**Centre of African Studies**

**Advisory Board**

**Minutes from meeting**

**Time:** Monday 31 March 2014, 16.30-18.00  
**Venue:** Centre of African Studies, Købmagergade 46, 4.  
1150 København K., Room 455.  
**Note taker:** Graham Klusener

**Present:** Henrik Stubkjær (DanChurchAid), Camilla Torp Olsen (SOS-Børnebyerne), Steffen Frølund Thomsen (Consultant), Pernille Nagel Sørensen (PS Advize), Mette Müller Kristensen (Bestseller Fund), Laurits Holdt (Journalist Ulandsnyt.dk), Stig Jensen (Director, CAS), Jesper Tang Nielsen (Head of Studies, Faculty of Theology) and Graham Klusener (Head of Administration, CAS)

**Agenda:**
1. Welcome by director, Stig Jensen  
2. Approval of minutes from last meeting in the Advisory Board  
3. CAS – news since last meeting  
4. Perspectives on the Study Progress Reform  
5. Any other business

1. Welcome by director, Stig Jensen

Stig Jensen welcomed the present members of the Advisory Board and gave an update on the status of the Board. He informed the members that since the last meeting Knud Vilby, Ole Winckler Andersen and Keld Buciek had withdrawn from the Advisory Board and that Mette Müller Kristensen, Laurits Holdt, Søren Jeppersen and Birgitte Markussen had joined. A
discussion on potential additional members has held focusing on profiles that would perhaps add alternative perspectives to the current Board.

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

The minutes from last meeting in 2013 were approved.

3. **CAS – news since last meeting**

Before updating the Advisory Board on the status of the education at the Centre since the last meeting, Stig Jensen informed the Board that the Global Development MA education presented by Henrik Hansen from Department of Economics at the last meeting, had now been accredited and would be offered from September 2014.

Stig Jensen gave an update of the educations at CAS. This included new trends with regard to the MA education at CAS and its students. His general assessment was that the quality of students admitted to the MA programme was improving and that this in turn resulted in a stronger profile of graduate being produced after the education. Stig Jensen also informed the Board that the programme had an intake of app. 50% international students, mainly from within the EU. He felt that these students added a lot to the study environment at the Centre. He also noted that CAS had been nominated for UCPH’s International Study Environment prize for 2013.

Stig Jensen reported that the last few years had shown a positive tendency of a larger intake of students to the MA programme at CAS but that there were challenges to this development on the horizon in the form of competition from newly accredited educations, CAS’s own research base capacity and possible implications of the Study Progress Reform. He also noted that proportionality few MA graduates pursued Ph.D. options upon completing the programme. A discussion on how best to face these challenges was held with the Advisory Board suggesting a number of initiatives that could enhance learning methods at CAS and further broaden the spectre of academic focus. The challenge here however was the availability of resources to do, as while CAS’s current staffing situation was healthy, there remained a number of obstacles in this regard in the immediate future. Likewise, the prospects of being able to increase the administrative capacity at the Centre were not good due to UCPH policy on this area.

Stig Jensen also updated the Advisory Board on developments regarding the Faculty of Theology’s pending move to KUA 3 scheduled for 2016. As within its current set-up, CAS would continue to occupy its own section in the new building. A challenge that the entire
faculty including CAS was facing, was with regard to the issue of reduced space available at KUA 3 and the potential impact of moving during the semester. An unresolved issue was whether the move would also include any administrative restructuring and what impact this could have. Stig Jensen also informed the Board of developments with regard to the CAS Library and the solution found to the problem of reduced space.

*Feedback from the members in the Advisory Board*

A discussion on the current content of the MA programme was the primary point of business. The issues of how the education at CAS could best grow in light of developments and trends on the African continent and which areas CAS should specialise in were raised in this regard. The suggestion was made that CAS could strengthen its profile in the fields of Conflict, Peace and Risk Management as well as Private Sector Development. Stig Jensen explained that while the CAS offered specialised topical courses in the form of electives (including the 2 suggested areas), it was still fundamentally important that the education maintained a generalist element in the form of the core courses to form a foundation for students from which to specialise.

The challenge though was whether this was a sufficient approach in order to produce attractive candidates for the job-market? Were single topical courses sufficient for specialised knowledge or should the core courses at CAS be re-focused in this regard too? The point was highlighted that African Studies graduates often compete with graduates from more known educations such as Economics and Political Science, where employers have a better idea of the specific competencies of these graduates. It was suggested that CAS could thus focus on creating candidates with a stronger specialised profile.

4. **Perspectives on the Study Progress Reform**

Jesper Tang Nielsen presented and outlined the context for the Study Progress Reform, which aimed to reduce the current time taken for students to obtain a university degree. A number of reforms had been passed in this regard which had major implications for all universities including Copenhagen University. He informed the Advisory Board of the challenges the MA education at CAS, in its current form, now faced as a direct result of this. The requirement that students be automatically registered for courses worth 30 new ECTS points each semester could have implications, in particular for traineeships and fieldwork and when students could do this in the course of their studies.

There was full consensus amongst members of the Advisory Board, that were the Student Progress Reforms to undermine the traineeship and fieldwork element of the education at CAS, the results would be potentially disastrous. They underlined how crucial the option of the
student being able to use his or her education in practice was. This was seen as both beneficial for the student but also the workplace, many of which rely on student staff capacity to function. Likewise, the experience gained here was considered a decisive factor in order for graduates to gain employment once they have completed their degree. Any revision of the study curriculum and structure of education at CAS would thus need to take these factors into account.

5. **Any other business**

No other business