

Date	Forum	Time	Place	Meeting #
23 April 2025	Academic Council	15:15-17:45	1525-626	02-2025

Participants	<p>Eskild Holm Nielsen (Dean), Sabine Ravnskov (AGRO), Frants Havmand Jensen (ECOS), Hanne Lakkenborg Kristensen (FOOD), Karen Thodberg (ANIVET), Anne Jensen (ENVS), Thomas Lykke-Møller Sørensen (BCE), Charles Møller (MPE) Björn Andresen (ECE), Emre Karaman (QGG), Litte Dalsgaard (TAP, ECE), , Anna Elisabeth Kristoffersen (PhD)</p> <p>Muhammad Mohsin Nawaz (PhD), Lærke Dueholm Jensen (student), Kira Gottlieb Køpping (student), Adrián Borbolla Muñoz (non-employed PhD student) Zakaria Hamdi (postdoc), Zahra Esfahani (postdoc)</p> <p>Brian Vinter (vice dean), Mie Lundgaard (chief advisor), Kim Kusk Mortensen (adm. centre Nat-Tech)</p>
Apologies for absence	Louise Fischer Koue (TAP, QGG), Søren Wandahl (CAE), Ahmad Madary (TAP, MPE), Gertrud Lindberg Tefre (deputy head of administration)
Guests	Peder Damgaard item 4, Michelle Williams item 6 and 8
Minutes	Ida Marie Gerdes

Item #	Time	Item and appendices	Owner
<b>1</b>	15:15-15:20	<b>Approval of agenda</b> (5 min.)  (Appendix)	Anne Jensen
No comments to the agenda – approved. Postdoc Zakaria and student Kira were bid welcome			
<b>2</b>	15:20-15:25	<b>Approval of minutes</b> (5 min.)  (Appendix)	Anne Jensen
No comments to minutes - approved			
<b>3</b>	15:25-15:35	<b>Preparing the chair for the annual meeting with the board</b> (10 min.)  (Appendix)	Anne Jensen
<p>In preparation for the Academic Council Chairs' meeting with the AU Board, all Academic Councils prepare reports for the board. The Council had no comments on the annual report of TECH Academic Council activities and thanked Ida for preparing an informative and well-structured draft.</p> <p>The Council suggested to have a more through discussion about the role of the Council and how information is disseminated at departmental level and vice versa, e.g. via "Institut Forum", the departments' Research Committees, etc.</p>			
<b>4</b>	15:35-16:00	<b>Tech Financial report</b> (25 min.)  (Appendix)	Guest Peder Damgaard
Peder Damgaard presented the account for 2024, budget 25-28 including the new bank model (see slides in First agenda).			

Peder described how the money from the research reserve can be spent on free research, innovation funding and strategic research environments.

The Council discussed the evolving strategic and economic landscape and identified several key developments. There is a clear movement toward increased competition and interdisciplinary collaboration across departments and faculties at AU. The current financial situation was deemed stable enough to consider savings and strategic investments, indicating a degree of economic resilience.

Concerns were raised about growing competition from other universities and potential consortia, particularly in areas such as food and science policy advice. These developments could impact AU's positioning and influence in key research and advisory domains.

In terms of education, it was emphasized that recent adjustments to teaching structures were driven primarily by quality considerations rather than economic factors. This reflects a commitment to aligning the offered educational programmes with student expectations while maintaining high academic standards.

Finally, the Council noted uncertainty regarding the future allocation of research funding. There was discussion about whether the traditional size-based distribution model would continue, and how access to funding might evolve, particularly in relation to interdisciplinary initiatives and departmental leadership.

<b>5</b>	16:00 – 16:10	<b>Consultation: Amendments to the Aarhus University By- laws</b> (10 min.)  (Appendices)	Anne Jensen
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The Council discussed the proposed amendments to the University by-laws, as outlined in the item circulated in FirstAgenda. These changes follow a recent amendment to the University Act, effective from 1 January 2025, which introduces a simplified model for appointing external board members. As a result, the current nomination body will be dissolved and replaced by a new appointment committee, as described in the case presentation.

Of particular relevance to the Council are two key elements of the proposed amendments:

- The formalization of procedures for electing chairs of Academic Councils, in accordance with agency requirements and existing practice.
- The allocation of two dedicated seats on Academic Councils for postdoctoral researchers and assistant professors, i.e. junior researchers.

Until the next AU election, these junior researchers will continue to participate in the Council as observers. Following the election, they will assume full membership status, including voting rights. The Council expressed support for these changes, emphasizing the importance of including junior academic staff in formal governance structures. It was suggested that a letter of support be drafted to highlight the value of their representation.

<b>6</b>	16:10-16:20	<b>Working group VIVE report</b> (10 min.) Next step  (Appendix)	Anna Elisabeth Kristoffersen
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The Council discussed the revised draft of the catalogue, following the in-depth discussion at the previous meeting and subsequent written feedback. The Council considered whether the primary purpose of the catalogue should be to promote a healthy organizational culture or to provide guidance on how to handle offensive behavior.

The updated version of the catalogue was presented by Anna (online), who highlighted several changes:

- Reference to existing protocols
- Acknowledgement of cultural challenges
- Attention to unreported incidents
- Emphasis on creating a level playing field (e.g., Villum initiatives)
- Use of gender neutral language

Michelle Williams noted that similar themes had emerged in the recent workplace assessment. She welcomed the inclusion of concrete activities and emphasized the importance of leadership involvement. While many procedures are already in place, she suggested the catalogue would benefit from a clearer leadership statement that offensive behavior is not tolerated. The catalogue will be discussed at the June meeting of the DEI Committee. The Dean also stressed the importance of presenting the catalogue to Faculty Leadership.

Karen raised the question of local funding for DEI initiatives. The Dean responded that many departments are already engaged in activities such as improving communication and supporting career development. In the coming years, the focus will be on fostering more inclusive work environments, with discussions continuing at the Faculty level.

Michelle added that DEI plans should be tailored to specific challenges — such as gender balance or internationalization — and that the most effective activities should be prioritized. Karen also suggested removing the term “female” where unnecessary.

Anne welcomed the focus on junior researchers and the alignment with the broader DEI strategy. Michelle mentioned the upcoming launch of a new career website.

	16:20-16:35	<b>BREAK</b> w. sandwich (15 min.)	
7	16:35-16:45	<b>Sandbjerg seminar August 28-29</b> (10 min.)  Husk det med møde om fredagen!	Anne Jensen

The Sandbjerg seminar is planned for 28-29 August. The theme of the seminar will be *“The changing role of the researcher in the post-factual society – how does the role of knowledge change, and how do we ensure research freedom within the new global frameworks?”*

The Dean proposed holding a Council session on the Friday morning after breakfast. This could take the form of a follow-up discussion on the seminar theme, a regular Council meeting (taking advantage of everyone being present), or a thematic dialogue. Council members were invited to share their thoughts on the idea.

Anne supported the idea of a follow-up session rather than a formal meeting, noting that not all members may be present in an official capacity. She also suggested that having a translator available would be a good compromise to ensure broader participation. The Dean expressed general satisfaction with the proposal, and Anne emphasized the importance of student participation session.

Karen raised a concern about the timing of the seminar and suggested that the dates should be reconsidered.

The Council also briefly provided broader reflections related to the seminar theme, including the evolving role of universities in society, the increasing influence of security concerns and political strategies, and the tension between institutional expectations and researchers’ personal academic ambitions.

8	16:45-16:55	<b>Annual follow up on DEI plan and workshop</b> (10 min.)  <b>Appendix</b>	Anne
<p>Anne Jensen gave a short summary from the annual DEI discussions which brought together faculty leadership, DEI committee members, and vice chairs from FAMU and FSU. The purpose of the discussion was twofold: to follow up on the 2024 DEI action plan and to share inspiration and best practices from departmental initiatives.</p> <p>Key conclusions from the meeting regarding the technical faculty's contributions to the AU-wide DEI action plan included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search committees: Departments, that systematically use search committees report a broader and more qualified pool of applicants. This practice appears to enhance diversity in recruitment.</li> <li>• Career conversations: These are especially important for junior researchers. While departments approach them differently, the EXIT survey shows that staff find them highly valuable. Council members are encouraged to support and prioritize these conversations.</li> <li>• Workplace culture: Many departments have launched local initiatives to foster a respectful and inclusive work environment. A list of examples is included in the appendix for inspiration.</li> <li>• New DEI committee at Tech: The newly established committee is functioning well and has been positively received.</li> <li>• EXIT surveys: Staff leaving the university are encouraged to complete the EXIT survey sent by the Dean. Council members are asked to help ensure this happens.</li> <li>• Looking ahead to 2025, the DEI Committee will focus on departmental experiences, AU's academic culture, the ABC criteria, and the role of Danish culture in onboarding processes.</li> <li>• Michelle Williams noted that results from the EXIT surveys—primarily completed by postdocs and PhD students—have been presented to faculty leadership. All departments have now DEI committees, and a wide range of local initiatives are underway, addressing issues such as gender, international staff, and junior/senior dynamics.</li> </ul> <p>The DEI Conference on 10 March was also mentioned. Participants shared the following reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anne reported on a degree of “DEI fatigue” as observed by members of AU DEI Committee from other faculties</li> <li>• Hanne commented on the structured use of search committees, noting that while the process is in place, measurable results are still lacking. She also emphasized the value of the EXIT survey in understanding why staff leave — often for better salaries, pensions, or tenured positions offered outside AU/the public university sector.</li> <li>• Brian encouraged continued efforts.</li> <li>• Lærke asked about DEI initiatives at the student level. We don't have many of these as many initiatives target TECH staff. Eskild responded that work is ongoing to improve the physical and social student environment, including training on how to manage shared spaces.</li> <li>• Charles highlighted the importance of attracting highly qualified candidates for positions, and Hanne warned that without bold decisions, we risk losing talent.</li> <li>• Michelle noted that departments like AGRO now have significantly more diverse staff profiles. Eskild added that young researchers are increasingly involved in recruitment committees, though it remains difficult to establish clear correlations between initiatives and outcomes.</li> <li>• Hanne concluded that, ultimately, improving diversity and inclusion requires courage — the willingness to select candidates who differ from ourselves.</li> <li>• Brian Vinter closed the discussion by encouraging continued support for leadership in these efforts.</li> </ul>			
9	16:55-17:25	<b>Status of Tech</b> Our challenges Strategy process	EHN

		(30 min.)	
<p>The Dean presented a general status, including an update on current developments and strategic priorities, at the Faculty to the Council, with particular focus on progress in achieving the 2024 goals.</p> <p>The Dean began by highlighting recruitment targets, noting that the aim is to ensure a minimum of three qualified applicants for each academic position. Encouragingly, there has been progress in hiring female senior academic staff, even within traditionally male-dominated fields. While gender remains a key focus, international recruitment is also a priority. These improvements are attributed in part to the structured recruitment practices that have been adopted, including the use of search committees. Positive, though less prominent, developments are also evident at professor level.</p> <p>Turning to student retention, the Dean emphasized that dropout rates should not exceed 15%.</p> <p>Hanne noted an increase in the total number of Danish students, whereas the decline in enrolment of EU student in 2023 contributed to the overall drop in numbers.</p> <p>The discussion then shifted to broader strategic challenges. Concerns were raised about shifting national political priorities, including the potential phasing out of HTX (technical upper secondary education) – an important pipeline for TECH students – and the increasing pressure to subject public sector research funding to competitive processes. The Faculty also faces demographic challenges, particularly the new Vejle Campus and fewer students coming from the northern regions.</p> <p>Looking ahead to the <b>2030 strategy</b>, the Dean outlined four key focus areas. A central theme is the importance of strengthening departmental capacity and encouraging departments to reflect on how they can enhance their own capabilities and contributions.</p> <p>Zakaria asked whether the EXIT- surveys also are conducted with students – which is not the case. Vice Dean for Education Louise Haase Møller is expected to provide more detail and information on the status of TECH education at June's Council meeting.</p> <p>Charles raised the issue of delegation, while Vice Dean for Research Brian Vinter emphasized that strategic missions must be rooted in the departments themselves.</p> <p>Sabine stressed the importance of fundamental / basic research, arguing that it must go hand in hand with applied science. Brian noted that while funding is increasingly directed toward higher Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs), next year's strategy will place greater emphasis on supporting individual prestige grants. The Dean added that fundamental/basic research is essential for building long-term resilience. Anne remarked that basic science should ultimately be applied while how the excellence of AU's applied science as building on fundamental/basic research should equally be acknowledged, and Brian reflected on how this year's TECH Strategy – such as the "Pillow3" initiative—might be implemented in practice.</p> <p>Sabine observed that competition is particularly intense at higher TRL levels, and Charles raised AU's positioning in relation to national defense. Hanne concluded by warning that without bold decisions, the University risks losing valuable talent.</p>			
<b>10</b>	17:25-17:35	<b>For information from chair and vice chair</b> Delegation provisions Honorary doctors in May (10 min.)  <b>(Appendices)</b>	Anne og Eskild

The Dean informed the Council that the new delegation provisions to be applied across the University have been developed in close collaboration with various stakeholders across Aarhus University. These provisions cover areas such as financial management, buildings and facilities, personnel matters, and collaboration agreements within both research and education. Departments are encouraged to make full use of these delegation opportunities, as long as they remain within the limits of allocated budgets. It was emphasized that ongoing dialogue at departmental level is essential to ensure effective and responsible implementation of the delegation provisions. This update supplements the appendix shared with the first agenda item of this current meeting.

The Council also discussed the upcoming call for nominations for Honorary Doctorates, which will be issued in May. Heads of departments will receive the official call, and Council members were encouraged to engage in dialogue with their colleagues about potential candidates. During the discussion, a suggestion was raised to consider nominating Honorary Doctorates only every second year. However, the Council expressed clear support for maintaining the current practice of annual nominations, emphasizing the importance of recognizing outstanding academic contributions on a regular basis and exposing and benefiting from the Faculty's excellent and extensive international collaborative networks.

<b>11</b>	17:35-17:40	<b>PhD degrees since last meeting</b> (5 min.)  (Appendix)	Anne Jensen
There were no comments to the list. The Council express sincere congratulation to the 15 PhD graduates.			
<b>12</b>	17:40-17:45	<b>Any other business</b> (5 min.)	Anne Jensen
Newly appointed Vice Dean for Education Louise Haase Møller will participate in the next meeting			
<b>13</b>		<b>Announcements</b>  Updated meeting plan	