

Doctoral Students at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway (TODOS)

Activity Report Spring 2020

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1. About TODOS

Doctoral Students at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway (TODOS) is an interest organization for PhD candidates & postdocs at UiT. We focus on three important aspects of being a successful PhD candidate & postdoc: good academic working environment, healthy social life, and representation of our interests on university's boards, committees, and events. We accomplish this by organizing academic seminars and social gatherings throughout the year as well as joining committees, meetings, and events with various contact persons in key positions around the whole university. Through this, we hope to contribute to improving your PhD & postdoc experience.

2. Letter from the Board Chair

Dear fellow PhD candidates and Post-Doctoral researchers from our extended UiT family across Arctic Norway and around the world,

I hope you, your family, and your friends are well no matter where you find yourself in the world. While things are easing up in Norway, we still live in strange and difficult times as the world grapples with the most serious global event of our generation. While the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic are not yet fully known, it has put significant strain on many of our lives, research activities, and future plans.

At the same time, the global pandemic has highlighted the value of sound research and quality decision making in the modern world. This does not just apply to the medical sciences and our peers on the frontlines of today's conflict, but to every researcher in every discipline around the world. The problems of yesterday are still the problems of today - sometimes more so as our social, cultural, political, economical, and natural systems are strained, twisted, and transformed by this new normal. Your research matters.



It is under these circumstances that I am proud to present the Bi-Annual Report for the spring semester of 2020 on behalf of the TODOS Board. The work of TODOS continues through the global pandemic and it has been an honour to serve you and represent your interests over the last six months. We are proud that TODOS has risen to the challenge of the present moment and are looking forward to helping guide PhDs and Postdocs at UiT into whatever future the second half of the year will bring us.

In this task, TODOS strives to be the eyes, ears, and voice of the new generation of scholars that it represents and it is committed in stimulating our academic and social lives both in person and remotely. We thank you for your positive interest and participation in our academic and social events as well as your continued engagement with TODOS. It is you who make a community of early career researchers possible.

To ensure our continued success, we always welcome your comments and ideas. You are always welcome to share your feedback and concerns with us via email, Facebook, Twitter, and in person.

We highly encourage you to get involved in the TODOS Board and now is an excellent time to get involved. Currently, we are seeking new members for the following positions: Vice Board Chair, Director of Social Affairs, and Director of Communications. Now more than ever, TODOS needs good people to help shape the future of its membership.

I would like to thank Ataur and Lorenzo who will be stepping down at the end of the Spring 2020 semester and Laura who decided to run for reelection. I greatly appreciate your hard work, input, and contribution you did in 2019-2020. Thank you in taking the time to make UiT a better place to work and study. I would also like to show my deepest gratitude to all UiT employees who have worked with us – thank you for your support and contributions. Finally, I would like to extend my thank you to all PhDs and Postdoctoral fellows - thank you for being here, thank you for your contribution, thank you for making UiT a world class institution.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

Anatolijs Venovcevs

TODOS Board Chair



3. TODOS Board

Board-Chair – **Anatolijs Venovcevs**, Institute of Archaeology, History, Religious Studies, and Theology (HSL)

Vice Board-Chair – **Ataur Rahman**, Norwegian College of Fishery Science (NCFS)

Treasurer – **Ukeje Agwu**, School of Business and Economics (BFE)

Chair of Social Affairs – **Lorenzo Ragazzi**, Department of Clinical Medicine (MH)

Chair of Academic Affairs – **Kara Kathleen Hodgson**, Centre for Peace Studies (HSL)

Chair of Communications – **Laura Victoria Schulte-Werning**, The Health Faculty (Helsefak)

4. Activities of the TODOS Board for Spring 2020

Overview

TODOS Board members are part of different councils and committees and participate in different meetings and events. TODOS strives to have representatives on all major university committees. In addition to that, the TODOS Board also organizes its own meetings to identify needs and concerns, plan social and academic events, generate new ideas, and share information. TODOS is also constantly receiving feedback from its members and is always working to improve the working conditions at the university. Our network of contact persons throughout the institution is used to achieve the necessary changes.

4.1 Meetings, Committees, and Contacts Throughout the University

- TODOS is represented in ***Forskningsstrategisk utvalg*** (*Research strategic council*), ***Forskningsetisk utvalg*** (*Research ethics council*), and ***Priskomiteen*** (*Prize committee*). These are vital arenas for UiT leadership, faculty leaders, and employee groups.
- TODOS had a representative on the ***Polarkomitee*** (*Polar research committee*). While the TODOS board is not directly represented, it has a close associate on this committee. The committee was established to improve the coordination and strategic development of the polar research environment at UiT. You can find more about the polar research committee [here](#).
- Starting in January, TODOS also began doing presentations to new employees at UiT in association with the International Cooperation Office. These presentations have been used to introduce TODOS to newly-arriving employees and inform them of the services TODOS provides. These took place in January and May.
- The TODOS Board is committed to being a truly multi-campus organization and is

constantly seeking to hear input from the other campuses besides Tromsø.

- TODOS Board members are in regular contact with representatives from the **library**, the **university administration**, **High North Academy** and the **representatives of temporary staff** at the university board.
- TODOS has held regular board meetings throughout the year, 5 this semester to plan and coordinate activities, meetings and events. Even the global pandemic did not stop the TODOS Board who moved their meetings online.

4.2. Events Organized for PhDs and Postdocs at UiT

December

For two years now, the TODOS Board has a rotating administrative structure meaning that half of the board members are elected in June and half at Christmas and both serve one year terms. This allows for overlap in leadership and means that TODOS can constantly host activities. While the new board members find their place in the organization, older board members can still host events. Thus, TODOS was able to continue its activities in December after the last general meeting. This included two events:

Shut Up & Write Sessions - TODOS partnered with the University Library to provide “Shut Up & Write” sessions. These sessions enabled PhDs and Postdocs to carve out time and space to focus specifically on their writing needs. Sessions were structured with goal-setting and timed writing periods, followed by breaks. One session was hosted on December 9th with 20 people attending. The picture to the right shows the full room at the first TODOS-UB “Shut Up & Write” session!



Life After the PhD, Part 2 - This series was designed as a collaboration between TODOS and the High North Academy, in response to feedback that PhD and Postdoctoral fellows needed guidance in developing their professional skills. The first part of this series was hosted in October and on December 10th saw the much-anticipated Part 2. The second workshop was

titled, “Building Your CV - Toward Your Dream Job!” 22 people registered for the event.

January

TODOS Monthly Social Gatherings - For two years, TODOS has been organizing monthly social gatherings for PhDs and Postdocs. Typically, every second month we meet up on a Friday after working hours at Bazinga on campus while the months in between we get together in the evening at Blårock downtown for their “Blue Monday”. We eat, drink, chat and have a great time.

The first gathering in 2019 took place in January at Blårock which was held on January 20th, the real [Blue Monday - supposedly the most depressing day of the year](#). Fortunately, there was no depression to be had that day as over 25 people came out to take over the top floor of Blårock. The event lasted long into the night.

Shut Up & Write Sessions - January saw the start of weekly Shut Up & Write Sessions for 2020 in partnership with the University Library. Three such sessions were hosted on January 9, 16, and 23. The events have been extremely successful with 20-30 people attending each week.

Arctic Frontiers Conference - Our Director of Academic Affairs, Kat Hodgson, represented TODOS at a panel-discussion side event to the Arctic Frontiers Conference, titled “Academic (un)employment and mobility in the Arctic North-project: Knowledge based Growth in the Arctic.” The event organizers and the audience sought insight into the perceptions and lived experiences of both Nordic and international PhD candidates regarding the High North labor market and career opportunities.

February

TODOS Monthly Social Gathering - Our second social gathering took place at Bazinga on Friday, February 28th with approximately 15-20 people attending.

TODOS-UB collaborative events:

- 1) *Shut Up & Write Sessions* - Shut Up & Write Sessions continued through February with high attendance numbers. Three sessions were hosted on February 13, 20, and 27.
- 2) “Your Name Isn’t Joseph, Why Are You Stallin’? - A Writing Workshop for PhDs and PostDocs” - this workshop was designed to help fellows understand the myths we tell ourselves about writing and provided tips for how to overcome procrastination and paralysis in the writing process. 25 people registered for the event.

International Mother Language Day - Held on February 21st and organized by the Bengali Community at UiT this was a TODOS-affiliated event to celebrate the diverse, multilingual community in Tromsø.

March

Shut Up & Write Sessions - Shut Up & Write Sessions continued in March with one being hosted on March 11.

University Shut Down - TODOS Board met the day before the university decided to shut down in response to the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All planned events were cancelled with hope of being hosted once again when the university reopens. This included two Shut Up & Write sessions, the last installment of the Life After PhD series, and a Writing Retreat to Vikran. All planning for potential future events was put on hold. We were very disappointed but the safety of our members comes first.

Going Digital:

In response to the global pandemic and to continue fulfilling our mandate, TODOS moved all of its operations online to its Facebook page, website, Twitter account, and email.

- 1) *Virtual Accountabili-buddies!* - A Facebook initiative created to keep our members accountable. Participants were encouraged to post their daily goals in the morning and in the evening post what they managed to accomplish. This ran every week day from March 14 to March 24.
- 2) *TODOS Minecraft Nights* - TODOS set up a [Minecraft Server](#) and run weekly game nights every Saturday. Members were encouraged to stay at home and play video games (in their off hours, of course). The logic was that if you are at home playing video games, you are not getting sick. The first TODOS Minecraft Night took place on March 28.
- 3) *Communication with Membership* - With social distancing measures in place, TODOS stepped up its role as an advocacy and communication group. TODOS postponed all social and academic events on March 11, a day before the official Norwegian government shut down. This was followed up on March 16, reassuring our members that the interests of PhDs and Postdocs was one of the top priorities of the UiT

administration and urging them to stay safe, stay home, and stay calm.

April

TODOS Minecraft Nights - We continued our Minecraft Nights through April with game nights being hosted on April 4, 10, 18, 24, and 25. The event poster can be seen on the right.

Virtual Shut Up & Write - TODOS's popular Shut Up & Write sessions were moved online on April 28th with 15 people attending in a digital format. The meeting was held through Microsoft Teams and was very well received. So much so that a spin-off, self-organized Shut Up & Write session was established by several members.



Communication with Membership and Expanding Advocacy - Throughout April, TODOS increased its communication with its members and national bodies representing PhDs and Postdocs on the developing situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Communication took place via email and on the TODOS Facebook page.

May

Virtual Shut Up & Write - Shut Up & Write sessions continued online. Sessions were hosted on May 5, 19, and 26, with approximately 10 people attending each time via Zoom, from multiple UiT campuses, including Alta and Narvik.

Leadership Skills course - Director for Academic Affairs, Kat Hodgson, represented TODOS as a guest presenter for the High North Academy course, FSK-8003: Leadership Skills. She presented the topic, "Culture and Conflict in the Workplace" to approximately 20 students via Zoom.

Communication with Membership and Expanding Advocacy - This work from April continued through May as government and university restrictions were eased and concerns were raised from PhD and Postdocs who were concerned how they could successfully finish their course of work and study. Through this TODOS is committed to advocate on behalf of its members to receive clear messaging from the university administration about necessary contract extensions. On the right is a picture of our socially-distanced Board Meeting.



Other Activities:

- TODOS is a member of SiN (*Stipendiatororganisasjonene i Norge*), the national organization for PhD candidates, postdoctoral fellows and early career researchers, which aims to be a contact point both for each local interest organization in Norway as well as from the European level (Eurodoc). SiN represents early career researchers' interest on a national level when it comes to policy making.
- First Steps in Tromsø - TODOS is working toward finishing a document to new employees arriving to Tromsø. The document is meant to be a living document meant to educate newly-arriving employees on how to navigate a new life in an Arctic city. The document is finished and ready to be distributed in the fall.
- TODOS has been actively using social media and email to promote all TODOS events. At the same time, TODOS website has been updated and improved after being neglected for a while.

5. Budget

Every year, TODOS receives a set amount of **250,000 NOK** to host activities for PhDs and Postdocs as well as settle out operational costs.

Unfortunately, we have not been able to host our planned events which requires financing

due to the Covid-19. However, pending bills and operational costs still remain. These are broken down below.

Pending bills

From 2019, we had pending bills of **79,477.11 NOK**. This deficit was due to too much expense from last year, hence requiring a withdrawal from this year's account. However, this withdrawal is not peculiar to this year. There was a deficit of **92,205.09 NOK** from 2018, which required an equivalent withdrawal from the budget of 2019.

On 27th December 2019, TODOS organized a seminar. The invoice for this was paid out this year. Requiring a withdrawal of **435 NOK** by NORGES ARKTISKE STUDENTSAMSKIPNAD (SITO)

On November 29th 2019, TODOS organized a side event for the Munin Conference: "How (and why) to work as an open scientist in the 21st century." It was a seminar and lunch for the speaker combo event. 10 people total attended the lunch for an invoiced amount of **4,600 NOK** by NORGES ARKTISKE STUDENTSAMSKIPNAD (SITO)

Available budget 2020

To carry out our operations and activities for 2020. We have **165 487,89 NOK** allocated to us when all pending bills from 2019 had been paid out - as of 30th May 2020.

Fixed Bills 2020

We have a fixed bill of **2,000 NOK** every year. This is paid out to the Association of Doctoral Organizations in Norway (Stipendiatororganisasjonene i Norge - stylized as SiN). This is usually paid out in December every year.

Board Members compensation

TODOS allocates **150,000 NOK** every calendar year for compensation of board members for the work done. This is an equivalent of **12,500 NOK** every semester for each of the six board members. The compensation goes to work contract extension to compensate for time spent on TODOS activities. It can also be added to the board member's annuum or taken as duty work.

This year, Anatolijs has decided to take out his compensation for **both semesters** as duty work. This means that **25,000 NOK** has been given over to TODOS to carry out our events. Aatur has also decided to take out his compensation as duty work for **this semester**. This means that **12,500 NOK** has been given over to TODOS to carry out our events. This means that a total allocation of **37,500 NOK** has been given over to TODOS to carry out our events.



So far, no other board member has given over their compensation. This may or may not change before the year runs out.

Hence, we have budgeted **112,500 NOK** to serve as compensation for board members.

Remaining budget as of May 30th 2020

As of May 30th 2020, we have an available amount of **52,987.89 NOK** to work with for the rest of the year.