Minutes from the meeting in the Study Board for International Affairs Monday May 4th 2015

Participants: Li Xing, Søren Dosenrode, Steen Fryba Christensen, Peer Møller Christensen, Avishek Banskota, Sissel Mai Ødegaard, Stina Bentsson (deputy member), Danny Raymond, Bjørn Møller, Malene Gram, Jytte Kongstad (min).

Not attended: Morten Penthin Svendsen, Anders Thriage Nielsen, Macarena Espinar López, Martine Wilhelmina Breivik (deputy member) and Anne Vestergaard Larsen.

1. Approval of the Agenda
Welcome by Li Xing. The agenda was approved with a suggestion from Søren Dosenrode for an additional item about coordinator tasks.

2. Approval of the minutes of meeting from the last meeting
The agenda was approved without comments.

3. The progress of the present semester
Li has received the student evaluations for the courses and Steen, Søren and Danny gave their comments.

Steen mentioned that the most of the evaluations were satisfactory. However, there was some criticism to one of the courses. Steen will follow up and take action right after the semester and maybe try to find a substitute for one of the two teachers of the course in question.
Søren has gone through the questionnaires for European Studies and there were no problems mentioned. Also at ES there was low a rate of answers but the comments were generally positive. However, there were some specific remarks regarding literature for the law course which some students found was meant for lawyers and, therefore, too difficult. This will be taken into consideration for the next course. The Simulation Game received once again positive evaluations and the students asked for more. This semester there is a problem with many one-man-groups. The students must be urged to work at least two persons together on the semester projects. The school will address this problem in the next Study Council Meeting June 9th 2015.

According to Danny the evaluations were also good in general at Global Refugee Studies. The group formation went fine and so did the examinations and re-examinations and they are now dealing with the planning of next semester. Also at GRS too few students have answered the questionnaire. A general criticism was that there are no meeting rooms for students. There is lot of space but not for meetings. Danny and Morten are almost finished with the course planning for next semester. Regarding group rooms students can use the meeting rooms and lecture rooms when they are free. This is done with success in Aalborg where lack of group rooms is a problem as well.

4. Video examination and student payment

The Board of Studies has three applications at the moment for examination abroad. One of applications from Avishok from Nepal has been approved because of the serious situation in Nepal at the moment after the earthquake. Avishok will contact the embassy in Kathmandu and make the examination arrangements there himself.

Li mentioned that it is important that the students see their supervisor face-to-face before the examination. Malene referred to the Regulation from the Ministry regarding examinations abroad. Li said that the rule is clear and that skype examinations are not normally accepted but in special cases video examinations from embassies may be granted. In these cases the students must pay all expenses inclusive the expenses at AAU. Examinations abroad are not a topic at GRS but they agreed that it is a good idea with rules if the question should occur. Søren said that examinations outside AAU should be an exception to the rule and never be considered normal practice. Malene mentioned the extra work with the administration of examinations abroad also in connection with the coordination with the external censors. Bjørn referred to the danger of complaints from the students after the examination. Malene mentioned that after getting a bad grade the students generally wants to discuss it with their teacher after the examination. Steen was afraid that we could end up with 30% of the students wanting to do their final examination from abroad which is not possible administratively. It might be difficult to reject applications if there are no strict rules.
5. Dimensioning / application status

There has been a boom in applications for the main programmes as well as for the specializations. The Study Board has received far more applications than can be accepted according to the dimensioning. Steen has received 327 applications, Søren more than 150, Danny 356 and Li 70 for CIR and CAS. Also applications for second and third priority have to be processed. Malene pointed out that first of all it has to be checked if the students have a relevant BA. Only the students with the highest grades will be accepted, and Anne will be in charge of calculating average grades for all applications Malene and Marianne Rostgaard have a meeting with the university director Friday the 29th of May to discuss the problems related to the new system for applicants.

Søren mentioned the problem with keeping the balance between Danish and foreign students and wanted a system where the background of the students were taken into consideration. According to Malene the Board of Studies do not have students with a legal claim for enrollment, therefore, it is not possible to favour any students.

6. Joint standard of teaching hours for SNIF

The norms for teaching vary slightly between Aalborg (DIR and ES) and GRS. This needs to be standardized.

According to Danny the only problem is the thesis where GRS has a higher norm than we have in Aalborg and they asked for flexibility. However, Marianne Rostgaard wants the same norms for all the SNIF programmes but is ready for some flexibility for 2015. From 2016 the same norms has to be used by the whole study board. Li agreed with a policy of using the same norms for the same activities. Danny said that of course is a harmonization possible but that history also has to count. Malene suggested larger project groups as this will save teaching hours and that it is crucial that we all keep inside the teaching hours allocated by the faculty. Søren remarked that we are generally in the need of more hours. A suggestion for joint teaching norms will be on the agenda for the next board meeting in August. Malene suggests a working group to make a suggestion for joint norms and calls for a meeting on this in August before the next Study Board meeting.

7. Strategy and action plan

Li informed from the meeting with the school and the group responsible for the Strategy and Action Plan with the external participants Per Jönsson from Sweden and Finn-Reske Nielsen The Study Board has to work out a strategy plan with answers to the criticism. Malene will help especially in connection with GRS and mentioned that the efficiency is lower at GRS than at the study programmes in
Aalborg. This is of great concern to the Faculty and they want an improvement. This will be discussed at the meeting with GRS in Aalborg on May 22\textsuperscript{nd}.

Danny mentioned that 4 month to finish a thesis inclusive field work is not possible. This would result in a low quality thesis. A solution could be to urge the students to start thinking of the thesis and collect data much earlier than they do at the moment, preferably already during their 8\textsuperscript{th} semester. This is an economic issue as the money as well as teaching hours are allocated on the basis of passed examinations and the faculty loses money for every student who does not finish in time. At the moment the hand in deadlines are May 31\textsuperscript{st} and July 31\textsuperscript{st}. For the last hand in date there is no supervision in July which is made clear for the student in the Thesis Guide. It might be considered to demand an application for a dispensation for the last hand in date as they do at CCG.

Danny asked for more flexibility which would give a higher academic standard and therefore, he is against pushing the student through the system. However, this is not possible according to the requirements of the dean. Since the meeting it has been found out that the GRS students have had to hand in in June at the latest. The deadline on 31\textsuperscript{st} of July makes it more feasible for students to hand in on time. This will be implemented from 2016 in Copenhagen.

Søren pointed out that previously August was a time where the teachers had time to attend conferences and prepare for coming semester.

8. Traffic light

Li have contacted three DIR students on e-mail and called them for an interview. Also Danny has a few students he is following closely. At GRS it is the supervisors who are responsible for spotting ‘problematic students’. If this does not work Danny takes over and talks to the students. At ES Søren has contacted one student.

9. Message from Li Xing

Li is extremely overworked with the responsibility of being head of the Study Board as well as of the research programmes, therefore, he withdraws from the task as head of the Study Board from September 2015. Steen is willing to take over until den next election in December. This was accepted by all the members of the board present at the meeting.

10. Miscl.
Søren asked for a list of coordinator tasks and an annual schedule for coordinators. He found it stressing not always knowing the deadlines in good time in advance. A fixed plan could prevent seminars and meeting conflicting with semester planning or examination preparation deadlines. The administration takes more and more of the time and there is a tendency for the semester preparation to start earlier each semester. The School will seek a solution to this.

11. Meeting plan for 2015

The Recruitment Panel (aftagerpanel) meeting is planned for June 1st at 10.00 with video transmission to Copenhagen. Lunch will be served right after the meeting at 12.00.

Next Study Board meeting will be in August a few days before semester start. This will be the last meeting conducted by Li.