

## **Proposal for course coordination and training activities for HGO4080/HGO4090**

Discussion note for Programrådsmøte 11.september, sak 9 (58/2019)

Following the discussion at the Program Council last June, Human Geography is considering establishing course coordination for HGO4080/HGO4090, as well as formalizing a set of training activities related to the master thesis. In this discussion note we propose a set of activities and the responsibilities of a course coordinator for the master thesis course.

The proposal is guided by the following principles:

- We want students to start developing their projects at an early stage.
- Potential supervisors should be identified at an early stage.
- Training activities are to be kept at a manageable level, both for academic staff and students in order to:
  - Make an efficient use of teaching resources.
  - Secure the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed activities.

Benefits of this set-up:

- a. Generic advice is time-effective, prevents repetition.
- b. Students learn much out of the questions their peers ask.
- c. Creating communities of practice for the thesis writing. Students get to know each others' topics and can more easily help each other throughout the whole process.

The responsibilities of the course coordinator would include:

- Design, coordination and participation in teaching activities related to the thesis.
- Suggesting thesis supervisors, in collaboration with Head of Studies.
- Academic coordination of master thesis exams, in particular suggesting evaluation teams.

### **SEMESTER 1**

#### **Workshop 1: Tøyen Retreat - Topic Brain storming (Autumn Semester Y1)**

1. Each student will bring 1-3 broad topic ideas. These deliberately should be broader than a thesis, the student is expected to design a project within that frame. The ideas will be written in a poster-like sheet with the name & picture of each student.
2. At the retreat, each staff member should be ready to say 3-5 minutes on their interests. These talks should be oriented towards student theses. The purpose is to attract students to topics that will also interest us.
3. Afterwards, we divide up into groups based on students' topic ideas (i.e. urban, development, environmental change, politics, economic geo). Each group is led by 1-2 academic staff. Each student presents her/his ideas to the group and discussion begins, with feedback from both staff and students.
4. At Tøyen, 3 staff members can do a 15 minute session modelling how to narrow down a topic. One of us can pretend to be the MSc student who has done a little background research on their broad topic. The other 2 staff members (or just 1) can ask them questions to help them get closer to a researchable idea. (see also below).
5. 'Poster' exhibition and 'post-it'-inputs and feedback from students and staff.
6. Plenary session about: things we have in common, things we wonder about, Q&A; what comes next

**Tøyen follow-up: Peer-led Topic Development & Concept Note (Autumn Semester Y1: early November)**

1. Students will be given a written guide on how to narrow down a topic, including advice on how to start asking questions about that topic. A 2-hour seminar slot will be announced so that students can work in groups of 3-4 to help each other narrow down their topics. The coordinator can be present to answer any questions.
2. Students will hand in a 300-500 word Concept Note of their topic, including a research question, with a short bibliography (5-6 sources). This will be unevaluated, but will be used to recommend potential supervisors.

**SEMESTER 2**

**Workshop 2: Research Design & Project Outline (Spring semester Y1: March)**

1. Students will be given a written guide on how to develop their projects further in order to develop a written 2-4 pages project outline to be handed in at a set date. Students will be divided into four groups of 5-6 students based on their outlines.
2. A 3-hour workshop will be organized, consisting of 1-hour joint session and 2 hours group work. The emphasis of the workshop will be on linking the topic to appropriate theoretical frameworks and designing the methodology.
3. The joint session will include instruction on current GDPR norms and routines.
4. During group work, each student will briefly explain her/his project outline. First, the staff members will in a discussion with the student on their topic. Afterwards, the other students provide feedback or ask questions.
5. After the workshop, students are expected to revise/develop their original outlines in consultation with their supervisors.

**SEMESTER 3**

**Workshop 3: Writing a Thesis (Autumn Semester Y2)**

1. A 2-hour writing workshop will be organized with the aim to address different aspects of the thesis and to answer questions from students.
2. A peer learning element at the end of the workshop can be included, so that students can discuss with each other. Students should be encouraged to form writing support groups.

**SEMESTER 4**

No organized training activities, individual supervision only.

### Proposal for teaching activities for HGO4090/HGO4080 – summary

|                         | Semester 1   | Semester 2   | Semester 3                    | Semester 4                  |
|-------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Activity</b>         | Tøyen retreat/Workshop 1: Topic Brainstorming<br><br>Tøyen follow-up peer-led topic development & concept note | Workshop 2: Research Design & Project Outline                  | Workshop 3: Writing a Thesis  | Individual supervision only |
| <b>Coordinator</b>      | Yes, organizer for both activities   | Yes, organizer   | Yes, organizer                |                             |
| <b>Other staff</b>      | Yes, only retreat, max 11  | Yes, for group work, max 4                                     | No, optional.                 |                             |
| <b>Suggested timing</b> | Tøyen retreat: September<br><br>Tøyen follow-up: early November  | March, before deadline for application of travel grants        | August/September              |                             |
| <b>Estimated hours</b>  | 20 hours coordinator/semester<br><br>Retreat: up to 5 hours per participant                                    | 20 hours coordinator/semester<br><br>3,5 hours per participant | 20 hours coordinator/semester |                             |
|                         |  |  |                               |                             |