

Protocol for PhD Board Meeting with Department chair and PhD study director 22.09.22

Attendees: Kanwal Tariq, Irene Alvarez, Simon Prokisch, Franziska Hildebrandt, Victor Karlstrom

1. Introducing the PhD Board concerns regarding Conflict Resolution

Irene explain concerns of the PhD board in terms of accessibility of information for various conflicts that can arise during PhD studies. The board will like to have a document that will hold all the information about the chain of conflict resolution and contact persons involved.

2. Defining the scope of PhD Student-Supervisor conflicts and the degrees of escalation

Anything that compromises PhD studies for example severe disagreements with supervisors etc. Neus asks if personal and academic issues both are included. Irene states that all sorts of conflicts are included but the PhD board can only reflect on our experiences. She also explains that we understand that there should be proper

Antonio explains that all conflicts have to be addressed by the employer and these responsibilities are delegated to several individuals as stated in official documents.

3. Inquiring about MBW's work and sexual harassment protocols

Irene asks if the protocols for harassment are department stated or handled by university. If internal documents are present, these should be discussed in *work and environment* group. Also these documents should be accessible for non-Swedish speakers.

Antonio shows the protocols of handling harassment present on SU website.

Neus states that PhD studies have two aspects: studies and employment. Each group leader also has a responsibility of dealing with work environment issues, conflicts, and harassment issues within the group. These responsibilities are officially delegated to PIs. Neus asks if creating a new document helps when there are already several different document present - how often these conflicts occur, and what do we build our procedures on, and if the extension of this program is not clear.

Antonio further explains how PhD student's

Neus asks if we can include in the PhD guide some directions for when different concerns arise. Irene explains that the PhD board is working on a document that will include various scenarios as examples to help PhD students with identifying and addressing conflicts.

4. Developing a new guide for Conflict Resolution:

- Awareness and Prevention
- Detection and Evaluation
- Negotiation and Mediation
- Resolution or Dissolution
- End of the road options

Victor also explains that the idea is to help PhD students solve conflicts before they become so big that it results in leaving the position. Neus explains that extensive support is the responsibility of the PI, administration and department heads. She further continues that we can write some common case examples that we can use to add guidelines in the PhD guide as a starting point. She also suggests that she and Antonio can meet newly recruited students, along with the HR, Jessika and PhD board representative.

Neus suggests we make it compulsory for each corridor to have a person in the PhD board to ensure representation.

5. Prevention of conflicts. The PhD student's recruitment system.

Irene suggests that more departmental responsibility during PhD recruitment might be helpful.

6. Detection of conflicts: when to raise concerns and to whom.

Concerns raised during ISPs can be addressed. Antonio shares that the ISP document is not properly used because conflicts are often not stated. This takes away the opportunity to resolve them in time. He suggests that the board further asks PhD students to use ISP to document issues.

7. Actors involved in Conflict Resolution:

- Redefining and expanding the Co-Supervisors role as scientific advisor and as mediator in conflicts.
- Mentor system for new PIs
- Involvement of Human Resources Officer as official mediator
- Volunteer PhD Student as corridor contact person and advisor
- Requirement for a PhD student representative in mediation meetings.

Co-supervisor role – Irene explains that we understand that their main role is to be a scientific advisor but also a mediator for conflicts for the student. However, the relationship between students and co-supervisor is not great for most students. Neus explains that the role is more flexible and the student should have a better relationship. However, it is not their responsibility to solve all issues. It is though a good idea that there is a meeting at the start with the co-supervisor to get to know them better.

The mentor system exists for PIs too.

Neus explains that the PhD students can also change co-supervisors and the best approach is to talk to her.

Irene states that PIs should have a role in addressing the conflicts if not resolving them. Neus states that that role exists and PIs should be reminded of that.

Irene also suggests that HR should also be involved in mediation when needed. Neus informs that a situation requiring mediation has to be brought to the SU HR by the head of the department so that is already covered.

Irene also states that having a PhD student mediator is also important. Anyone that the PhD student facing a conflict is comfortable with. Neus says there was a role like that defined before – ISP meetings can include a PhD student from another research group who can also stay during the follow up and the part where the supervisor has to leave.

8. The end of the road options:

- Adapting to the progress of the PhD studies to each case.
- Change of supervisor
- The funding problem
- Termination of PhD student contracts

Irene asks what happens when the conflicts between the student and supervisor cannot be solved, how the above-mentioned points are addressed. Neus says that we have guidelines that for the framework but the actual solutions/ outcomes will be different in each situation.

Neus further explains that the underlying reason for why the student-supervisor relationship does not work will determine the solution too. Antonio emphasizes that communication is the key for most problems.

Neus also explains that the ordinance gives PhD students the option to change supervisors but that's more difficult for biological sciences since the new PI should be able to support and provide scientific guidance. She also emphasizes that the circumstances matter so even if someone changes supervisors using that right, one may not have enough time to finish the requirement of the degree.

9. Final remarks and conclusions.

Neus says she wants to discuss participation in Mass and Moss. Irene explains for Moss we agreed on a plan to deal with it and Neus mentioned she will send time suggestions for another meeting to discuss Moss further.