Centre of African Studies
Advisory Board

Minutes from meeting

Time: Wednesday 29 April 2015, 16.00-18.00
Venue: Centre of African Studies, Købmagergade 46, 4.
1150 København K., Room 039
Note taker: Julie Oxenvad / Amanda Hammar

Present: Steffen Frølund Thomsen (Consultant), Mette Müller Kristensen (Project manager, Bestseller Fund), Laurits Holdt (Journalist, Globalnyt.dk), Birgitte Markussen (Head of the Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Søren Jeppesen (Associate Professor, CBS), Amanda Hammar (Director, CAS), Kirsten Busch Nielsen (Dean, Faculty of Theology), Carsten (Head of Studies, Faculty of Theology) and Julie Oxenvad (Head of Administration, CAS).

Agenda:
1. Welcome by director, Amanda Hammar
2. Approval of minutes from the last meeting in the Advisory Board
3. Update on the Study Progress Reform
4. Reflections of broader university structural/policy challenges
5. Update and discussion of CAS’s strategic developments, challenges, priorities and concerns
6. Open floor for issues and feedback from Panel members
7. Any other business
8. Date for next meeting
1. **Welcome by director, Amanda Hammar**

Amanda Hammar welcomed the present members of the Advisory Board. All participants at the meeting introduced themselves.

2. **Approval of minutes from the last meeting in the Advisory Board**

The minutes from the last meeting held on 5 November 2014 were approved.

3. **Update on the Study Progress Reform**

Carsten Selch Jensen informed about the Study Progress Reform (SPR) and the work in the CAS Study Board revising the Study Curriculum so it meets the demands of the reform.

The purpose of the reform is to decrease the length of study for the students. The SPR requires that UCPH reduces the average duration of studies with 7.6 months and for the Faculty of Theology it is 5.6 months. If UCPH does not meet the requirements, there will be implications for the university’s funding, with the likelihood that grants will be reduced.

One of the challenges for the Faculty and CAS is that the students are not taking 30 ECTS every semester as the SPR requires. The Study Board has worked intensively on revising the Study Curriculum so it meets the requirements of the reform and meets the challenges that CAS is facing in relation to decreasing the length of study. This includes for example adjusting the hours of teaching so that students have 8 hours per week in the first year; changing the ECTS-weighting for optional courses (courses will be offered with either 7.5 or 15 ECTS points only, in line with most other Faculties); and adjusting the requirements for the optional *Traineeship and Fieldwork*. (The Faculty is still awaiting a decision from UCPH regarding the proposed reduction in the length of the MA thesis, which most Faculties have objected to.) Especially the optional *Traineeship and Fieldwork* is a challenge for CAS and has been discussed thoroughly because it is often the reason for extension of the length of study, yet it is a crucial aspect of the degree programme. [Note: The term ‘traineeship’ is being replaced by ‘internship’ in the forthcoming revised Study Curriculum.]

The Advisory Board agreed that the possibility of traineeship and fieldwork is an important part of the programme and highly appreciated. They also noted that, given the emphasis on employability, it is a paradox that opportunities for students to undertake relevant job-related activities are coming under threat (time-wise) when they have such positive value for subsequent job seeking. A third option raised, for CAS to consider alongside the current internship and fieldwork options, was a ‘contracted’ research project within a relevant organisation. This is something for CAS to look into.
4. Reflections of broader university structural/policy challenges
Kirsten Busch Nielsen informed about the broader university structure. The Faculty of Theology is the smallest one of the Faculties at UCPH, all of which are very different (in structure and organization).

Kirsten Busch Nielsen expressed appreciation that CAS is located in and a part of the Faculty of Theology, noting especially the value of its broad reach, topically and spatially, and its cross-disciplinary range. She believes that the ‘dimensioning’ of the MA programme at CAS is a challenge in the years to come because CAS has to reduce gradually the intake of students for the MA programme in the coming years and therefore CAS cannot grow as wanted (in terms of numbers of its own Masters students). Therefore CAS has to look at other possibilities such as cooperation with other programmes at UCPH (for example Global Health) or external partners such as companies, organizations etc. Amanda Hammar noted in turn that CAS can consider growth in other ways such as in the area of research, which is not constrained by dimensioning (only by the availability of research funds).

Kirsten Busch Nielsen also mentioned the possibility for Masters students to write their MA thesis in cooperation with an external partner (for example a company or organization), which is a new goal in the University’s Development Contract. The Advisory Board discussed this and the members were positive towards the cooperation between students and external partners in relation to the MA thesis. Birgitte Markussen provided some examples of what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) might be interested in. At the same time, the need for students to retain academic independence was recognised. A possibility was discussed for CAS and the Africa Department at MFA holding a joint seminar in the autumn on a topic of mutual interest.

The Advisory Board agreed that CAS needs to prepare the students for the thesis earlier on so that they are prepared in time and are made aware of the different possibilities. In relation to this Amanda Hammar added that CAS plans to establish a mentoring system for students to support them in their academic direction and in fulfilling the study requirements in good time.

5. Update and discussion of CAS’s strategic developments, challenges, priorities and concerns
Amanda Hammar updated the board on the development in the staff at CAS. Karen Lauterbach is employed as associate professor from 1 August. She will be linked to the research platform Religion, State and Society. From 1 May CAS will employ a new PhD student, Toke Andreas Wolff.
Amanda Hammar informed about the strategic planning process underway at CAS. CAS had had two strategic meetings so far, with more planned. The focus on the meetings to date was to discuss what CAS is (identity, vision, aims, etc) and what its strategic priorities are with regard to major areas of concern. In relation to the discussion some important questions were raised such as precisely how CAS will work with interdisciplinarity, questions of academic coherence and compatibility in the programme, and how do the courses complement each other.

Amanda Hammar also informed about the graduate survey conducted in autumn 2014 and went over some of the more interesting results that were worth noting. While recognizing the very high degree of statistical uncertainty in the survey, among the key ‘pointers’ were: the reported high degree of relevance of the MA study to jobs attained, and high degree of relevance of internships and job experience. The board discussed the report.

Julie Oxenvad informed about the CAS evaluation in relation to quality assurance and the accreditation process at the University. The UCPH will apply for Institutional Accreditation in 2016 which means that the University will move away from accreditation of study programmes carried out by the Danish Accreditation Institution. If the application for Institutional Accreditation is approved the University will be responsible for the quality assurance of the university’s own programmes. As a part of the Quality Assurance Policy at the University every study programme will have to complete a mini-evaluation every year and a full programme evaluation every sixth year. In 2015 CAS will complete a full programme evaluation. The Advisory Board discussed the CAS evaluation and the process. A question was raised as to what kinds of performance indicators might be relevant that will be of benefit for CAS.

Amanda Hammar informed about different initiatives at CAS, for example: the running of a (non-ECTS, but practice-oriented) Critical Development Planning course for the students; a Career Day; an initiative to support graduates who want to write for publication or develop research applications; and and the establishment of an Africanist Graduate Forum for PhDs across the Øresund region and beyond, working on Africa-related topics.

A key challenge for CAS is how to find time for research and other initiatives when the group of academic staff (VIP) is so small.

The Advisory Board acknowledged all the work and initiatives that have been carried out and agreed that CAS needs to focus and be very specific in the strategic planning. Responding in particular to a (very) draft text that CAS has been working on to define and profile itself, the Board members stressed the need for CAS to work on a profile that clearly distinguishes the Centre and its programme in African Studies from other related institutions.
and programmes. Kirsten Busch Nielsen also noted that it is important that CAS profiles itself internationally as there are not many other Universities who offer a full MA programme in African Studies. Others also noted the value of profiling our own students through the CAS website and other social media platforms.

6. **Open floor for issues and feedback from Panel members**
   The Advisory Board had no further issues or feedback in addition to what had already been discussed under the previous items.

7. **Any other business**
   No other business.

8. **Proposed date of next meeting**
   CAS will forward suggestions for a date for next meeting in the autumn 2015.