

Minutes of the General Meeting held on 2 December 2019

Location: Fakultätenzimmer
Time: 6 pm – 7.20 pm
Present: 12 avuba members and two guests (actionuni)
Minutes: Patricia Eiche

Agenda:

1. Welcome and short presentation by actionuni
2. Election of vote counters and approval of the agenda
3. Approval of the minutes from the General Meeting on 3 December 2018, including information on a motion from the General Meeting on 3 December 2018
4. Finances: a) avuba membership fee for 2020, b) annual report 2018, c) projection for 2019 and budget 2020
5. Progress report from avuba
6. Elections for 2020: a) co-presidium, b) auditors, c) avuba executive board members
7. Outlook 2020
8. Miscellaneous

Item 1: Welcome and short presentation by actionuni

Patricia Eiche (avuba head of administration) welcomes those present to the 2019 General Meeting.

Carmen Faso, co-president of actionuni, the Swiss umbrella organization for associations of teaching and research assistants, then gives a slideshow about the “[actionuni Grand Tour](#)”. She explains that actionuni campaigns for the interests of its members at a national level. avuba has been a member since 2013 and pays an annual membership fee of CHF 600. actionuni engages in regular discussions with organizations such as the SNSF, the Swiss Accreditation Council and the Swiss Conference of Higher Education Institutions (*Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz*). These organizations will not speak with cantonal associations of teaching and research assistants, only with an umbrella organization. To be able to represent its members’ interests, however, actionuni requires its members to respond to its requests for information. Its budget does not currently allow it to remunerate the assistants who play a part in actionuni. To ensure that actionuni can continue its work in the long run, further funding must be found in addition to membership fees. The current actionuni presidium is already exploring options with national bodies. Anyone wishing to help improve the situation of Swiss teaching and research assistants is welcome to contact [Carmen Faso](#). More information can be found at www.actionuni.ch.

Item 2: Election of vote counters and approval of the agenda

Philippe Hofstetter from the Faculty of Law puts himself forward as a vote counter.

With the exception of Patricia Eiche (head of administration) and Carmen Faso and Rashmi Rairavat (actionuni presidents), all those present confirm that they are members of Group III and therefore eligible to vote. All those who are eligible to vote approve the existing agenda.

Item 3: Approval of the minutes from the General Meeting on 3 December 2018, including information on a motion from the General Meeting on 3 December 2018

Patricia Eiche explains that the motion from the General Meeting on 3 December 2018 relating to the “automatic cost-neutral extension of fixed-term contracts to include the duration of maternity leave” still requires more work. Since the General Meeting, the following has happened:

- A meeting with the central HR team and Diversity Office was held in January 2019.
- In February 2019, Patricia Eiche attended a meeting at the free legal advice (skuba-clinic) and learned the following:
 - Externally funded assistants at the University of Basel are classed as non-structural assistants and receive a private law (*privatrechtlich*) contract. This means that:
 - The contract, and therefore the conditions of the external funding body, apply in the first instance.
 - If the contract contains no information on a particular topic, then further terms and conditions apply that form part of the contract (e.g. SNSF terms and conditions, or terms and conditions such as the University’s regulations on secondary occupations, if these are mentioned in the contract).
 - If the topic is not regulated by any of the sources mentioned above, the Swiss Code of Obligations (*Obligationenrecht*) applies.
 - “University-funded” assistants at the University of Basel have a structural post and a public law (*öffentlich-rechtlich*) contract. This means that:
 - The contract applies in the first instance.
 - The University terms of employment also apply, i.e. terms of employment for assistants, HR regulations, regulations for academic staff, etc.
 - If a specific topic is not regulated by any of the sources mentioned above, the Swiss Code of Obligations (*Obligationenrecht*) applies.
 - Accordingly, the following do not apply to assistants with private law contracts: Terms of employment for assistants, the University HR regulations and the regulations for academic staff, which stipulate, for example, that a doctorate usually lasts for 1+3 years and a postdoc leading to Habilitation lasts for 2+4 years.
 - The phrase “The employment contract may ... be extended” means that the employer may offer an extension. There is, however, no entitlement to an extension, even if an assistant’s academic achievements are evaluated “positively”.
- In spring 2019, various bilateral talks took place with the President’s Office to discuss the results of the avuba survey and develop measures accordingly. The University of Basel has taken note of assistants’ feedback from the avuba survey on the duration of employment as well as their desire for longer and more standardized contracts, and has used this to develop a university-wide process for employing and supervising doctoral students and postdocs. In the future, this will ensure good, transparent and equal conditions in the doctoral and postdoctoral academic qualification phases.
The university-wide process for employing and supervising doctoral students and postdocs will come into effect at the University of Basel from January 2020.

This includes a new form “doctoral agreement” concluded at doctorate level and mandatory “postdoctoral agreement” at postdoc level. avuba gave extensive feedback on these templates on 22 November 2019 and, among other things, has requested that the following text be incorporated into the agreements:

- Assistants taking maternity leave are entitled to 16 weeks of leave at full salary.
- Full salary will be paid for the duration of compulsory Swiss military/civilian/firefighting service.
- Should the employment contract end during one of the periods of absence stipulated above, the assistant will be paid appropriate compensation from the insurance fund.
- If nobody is employed to replace the assistant for the duration of maternity leave or military service, the contract may, at the request of the assistant, be extended by the amount of research time lost due to absence. This will be cost-neutral and paid with at least the daily allowance from the insurance fund. The assistant is also entitled to access their workplace during this time.

Work continues on these forms. At the time of the avuba General Meeting, it is not yet clear whether the text proposed by avuba on this topic will be incorporated into the new doctoral and postdoctoral agreements.

3.a) Motion from the avuba General Meeting to the head of administration and the executive board:
Address the following topics at the next Senate meeting on 17 December 2019

- Desire for transparency regarding the differences between the two employment categories for assistants at the University of Basel
- Desire for transparency regarding the practical implementation of the phrase “may be extended” (paragraph 23 of the regulations for academic staff): “In justified cases, employment may be extended by a maximum of one year provided that this is necessary for the assistant’s academic training, and particularly in the case of family obligations.”
- Desire for transparency regarding entitlement and implementation of the following issue: “at the request of the assistant, the contract may be extended by the amount of research time lost due to maternity leave/military or civilian service.”
- Duration of postdocs: avuba wishes to discuss the Senate’s stance when a postdoc is employed with a 50% workload and/or acquires their own funding: Would it not be possible to extend the employment, which lasts for a maximum of 6 years? If so, where would this need to be stipulated in law/in writing?

://: -> The motion is carried.

Addendum from 3 December 2019:

According to the response from Christine Meyer-Richli, Deputy General Secretariat at the University of Basel, to Patricia Eiche’s email, received 3 December 2019, the Senate is not the right body to deal with this matter. Central HR is responsible for these matters, together with the Graduate Center. The strategically responsible body is the doctoral committee and the decision-making authority (upon request) is the President’s Office.

The avuba executive board agrees with the approach suggested by Patricia Eiche by email on 3 December 2019:

- a) As agreed, Christina Lamers will attend the doctoral committee meeting on 4 December 2019. She will inform Patricia Eiche of the decisions made by the doctoral committee.
- b) At the next meeting of the Senate Committee (Regenzausschuss), Ulrike Unterhofer will outline the issues important to Group III, although this “agenda item” will not be discussed by the Senate. Above all, these issues affect the University’s attractiveness as an employer in a broader sense, and avuba therefore believes that the other groups should also be informed of assistants’ concerns.
- c) A long-agreed meeting between avuba, HR and the Graduate Center (Stefanie Hof) will take place on 15 January 2020 from 1 pm – 2 pm. avuba will put forward its concerns at this meeting.
- d) An avuba executive board meeting will be held in the second half of January, when further steps will be discussed.

Executive board motion to the General Meeting:

- Approve the minutes for last year’s General Meeting on 3 December 2018.
://: -> The motion is carried. The minutes are approved and thanks are expressed.

Item 4: Finances

4.a) avuba membership fee 2020

Executive board motion to the General Meeting:

- The current membership fee of CHF 15 per semester should be maintained.
://: -> The motion is carried.

4.b) Annual report 2018

Katharina Prautsch, doctoral student in the Faculty of Medicine, and Georg Starke, doctoral student in the Institute for Biomedical Ethics, reviewed the annual report 2018 on 13 June 2019 and found it in order. The University has already covered the deficit for 2018 and, as every year, the result of the avuba annual report at the end of 2018 was CHF 0.

The avuba annual reports can be viewed at <https://avuba.unibas.ch/en/about-us/minutes-and-annual-reports-174/annual-reports/>.

Executive board motion to the General Meeting:

- Approve the existing annual report 2018 and express thanks.
://: -> The motion is carried.

4. c) Projection for 2019 and budget 2020

In accordance with the performance agreement with the President’s Office, avuba may avail itself of a maximum annual cost/revenue deficit of CHF 50,000 from the University. avuba endeavours to use its money responsibly.

Since avuba was founded, the University has covered an average annual deficit of around CHF 32,000.

avuba expects to make use of the University of Basel's deficit guarantee to the order of around CHF 33,000 for 2019.

In 2020, avuba anticipates that income from membership fees will remain stable and expenses will be in line with previous years. It therefore expects to make use of the University's deficit guarantee to the order of around CHF 30,000 for 2020.

Executive board motion to the General Meeting:

- Approve the existing budget for 2020.
://: -> The motion is carried.

Item 5: Progress report from avuba

avuba activities in 2019:

- Analyzing the avuba PhD & Postdoc Survey 2018:
 - January to April: Various meetings with the President's Office
 - April: Publication of the most important findings ([EN 20190403 avuba PhD & Postdoc Survey 2018 - avuba report](#)), the [answers given by all assistants of the University of Basel who took part in the survey](#) and the [answers given by assistants employed at the University of Basel who took part in the survey](#)
 - May: Presentation and discussion of the areas with need for action during the President's Conference (Rektoratskonferenz)
 - June: Publication of the [summary of areas with need for action including faculty figures](#)
 - In November, the President's Office compiled a two-page report at the request of avuba: [20191126 Measures which are already implemented or which are planned](#)
- avuba has also developed statements on the following topics:
 - Feedback on the University's 2023–2030 strategy paper
 - avuba has written two requests to the President's Office regarding the "Academic Editing" incentive. The President's Office then approved a two-year pilot, starting September 2019, to reimburse doctoral students for up to CHF 500 spent on editing their own high-impact publications using an editing service of their choice.
 - avuba has also provided ongoing feedback on the new employment and supervision processes that will come into effect in January 2020.
- avuba events:
 - Nine lunchtime meetings
 - Two evening seminars on "financial security"
 - A city tour with barbeque evening
 - Film night in December
 - Regular Happy Hours at Verso
- Participating in the University Welcome Day in September
- Funding of 15 academic and non-academic projects

Item 6: Elections for 2020

6.a) Co-presidium

Ann-Kathrin Hess and Camila Plaza are standing as co-presidents for 2020. They leave the room while the vote is taken.

Patricia Eiche explains that nobody has put themselves forward for the role apart from the two doctoral students.

- Election of Ann-Kathrin Hess, doctoral student in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as avuba co-president for 2020
://: -> The General Meeting elects Ann-Kathrin Hess.
- Election of Camila Plaza, doctoral student in the Faculty of Business and Economics, as avuba co-president for 2020
://: -> The General Meeting elects Camila Plaza.

6.b) Auditors

Ann-Kathrin Hess and Camila Plaza put themselves forward to audit the avuba annual report 2019 in spring 2020. As neither has been involved in avuba business in 2019 so far, they are both accepted as auditors by the avuba members in attendance.

6.c) Executive board members

Ex-officio executive board members 2020:

- Nesina Grütter, Faculty of Theology
- Tizian Troxler, Faculty of Law
- Eva Schnider, Faculty of Medicine
- Patricia Hertel, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
- Butrint Aliu, Faculty of Science
- Ulrike Unterhofer, Faculty of Business and Economics
- Nathalie Schicktanz, Faculty of Psychology

Item 7: Outlook 2020

Planned activities:

- Continuing to monitor University measures relating to the areas with need for action identified by the avuba survey 2018.
- Continuing existing events (lunchtime meetings, Happy Hours, evening seminar, avuba barbeque evening, funding academic and non-academic projects).
- Meetings with individual Group III representatives on University committees.

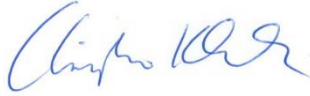
The avuba members in attendance agree with these focal points and do not suggest any other matters to be addressed by the co-presidents in 2020 – apart from the desire to address various topics at the next Senate meeting (for details, see item 3.a) on page 3).

Item 8: Miscellaneous

Patricia Eiche gives thanks to the avuba co-presidents who are stepping down at the end of the year and says that it has been very pleasant working with them. She also thanks all Senate representatives who are ex-officio members of the avuba executive board for their valuable, unpaid commitment to Group III in 2019.

On behalf of himself and Christopher Klenk, Philippe Hofstetter thanks Patricia Eiche for her outstanding and tireless dedication to assistants at the University of Basel and invites all attendees to partake in drinks and snacks.

Basel, 16 December 2019



Christopher Klenk



Philippe Hofstetter