



**Study Board of Language and International Studies**

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**Study Board Secretary**

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**Minutes 4/2020 Approved**

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|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Date and time</b>             | December 2nd 2020 kl. 1300-1500  |
| <b>Place</b>                     | Teams  |
| <b>Present: Elected VIP</b>      | Kirsten Jæger (KJ- Chair of the Study Board), Bent Boel (BB, representative for LISE)  |
| <b>Present: Elected students</b> | Flavia-Gabriela Sandu (FGS, student representative for LISE), Jakob Blasius Thomsen (JBT, student representative for LISE), Elias Mark (EM, student representative for LISE)             |
| <b>Present Observers</b>         | Helja Asadi-Gholami (HAG, LISE Student Counsellor), Ana Maria Macias (AMM, representative for SIS Spanish); Susanne Hald ; Laura Bang Lindegaard (LISE 2 <sup>nd</sup> Sem. Coordinator) |
| <b>Not Present</b>               | Oscar Garcia (representative for SIS Spanish), Ben Dorfman (BD), Ida Vejnø (IV, SIS Spanish Student Counsellor)  |
| <b>Referent</b>                  | Helja Asadi-Gholami, Kirsten Jæger, Inga Ernst Andersen (IEA Study Board Secretary)  |
| <b>Approved</b>                  | TBA  |



**1. Approval of agenda**

The Agenda was approved

**2. Approval of minutes 3/2020**

The minutes were approved.

**3. Teaching Schedule Spring 2021**

***a. LISE***

KJ states that LISE students will have 20 'confrontation hours'.

KJ notes that the coming spring semester is largely planned for all semesters (i.e., 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>). The plans have been approved by the respective teachers. However, some decisions still need to be made as to whether courses, except electives, will run as hyflex or online courses. KJ further notes that some students will be taking electives from other studies.

KJ points out that workshops for the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester should be removed from the semester plan.

***b. SIS***

KJ states that SIS students will have 18 'confrontation hours'.

KJ relays that there have been discussions as to changing the length of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semester, so that the courses run for 9 weeks. However, the classes that SIS shares with LISE will run for 10 weeks. AMM clarifies that there are two shared courses with LISE.

AMM states that the 'confrontation hours' have not yet been planned, but that she will forward these to KJ when they have been finalised.

AMM relays that the 4<sup>th</sup> semester students will be staying in Denmark, and that this decision was made with the students.

AMM states that, like previous years, the course in oral Spanish will be a shared between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> semester students, but this year the number of students will be higher. Some activities will, however, be divided between the two semesters. AMM notes that SIS students will also do electives with LISE. The 6<sup>th</sup> semester students also have the opportunity of joining the regional studies course with LISE.

JBT wonders whether AMM has thought of ways in which SIS students can meet/socialise with native speakers. AMM states that she is working on getting the students into contact with some retired Spanish teachers from Spain. She currently has 15 teachers that want to be a part of this platform, which is about 1 teacher per student. AMM needs to talk to these teachers and see what they have in mind and what she herself has in mind, once a plan has been set the students will be invited. AMM is also researching how to get the SIS students into contact with other students around their own age.



**c. Common**

KJ notes that in addition to the 'confrontation hours' there will be Friday lectures and students will have the option of seeking out their teachers in their office hours or per email. This is listed in the semester plan as hours allocated to course-related feedback and to information meetings and study counselling.

**4. Report on Students not completing their exams on time**

KJ reports that most students are progressing well through the programmes, 92% are on time in LISE, and 83% are on time in SIS.

KJ explains the 'traffic lights system', there are 3 main zones. Green is the first zone and means that the student is on time with their studies. Yellow is second and indicates that the student is slightly behind. Red is the third and means that the student is more than 15 ECTS behind. Additionally, there is the Blue zone which is used for students who are more than a year behind. KJ notes that the university is in contact with all the students in the yellow and red zones. KJ: The LISE students are mostly behind because of medical reasons.

KJ states that LISE has 11 students in the red zone. LISE has 3 'blue students' as well, however, one of these has left the programme

KJ notes that spring 2020 led to all Spanish students having to return and hence being unable to finish their semesters, and so got no ECTS points – individual study programmes have been made for these. Students are hence being advised not to go abroad currently.

**5. Study Board Report 2020**

KJ notes that the 'traffic lights system' is used here as well, and that most numbers are fine,

except that there are two 'yellow' issues; the first issue is the dropout rate for the 2019 cohort of SIS Spanish students, the second issue is that Spanish students apparently spent a little too much time completing their programmes. While KJ notes that due to the cohort being fairly small, the numbers are slightly skewed. However, she notes that according to the coordinator the cohort does seem to be slightly 'weak', in that many of the students found that the study was not right for them, that the demands were too high, or that the profile was not what they were looking for.

AMM states that quite a lot is done to track the students who drop out to find out why. It seems that the students had expected something different from the study, or that they were interested in the Spanish aspect, but not the rest.

AMM further notes that some students face unexpected life events, but that the study tries to encourage and make plans for these students making it possible for them to stay in the program.

JBT remarks that, because of corona and since we now have fewer international students in the LISE programme, we need to foster an international learning environment. We should think of initiatives to ensure that students engage with other people from different backgrounds. KJ



notes that the study is continuously considering ways to change the situation, and at the same time trying to encourage students to make new connections through other means, e.g., the Global Graduate programme. However, this has also been more difficult due to corona. KJ further points out that this issue was discussed at the 'recruitment panel meeting', here it was noted that the student intake was significantly lower in 2019 (although it did seem to 'bounce back' in 2020), this could be attributed to the closing of the international aspect of the programme.

## **6. Censor report 2019**

KJ notes that BD had a concise response to the censor report of 2019, he stated that,

"Regarding the censors report for LISE, this is the response of the education coordinators:

- 1) we appreciate censors' attention to detail;
- 2) as instructors and supervisors, we're clear on the importance of methodology in projects and make it clear to students that methodology need be included (by which we mean a description of a project's architecture, explanation of a project's logic and the interrelation of a project's sections as well as senses of other potential ways a project's subject might have been engaged;
- 3) however, as coordinators, we are concerned about potential expectations of a high level of homogeneity between projects on the part of external censors, especially given the interdisciplinary nature of the international studies field, and 4) we continue to find it of high importance to align ourselves with international standards in international studies, which demand creativity and flexibility in terms of research design, the expression of results, and modes of expressing relations with existing research and literature."

## **7. Discussion of teaching/project evaluation data (continued from meeting 3)**

KJ notes that according to the law of public administration, there is nothing that prevents students from getting this data on the condition that addressing the data would remain confidential. KJ however points out that teachers are not keen on the data being made available to a wider group of people ~~the public~~.

KJ notes the dilemmas encompassed by this issue, one being that the role of the Study Board is to be a political sounding board where the students can make their voices heard, yet it is also an administrative body at the same time. Thus, the daily administrative tasks of the chair of the study board should not be something that involves student members of the Study Board. The study administration (Chair, coordinators, study secretary) handles many cases on a day-to-day basis, and due to practical reasons it is not possible to involve the entire study board in all decisions. In a similar vein, individual students may also feel more comfortable with contacting the study administration when they know that only a few members of the staff will have access to their case. On the other hand, the entire study board is responsible for the quality of the programs, as pointed out by the student members of the study board.

JBT expresses that the Study Board must try to find a balance between the Study Board making general guidelines without getting in the way of daily administrative work. He further notes that currently, students feel disconnected to the guideline-making-process.



JBT also argues that when it comes to the semester evaluations, it might make sense sometimes to have the specific reviews from students, but he also sees the validity of the teachers' concern of the sensitivity of some comments. EM joins the discussion stating that actual problems will eventually reach the Study Board, hence there should not be a need for students to read the individual evaluations.

LBL notes that faculty members do not get to read evaluations other than their own. It is only the chairperson who reads all the evaluations. She further notes that a more open evaluation format would perhaps be beneficial, such as oral in-class evaluations, and that this might make the students feel closer to the process as well. KJ also reflects that this feeling of disconnect also applies to the Study Board and other faculty as well, as many rules and guidelines come from further above. JBT likes the idea of a oral-based evaluation and suggests that this should perhaps be implemented on a semester level where the students can have an open dialogue.

KJ proposes the following solution: The Vice Chair (a student) would get access to the data and read it, as would the Chair. The Chair writes the report, and then the Chair and Vice Chair will together ensure that the student perspective is heard, this also ensures that the teachers do not have their evaluations read by many different people. KJ further builds upon the idea of oral-evaluations as perhaps being implemented as open end-of-semester evaluation meetings where the students can discuss with the teachers in planum, and that this could be arranged by the semester coordinator.

EM supports both ideas (the Vice Chair getting to read the evaluations and the open dialogue), however, he reflects that students are unlikely to provide much feedback in the classroom as the feedback would then no longer be anonymous. LBL notes that the in-class evaluation is also challenging for the teacher, but that her experience with this evaluation form was positive as the in-class discussions lead to more constructive written feedback later.

The decision was made to implement the solution proposed above: that the vice chair of the study board gets to read the full set of evaluation data, the chair of the study board is still responsible for writing the final report but must consult the vice chair in order to ensure that the students' perspective is fairly represented. The study board will continue to develop its evaluation procedures, including discussing evaluation meetings, arranged by semester coordinators.

## **8. News from Students and Student Counsellors**

### **a. Student Representatives:**

EM states that the hybrid teaching, where one half of the class attends in person and the rest online, should continue in the coming semester, as it is important for the students to be physically present on campus and get to see their fellow students. KJ agrees with this point and notes that most classes will follow the hybrid form, while elective classes will most likely be normal classes (i.e., physically on campus classes). JBT notes that the corona situation should be considered, as should students who are uncomfortable with being on campus, he further notes that this includes exams as well.

KJ states that for LISE the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester will have 2-3 online courses and 2 online courses. Regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> semester, Laura and Wilhelmina will have online-only classes. Joni will start by having only online classes but might change it to hybrid classes depending on how the corona situation develops. Ben



will have hybrid classes from the beginning. And Hanne and Kirsten are trying to come up with another solution entirely. Sixth semester will have electives that can be attended in person on campus. JBT suggests that this should be communicated to students as soon as possible.

JBT states that students have asked about how to decide between academic journals. KJ proposes that teachers can provide information about specific journals that are useful/relevant to their respective classes.

#### **b. Student Counsellors**

HA states that quite a lot of international students are interested and email her about the general requirements. She suggests that perhaps the new Danish requirement should be stated quite clearly on the LISE programme page as well as elsewhere on the AAU website.

HA notes that generally there is an issue with the information provided online in English. This is problematic as students should be treated equally. JBT notes that it seems to be a university-wide issue. HA will compile a list of the pages she has found to have lacking information in English, she will forward this once finished to KJ.

HA notes that some students from the first semester have expressed feelings of being disconnected from the study and their fellow students.

HA questions how long emails should be kept/saved on the counsellor email. SH will check up on the GDPR rules and see whether the rules include anything about the storing of emails. KJ points out we also need to find out who should go through the emails and delete them, SH will research this as well.

### **9. Orientation from Study Board Chair**

#### **a. Budget**

KJ states that the study board has been allocated 11,200 hours to conduct the two programmes, the programmes will spend around 5,000 hours in the spring, saving some hours for the fall semester which is usually the most expensive. 400,000kr is spent on external censors, 8,000kr on new student activities, and 5,000kr on a graduation party (if the corona situation allows this)

#### **b. Recruitment Panel Meeting November 20<sup>th</sup>**

KJ notes that very few external members participated, but those who did expressed great understanding about the struggles and frustrations brought on by the Danish A-level requirement.

KJ reports that in the meeting it was found that employers need to be made aware of the qualities of humanities and social science graduates. In the meeting, Heidi Vesterby stated that companies tend to hire consultants to do the soft tasks, e.g., creating a diversity policy, but a better idea is perhaps to employ a graduate from BA/MA programmes and have such graduates hired for 6 months for the same price as a consultant. The graduate could in those 6 months show the organisation that there are various points that are integrated, and hence show the importance of these 'soft' skills, and perhaps stay on



after the six months have passed. EM notes that Vesterby said that humanities can be thought of differently, “humanities allows us to translate complex data into diverse actions and solutions”.

KJ reports that another important finding of the meeting was that students can use the corona situation positively. The students can show that they were forced to study under these new conditions and do tasks on digital platforms. In this way the students can demonstrate their resilience and adaptability since they were able to stick to their studies and complete them in spite of the difficulties brought on by corona.

**c. Electives (administration)**

This was discussed earlier (above).

**10. Further issues**

**a. Making the students feel more engaged**

HA suggests that teachers might create study groups for the second semester. Groups that could be used for group work in class but not necessarily for exams etc. This might be done in collaboration with the tutors so the study groups and the tutor groups would be the same. AMM notes that she encourages students to make such groups themselves as she finds it best for the students to decide on their groupmates on their own. JBT supports this point as he also does not think students will not like being put into groups. LBL agrees that it would not be nice for teachers to decide on groups. Instead, one might install mentor groups, where there are older students who help the new students, and the teachers could strongly recommend the new students to work within those same groups. KJ notes that this might also be arranged for the second semester students.

**b. The LISE project library**

SH is looking into the issue of project hand-in for the project library

**c. AMM asks whether there will be new videos to present SIS and LISE.**

KJ answers yes, a company has been hired by the university to make videos introducing the studies.