

Meeting Fachrat MATS (3 June 2015, 9:00-11:30)

Minutes

Present: Harald Fuess (chair and speaker); Christiane Brosius; Daniel Münster: Cathrine Bublatzky; Jule Nowoitnick (minutes); Elisabeth Meyer, Henrike Hoffmann

Excused: Joachim Kurtz; Oliver Lamers; Brigitte Berger-Göken

Guests: Barbara Mittler; Lilian Emonds; Magdalena von Drachenfels

Explanation: The meeting was held in German. In order for the meetings to be accessible for all MATS students and staff the minutes are in English.

Top 1 Welcome

- Harald Fuess opens the meeting and declares the Fachrat in quorum.
- As he circulated the minutes for the last meeting only shortly before this meeting, he suggests that the Fachrat will accept it provisionally but members of the Fachrat can veto it via email.

Top 2 Q+Ampel-Klausursitzung on June 22

Questions regarding the study programme evaluation in the summer term 2014

- Harald Fuess asks if the study programme evaluation that is now part of Q+Ampelverfahren was conducted in German or English – Jule Nowoitnick explains that it was conducted in English, including explanations for the students.
- Barbara Mittler asks where the number of 60% of students not satisfied with the MATS comes from. – Harald Fuess explains that it comes from the evaluation but needs to be put into perspective as only a third of the student body participated.

Preparation for the meeting

- The Fachrat plus the additional student representatives (Lilian Emonds and a student who studied abroad in their 3rd term – Kyoto? Kathmandu?) will represent the MATS in the meeting on June 22.
- In addition, Harald Fuess will inquire with the QM team if more members of the professorial staff could be present to appropriately represent the interdisciplinary breadth of the MATS.
- The 10 minute presentation at the meeting will encompass a short introduction into the specifics of the MATS, explain what changes have been incorporated already and problematize what remains to be done/discussed – and possibly the problems with some of the data used in the Q+Ampelverfahren (e.g. special circumstances for study programme evaluation). Together with the power point it will already shortly address the issues raised by the SBQEs.
- To prepare for the Q&A part of the meeting Harald Fuess will circulate a list of the topics/questions raised and recommend which MATS representatives should prepare which issues.
- Harald Fuess suggests the following rough division: philosophy of the programme = Kurtz; internationalization/exchange = Fuess; administration = Nowoitnick; students always welcome to be involved as all points concern them.
- In a meeting on Wednesday June 17, 9-10am, the representatives will come together for a mock-up of the Klausursitzung.
- Jule Nowoitnick will circulate a list of initial career destinations of MATS graduates.

Further Discussion

- Cathrine Bublatzky suggests emphasis of the teaching of research-oriented soft skills like self-organisation.
- Barbara Mittler explains that more than other humanities subjects the MATS students ought to learn to independently and critically analyse local issues in a truly global context and as consequence of a historical development; she stresses the importance of the historical dimension also in understanding the dynamics of the contemporary global world in response to the critic that the MATs may be 'too' historical in its orientation.
- Daniel König proposes to prepare an example on the historical foundation of ISIS; Christiane Brosius will add urban migration as example from another disciplinary perspective in the MATS.
- Daniel König addresses the additional challenge for many international students to adapt to the idea of German humanities of self-organisation which also means an additional challenge for the staff to help the students in this orientation process.
- Cathrine Bublatzky suggests to not only emphasise the interdisciplinarity but also the internationality of the MATS on June 22 and the connected challenges go beyond what one discipline can solve; Jule Nowoitnick adds that the existing, very helpful staff of the International Office who can and do help are hard to find since not all webpages are available in English.
- Daniel König stresses that the internationality is also a huge plus; students can build global networks and – as Christiane Brosius adds – gain transcultural competence in 'real life'.
- Barbara Mittler asks about student-to-student mentoring which has not been implemented yet.
- Elisabeth Meyer sees this as part of the duties of the student body council (Fachschaftsrat) but explains that not many students use this chance.
- The Fachrat decides to make sure that the Fachrat has a whole pin board in the entrance hall.
- Jule Nowoitnick shortly introduces the idea of a more intense orientation workshop for new students which could also more intensively involve the Fachschaftsrat and offer additional incentive through training in mentoring.
- Barbara Mittler suggests to appoint clear contact person for a group of students in the Fachschaftsrat.
- Christian Förster supports a more or less mandatory session which would also help to involve students which might otherwise be too shy to engage with, e.g., members of the Fachschaftsrat.
- Daniel Münster shares the experience from his former study programme where students had to come with a clear plan for their studies and could adjust the details of their research topic and supervision in the first term; in a week of orientation the faculty introduced themselves as well as the German academic system.

Top 3 Module Descriptions / Modulhandbuch (MHB)

- Harald Fuess will revise the current MHB to fit the formal requirements and circulate it by the end of the week.
- He and Jule Nowoitnick explain that this step is about meeting the formalities of the evaluation first; the ongoing discussions about a deeper reform to the programme will take more time and will continue into the late summer term; hopefully a formally and structurally revised MHB can be submitted to the faculty meeting in the winter term.

Top 4 Core issues of structural reform

Abolishment of Oral Exam

- The current Terms and Regulations of Examination include an oral exam which has to be taken before the master thesis is submitted; the oral exam tests general knowledge in the field of TS, it is not a defence of the master thesis.
- Based on previous discussions Harald Fuess suggests to abolish the oral exam as the amount of effort required by all parties is not outweighed by the intellectual benefits or credit and grading importance.
- Christiane Brosius, Daniel König, Daniel Münster and Barbara Mittler are all in favour of keeping an oral exam as check-up of another important academic skill set (rhetorical skills) and as ceremonial frame/occasion to engage in critical discussion with the student, which otherwise only takes place in the classes.
- Lilian Emonds explains that students would welcome earlier and clearer information on the oral exam; Jule Nowoitsnik supports this also in view of non-HCTS professors serving as first supervisor in the MATS.
- Barbara Mittler suggests to look at the MA Religious Studies as example for exams in an interdisciplinary, inter-institutional setting.
- Harald Fuess asks about dates for oral exams at other chairs; Daniel König would prefer to set individual dates with his candidates. Christiane Brosius, Christian Förster and Harald Fuess now have their oral exams scheduled for mid-July.
- The Fachrat discusses if it would make more sense to have an oral exam after the master thesis as well as other possible formats of the exam, e.g. presentation of a paper in the colloquium.

Extensions of term paper deadlines

- The Fachrat decides that under exceptional circumstances a lecturer may grant an individual student an extension for a submission beyond the April/October 15 class grade submission deadline but would then need to communicate clearly by what date this grade will be submitted to the office.

'Regelstudienzeit' / regular period of study

- Magdalena von Drachenfels problematizes the pressure to finish in four semesters vs. the need of such an interdisciplinary programme to give its students time to digest and carefully plan a master thesis.
- Barbara Mittler explains that the stress comes from the Bologna system; students should be able to extend their studies if they so wish; but it is important in the context of the Q+Ampelverfahren that it is *structurally possible* to finish the MATS in four terms.

Rename the Module Mobility into Mobility and Research Module (Suggestion by Münster)

- The Fachrat agrees.

Upon admissions, students are tentatively allocated to a field of concentration. During the first semester they can still change (until 30 November?). Each student receives one of the professors as mentor; changes afterwards are only permissible upon approval of a professor representing the new field of concentration. (Suggestion by Münster/Fuess)

- Cathrine Bublitzky would see this responsibility more with a focus advisor (Fachstudienberater) who would then also help the students to select an appropriate program of study.
- Nowoitsnik stresses that it is urgently important to install advisors in the foci and to clarify who (coordination, advisors, professors) would bear which responsibility.

- Harald Fuess explains that SEG being the focus of approx. 2/3 of the students would be too big just for Steven Ivings. There are five Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter and teaching and administrative responsibilities should be distributed more evenly.
- Cathrine Bublatzky agrees to serve as advisor for SEG together with Steven Ivings.
- Jule Nowoitnick will contact all advisors/assistants to clarify the respective responsibilities.

MATS Introduction to Transcultural Studies lecture course keep but make tutorials compulsory for all degree students (5 CP plus tutorial 2-5 CP = 7-10 CP ?) or DIVIDE Introduction into classes according to the fields of concentration

- The Fachrat agrees to make the tutorial compulsory and decides to fund three tutorials accompanying the Introduction to Transcultural Studies for the coming winter term.
- Jule Nowoitnick asks the students if they would think a separate class on basic academic skills within the special context of the MATS would make sense; the students agree; Magdalena von Drachenfels mentions "Skills, Tools and Methods for Transcultural Studies" (taught by Jennifer Pochodzalla in WiSe 13/14) as great example.
- Daniel Münster could also provide a syllabus.
- It is discussed how such an extra class could be integrated with the limited teaching hours of the assistants.
- Jule Nowoitnick suggests to collect the syllabi by Jennifer Pochodzalla and Daniel Münster, and discuss them with the focus advisors to devise a more concrete plan, possibly for intensive sessions.

Kolloquium

- Harald Fuess problematizes the current version of the colloquium as the group is too big and thus leaves not enough room for each student.
- Daniel Münster asks about the possibility of a colloquium in the winter term to accommodate students finishing in five semesters; Christiane Brosius refers to previous discussion where the professors agreed that a colloquium in the fourth term is an important facilitator for ending the programme in the regular two years.
- Harald Fuess sees further need for discussion on the future format of the colloquium (two groups? Colloquia in foci? Just with supervisor?).

Top 5 QuaSiMi

- Barbara Mittler explains that the quality funds committee has to be dissolved this term. Remaining and future funds (approx. half of the current quality funds) will go into the funds of the institute (Aversum).
- Harald Fuess suggests that the Fachrat would then be the committee to allocate these funds; the Fachrat agrees.