Research Committee on 1 December, the management has discussed the topic. Kim will present the future organizational structure, and the committee are invited to comment on the structure.

Minutes:

Based on the workshop on 1 December, the new organizational structure and its timeline were introduced. On December 18th, it will be presented to the department, and in early 2024, the finalization of the department structure will commence. This includes verifying or restructuring research areas, assigning tasks and responsibilities, and finalizing the organizational description.



The new structure involves the removal of a management layer and the establishment of a unified Leadership Committee comprising both the leadership and the new section leaders. Kim, Niels, and Cejna will manage the agenda. These meetings, encompassing both leadership and strategy sessions, will allow ad hoc inclusion of employees to ensure their engagement. Jens Muff will be Leader of BIO Esbjerg, considering it pivotal for Esbjerg's active participation in daily management.

As research areas transition into sections, it primarily signifies a name change; the sections are expected to function similarly to the former research areas. There's an emphasis on accurately defining the sections' work and sorting out responsibilities. Furthermore, establishing a clear financial structure is necessary due to current varying practices. Additionally, there will likely be requirements for teaching and staff planning within these new sections.

The transition plan involves maintaining the previous economy at the beginning of 2024. Jens and Niels will take responsibility for the former sections until the new structure is in place (including handling personnel, Lab-tech, and finances). Hiring will be carried out by the research area leaders and Kim.

Comments from the committee members on the structure:

- There are questions about the economy in the various sections.
 - The department centralizes finances, yet some sections have committed to buyouts for several years, which will still impact individual sections.
- Questions have been raised on how to avoid certain sections solely focusing on either teaching or research.
 - Suggestions involve reducing the disparity between external and internal turnover, setting requirements for teaching staffing, and possibly shifting the focus to the section level rather than the individual level. Plans are also mentioned to introduce visualization tools to enhance process transparency.
- There is also attention given to the risk of lacking ownership in the educational programs.
 - Efforts are being made to explore ways for Niels and Lars to foster greater ownership of the educational programs.
- There are questions regarding how employees are allocated among the various sections.
 - A plan is currently being developed. Similarly, the exact number of sections has not been finalized. It's crucial for employees to feel a sense of belonging within the sections. It's proposed to allow employees to have a say in where they are placed.
- Satisfaction with the process is expressed, appreciating participation and employee involvement.

9.50-10.00: Item 8. Discussion regarding respect for disagreement / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Appendix 8.1: Mail from Rector

Based on the rector's email, the committee will discuss if there are any current issues within the department and whether initiatives are needed.

Minutes:



The email from the rector is briefly reviewed, and an inquiry is made as to whether this issue is familiar to the committee members. The email concerns the expectation for employees and students at AAU to maintain proper conduct and behavior, as well as a factual and respectful debate - even when discussing challenging and sensitive topics. This communication is prompted by the wars in Ukraine and between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

There is a consensus among the committee members that they are not aware of employees or students experiencing harassment, intimidation, threats, or similar issues at the department. Consequently, there is an agreement that no initiatives are needed, as addressing a non-existent problem could generate negative energy.

Break

10.10-10.25: Item 9. Discussion regarding 4+4 PhD Students: How are their terms of employment different / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Appendix 9.1: ENG's description of 4+4 PhD Students

As 4+4 PhD Students are hired on different terms than ordinary PhD Scholarships, the committee will talk about how they are different, and are invited to give inputs on how to manage these differences.

Minutes:

The issue of hiring 4+4 PhD students under different terms than regular PhD scholarships is being addressed. It has been widely used as it helps ensure good internal recruitment. The problems mentioned include:

- They are technically not employed but are sometimes treated as such.
 - This also means they lose out on 2 years of pension.
- The department cannot afford to purchase teaching services from them.

It is expressed that there are no clear rules in this area, and several 4+4 PhD students are disappointed with their employment. There's an understanding that changes will be made, and the department won't have to buy their teaching or compensate their salaries.

10.25-10.35: Item 10. Discussion of the department's competence strategy / Morten Korsgaard and Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Appendix 10.1: The competence strategy

The committee will discuss whether they would like changes to the strategy (which can also be found on the BIO's 'Intranet').



Minutes:

It was decided to move the item from the agenda.

10.35-10.40: Item 11. Information regarding Staff Performance and Development Review (MUS) in 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Kim is planning to have 'MUS' with all assistant, associate, and full professors for at least two years. Furthermore, AAU has made some new materials for the conservation, which will be used. The materials can be found here: <https://www.ansatte.aau.dk/regler/personaleforhold/medarbejderudviklingssamtaler-mus-og-lederudviklingssamtaler-lus#d6c7821b-51ca-48bd-9172-c9e01f46c06d> (Danish version).

Minutes:

It is announced that Kim is planning to have 'MUS' (employee development interviews) with all assistant, associate, and full professors for at least two years, with the aim of getting closer to employees and removing the division between employees and leaders.

10.40-10.55: Item 12. Discussion regarding stress (and developments regarding stress) within universities / Teis Søndergaard

A report from 2022 points to stress at universities: <https://at.dk/media/7570/noa-l-2021-2.pdf> (please see page 122).

Minutes:

The attached report regarding the work environment among employees is briefly reviewed, with a focus on Figure 4.2, indicating the percentage of employees who report feeling stressed all the time or often in the past two weeks. Universities and research rank second, and public administration ranks third in this aspect.

There are no recorded instances of stress-related sick leaves in our department. However, discussions with other departments union representative highlight this as a significant issue. Therefore, we need to consider what can be done to prevent this problem from affecting us.

It's emphasized that the administration, in particular, faces challenges that affect their ability to deliver the desired service, resulting in frustrations and an increased risk of employee turnover. The administration is vulnerable, especially when employees are on leave. There's a difference in resilience between the VIP layer and the administration; the VIP layer comprises many experienced employees with over 10 years of tenure, a feature lacking in the administration.

There's a consensus on the importance of being attentive to these issues before they escalate. Proposed solutions include openness, dialogue, clarity, and regular follow-ups to prevent stress.



10.55-11.05: Item 13. Discussion regarding 'attendance culture' (fremmødekultur / working on site) among employees at the Department / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

How does the committee view the general attendance culture 'on-site' in both Aalborg and Esbjerg? Is this an area that the department should focus on?

Minutes:

There's a discussion among the committee members about attendance culture. It's mentioned that after the pandemic, people are less present, which can affect both the social and academic environments. Simultaneously, the flexibility of working from home is highlighted, but there's a warning that one might miss out on the good culture. Additionally, those physically present might end up doing more work and bearing a heavier workload. It's also noted that it's crucial to set an example for the students, so if we show up, there's a greater chance they might too.

There's a resistance towards strict attendance rules, but the idea of developing a policy or guidelines is being debated. It's suggested that Kim could possibly bring up attendance tracking as a topic in the upcoming performance appraisal discussions (MUS) or in leadership meetings.

Additionally, there's a discussion about reducing the number of offices due to the need for consolidation. The idea of possibly introducing shared offices is mentioned, but there's opposition, especially from those who prefer their own office.

To address this, visibility is proposed, for instance, through clarity about office usage and communication, perhaps in newsletters, emphasizing the importance of visibility and physical presence.

11.05-11.15: Item 14. Discussion regarding the Lunch Room in Aalborg / Susanne R. Bieldt

There seems to be a lack to space for employees' breaks.

Minutes:

Employee representatives in the committee express a wish for better conditions in the lunchroom, as there is a lack of space due to both students and staff using it. Suggestions include potentially utilizing the balcony as additional space for group rooms.

However, it is noted that the students have very little space, and at the faculty, we are among those with the least space available for students.



The conclusion of the discussion is that the room will remain accessible to all but reserved for staff from 10 to 10:30 AM and during lunch. Therefore, there might be a need for a sign or similar indication, which Susanne and Ane will follow up on.

11.15-11.25 Item 15. Discussion regarding the Art Committee / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

The committee is invited to give their input regarding where suggestion from the Art Committee should be presented, discussed, and decided upon.

Minutes:

An update is provided on what the art committee is working on, including the decoration of the auditorium, soundproofing in the lunchroom, and art for the department's 50th-anniversary celebration next year. The art committee has carte blanche to propose ideas; however, it should be noted that the head of department must be involved in the final decision. Additionally, they are currently working on forming a selection committee, considering the possibility of involving students.

11.25-11.35: Item 16. Discussion of the committee's annual cycle 2024 / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Which topics does the committee suggests for agenda items for 2024? The meeting frequency will be adjusted accordingly.

Suggestions for inspiration:

- The department's budget and 'regnskab'
- Evaluation of the department's Competency Strategy (mandatory, see: <https://www.ansatte.aau.dk/regler/personaleforhold/medarbejderudviklingssamtaler-mus-og-lederudviklingssamtaler-lus#efter-medarbejder--og-lederudviklingssamtalen>)
- Making terms of reference (kommissorium) for the committee (what is the committee's unique profile?)
- Knowledge for the World and Research Indicator 'Målaftaler'

Minutes:

The topics for next year are reviewed and discussed for any gaps.

It is proposed to include a well-being update in each future meeting. Additionally, it is suggested that the next newsletter mention that the secretariat is under a bit of pressure.

11.35-11.45: Item 17. Any other business (eventuelt) / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

Minutes:

No one has any comments regarding the 'any other business' item.