



Collaboration Committee Meeting August 30, 2024

Location/Time: FRB7H 2.405 and Teams 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Participants: Kim Lambertsen Larsen, Kristian Bering, Morten Korsgaard, Niels Thomas Eriksen, Sara Jellesmark, Susanne Remmer Bielidt, Teis Søndergaard and Sergey Kucheryavskiy.

Casper Donneborg and Anders Ægidiussen participated under the item regarding the economic status.

Unable to attend: Morten Lykkegaard Christensen due to his new role of Head of Section he is stepping down from the Collaboration Committee in order for the Committee to get a new employee member.

Minute taker: Kathrine Nielsen

Minutes

1. Approval of the agenda (KLL)

The agenda was approved.

2. Approval of minutes (KLL)

The minutes from the June 7, 2023, meeting were approved with the remark that future minutes should include a more detailed description of the items. It was also agreed that both a Danish and an English version of the minutes should be prepared for this meeting since it was conducted in Danish. It is important that an English version is also available for all employees at the department on the department's intranet.

3. Status of the department reorganization including onboarding of new Heads of Sections (KLL)

Kim informed that there have been changes in the department's management. Cejna Anna Quist Jensen has been the Vice Head of Research, but since she is leading two Horizon EU projects, she is stepping down from the leadership role. Mette Lübeck will replace her as Vice Head of Research, meaning she will no longer serve as the Head of the Bioresources and Process Engineering Section. Instead, Morten Lykkegaard Christensen has been appointed as the new Head of this section.

As part of the onboarding of the new Heads of Sections, there was a discussion about employee development interviews (MUS) and competency development at the meeting in the Management Committee in August. Kim Lambertsen Larsen has conducted MUS with the PLA members, and he will continue to do so in 2025. Head of Sections will conduct MUS in the fall with postdocs, PhD students, research assistants, and technical-administrative personnel (TAP) in their sections.

At the Management Committee Meeting in September, the onboarding theme will be "well-being and work environment."

There was a request for a Danish version of the organizational chart to be included in a coming newsletter.

Follow-up: Louise Bak Søndergaard will prepare a Danish organizational chart.

Aalborg University
Fredrik Bajers Vej 7K
Postboks 159
9220 Aalborg

Responsible:
Kathrine Nielsen
Phone: 9940 3634
Email: knie@bio.aau.dk

4. Orientation from the administration (MOKO)

Morten provided an update on what's happening in the Administration. There are currently three focus areas:

- Development of the secretariat, including a focus on good service.
- Attention to stress and prevention of symptoms.
- Ensuring robustness by having both primary and secondary responsible for various task areas.

These focus areas will be addressed with a developmental mindset in solving tasks in mind.

A new office trainee named Marie Sørensen has joined the Administration and is being mentored by Amanda Perschke.

The Study Team is currently working with new students who will begin in early September.

Tasks have been distributed among team members in the Department team, with Louise Bak supporting the daily management, Kathrine Nielsen supporting the Collaboration Committee and the Management Committee, and Line Lykkebak supporting the Department Council.

The Project Economy Team is busy holding project status meetings. Overall, it's a busy period, and there's a focus on developing tasks and avoiding mistakes during these busy times.

It was mentioned that the VBN (research database) is a significant workload for the Study Team, and there's a discussion about whether the department should outsource this task to the VBN team at Aalborg University. It was emphasized from the employees' side that if the task is outsourced, it should lead to real savings, ensuring that we don't see an increase in costs over the coming years or end up duplicating work.

Morten also mentioned that a group from the Department of Culture and Learning conducted focus group interviews in the Administration. The key points were that there is psychological safety within the Administration, but there is room for improvement in the feedback culture and collaborations in the teams. Additionally, it was noted that changes have been a significant concern for some employees, with some feeling that previous changes haven't been fully processed yet. Morten will address these insights in the fall.

From the employees' side, it was positively noted that there have been no resignations in the Administration since mid-2022. Some employees have been on maternity leave, but they have returned, and generally, the Administration's work environment has a good reputation at Aalborg University. However, it was also pointed out that there are some inefficiencies in task management in certain areas.

The leadership responded by emphasizing the importance of addressing inefficiencies and ensuring that the administrative service is satisfactory.

5. Time registration (MOKO/KLL)

Kim informed that employees will begin time registration from October 1, 2024, unless they are paid by the hour or are self-managing. Since July 1, 2024, work hours have been automatically registered in the system and can be adjusted retroactively if needed.

AAU's management has prioritized introducing a user-friendly system that requires minimal action from both employees and managers. Therefore, a solution has been chosen where the schedule is automatically filled based on employees' normal daily working hours if they do not make a manual registration.

Whether an employee is considered self-managing will be determined based on an individual assessment. AAU's leaders with hiring and firing authority are currently making this assessment, and those considered self-

managing will receive an addendum to their employment contract via Digital Post by September 20, 2024. Kim informed that all academic staff (VIPs) are seen as self-managers, and the department management will request that special and chief consultants are seen as self-managers as well. Other TAPs, both in administration and in laboratories, will have to make time registrations.

From the employees' side, it was positively highlighted that a large proportion of the employees at the department are considered self-managers and thus exempt from time registration. However, it was also noted that it is an advantage that the system is user-friendly and that the schedule is automatically filled for those employees who must make time registration.

Regarding the Administration, it was mentioned that it could create a sense of unfairness if some employees must register working hours while others do not, which is something Morten should be aware of and address.

From the management's side, it was pointed out that time registration is an EU requirement to ensure that management complies with employees' working hours and can intervene if an employee is working excessive overtime. In such cases, Kim will receive a notification if the normal hours are exceeded significantly, allowing management to ensure work-life balance and take action to safeguard the well-being and work environment of the employee in question.

6. Salary negotiations 2024 (KLL)

Kim informed that AAU employees have until September 15, 2024, to submit themselves for salary improvement in connection with the annual salary negotiations. This is done by completing the relevant recommendation template and submitting it to the immediate supervisor and your union representative. Kim also noted that it is possible to receive a salary improvement both by applying and without applying, as he will inquire with the Head of Sections if any employees have taken on extraordinary responsibilities or stood out positively in other ways.

Kim mentioned that the negotiation framework for VIPs is flexible and that the faculty leadership has chosen not to disclose the exact pool. For TAPs, the negotiation framework is 0.75 of the salary pool. Kim is responsible for VIP and TAP-Lab salary negotiations, while Morten is responsible for TAP-Administration salary negotiations.

From the management's side, it was pointed out that they aim for a balance between qualification allowances and one-off bonuses of approximately 50/50.

7. Orientation about the planning of the holiday year 2024/2025 (KNIE)

Kathrine Nielsen presented the item as she is part of the department's HR team. She explained that an email is sent annually to all employees with instructions to complete the holiday form for the upcoming holiday year.

The Collaboration Committee has received a draft of this email attached to the agenda, allowing them to provide input on the email and its content.

The Collaboration Committee positively noted that the email indicates that the specified holiday will be assigned if no action is taken. It was also mentioned that it would be advantageous if the deadline was included in the subject line, and it was emphasized that employees should report to ferie@bio.aau.dk and not make registrations themselves in Statens HR. The information regarding special holidays could be clarified by stating that employees will receive an email regarding the allocation of special holidays in January if they do not record them on the holiday form in the first instance.

From the management's side, it was emphasized that it is important that all holidays are registered and taken since holidays are important for employees' well-being, helping them disconnect, prevent stress, etc.

8. Well-being: An update from the work with the department code of conduct will be given due to the VIVE report on sexism and career trajectories (MOKO/KLL)

Morten informed that, following VIVE's report, a working group was established after a meeting in the Department Council to develop a code of conduct for the department.

The established working group consists of:

- Christine Steenberg, HR employee
- Nadieh de Jong, Assistant Professor
- Susanne Remmer Bielidt, Laboratory Technician
- Sergey Kucheryavskiy, Associate Professor
- Mads Moltzen-Juul, Student
- Morten Korsgaard, Head of Secretariat

The working group met on June 27, 2024, where there were productive discussions regarding the importance of having someone to turn to, and the code of conduct helps formalize and specify how we want our behavior to be at the department.

The first draft of a code of conduct was presented:

- The Department of Chemistry and Biosciences is open and inclusive.
- We aim for a culture where we always show respect and high integrity, where we develop ourselves, and are proud of our workplace.
- We seek a collaborative culture that is participatory, team-oriented, and based on the exchange of experiences. A culture that fosters openness and curiosity toward new initiatives and ideas, as well as a constructive approach to problem-solving. A culture where communication paths are well-thought-out and clear.
- All employees and students contribute to a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- All forms of harassment and discrimination based on age, gender, race, religion, abilities, education, nationality, appearance, or opinions are unacceptable.

During the meeting, it was emphasized that a code of conduct is important because words create meaning. As we are a workplace with many nationalities and cultures, it is particularly important that we have a code of conduct that describes the common work culture we want and are all responsible for.

It was suggested that the code of conduct could be part of the department's onboarding program and that it could state that our way of working is characterized by a flat organizational structure. Additionally, it was mentioned that it would be interesting to incorporate key points from the summer seminar regarding diversity and inclusion. The code of conduct could also be presented to employees from different cultures to get their feedback and potential suggestions for adjustments or elaborations.

The working group is also considering creating a list of people to approach if someone experiences inappropriate behavior. The list includes the department management, the Administration's HR employees, and the union representative (TR). It was noted from the employees' side that cases of harassment become HR matters. Therefore, the code of conduct is primarily used to articulate the culture we want, but if there are actual violations of the code, these will in most cases become HR-cases, and thus breaches of the code cannot be discussed in the Collaboration Committee.

From the management's side, it was noted that it is necessary to consider the initiatives implemented centrally at AAU based on VIVE's report so that the working group's input supports and/or develops the general recommendations at AAU.

The next step is to present the Department Council with an update on the working group's work on the

department's code of conduct. Afterward, the working group will meet again based on the discussions held in the Collaboration Committee and the Department Council.

9. Economy status (KLL)

Anders Ægdiussen and Casper Donneborg participated in this item.

Anders began by presenting an overview of the department's economy. He noted that the department's economy is stable in the short term but the economy remain problematic at the faculty level. This means that the department's budget target has been adjusted, so instead of the initially expected result of -5.8 million, which then became 0, we now need to deliver a surplus of 2 million. This change means that we must prioritize rigorously for the rest of the year.

In the coming years, the budget target is 0 in 2025 and -6 million in 2026. The department's economy largely depend on the student population, where it seems we have reached a plateau and may experience a slight decline in the coming years. Additionally, there has been an increase in external funding in recent years, which we need to be mindful of, as there must be a balance between basic funding and project funding. This is because basic funding covers PLA and TAP salaries, rent, and internal operations, while project funding covers other VIP positions and project-related expenses.

Moving forward, focus will be on optimizing external funding budgets, reducing internal expenses, and increasing buy-outs for VIPs, among others. All these initiatives are being implemented to secure the department's long-term financial stability. We are facing a master's reform that is expected to be cost-neutral, but the full picture is not yet clear. Furthermore, work is underway to create a new budget model for 2027 and beyond at Aalborg University. Since we are part of a political organization, there are always unknown factors that can affect our expectations and/or require changes at the department.

Casper then presented the department's operational budgets. The message was that things are looking good overall, but we should hold back and postpone purchases to 2025 where it makes sense.

Follow-up: From the employees' side, there was a request to specify the department's budget in more detail at a future meeting. It was also mentioned that it is good that the Collaboration Committee is presented with the department's economy and internal operational budgets annually to stay informed about the department's financial situation.

10. Need for a new SU-member (KLL)

Morten Lykkegaard Christensen has joined the leadership, so a new VIP member is needed for the Collaboration Committee.

Follow-up: Teis Søndergaard will inform Kim Lambertsen and Kathrine Nielsen about the new SU member before the next Collaboration Committee meeting on October 24, 2024.

11. Any other business (KLL)

Kristian Bering informed that a vernissage for the new artwork in the auditorium will be held on October 4, 2024, at 2:00 PM. An email with more information will be sent out to the Department.