Minutes – Meeting Fachrat MATS (29 April 2015)

Present: Joachim Kurtz; Harald Fuess; Christiane Brosius; Daniel Münster; Cathrine Bublatzky; Jule Nowoitnick; Brigitte Berger-Goeken; Oliver Lamers; Henrike Hoffmann; Elisabeth Meyer;
Excused: Man Hom Lam
Guests: Christian Förster (member of the reform committee); from 11am Kai Töpfer (quality management, Faculty of Philosophy)
Minutes: Jule Nowoitnick
>> Fachrat is in quorum

Explanation: The meeting was held in German. For the minutes to be readable for all staff and students of the MATS the minutes are in English.

Top 1 – Welcome and confirmation of last meeting’s minutes
- Joachim Kurtz opens the session and adds three topics to the agenda: confirmation of last meeting’s minutes, formal election of speaker of the Fachrat and varia
- In last meeting’s minutes Nowoitnick will change ‘Studienkommission’ to ‘Studienkommission of the Faculty of Philosophy’ and circulate the revised minutes.

Top 2 – Formal Election of the Fachrat’s speaker (Fachratssprecher)
- Kurtz explains that he was selected as de facto speaker as Brosius and Fuess could not attend the last meeting.
- Fuess is elected unanimously as the speaker of the MATS Fachrat and conducts the meeting.

TOP 3 – Current Issues
- To ensure a structure for the programme, the Fachrat decides that also in the future the colloquium will only be offered in the summer term to be attended by students to graduate either in that summer term or in the following winter term.
- It is decided that the submission deadlines for writing samples within the colloquium are kept but that students who will not submit their thesis in the summer term are – in consultation with their supervisor – free to submit not a chapter of their future thesis but, e.g., a revised proposal or literature review.
- A questionnaire asking students to state their term of graduation and reasons for a possible extension, as proposed by Fuess, is legally not possible as the Terms and Regulations of Examination do not limit the overall study time; only deadline set: students have to register two weeks after their last ‘Schein’-date.
- What would be possible is an anonymous, statistic evaluation to allow optimization of the administrative processes.
- The Fachrat decides that in cases where a thesis topic requires this, both readers may be non-HCTS professors.
- Per the Terms and Regulations of Examination the first supervisor (“Betreuer”) must chair the oral examination; to avoid MATS students being examined by the standards of an external supervisor’s own study programme, Fuess will prepare an information sheet on the MATS oral exam.
- The Fachrat decides that **lecturers teaching in the MATS generally should have a PhD** in hand. Exceptions, e.g. for specialized technical topics, are possible upon request by the responsible professor and to be decided by the Fachrat.

- For doctoral candidates to gain teaching experiences, co-teaching is preferred. If they do not hold a position at university, they need to be offered a teaching contract ("Lehrauftrag").

- The Fachrat discusses the border between proof reading of one’s paper by a native speaker versus copy editing. The latter is obviously highly problematic.

- It is proposed that academic writing/good academic practice is offered as mandatory tutorium for new students. (see also Top 5 - course planning)

**Top 4 – Changes to Programme Structure**

- Fuess **suggests for seminars to be worth 10 credit points instead of 7** as this would reduce the work load for the students (one critique by students) and class size at the same time.

- Meyer agrees that 7 appear too few for actual work load so the increase in points could be explained to the Studienkommission; a change would need to take into account students having started in the old system.

- The Fachrat agrees that a standardization through the faculty / university would be good but not realistic.

- The Fachrat decides that students majoring in the MATS **may replace one of the six mandatory MATSA seminars of terms 1-3 through two seminars with reduced credits.**

- Students thus have two options for their course work:
  1. six MATS seminars worth 7 credit points
  2. five MATS seminars worth 7 credit points + two MATS seminars with reduced credits

- The Introduction to Transcultural Studies is still mandatory with 7 credit points; the import slots remain to be filled through various courses depending on the interest of the student and the options available at the host institute.

- Points for further discussion: abolition of oral examination; joint degree option; frame of study foci

**TOP 5 – Course Planning**

- Zara Barlas could take on a 50% position (quality funds) for academic writing in English for one year so two classes (one weekly, one blocked) plus open writing sessions can be offered.

- Due to the time-lines of their projects a number of JGL request to teach blocked seminars – the Fachrats allows this.

- Generally, permanent staff is still supposed to teach on a weekly basis.

- In the winter term 2015/16 the Introduction to Transcultural Studies will be taught by Joachim Kurtz and Christiane Brosius; SEG-part to be possibly taught by Christian Förster.

**TOP 6 – Q+Ampelverfahren (with Dr. Kai Töpfer)**

- Töpfer is welcomed by Fuess and asked to explain the **further procedure**
  - 7-10 days before the meeting on June 22 we will receive a list of topics for discussion by the SBQEs (members of the university’s internal evaluation committee)
  - Meeting on June 22 is meant for open, also self-critical discussion with the SBQEs to find solutions for possible problems together
at the beginning of the meeting we will have approx. 10 minutes to present the MATS; SBQEs will know little about it so also the interdisciplinarity, internationality and other structural specialties of the programme (e.g. research professorships also linked to other institutes) should be explained

at the end of the meeting there will be a separate discussion between the SQBEs and the student representatives from the MATS

we should receive minutes soon after the meeting; the detailed results and recommendations probably in the semester break

within two weeks we have the chance to object to specific points through Töpfer

otherwise we have until approx. Feb 2016 to formulate a response paper and a catalogue of actions to integrate the recommendations

the prorector will receive both our statement and the recommendation by the SBQEs to make the decision about the MATS’ evaluation

we will then have three years to put the plans into reality and submit a report on our progress

in seven years the cycle would begin anew

should the MATS be put on ‘red’, it would go into an audit next term

Töpfer explains that in comparison to other study programmes, the MATS has a lot of yellow in the preliminary results; reason for concern: 54% of students are disappointed in the programme

He recommends that we have a close look into the study programme evaluation

Walk-Through of Documentation

Pages 4-5, points 1. – 2. (qualification goals, module book): mostly a question of formality; Töpfer suggests to start revising immediately

Problematic that a third of the courses have not been evaluated; next chance for full evaluation again in winter 2015/16, mandatory every two years

Page 7, point 4.1. (work load in comparison to other study programmes too high): Fuess explains the above discussed idea of reducing the number of courses per term by raising the credits

Page 8, point 4.7. (going abroad without needing to extend study time): SQBEs will need contextualization (exchange agreements? Learning agreements for better planning?); more detailed feedback by students needed

Page 9, 5.1. (not enough classes/lecturers): we would need to explain that the evaluation fell into summer 2014 where 4/5 professors were absent

Page 9, 5.2. (too many participants, rooms not good; work stations needed): Fuess explains that CATS should solve the problems, also of the student meeting room

Nowoitnick contextualizes the feedback as in the term before there had been two over-crowded seminars, by now situation much better; students confirm this; only problem being Introduction in 212 – idea to move lecture to bigger lecture hall.

Page 11, 7.3. (prompt checking on exams): Fuess explains newly established deadlines for grades (15.4. and 15.10.); might also be a question of feedback; coordinator as ombudsperson to act for students.

Page 11, 7.3. (deadlines for exams): would maybe need more detailed feedback from students; grade deadlines require earlier submission deadlines; transparent course requirements meant to allow better planning; students confirm that this already works.

Page 11, 7.3. (dates for exams): duty to provide those; Meyer and Hoffmann cannot understand the critique; possibly also due to exceptional circumstances of summer term 2014.

Page 12, 7.5. (modules not well connected): might lie in breadth of the study programme; might need optimization
- Page 14, 8.1. (applied qualifications): Lamers asks how that would work for a research-oriented master; Töpfer asks if students are aware of the MATS being research-oriented; otherwise this would need to be communicated more clearly
- Page 14, 8.2. (mentoring by lecturers): Töpfer sees underlying problem of uniform standards and understanding between teachers
- Fuess explains a general challenge due to our very international student body: some students did their BA in an academic system without term papers so it usually takes them 1-2 terms to practice academic writing.
- While the yellow is spread out through the documentation which will lead to lengthy discussions with the SQBE, Töpfer sees the following main reasons as there seem to be
  - No clear structure
  - no clear regulations for the teachers.g. criteria for assessment
  - communication between teachers and coordination needs to be optimized
  - clearer information for students and applicants

**TOP 7 – Varia**

- Fuess thanks Töpfer for joining the meeting.
- For the next meeting of the Fachrat May 20 (or another date in that week) is suggested.