

## STANDARD AGENDA 2015-2016

### FOR ANNUAL FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS AT THE CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

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#### **Introduction**

The Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF) wishes to have a running dialogue with the Centers of Excellence funded by the foundation. Hence, it holds annual follow-up meetings with each Center of Excellence.

These meetings serve as a way for the foundation to stay informed about the center's results, developments, challenges and successes and, at the same time, as a way to learn more about how the Center of Excellence funding instrument functions at each center/institution and in each research area. Many centers use the meetings as an internal management tool and as an opportunity to take stock and point out common goals, overall directions and objectives.

#### *Time and venue*

As a general rule, the follow-up meetings are held at the centers' premises. Occasionally, a follow-up meeting may include a lab tour (or similar) or take place at another site, e.g., in cases where a center includes several nodes or conducts field research at specific sites.

Approximately three hours are set aside for each meeting, which, depending on the time, might either commence or end with a lunch (included in the three hours). Right after the meeting, the DNRF would like to have access to a meeting room for 30 minutes in order for the DNRF representatives to sum up the meeting.

The follow-up meetings are held in blocks, where the DNRF visits up to eight centers in four days. The date of the meeting is announced approximately 6-12 months in advance of the meeting. The center leader/center administrator and the DNRF contact person agree on an agenda no later than 2 weeks before the meeting.

#### *Participants*

The chair, the director, some board members, and a contact person from the DNRF secretariat participate in the follow-up meetings. When visiting the centers, the DNRF likes to meet with as many center members as possible in order to get a feel for the center's atmosphere.

The meetings are typically divided into an open and a closed session. During the open session, all center members are encouraged to participate. The center leader usually invites the dean and/or head of department to participate in the open session, and if there is a need for further discussion on issues related to the host institution, he or she may participate in part of the closed session. It is

important to the DNRF that some time be reserved for a meeting solely between the center leader and the foundation.

Between the open and closed sessions, the foundation may want to meet with a specific group of center members, e.g., Ph.D. students, post-docs, foreign staff or students, male/female center members, etc.

#### **Agenda points – Open session** (approx.. 2/3 of the total meeting)

1. Welcome by the DNRF. The director of the DNRF starts the follow-up meeting with a 10-minute presentation on the foundation, including how the center contributes to the foundation's goal of strengthening Danish research.
2. Overview of the center, by the center leader. This agenda point should include a brief introduction to the center, its grand objectives, its activities, organization, scientific production, educational activities, dissemination and outreach activities, etc. (according to measures reported on in the annual report).

At the first follow-up meeting, the center leader is expected to give a thorough introduction to the goals, ambitions and organization of the center. Likewise, centers entering the second grant period are requested to address the vision and changes (research, organizational set-up etc.) at the first meeting in the new period and to reflect on the evaluation procedure. When centers are approaching the end of the second term, they are asked to report on their plans for the future (embedding, life beyond the DNRF) and to evaluate their CoE experience.

3. The research. The DNRF requests that the center leader and/or senior researchers in charge of the different projects/groups give a general status report on the center's research. The foundation also asks that they discuss any problems, new vision, and new ideas and any possible need to revise the research plan.

Furthermore, the DNRF welcomes short (approximately. 10 minutes) presentations on selected topics. These presentations may be done by any member of the center. Over the course of 2-3 follow-up meetings, it is important to include a number of presentations from both Danish and international Ph.D. students and post-docs. When Ph.D. students present their research, they should comment on the organizational setting, length of study and stays abroad.

The number of presentations should be kept to a maximum of four (including the center leader's presentation). The center is asked to take into consideration that participants from the DNRF are researchers from different fields. Therefore, presentations on the center's research activities must be formulated in a way that makes it accessible to researchers from other fields.

4. Specific topics. Each year, the foundation selects a topic to be discussed with all of the centers. Internationalization, collaboration, education, gender and postdocs are examples of topics that have previously been discussed. Starting in the fall of 2015 and continuing until the summer of 2016, the foundation has chosen *interdisciplinarity* and *measuring research performance* as specific topics.

#### *Interdisciplinarity*

Again and again interdisciplinary research is proclaimed as a pathway to groundbreaking results. This potential seems to be broadly recognized and there is a growing appreciation of the fundamental benefits of collaboration across fields. The DNRF believes the foundation has a specific role to play in promoting interdisciplinary research. This is because the foundation is open to applications from all scientific areas, including interdisciplinary ones. The result is that many centers end up being bedrocks for outstanding interdisciplinary research.

During the follow-up meeting, the DNRf would like to know whether the center is engaged in interdisciplinary activities? If so, how is the execution of interdisciplinary research experienced at the center? Are there barriers and can the DNRf be of further support to interdisciplinary research? What are the center's strengths/challenges in relation to interdisciplinarity? What are the key elements when interdisciplinarity leads to groundbreaking results?

#### *Measuring research performance*

Measuring research performance is another topic to be discussed with each center in 2015/16. Together with the rest of the research system, the DNRf is under constant pressure to demonstrate its impact on the wider society. Currently, the DNRf collects data about the performance of the centers through the annual reports (appendix A-H). The DNRf would like to open a discussion on whether the right data is collected. Does the center count or measure activities that the DNRf does not ask them to, because these alternative measures reflect the progress of the center in an important way? In line with this debate, the DNRf would like to explore one specific trend, i.e. altmetrics. This is an attempt to broaden the indicators for research performance in order to go beyond citations and publications e.g. by counting the number of times papers are downloaded, recommended or mentioned on various online platforms, such as Mendeley, F1000 and Twitter. Altmetrics can also be of importance to the theme of interdisciplinarity, as one of the acknowledged concerns with interdisciplinary research is that it can be difficult to raise awareness of an emerging interdisciplinary research area. DNRf wants to explore whether altmetrics is being discussed at centers and if so, what are the preliminary experiences?

#### **Meeting Ph.D. students or post-docs**

The DNRf would like to meet only with the center's Ph.D. students or post-docs for a 20-minute informal discussion. During a ten-year center grant period, the DNRf plans to meet with both the Ph.D. students and the post-docs approximately three times each.

During these meetings, the foundation wishes to learn about the Ph.D. students' and post-docs' experience at the center, their involvement in teaching, how the supervision works, their future career plans, etc. Please refer to the specific questionnaires for these meetings, which are appended to this document.

#### **Agenda points – Closed session**

5. Finances and administrative issues. A central question for the DNRf is whether there is a correlation between research plan, budgets and accounts/expenses. Possible questions regarding administrative issues can also be brought up during this session. *Participants*: Center leader, center administrator, and other relevant center members (e.g., senior staff). The dean and/or head of department may also participate if relevant.
6. Discussion with the center leader alone. The center leader is expected to give an assessment of the center as well as an overall evaluation of the research. This assessment should include staff, management and organization, and the relationship between different groups and/or units in the center. Here, the center leader has the opportunity to express problems, wishes, ideas, vision, etc.