

Interdisciplinarity - challenge or opportunity for international mobility?

**Examples from practice at the Faculty
of Arts and Humanities**

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International Affairs Office at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Coordination:

- Student Counselling Studies Abroad Faculty I (ca. 84 Erasmus-Partnerships/9 Departments)
- International and interdisciplinary M.A. Program Roads to Democracies (counselling on study abroad options)
- Connection point between faculty members and International Office for establishing new cooperations

- Connection between academics, students and administration (with different universities abroad)

Aim of this presentation:

- raising awareness for chances and challenges from the level of administration and counselling
- Starting point for further discussions

Outline

1. Interdisciplinary degree programs and recognition processes
2. Opportunities and challenges and to Outgoing and Incoming Mobility
3. Current solutions
4. Aspects for further improvement and discussion

1. Interdisciplinary degree programs and recognition processes

- **Interdisciplinary programs**
- B.A. Literature, Culture, Media (English/French/German/Spanish)
- M.A. Roads to Democracies – History, Political Science and Sociology
- M.A. Media and Society (Media Studies, Social Sciences and Economics)
- Teacher Training Programs

Combination Model

- Major Studies – Minor Studies (15 B.A./14 M.A.)
- Studium Generale (courses from 9 departments and language center/soft skills)

Attractive Programs!

Recognition Process (example):

B.A. Literature, Culture, Media (Spanish) + Media Management

- **Examination board (Department of Romance Studies)**
- **Examination board (Department of Business Administration)**
- **After consulting appointed representatives from the subject areas**
 - B.A. LCM Spanish, Faculty I (lecturer in case of doubt)
 - B.A. Media Management, Faculty III (lecturer in case of doubt)
 - Studium Generale
 - Internship recognition at internship board
 - **At least 4 academic experts involved, and this is how interdisciplinary recognition that is in alliance with the study regulation and based on quality standards can be assured**

2. Opportunities and Challenges to Outgoing and Incoming Mobility

Opportunities:

- **Outgoing:** Many subjects broaden the opportunities for finding suitable courses abroad (Literature, Culture, Media, Soft Skills, Economics)

- **Incoming:** Students can select from a broad interdisciplinary course offer at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities (extend foreign language course offer)

Challenges:

- **Establishing cooperations**
- Different university structures
- finding compatible programs for incoming and outgoing students
 - Different interdisciplinary programs (e.g. B.A. *Political Science*, Law, Economics (incoming) versus (outgoing) *Political Science*, Sociology, Culture)
- **Recognition processes**
- *Online Learning Agreement* „two persons-access“ but several persons are involved in the recognition process in interdisciplinary programs

3. Current Solutions - example

Establishing cooperations

- M.A. Roads to Democracies
- Studies Abroad Module 18 credits
- Specific cooperations for this program for history or political science or sociology - specialization
- Interdisciplinary examination board exclusively for the study program

Studies Abroad: Thematic Module Abroad (18 cp)

The module will be concerned with programme-related contents, methods and theories in the fields of history, political science, sociology and related subjects such as cultural studies. The concrete curriculum is to be agreed in detail with the respective partner university and is to be defined in a Learning Agreement.

Students will analyse democratization in a global context:

- problematize the limits, scales and concepts of democracy (e.g. E-Democracy)
- identify the role of **different actors (media, social movements, literature)** for the implementation of democratic ideals in different world regions
- evaluate how (democratic) **institutions and processes develop**, or fail to develop, in new states and in **post-revolutionary and post-colonial situations**
- be able to understand the dynamics of **conflicts and wars**, considering various geopolitical areas.
- be able to understand supranational organisations from a historical, institutional and comparative stance,
- analyse **international relations** in geo-political and strategic terms, security policies, conflict management and prevention of political crises
- be able to reflect critically and comparatively on ways different regions developed politically, economically, socially and culturally.
- be able to use a critical and comparative approach in working with **historical sources and historical accounts and further research material**

Modules during the semester abroad (3rd Semester)

Alternative
Thematic Module
Abroad (18cp)

Thesis Forum II (1
SWS, 3 cp + 3cp)

Additional and
Practical
Modules (3+3)

3. Current Solutions

Challenges (repeat)

Recognition processes

– online Learning Agreement „two persons- access“
but several persons are involved in the recognition process in interdisciplinary programs

- **Establishing cooperations** - finding compatible programs for incoming and outgoing students
 - Different interdisciplinary programs (e.g. B.A. *Political Science*, Law, Economics (incoming) versus (outgoing) *Political Science*, Sociology, Culture)
 - Different university structures

Solutions:

Recognition Process:

Decision and responsibility- examination board

After consulting appointed representatives from the subject areas:

- History (lecturer in case of doubt) -18 credits, thesis, elective modules
- Social Sciences (lecturer in case of doubt) - 18 credits, thesis, elective modules
- **At least 2 academic experts involved**
- **Establishing cooperations**
- **Studies Abroad Module – more “suitable” programs and cooperations**

3. Current Solutions

- **Remaining challenges:**
- Further combinations or recognitions would mean the involvement of further experts
- Incoming Students – international course offer but maybe very specific and interdisciplinary (combinations with law, economics, human computer interaction required) – OLA limits involvement of further experts also for incoming students
- OLA/ISCED do not “know” Roads to Democracies – only history or social sciences
- A studies abroad module is not easy to implement in all programs

3. Possible solutions and aspects for further discussions

- Further solution approaches:

- One subject cooperations/mobility - moving to two subjects
- Two digital systems/parallel processes for involving all experts
- **Making interdisciplinary study options visible for incoming exchange students (extend foreign language course offer)**
- Interdisciplinary Examination Boards
- Mobility windows

What we would need:

- Digital tools (OLA) should allow the involvement of more academic experts in the recognition process (Combination of ISCED- Codes)
- Open “container modules” in study programs **at home and abroad**
- Flexibility to attend courses from different departments/faculties **at home and abroad**

Summary

Interdisciplinarity has a high potential for increasing student mobility!

(e.g. finding suitable courses abroad)

But the conditions need to be adapted for using this potential.

Digital tools need to consider interdisciplinarity and the involvement of many academic experts/disciplines in the recognition (outgoing) and admission (incoming) process.

- Discourse on mobility should open to interdisciplinary programs

Thank you very much for your attention!

Further ideas/experience?

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