Centre of African Studies
Employers Panel

Minutes from meeting

Time: Wednesday 2 December 2014, 16.00-18.00
Venue: Centre of African Studies, Købmagergade 46, 4.
1150 København K., Room 039
Note taker: Julie Oxenvad

Present: Steffen Frølund Thomsen (Consultant), Laurits Holdt (Journalist, Globalnyt), Pernille Nagel Sørensen (Consultant), Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen (General Secretary, Dan Church Aid), Amanda Hammar (Director, CAS), Kirsten Busch Nielsen (Dean, Faculty of Theology), Carsten Selch Jensen (Head of Studies, Faculty of Theology), Stig Jensen (Chairman of the CAS Study Board) and Julie Oxenvad (Head of Administration, CAS).

Agenda:
1. Welcome by Amanda Hammar, Director of CAS
2. Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting
3. Matters arising from previous minutes
4. Overview of Copenhagen University budget situation and implications for the Faculty and CAS (Kirsten Busch Nielsen, Dean)
5. Update on Study Progress Reform (Carsten Selch Jensen, Head of Studies)
6. Update on new CAS Study Curriculum (Stig Jensen, Chair of CAS Study Board)
7. Overview of developments and challenges at CAS (Amanda Hammar)
8. Open discussion of issues and feedback from Board members
9. Any other business
10. Dates for meetings in 2016

1. Welcome by director, Amanda Hammar
Amanda welcomed the present members of the Employers Panel. All participants at the meeting introduced themselves. Amanda informed that the change of the name of the board to
Employers Panel is consistent with the common guidelines from UCPH as the English title for ‘Aftagerpanel’.

2. **Confirmation of minutes from previous meeting**
The minutes from the last meeting held on 29 April 2015 were approved.

3. **Matters arising from previous minutes**
Amanda noted that the agenda was prepared so that it would cover many of the key matters arising from the previous minutes.

Steffen asked if there was any news in relation to the government’s proposed reduction in the length of the MA thesis. Kirsten replied that the government is negotiating a ‘revised study progress reform’ but at the moment there is no news in relation to the length of the MA thesis.

Amanda updated on the process of establishing a mentoring system which she expects to be ready in the New Year and to start it actively in the spring semester.

Kirsten updated on the ‘dimensioning’ and informed that as the numbers for unemployment for CAS graduates hasn’t improved in the last year, the Faculty maintains the reduction in the intake of students to the MA programme. As an indication of the current employment environment relevant for our students, Birgitte observed that DanChurch Aid has just had to lay-off 65 people.

4. **Overview of Copenhagen University budget situation and implications for the Faculty and CAS**
Kirsten informed about the current economic situation at the University in relation to the government’s agreement on the 2016 Budget. The University Board will adopt the budget for the University in next week.

The KU Budget will be affected by three major changes: education grant cut by two percent, research grant down by DKK 1.4 billion, and cancellation of the rent contribution to the rent payments related to the new KUA3 building (DKK 70 million annually from 2017). Furthermore, there is a good deal of uncertainty about the research funding in 2019, although this is expected to dip substantially by then; and there is a risk of further decreases in education funding in 2019, particularly with the anticipated removal of the DKK5000 supplement that has been given since 2010 when students completed their studies. Funding for individual post-doctoral research projects has been cut, as has funding for research specifically related to development, both of which affect CAS’s possibilities for expanding our research.

Kirsten stressed that it is a completely new situation for the University and the Faculty and that both the University and the Faculty will have to deal with it in the budget for 2016 and in the coming years.

The Panel discussed the situation. It also raised the issue of how the decrease of the intake of students due to ‘dimensioning’ will affect the economic situation at the Faculty. Carsten stressed that the main focus should be on how to retain the students and reduce the dropout rate.
5. Update on Study Progress Reform and Accreditation Process

Carsten updated the Panel on the status of the Study Progress Reform and the implementation of the law that came into force in the autumn semester for Masters programmes. A lot of work has been put into revising the Study Curriculum and to ensuring that students are registered for 30 ECTS each semester.

The government is negotiating a new and revised Study Progress Reform in which it plans to remove the requirement that students have to register for courses of 30 ECTS in total each semester. Instead the University is considering introducing a requirement that students pass a minimum of 45 ECTS each year. Carsten said that the University expects that the changes in the reform will take effect from September 2016.

Carsten also updated the Panel on the accreditation process for the University. The University will send an application for institutional accreditation in April 2016, and in June and September the national Accreditation Institution will carry out two panel visits at the University. In March 2017 the Accreditation Council will publish its decision on whether the application is approved. If it is approved, the University will be in a position to assure the quality of its own study programmes and be able to approve new study programmes without approval from the Accreditation Council.

As a part of the quality assurance at the University, CAS carried out a programme evaluation in 2015 which has to be done every six years according to the Quality Assurance Policy. Carsten informed about the process, including how external experts were involved. It was noted that this was not an academic evaluation.

6. Update on new CAS Study Curriculum

Stig informed about the process of revising the Study Curriculum. The work started 1½ years ago and although the starting point was to make small changes rather than a comprehensive revision, the revision ended up being quite comprehensive after all..

The following changes in the Study Curriculum have been made (among others not listed here) to accommodate the Study Progress Reform:

- Adjustments of the exams for courses in which there is a compulsory element during the course where students have to participate, for example the opponent phase in Politics, Development and Change. CAS had to ensure that the students will be able to take the re-exam even if they have been unable to participate in the compulsory part during the semester.

- Changes in relation to Internship and Field Study. Experience shows that there is a greater risk that students will be delayed in their thesis writing if they go on internships and fieldwork. In light of this, CAS has upgraded the supervision, and furthermore the exam is now divided so that the students must hand in a written proposal before going on Internship or on Field Study and the length of the final written exam paper is then shortened.

- The order of the courses is now fixed and mandatory which means that the compulsory courses, elective components and MA thesis are to be taken in a fixed order.

- Mainstreaming/standardization/alignment of the ECTS weighting of some courses (e.g. optional courses for 7.5/10 ECTS instead of 10/15 ECTS) hence/so that it will correspond to
the weighting of courses at other study programmes. It will thus be easier for students from other study programmes to take courses and CAS and for CAS students to take courses at other study programmes.

- **Kiswahili I** is now a part of the MA programme (even though it is an introductory course). Both **Kiswahili I** and **Kiswahili II** will be offered for 7.5 ECTS.
- **Religion, Culture and Society in Africa** will only be offered for 15 ECTS.

The Study Board has already made a change in the new Study Curriculum to meet a request from the students to allow for greater flexibility especially in the third semester. This means that the **Internship and Field Study** options will be offered for 22.5 ECTS as well as 15 and 7.5 ECTS, making it possible for students who want to take one **Kiswahili** course or an optional course in the second semester to still go on **Internship and Field Study**. Consideration has also been given in some courses/periods to trying to spread out the workload for students taking several courses at once, so that not all the heaviest work occurs at the same time if possible.

Kirsten noted that a decision has been taken at Copenhagen University that Bachelors students should receive 12 hours of classroom/teaching time per week, and Masters students should receive 8 hours per week with respect to courses of 15 ECTS. This has financial implications especially for optional courses of 15 ECTS if externally taught.

The Panel discussed and asked questions in relation to the Study Curriculum. Steffen emphasized the need to retain the kind of core coverage that the compulsory courses provide to ensure a broad understanding of Africa, while also ensuring specialized focus through the optional courses. Stig noted that even within the core compulsory courses, students are able to select and follow their own key interests.

It was also pointed out that in recent years there has been a notable increase in the number of CAS students wanting to do PhDs, and successfully applying to do so at various universities both in and outside Denmark.

### 7. Overview of developments and challenges at CAS

**Staff:**
The Panel was informed that since last meeting CAS has employed a new full-time associate professor, Karen Lauterbach, which means that CAS currently has three full-time employed researchers. There are three active PhD Students associated with CAS, among these one new candidate started in the spring with Faculty funding, Toke Andreas Wolff. CAS has one administrator that works both with CAS administration and the quality assurance and accreditation at Faculty level. Furthermore, there are two student assistants employed. In addition, CAS has one Emeritus Professor, Holger Bernt Hansen.
**Strategic planning:**
The key focus in the ongoing strategic planning process at CAS so far has been on education and teaching. CAS is reflecting on what defines the fundamental elements of African Studies in general and what ought to be the primary components of the CAS Masters programme in particular. Some consideration has been given as to whether this might entail revising the content and/or structure of the education. For example, CAS has discussed whether the Masters programme should consist of three core compulsory courses instead of four to give the students more opportunity to specialize (45 ECTS for optional courses). This kind of question is still under consideration. Steffen expressed some skepticism about moving away from the basis of having four compulsory courses because in his view the students need the broad knowledge about Africa as well as specialization.

In terms of the optional courses, CAS faces the challenge with a low number of registrations. CAS needs to consider the subjects of the courses what’s on demand. CAS is confronted by competition from other programmes and CAS is considering collaborating and offering courses together with other departments.

In relation to the MA thesis CAS expects a high number of students writing their thesis in the spring semester (28 are currently registered for spring 2016). This puts pressure on the CAS staff in terms of supervising as there isn’t any budget for external supervisors.

Amanda informed about some other activities CAS is considering, aimed at supporting the students during and after their studies. This includes: establishing a student mentoring system that CAS plans to implement in the spring semester; promoting the possibility for students to write their thesis in collaboration with an external partner (such as NGOs, organization, or company); and an initiative to explore how graduates can possibly co-publish together with relevant academic staff at CAS.

**Research**
Due to cuts in the Danish development research funds, CAS is confronted with new challenges for research funding possibilities and is having to rethink its strategies.

The panel was informed about new research-related initiatives and activities at CAS, among these being cooperation within a newly established Nordic Africa Research Network, the ongoing Africanist Graduate Forum initiated by CAS for PhDs in the region, CAS’s hosting of various research networks such as one on Environment and Change, new publications from researchers at CAS, and ongoing presence of CAS researchers in the media.

**Other activities/Website/KUA3**
Other activities at CAS that were mentioned include ongoing work to update the CAS website, both in terms of content and design. Furthermore, CAS is looking ahead to the relocation to KUA3 in winter 2016/17 and is preoccupied with preparing for it.

8. **Open discussion of issues and feedback from Panel members**
The Panel discussed the role of the Employer Panel and how it can contribute to the development at CAS and the challenges the Centre is facing. Furthermore, it discussed how
CAS can enhance marketing of its students, improve the employment statistics, make a stronger connection to the job-market, new possibilities for research funding, and marketing CAS in general in terms of both its comparative strengths and making it more visible.

Birgitte remarked on interesting trends emerging in relation to a ‘new’ Africa, as well as in North-South and South-South relations and in relation to the broader development paradigm, that CAS could keep in mind with regard to some of its teaching. In addition there may be opportunities for greater visibility through writing articles for the media and tweeting.

Kirsten noted that even if CAS students are doing well academically, there are still challenges for employment and that ‘dimensioning’ challenge won’t disappear. Pernille suggested that CAS students might look outside Denmark for relevant employment.

9. **Any other business**
   
   No other business.

10. **Dates for meetings in 2016**
    
    It was proposed that the dates for next meeting will be in late April or early May, and again later in the autumn.