



Sosialantropologisk institutt

Notat

Til:	Instituttstyret
Fra:	Instituttleder
Sakstype:	Vedtak
Saksnr.:	V-SAK 3
ePhorte:	
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Revision of the PhD programme at SAI

Background

SAI has a thriving cohort of PhD students, of which by far most successfully complete their programme and find employment appropriate to their high qualification, mostly within academia, as well as in significant other positions. PhD positions advertised by SAI attract numerous highly qualified international and national applicants, who are drawn by the opportunities that the programme provides, and overall the quality of applicants for PhD positions is rising.

However, the time taken for completion of the degree is still much higher than the University and funding agencies would prefer, which is harmful for students, both in terms of their personal economy, and of their self-confidence and career progression. One factor among many for the relatively slow progression of students through their three or four years of PhD-employment is the course structure, the content of available teaching, as well as the degree of cohesion among the PhD cohort at any given time at the department.

Previous attempts at revising the PhD programme at SAI similarly aimed for improved training, including a stronger methodological component and some level of career-development focus. The overall aim for a more structured PhD programme with more clear-cut input from SAI faculty apart from the supervisor, and a stronger integration of the PhD cohort, was, however not yet achieved, although some important improvements were brought on the way, concerning the midway-evaluation and other teaching components.

Specifically, the future revision of the PhD programme should take into account the following considerations:

- SAI has very small numbers of PhD students, who start at different times and thus, at any given time, only less than a handful of students at, respectively, pre-fieldwork, fieldwork and post-fieldwork stages. Therefore, their training needs are diverse.
- The students pursue very diverse research topics, reflecting the diversity of anthropological research at SAI, as well as an increasing tendency of PhD positions to be tied to research grants held by individual staff members. Nevertheless they all share the challenges of fieldwork preparation and writing and require hands-on methodological, writing and career planning support.



- Increasingly, PhDs recruited at SAI come from diverse training backgrounds, without necessarily having pursued all or most of their studies in social anthropology. While this can be a strength and is in line with developments across the discipline, it must be considered in future PhD teaching.
- The core SAI PhD courses (Sosant 9100) have traditionally offered complete freedom for the course responsible to decide on the theme and the readings. This has led to a wealth of specific courses, which, while attractive to the teachers, did not necessarily attract many of our own PhD students.
- The small numbers of the PhD group, in combination with the specificity of PhD-course themes result in difficulties to fill our courses, and, more specifically, to fill them with our own students – and a certain proportion of own students is necessary to make such courses economically viable.
- In addition, PhD students have continuously expressed an interest in more hands-on, methodological courses, which would convey skills relevant to the successful completion of the PhD, as well as transferable skills for future career development.
- More structured pre- and post-fieldwork training courses, which for economic reasons would replace some of the current teaching programme, would be attractive and could be obligatory for all PhD students, ensuring satisfactory participation rates, and contributing to a sense of cohort cohesion.
- Offering regular, well-crafted methodology, analysis and writing courses – in addition to occasional specialised “current theory”-type courses – would have a potential to attract external PhD students to our teaching programme - which in turn would be of benefit to our own students.
- A final point to take into account during the revision of the PhD programme is the fact that the Oslo Social Science Summer School programme, which in the present SAI PhD training structure is an obligatory component, no longer exists, so this obligatory teaching component needs replacement.

Overall, the future revision of the PhD programme should contribute to improved training in view of more timely completion of the PhD, to offer students opportunities to acquire a more broadly applicable skills set, and, not least, to enhance the PhD students’ well-being and confidence during their training.

Milestones/timeframe

- 6 February 2024: The working party proposes the mandate for its future work to the board.
- 13 February 2024: SAI establishes a working party to propose a revised PhD programme structure, drawing upon, expanding and seeing through previous constructive recommendations from the earlier PhD programme leadership, consisting of the PhD leader Paul Wenzel Geissler, Liv Christina Varen, advisor for the PhD programme, Alessandro Rippa, Hege Høyner Leivestad, and Meghna Roy.
- April/May 2024: The working party discusses the revision with the PhD panel.
- 13 June 2024: The working party shares its suggestions at the staff meeting (stabsmøte).
- 3 September 2024: The working party proposes an almost complete draft of the new structure to the board.
- Autumn 2024: The working party presents a finished draft to the PhD panel for feedback before sending the finished draft to the Faculty Program Council.



UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

Forslag til vedtak:

Instituttstyret godkjenner at instituttleder iverksetter revisjon av instituttets del av opplæringdelen på ph.d.-programmet.

Med hilsen

Thorgeir Kolshus