

Accreditation report

**University of Hamburg
(Aarhus University)**

**„Journalism, Media and Globalisation“ (M.A.)
(joint degree)**

I Procedure

Previous Accreditation: July 13th 2010 through: ZEvA, until: September 30th 2015; preliminary accreditation through ACQUIN: September 30th 2016

Date of Contract: January 27th 2015

Receipt of self-evaluation report: July 22nd, 2015

Date of the on-site visit: January 12th/13th 2016

Standing Expert Committee: Humanities, Philologies and Cultural Studies

Attendance by the ACQUIN Office: Tobias Auberger

Decisions of the Accreditation Commission: March 30th 2015

Members of the Peer Group:

- **Prof. Dr. Margreth Lünenborg**, FU Berlin, Institute for Media and Communication
- **Thomas Morawski**, Austrian Broadcasting Service
- **Prof. Dr. Lars Rinsdorf**, Stuttgart Media University
- **Winja Weber**, University of Erfurt

The **Evaluation report** of the peer group is based on the self-evaluation report of the HEI and extensive discussions with the heads of the study programmes, staff representatives, students and employers. The reviewers thank the organisers and the participating teachers and students of the on-site visit in Hamburg that they were available for the discussions and have been prepared to provide information on programmes and university.

Evaluation Criteria have been the “criteria for accreditation of study programs” by the German Accreditation Council in the actual official version. At the same time the national context, particularly the national rules regulating the establishment of study programmes, has been taken into account.

II Introduction

1 Short profile of the University of Hamburg

The University of Hamburg was founded in 1919. With around 40,000 students, it is one of the largest universities in Germany. In order to comply with the Bologna process, the university has changed their courses to the two-cycle Bachelor/Master model in the winter semester 2005/2006. Since 2013, the University of Hamburg is divided into the following eight faculties: Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of mathematics, computer science and natural sciences, Faculty of Psychology and Sports Science, Faculty of Business Administration. Together, these faculties offer 170 study programs.

2 The program and its framework

The advanced master's degree program is offered in the framework of the Erasmus Mundus program as a joint degree by the University of Hamburg and Aarhus University. It comprises four semesters in which the students earn 120 ECTS points; the degree awarded is that of a Master of Arts.

The Aarhus University additionally offers this program in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam, the City University London and the University of Swansea. The parts of the study program which are offered by the Aarhus University are the same in all these variants.

The study program in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam has been assessed by Certified VBI in 2015. Based on the agreement of the German Accreditation Council with the Dutch NVAO for the accreditation of Joint Programmes these assessment results are taken into account in the evaluation of the study program at the University of Hamburg.

3 Results of the first accreditation

The Master program "Journalism, Media and Globalisation" (M.A.) at the University of Hamburg was accredited on July 13th 2010 by ZEvA.

III Evaluation

1 Targets of the Higher Education Institutions and the Study Program

The M.A. program addresses students worldwide with a Bachelor degree not focusing a specific field of academic expertise (non-consecutive), but requiring an at least three months period of professional activity in the field of journalism. The master's program is run together with four academic institutions (University of Aarhus, City University London, University of Amsterdam, Swansea University) as a joint degree program. The second year of graduate study in Hamburg is following the introduction year in Aarhus, DK. Thus the accreditation of the Hamburg part has to focus the 2nd year study in Hamburg, but evaluates as well the interaction and fitting with the first year in Aarhus.

The Hamburg part of the program is focused on connecting journalism and communication studies. Generally speaking the programme aims at qualifying journalists in research oriented specialization in transcultural and global media research with practical opportunities of applying this knowledge in editorial work. Joining theory and professional practice in one programme is a comprehensive task. Therefore the main challenge is to implement a dual training which combines research-oriented and practical training. The defined target is preparing the candidates for both fields of journalism and social science researches. The program is neither meant to be a vocational training, nor hands-on journalism training. The overall aim of embedding the study into the global issue is mainly ensured by the openness for a broad variety of nationalities of the students which has been successfully realized. The conditions of Hamburg University as an international university with a couple of programmes in English language contribute to that in a positive way. A study program of multi-cultural perspectives seems to be quite unique in Germany. The aim of the Erasmus Mundus program of preparing students for gaining competences in methods and research in social sciences is far from any doubt. It is as well out of any serious discussion that the university is well prepared for these challenges; staff, structures and equipment are satisfyingly prepared.

But as it is not known very much about the career paths of the candidates and alumni. The strategy of adhering students without a longer practical experience from the study programme and trying to keep them for the academia itself is understandable, but of some risk; especially in the perspective of future labour markets and in the light of growing digitalization. In addition to that it may be useful to look at the rapidly changing market of journalism itself, including symptoms of de-professionalization and "entertainization". There is of course no basic solution for the dilemma named above.

The target of producing candidates with not only expertise in Social Sciences is well explicated, the same – last but not least - are communicative competences which are trained in the program in different steps. Frequent presentations on a level that should be understandable for non-experts

are also part of the programme. Basic information of the central targets of the program and curriculum are clear and openly accessible. In this regard the recommendations and conditions of the first accreditation were fully met. Whether the reflection on the labour market, its demands and employment areas is part of the program cannot be assessed but is recommended. Digitalization and Datafication are main driving forces for change of societies and journalistic work and may be focused in the curriculum. One of the changes is seen in a growing co-operation by researchers and journalists working in international networks being established by journalists themselves (see e.g. NDR Hamburg and illRG International Investigative Interviewing Research Group).

2 Concept of the Study Program

2.1 Concept of the study program

The study program reflects adequately the objectives of the joint master. The first year in Arhus comprises the modules "Reporting Global Change", "Globalisation and World Order", "Globalisation, Culture, and the Roles of the Media" as well as "Social Sciences Methods for Journalists", "Researching Journalism" and "Analytical Journalism". During the year in Hamburg the students have to participate successfully in four modules: the modules "Media Systems and Journalism Cultures in an International Comparative Perspective", "Processes of Transcultural Communication" and "Researching Journalism and Communication" in the third semester and the "Finale Module" in the last semester.

Perspectives of comparative media analysis and research – using the nation state or the national media system as a starting point – are complemented with transcultural analytic perspectives looking at processes of globalization within each national or cultural framework. The introductory courses on methods and methodology taught in Arhus are followed up by research oriented classes where selected methods are applied in joint research projects of journalism studies.

Though most of the classes are obligatory students with German language competences have the opportunity to participate in other classes of the German Master's program. The English speaking students can choose between intense classes in German language or professional internships, as well as select classes working on practical application of globalization issues in local or regional reporting.

The combination of clearly research oriented specialization in transcultural and global media research with practical opportunities of applying this knowledge in editorial work (multimedia storytelling) has to be highlighted. The need for teamwork is trained in these practical classes as well as in research oriented modules. The 3rd module (Researching Journalism) serves as a preparation for the writing of the Master's thesis during the 4th semester. Having social scientists from media and communication studies as well as political science being involved in teaching and

supervision offers the students transdisciplinary knowledge to analyze the implications of globalization to the changes of media and society. During the accreditation process current changes within media and journalism especially referring to modes of digitalization were discussed intensively. Within the curriculum in Arhus as well as in Hamburg processes of datafication, algorithm based selection procedures, visualization of data should be included more intensively. The expertise available in Hamburg offers enough opportunities for this inclusion without the need of fundamental changes of the module structure. It was argued convincingly that these issues need to be implemented in internationally comparative research as well as in the analysis of transcultural communication processes.

None of the students giving frankly insights into their current experiences with the studies in Hamburg articulated discomfort with the workload or the time structure of examinations that have to be managed. Thus the ten years experience with the joint master reflects a careful management of teacher's expectations and student's needs.

As the teaching curriculum in Hamburg is closest to the first year introduction courses in Arhus within the joint Master's program in terms of content (Journalism and Media across cultures) we recommend closer mode of exchange, communication and coordination of teaching content, required literature etc. between both universities. The student's experience should be included in such an ongoing feedback and coordination between both universities.

The concept of the specialization on „Journalism and Media across Cultures“ offered at Hamburg University is well elaborated, convincingly developed and established successfully. Current changes in media and journalism – espec. due to technologically based driving forces – together with their need of research can be included into the existing module structure without any restrictions. The overall structure convinces especially in the advanced combination of reflective knowledge about the conditions and contexts of globalization and its relevance for modes of public communication on one hand side with the practical approach into the field of journalism on the other hand, having modes of globalized reporting not just left to the field of big transnational media institutions, but dripping off into local and even hyperlocal forms of news coverage.

2.2 Modularization, Study Context and Admission

As mentioned above the basic structure of the curriculum is obligatory. In Module 2 (Processes of Transcultural Communication) besides an obligatory seminar tutorial and internship can be organized in different ways, thus offer options for electives. Each module is described precisely offering selected readings to give an impression of what to be expected. The modules are consisting out of two courses, combining seminars, tutorials, and colloquia. All modules have to

be assessed with a written seminar/research paper, partly to be handed in as a group report. Additionally oral presentations have to be made. We would recommend having the students' experiences coming from different cultural and media background to be included in the planning of their oral presentations more intensively.

According with the German university system and practice the time of attendance in classes is quite low compared to times of self-study (ca. 1 : 5). As a research oriented program the focus on self-organization and individually managed processes of reading and research are evaluated as adequate. Especially for those students not being used to the German system this process could be supported and boosted by forms of blended learning and didactical information available online on how to manage self-organized research processes successfully.

The curriculum consists of seminars, tutorials, and labs. Thus the students are confronted and involved in different types of teaching and learning experiences. Due to the small number of students taking part in classes (max. 20), a high level of activity is expected, a large part of work has to be organized in teams and a variety of modes of presentation, discussion, training and research is included within the curriculum. Each module comprises ten CP; the competences are tested in an exam or practical work.

Within the 3rd module students can work as interns, either before they start the teaching period in Hamburg or between the 3rd and 4th semester. The University of Hamburg offers a broad variety of contacts to editorial offices or press departments where students can apply for as interns. An early information on these opportunities is offered during the second semester in Arhus already. The students finally take their own responsibility for the internship, but get support by the Hamburg coordinator of the programme.

The selection of students for enrollment is run at Arhus University. Clearly defined criteria guarantee a fair and balanced selection process. Being part of the Erasmus Mundus programme enables offering scholarships espec. for non-European students. To avoid leaving this funding opportunity a new application for Erasmus Mundus is prepared for 2016. If this application will not be successful enough excellent student applications are expected for the future, but the global diversity of students (espec. out of the Global South) might be restricted due to reduced funding opportunities.

2.3 Further Development since the last accreditation

There have not been significant changes within the content of the program since the first accreditation in 2010. But further developments were made in the establishing of an ongoing cooperation on the hyper-local level to realize forms of multimedia storytelling in cooperation with Eimsbütteler Nachrichten.

3 Implementation

3.1 Resources

The study program is properly staffed and sufficiently financed. The commission is strongly convinced that the tuition fees cover the costs of the program sustainably, even if the program shouldn't be supported by an Erasmus Mundus grant in the future. The university management underlined the strategic value of the program for the university's aim for internationalization and clarified that they would support the program from their own budget.

Although the program is run by a smaller department in Hamburg, the commission got the impression that the personal resources both on administrative and teaching level are in line with the requirements. The professional background of professors and lecturers involved in the program fits perfectly to the curriculum. It should be mentioned that the program is embedded in the university's research focus on climate change, which attracts lecturers with a globalized mind-set. Furthermore the program with its specific needs benefits from supporting units on university and faculty level like for example the international office or special courses for teaching in an international context offered by the centre of didactics.

All courses of the program are taught in well-equipped class rooms, including a newsroom with a specific learning environment for multi-platform reporting. Additionally the students have enough opportunities to meet in smaller groups to prepare for team presentations. The commission stresses explicitly the excellent access to international scientific journals and other relevant research resources provided by the libraries on campus, which is a key success factor for a research oriented master program.

3.2 Organization, counselling and co-operation

The cooperation between the five universities within the Erasmus Mundus program is fixed within a memorandum of agreement and managed successfully in the consortium for ten years now. The levels and modes of decision making are elaborated precisely and managed convincingly by the Board of Studies (BoS) as the governing body (see details in the self-assessment, p. 53ff.). Hamburg has established clear structures of responsibility and ongoing engagement to guarantee continuity, but as well to enable changes as they become necessary. The programme coordinator is member of the BoS. The representation of students within the BoS assures an ongoing feedback of student's experience to the further development of the program.

The partners in the international master program have developed an appropriate governance structure for it. The commission is sure, that all relevant topics could be discussed within this structure sufficiently. Staff members and students from all partner universities are involved in the decision making and can address problems that should be discussed and solved both on the overall

program and specialization level in Hamburg. Nevertheless the commission would recommend to the partners to involve students more intensively in innovation process to benefit from their ideas and multicultural background. From the eyes of the commission the students in the program are extraordinarily motivated and devoted to internationalization. That should be recognized as a valuable resource for the further improvement of the program.

A strong commitment of the university management is needed to run an international master program successfully. The existing cooperation agreement, signed by senior executives of all partner institution, and the statements of the vice-dean and the vice-president during the audit in Hamburg are showing, that this kind of commitment is given. The agreement between the partner universities contains appropriate rules and regulations for all relevant fields of cooperation. The specialization in Hamburg is appropriately embedded in the standard governance structure of the university following the idea of subsidiarity.

3.3 Examination System, Documentation and Transparency

The examination system fulfils the demands on a master program both from a didactical and legal perspective. All tests during the program are appropriate to the acquired knowledge, skills and competences. The variety of forms of examination is sufficient, explicitly from the eyes of the students involved in the audit. Appropriate individual solution is offered to handicapped students, student parents and other students with special demands.

In general the management offers a broad variety of offline and online documents with information about the academic program and practicalities related to the program. Especially the program's website provides applicants and participants comprehensively with all relevant details about study content and examination requirements. In comparison to the first audit five years ago the external and internal communication concept improved significantly. Anyway, the particular concept of the program with a foundational year in Ahus and a specialization in Hamburg leads to a specific need for information during the transition phase between the first and the second year. Especially non-EU students seem to get not all necessary information at the right moment in time. Because of that the program management could perhaps take in consideration to reassess the established communication concept under this perspective. Again the commission would like to encourage the management to involve the students in this process to gain advantage from their experience. Regulations regarding the Lisbon convention are implemented properly.

3.4 Gender justice and compensation opportunities for disabled people

The University of Hamburg has established elaborated strategies to provide gender justice and compensation opportunities for disabled people – including institutionalized support for students

and staff members. The audited master program is fully embedded in this strategy. The commission is strongly convinced that demands and problems related to these fields are handled appropriately by the involved institutions.

4 Quality Management

The Board of Studies, consisting of senior members of each consortium partner, is responsible for the quality management of the entire programme. The programme manager of the study programme in Hamburg supervises the quality assurance especially for Hamburg. The university of Hamburg collects quite a number of data. They deliver statistics about applications, number of students, drop out rates, and reasons for drop out of the studies of the last years.

In order to improve the content of the classes, there is a standardised evaluation for each course, including the course structure, a debate and processing of course content, competence of the lecturer, and the management of interaction and participation. Besides these evaluations, students have the opportunity to discuss (on the content) with teachers and the programme manager. Students reported that there are quick reactions (mostly for the next term), so they feel like these evaluations have a big impact.

In addition to the evaluation of the courses, there is no evaluation of the study programme on the whole, for example organisational evaluation criteria like assistance for administrative tasks (e.g. residence permits, computer system of the Hamburg University, housing) or the satisfaction with the variety of supervisors for the master thesis. For this reason, the university should involve students' expertise in the further development of the whole programme to a greater extent.

As the university claimed, they can just deliver a limited amount of information in regard to the career path taken by students after graduating. In an unstandardised survey conducted for the ten year reunion of the programme, students were asked about the biggest achievement after graduating, their currently professional doing, and about any problems of finding a job. For a better evaluation, alumni studies should be implemented more systematically and regularly. Furthermore, the alumni network should be used more systematically to gain advantage from the professional knowledge and multicultural experience of former students.

5 Summary

The study programme „Journalism, Media and Globalisation“ (M.A.) is a sound programme, which embodies current trends in journalism and combines them with a research oriented specialization. It imparts knowledge methods and social sciences as well as practical experience in journalism. The curricular concept of the programme is planned thoroughly and executed

properly. Objectives are defined and can be reached with the proposed modular structure. Therefore, only some minor steps for a further development, e.g. a slight re-organisation of modules, are suggested for the future development.

6 Evaluation according to the „Criteria for the Accreditation of Study Programmes“ (resolution of the Accreditation Council of 08.12.2008, last amended on 20.02.2013)

Criterion 1: Qualification Objectives of the Study Programme Concept:

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 2: Conceptual Integration of the Study Programme in the System of Studies

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 3: Study Programme Concept

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 4: Academic Feasibility

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 5: Examination System

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 6: Programme related Co-operations

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 7: Facilities

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 8: Transparency and Documentation

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 9: Quality Assurance and Further Development

- The criterion is fulfilled

Criterion 10: Study Programmes with a Special Profile Demand

- Not applicable

Criterion 11: Gender Justice and Equal Opportunities

- The criterion is fulfilled

7 Recommendation of the expert group

The group of experts recommends the following **decision**: Accreditation without conditions

IV Decision of the ACQUIN Accreditation Commission

On the basis of the report of the expert group, the statement of the HEI and the statement of the standing expert committee, on June 27th 2016 the Accreditation Commission took the following decision:

The Master programme „Journalism, Media and Globalisation“ (M.A.) is accredited without conditions.

The accreditation is valid until September 30th 2022.

For the further development of the study programme the following recommendations are given:

- Digitalization and Datafication are main driving forces for change of societies and not at least of journalistic work and should be addressed to a greater extent within the curriculum.
- A more intense communication and coordination structure between Aarhus and Hamburg is recommended to avoid overlaps of the study program.
- Regarding practical issues of the transition from Aarhus to Hamburg, the university should prepare more detailed Information together with students and establish respective information channels. For practical assistance a buddy-system could be helpful.
- The university should involve student's expertise in the further development of the program to a greater extent.