Term evaluation autumn 2011 - International Studies

This evaluation is based on two electronic questionnaires which resulted in numerous very useful feedbacks. About 50 to 60 percent of the students participated. Practically all respondents were students of the 7th term, almost none of 9th term. This, however, is unproblematic giving the point that the 9th term is internship semester, with no teaching. In addition to the electronic feedback, the chairman and other members of the board of studies had various discussions with the students, practically with the whole group at the Rebild Seminar, with the leadership of the student organization DIRES, or at the board of studies.

The overall impression is that the students found the subjects taught in the programs very interesting and engaging. Most found also the Aalborg model of Problem-Based Learning inspiring (although tough for some of those not used to it before). But many students saw also room for improvement at various points.

One recurrent remark has been that the aims and contents of courses were not adequately communicated at the beginning of the term. The board of studies addressed this problem by revising the syllabus, making content and aims of each course much more explicit. Another recurrent critique was that the literature for the lectures was sometimes uploaded rather late. In the future there will be a specific deadline for all teachers well in advance of the start of the term. Students also pointed out that in some courses the cohesion between the lectures given by different teachers was insufficient. This problem will be addressed by making one teacher “course responsible” from now on.

The students of European Studies (ES) pointed out that their program was underrepresented in the teaching during the first weeks. Therefore in the future there will be more ES-related lectures early on.

As to the quality of the teaching, virtually no student expressed dissatisfaction at the courses of “Chinese Area Studies” or the “External Role of the EU” (for ES-students only). The same was the case with “Project Writing”, “English for Social Sciences” or “Mind Mapping”; only two students were dissatisfied at Latin America Studies. There were, however, substantial minorities who forwarded critical comments as to the bigger classes of Development and International Relations (DIR), or DIR and ES in common. This is perhaps to some extent unavoidable, given the point that the groups of students are rather heterogeneous. In order to improve the teaching further, every teacher got the electronic feedbacks relating to her/his course.

The Rebild Seminar, a combination of academic teaching and social event, was classified as a great success throughout.

As regards the project period, on the ES side virtually no student expressed dissatisfaction with the supervision on any of its components. On the DIR-side the picture is a bit more differentiated, with e.g. 6 of 33 respondents not being completely satisfied with the academic and theoretical support from the supervisor. Again we have to keep in mind that the students at DIR are a heterogeneous group, and that not all students responded. In March 2012 the institute organized a “pedagogic day” for all teachers, with much emphasis exactly on project work. There will be more discussions about this at board and teachers meetings.
Wolfgang Zank

(Until February 2012 chairman of the board of studies).