

**Aalborg Universitet**  
Fredrik Bajers Vej 7K  
Postboks 159  
9220 Aalborg

Line Christensen Lykkebak  
E-mail: lch@bio.aau.dk

Dato: 13-01-2025  
Extraordinary Meeting

# Department Council

Meeting notes for meeting in Department Council 13 January 2025 from 09.00 to 11:00

**Participants:** Kim Lambertsen Larsen (Chair), Mads Moltzen-Juul, Nadieh de Jonge, Morten Korsgaard, Peter Roslev, Casper Steinmann, Stefan Junne, Sofie Albrekt Hansen

Secretary: Line Christensen Lykkebak

## Agenda

1. Welcome and introduction
2. Group discussions
3. Break
4. Joint Recap and Prioritization + Next step

## 4. Joint Recap and Prioritization + Next step / Kim Lambertsen Larsen

### Work-life balance struggles

#### Flexible Working Hours

Employees should have the option to work flexibly, but it should not be a requirement. It is also important that VIP employees (academic staff) know the rules and the opportunity to work remote and within a flexible schedule, and that this information is provided to all new hires, for example, during performance reviews (MUS).

#### Well-Being and Welfare

Regular workshops on well-being and welfare should be established. These workshops can be held periodically, for instance, every second year, and cover various relevant topics.

#### Email and Meeting Policy

A strict email policy is not desired, but it is recommended that employees and management schedule their emails to be sent within regular working hours. It should be made clear that there is no expectation for employees to read or respond to emails during weekends or evenings. The aim is to foster transparency and support a healthy work-life balance.

### Lack of inclusivity in hiring and leadership:

### Leadership Representation

It is acknowledged that management at all levels (not just top management) should reflect the composition of the workplace. For instance, the current leadership structure does not represent the diversity of the workplace (lack of international representation).

### Career Progression

There is a need to inform young employees about how they can advance through career levels. Mentorship and leadership programs should be established to train staff to guide young employees on their career paths. Similar to the K-VIP program but aimed at employees, these initiatives should equip mentors with the necessary tools to help others navigate career systems. For example, if an employee approaches a Danish employee for career advice, the person can assist them, but if they go to an international employee the person might not be familiar with the Danish education or career system. In such cases, the international employee could consult with their section leader for support.

### Inclusion in Departmental Councils

Departmental council meetings are often held in Danish. E.g. the department council meetings were previously conducted in Danish but are now held in English due to the inclusion of Stefan Junne as a member. Management should encourage participation in councils and committees. While participation should not be mandatory, employees should be actively encouraged to attend these meetings.

### Leadership and Administrative Roles

The department should do more to identify and scout employees for administrative tasks and leadership tracks. This effort should be integrated into career planning to support employees pursuing leadership and administrative roles.

### Mandatory Diversity Training

It would be beneficial to explore the development of mandatory training sessions focused on cultural understanding, effective collaboration, and fostering diversity, inclusion, and respectful treatment. These sessions could be integrated into existing events, such as summer seminars, to address the needs of a multicultural and diverse workforce.

### **Insufficient collaboration opportunities:**

#### Cross-Departmental Activities

There is a recommendation to establish more cross-departmental activities, inspired by successful examples like the water group. These types of initiatives have proven to be valuable, and it is suggested to highlight and expand on existing efforts to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

#### Internal Visibility

The department lacks sufficient internal visibility regarding ongoing activities and achievements. Utilizing information screens in the building to share research highlights is recommended, as these are a channel widely viewed by employees.

### Research Fridays for Staff

The existing Research Friday format can be extended to include staff, as it can be particularly beneficial for younger researchers. Invitations to these events can be sent via email. While establishing recurring events often starts slowly, they tend to improve over time, so patience and consistency are key to their success.

### Low-Key Social and Networking Events

Introduce low-key social events, such as a speed-dating or poster-events where younger researchers meet more experienced colleagues, technical and administrative personnel (TAP), or others. These events can serve as informal opportunities to learn about each other's daily work, courses, and experiences, fostering a greater sense of community and collaboration.

### PhD/Postdoc Committee

The PhD/Postdoc committee is highly effective, especially as it includes external contributors. Its continued success can serve as a model for other initiatives.

### Sharing Internal Successes

To promote internal achievements, utilize accessible platforms like newsletters to share success stories, research highlights, and opportunities for collaboration. Including staff portraits in the newsletter is another way to enhance engagement. A more structured approach to sharing publications and collaboration opportunities is needed to ensure broad and consistent communication.

## **Sustainability practices not fully implemented:**

### Realistic Goals

Many of the "ideal" situations discussed are either set at an unachievably high level or are more personal in nature (e.g., cycling to work). A balanced approach is necessary to ensure that goals are realistic and actionable for everyone.

### Sustainable Lab Practices

There is a need for ongoing courses and training programs to promote sustainability in laboratories. Introducing sustainability workshops and training programs, such as those offered by organizations like My Green Lab ([mygreenlab.org](http://mygreenlab.org)), can be a valuable starting point. These initiatives should be grounded in practical, common-sense approaches to ensure they are both effective and realistic.

## **Need for more social and teambuilding events:**

### Action Plan for Social Organization

There is a pressing need for a clear action plan to address the organization of social and cultural activities. While there are many good ideas, they rarely come to fruition due to a lack of structure. Establishing a staff association or a social committee could help coordinate and execute these initiatives effectively.

Consider anchoring social initiatives in existing committees by including one member from each departmental council or committee (e.g., SU, IU, MOS, PhD/young researchers group, MC, DMC etc.). This approach ensures broad representation and collaboration across the department.

### Cultural Events

Organizing events centered around culture, such as international food gatherings where people meet and connect through shared meals, is recommended. These events can foster cultural exchange and strengthen community ties.

### Different ideas

An annual summer party, such as a barbecue, is a great idea, but there is a need for leadership to take charge of planning and execution. Simple and informal gatherings, such as board game afternoons, can be an enjoyable way to bring people together in a low-pressure setting.

Reintroducing casual and fun traditions like "leftover parties," where attendees bring their own drinks, can revive the sense of joy and spontaneity. For example, past events like learning the GREASE dance with a dance teacher added a memorable and fun element that has been missed.

### Enhancing Social Aspects at the Summer Seminar

The summer seminar should emphasize team building and social bonding among attendees.

Including activities that strengthen connections within the group would enhance the event's impact.

### Art Committee Initiatives

The art committee could organize events to showcase and explain their work to the broader community. These activities would engage the entire department and provide insights into their contributions.