Minutes from Panel’s meeting with Ulla Wewer and Ole William Petersen 12 April 12:30

Approved.

Place of meeting: University of Copenhagen (KU), The Panum Institute, room 23.1.10, Copenhagen

Participants:
Dean Ulla Wewer (UW) and Head of Department Ole William Petersen (OWP),
SUND, University of Copenhagen.

Panel:
Professor Hans Lassmann (HL), Austria (Chair of Panel)
Professor Margaret M. Esiri (ME), United Kingdom
Professor Christine Dijkstra (CD), The Netherlands
Professor Hartmut Wekerle (HW), Germany
Professor Anders Blomqvist (AB), Sweden

Secretariat to the Panel:
Professor Lars Terenius (LT), Medical Expert in the Secretariat
Consultant Pia Jørnø (PJ), Leader of the Secretariat (Rapporteur)

Agenda:
1. Short presentation round.
2. Information on the Faculty’s procedures in connection with documentation of research and handling and storing of research material.
3. Possible other questions.

Abbreviations:
KU = University of Copenhagen
SUND = The Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen
MP = Milena Penkowa

Minutes:

Ad 1. Short presentation round

HL welcomed, and a short presentation round was conducted. HL asked UW and OWP whether they would accept a dictaphone turned on. He explained that the dictaphone exclusively was used as support for PJ’s writing of the minutes from the meeting. UW and OWP accepted the dictaphone turned on.
Ad 2. Information on the Faculty’s procedures in connection with documentation of research and handling and storing of research material

UW explained that following the suspension of MP in March 2010, SUND and the Head of the Department have made a special effort for securing the continuity and finalisation of the projects of MP’s then Master and PhD students, among other things by appointing new supervisors for them and ensuring their access to their data and experimental material. UW also told that hitherto, SUND has not had any formal rules for research procedures or good scientific practice specific for this Faculty. However, after the abolishment of MP’s employment at KU, SUND has initiated a discussion among SUND’s faculty members and PhD students about establishing, on the best possible way, procedures for good scientific practice, including documentation of research. The discussion has been facilitated through seminars and PhD courses, discussions at department level and more. Also the Attorney of the State (Kammeradvokaten) has provided advice on this matter.

As a result of this effort SUND plans to formulate a code of conduct for good scientific practice, which can function as a basis for future research and future education of researchers. UW explained that SUND aims at a balance between empowerment and enforcement in the future culture for good scientific practice.

UW told further that a group is working on developing a “common set” of good scientific practice for wet and dry science. In addition, SUND is close to establishing an internal arrangement, where a well reputed and well liked faculty member will be appointed as “a named person” (“en særlig udpeget person” in Danish) who shall contribute to solving minor disagreements and accusations between employees.

HL briefly expressed that the Panel’s task comprised analysis of the scientific papers co-authored by MP, except the papers that have been reported to the Police or the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty (DCDS) before 1 July 2011. HL asked whether UW could inform about the status on the investigations conducted by the Police or DCSD.

He explained that the settling of the case reported to the Police is decisive for two of the papers in the Panel’s portfolio, because these two papers are closely and directly connected with the paper reported to the Police (same animal experiments in all three papers).

UW told that to her knowledge these cases have not yet been settled.

OWP told that he had been Head of Department for MP in the period 1999-2005 (acting 1999). He explained briefly the career time-line of MP: MP had senior faculty PhD supervisors as assigned by the Faculty’s PhD-school. MP was granted a “Super Post Doc” in the beginning of 2000 from the National Research Council. Due to MP’s well-consolidated research, including her collaboration with Juan Hidalgo she was assessed qualified for an Assistant Professor position, but she maintained the position as Super Post Doc. All departments had elected Heads of Department then and were organised in sections. MP’s then department had three sections, and MP was employed in Section C. In the period 2000-2005 OWP re-organised the department into sections dealing with specific research areas, and MP became employed in the area of neurobiology. Within this context the researchers and also MP presented and discussed their research at the departmental seminar series. After 2003, when some allegations on scientific misconduct had been put forward against MP, MP expanded significantly on her domestic collaborations and
HL asked whether the department ensured quality control of the work of MP when she was a Super Post Doc or a mentor for her. OWP responded that the Department did not perform or ensure further mentoring of MP or quality control of her work then, beyond endorsing a strong mutual desire between MP and senior faculty of section C concerning the continued employment of MP in this setting. OWP adds that this should be seen in light of the fact that MP over the past five years had already published more than ten papers and received training at the PhD-level in the very subject and technology that she was expected to pursue in her PostDoc. In retrospect, the department followed the standards for mentoring Post Docs and Assistant Professors at that time, and had excellent experience in doing so. UW assesses that in general quality control has increased since then at SUND.

HL asked if the rules for animal experiments were established in 1999. UW confirmed. She referred to that permissions for animal experiments must be obtained, and the researcher must record all experimental animals and the conducted experiments on each of them in an annual “animal journal” which must be submitted to and approved by the Animal Experiments Authority (Dyreforsøgstilsynet).

HL told that the Panel had not been able to find MP’s animal journals for 2001 and 2002 and asked whether SUND has rules for the period of archiving of the animal journals or the animal requisitions. UW told that there are no rules at SUND for this.

HL informed that the Panel has had problems with finding sufficient background documentation for its investigation, because the archive holding all items from MP’s office and lab is unstructured and difficult to find your way around in. He explained that the Panel has not been able to find sufficient written documentation that provide exact links between the individual sample sections and the individual animals and experiments, from which the individual samples origin. HL asked whether there are any rules or guidelines on how to make experimental material traceable back to the specific animals and the experiments conducted on them.

UW told that there are no rules or guidelines on documentation, but that it has been the responsibility of individual researchers. Likewise it has been the responsibility of the senior scientists to educate the students on good documentation practice. UW added that SUND now plans to implement rules/standards for good practice for documentation and archiving.

HL furthermore noted that MP claims that it is the university which has messed up her items in the archive. UW responded that SUND has not messed up the archive and that she cannot recognise that anyone at the Faculty should have messed up the MP archive. The items from MP’s office and lab have been the responsibility of a management team with no relations to MP and in a fully transparent process.

**Ad 3. Possible other questions**

HW asked about MP’s steep and successful career until a few years ago and how this has been possible. UW responded that MP had an ability to collaborate with highly esteemed researchers.
and mentioned Hidalgo, Bock and Klarlund Pedersen as examples. UW also told that MP was very hard working and very engaged in her scientific work, and that she reportedly was a good teacher.

CD asked whether there were specific criteria for employment of Assistant or Associate Professors, e.g. on publication, in the period of 2000-2005. UW told that there was not.

HL thanked UW and OWP for the information given.