

German Jordanian University

GJU-Network „Social Work“

Virtual Network Meeting 2020 via ZOOM

22nd of October 2020

Start: 9:00

End: 12:10 (German time)

Minutes

Attendees:

Dr. Jochen Pleines	GJU, Network Head
Prof. Dr. Anne Lequy*	UAS Magdeburg-Stendal, Project GJU
Prof. Dr. Ralf Roßkopf	GJU, Vice-President International Affairs
Prof. Dr. Salah Al-Salman	GJU, Dean School of Applied Humanities & Languages
Prof. Dr. Christine Huth-Hildebrand	GJU, Head of Department Social Work
Prof. Dr. Sahar Makhamreh	GJU, Department Social Work
Dr. Bader Madi	GJU, Exchange Coordinator, Department Social Work
Ms. Khalida Radaideh	GJU, School of Applied Humanities & Languages
Stefanie Kirsch	GJU, Network Coordinator, International Office
Prof. Dr. Sigrid James	U Kassel
Prof. Dr. Ingo Bode	U Kassel
Mr. Juri Kilian	U Kassel
Prof. Dr. Rahim Hajji	UAS Magdeburg-Stendal
Prof. Dr. Christoph Damm	UAS Magdeburg-Stendal
Prof. Dr. Kilian Smith	UAS Magdeburg-Stendal
Prof. Dr. Robert Northoff *	UAS Neubrandenburg
Prof. Dr. Achim Förster	UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt
Prof. Dr. Vathsala Aithal	UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt
Prof. Dr. Eva Gerharz	UAS Fulda
Prof. Dr. Angelika Groterath	UAS Darmstadt
Dr. Monica Heitz	UAS Magdeburg-Stendal, Project GJU

* temporarily

Apologized:

Prof. Dr. Carola Bauschke-Urban	UAS Fulda
Mr. Magnus Frampton	U Vechta
Prof. Dr. Steffi Kraehmer	UAS Neubrandenburg
Prof. Dr. Ute Straub	UAS Frankfurt/Main

Technical Platform: Zoom

Organized by Dr. Monica Heitz, GJU Project Office Magdeburg

Moderation: Jochen Pleines

Stefanie Kirsch (for item 5)

Minutes: Jochen Pleines

Agenda:

- **Opening and Welcoming Addresses**
- **Introduction round**

- 1 The Department „Social Work“: Functions and Structure:**
Achievements, Updates and Perspectives
Feedback about Online-Teaching, new Bachelor programme „Social Work“
- 2 Digitalization** at the GJU and in German partner universities: Enrichment of GJU curriculum with online courses from German partners, adding virtual Flying Faculty, further ideas
- 3 Performance of Network partnerships:** Past and future
Updates for MoUs, revised MoU with FHWS
Participation in Erasmus Plus calls, Joint Research projects, Publication platform
- 4 Feedback on Protracted Displacement Conference**
New Focus in Curriculum, Research and Teaching: Refugees in Higher Education
- 5 Election of new Network Head**

- **Closing session:**
Final discussion and future prospects on further collaboration
Scheduling the network meeting 2021

- **Opening and Introduction**

- Network Head Dr. Jochen Pleines opened the Network Meeting at 9:00 a. m. (German time) welcoming all participants.

- In her welcoming address, Prof. Dr. Anne Lequy summarized the history of the Social Work Department at SAHL, GJU mentioning the first steps with the Professional Diploma in 2015, followed by the introduction of the Master programme Social Work in 2018. She highlighted the recent success of the Protracted **Displacement** conference. As a new approach, SAHL is planning to establish a Bachelor programme including German language lessons accompanying the courses of Social Work and the German Year for all new students. Prof. Lequy gave expression to her expectation that the new B.A. programme will broaden and intensify the networking activities even further. She thanked the partners of the network for their outstanding efforts up to now and expressed her firm belief that the network will pursue this successful path in the future.

- On behalf of the GJU, Prof. Dr. Ralf Roßkopf reviewed the achievements of the programmes of Social Work, stating the successful establishment of the Department within the School of Applied Humanities and Languages, counting now an academic staff comprising 5 full-time instructors (3 full professors and 2 assistant professors). He also underlined the success story of two postgraduate study programmes (Professional Diploma and Masters), now to be rounded out by an undergraduate programme of Social Work. He drew the attention to numerous challenges and risks which the GJU in general and the Department of Social Work in particular had seen themselves confronted with during the Corona crisis. As a project that is based on transnational academic education, the GJU had to find solutions to a national lock-down of more than 2 months with the entire load of teaching and administrative tasks which had to be organized and performed from home office.

- Prof. Dr. Salah Al-Salman, Dean of the School of Applied Humanities and Languages, expressed his satisfaction and pride of having the Department of Social Work operative at the GJU and, more precisely, in the School of Applied Humanities and Languages. For him, it is important to note that this department is outstanding and unique in Jordan and in the region. He proudly mentioned that, only a week before, the Deans' Council of the GJU had confirmed the first three Master' degrees in this study field.

- Prof. Dr. Christine Huth-Hildebrandt, Head of the Department of Social Work, welcomed the participants of the Network; in her address; she underlined the close links between the GJU and the Project Office at Magdeburg.

- **Introduction Round:** As for a considerable number of representatives (from GJU and the German partner universities) this meeting was the first time to participate in a network meeting, all participants introduced themselves.

1 The Department „Social Work“: Functions and Structure:

Achievements, Updates and Perspectives

Feedback about Online-Teaching, new Bachelor programme „Social Work“

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt presented a survey of objectives and achievements aimed at by the Network during the period from 2017 until 2020. For doing so, she reviewed the minutes of the annual network meetings of 2017 (Magdeburg), 2018 (Kassel) and 2019 (Frankfurt/Main) and contrasted these with concrete conditions and challenges on the ground.

She pinpointed discrepancies of expectations and real life conditions in the following fields:

- insufficient equipment with academic staff for the envisaged programme structure,
- absence of secretarial support,
- spatial distribution of teaching activities between main campus in Madaba and the campus in downtown Amman,

Furthermore, the Department sees itself confronted with framework conditions put forward by the German institutions on the one hand and recurrent obligations and regulations imposed by the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education on the other hand. For the Department, meeting the expectations arising from these general conditions has been a continuous challenge. As a further challenge, she mentions the decision to provide all lectures for the current semester entirely online. For the future activities of the Network, Christine Huth-Hildebrandt invites its members to take into consideration the above-mentioned special conditions.

As major projects for the upcoming period, she mentions the following items:

- common efforts in developing the curriculum for the new undergraduate B.A. study programme,
- exchange of students (both ways), particularly once there will be B.A. students preparing their “German Year”,
- exchange of visiting scholars based upon specializations as required by the study plans,
- research projects,
- publications.

For the B.A. programme she underlines the intention of conceiving it as a general programme, not limited to one field of application. In accordance with the vision of the GJU the Department will follow international academic standards, but will also focus on their implementation in the Jordanian and regional settings.

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt thanked Rawan W. Ibrahim for the efforts she had made in the past period as the “Exchange Coordinator” of the Department of Social Work. This task will from now on be taken over by Bader Madi who, in this function, will be the contact person in the Department for the network.

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt’s presentation was commented on by members of the Network:

- Ingo Bode asked after the schedule of opening the B.A. programme:
- The GJU is starting the procedure of establishing the study plan in this semester and will submit it to the Ministry of Higher Education by the end of February 2021, this being the unique annual date for submitting new study programmes. Provided this step can be accomplished, the programme could start in autumn 2021; it will, however, have to be accredited before having its first intake of students.
- This programme, like all other subjects at the GJU, will be taught in English; students will study German language courses during their first three years before spending one year in Germany. It is obvious that partnerships with German universities (from the Network and further institutions) will have to be established and designed for this compulsory element of the GJU programme.

Rahim Hajji and Christoph Damm declared that UAS Magdeburg-Stendal is ready to support the efforts of the GJU colleagues in preparing the B.A. programme; they suggest that a meeting should soon be scheduled allowing to treat curricular questions in detail.

Sigrid James supported this suggestion and offered cooperation and support in opening this new dimension.

For the UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt, Achim Förster declared that, for his university, the GJU is a major partner and that they are planning to continue coordinating their and GJU study plans and establishing course packages for student exchange in both directions.

The UAS Fulda, represented by Eva Gerharz, announced a new programme enhancing the internationalization especially for the programmes of Social Work both on the B. A. level and on the M. A. level. For the undergraduate level, a compulsory semester abroad will be strongly recommended, and for the M. A. programme the UAS Fulda will implement international tracks with particular emphasis on human rights. Partnership with the GJU is here considered as of highest priority.

Sahar Makhamreh suggested to make sure that students of Social Work in their German Year choose internship positions in institutions that are closely linked to social work field activities.

Secondly, Sahar suggests to install a counselling system for exchange students coming to Jordan from Germany or other countries. She considers that the Network partners could play a decisive role in realizing this initiative.

2 Digitalization at the GJU and in German partner universities:

Enrichment of GJU curriculum with online courses from German partners, adding Flying

Faculty, further ideas

Ralf Roßkopf drew a general picture of challenges and tasks that the GJU in general had been confronted with as consequences of the pandemic:

- In a first step, the study programme of the entire university had to be switched from its traditional physical form to online teaching concepts. Although tools (as Moodle, MS-teams etc.) had been available on the campus before, lecturers as well as students had only limited experience in implementing these.

- The next challenging step had been the lockdown that had been imposed nation-wide for two months.

- The GJU succeeded in establishing an overall structure for digital forms of the lectures.

- Being convinced that, **even once** the pandemic will have been overcome, higher education will not be the same as it had been before the crisis, the GJU decided to consider online teaching as an integral part of the teaching environment in higher education in Jordan for the future.

Ralf Roßkopf mentioned plans for the academic year 2021/22 to establish a study programme entirely performed online. He expects challenges and obstacles arising from the obligation established by the Ministry that such an endeavour will necessitate accreditation of the entire study cursus before it can start its first intake which also means hiring and financing the respective staff in advance.

Meanwhile, the Government is about to simplify regulations also for physical programmes then allowing up to 50% of online lectures in physical study programmes. The GJU intends to make use of these margins to gain experience and to build up competence of its staff.

As funding for new online-based concepts will be difficult to find in Jordan, Ralf Roßkopf sees a fruitful perspective for the GJU to join projects of the German partner universities. He formulates a call for cooperation declaring the GJU's interest to be included in research and developmental profiles of the network partners.

Rahim Hajji and Eva Gerharz express their explicit interest in cooperating with the GJU Department of Social Work in developing, adapting and implementing digitalized platforms.

Existing concepts of distance learning will have to be viewed and adapted to the Jordanian context conditions.

Achim Förster pleads for creating open source teaching platforms and mentions, as an example, the platform “VirCamp” which is successfully implemented by the UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt in a consortium of European partner universities (cf. <http://vircamp.net>).

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt outlines that, at the GJU, concepts for implementing distance learning do exist, but that the main challenge is to be seen in the didactic frameworks in Jordan. She illustrates the difficulties met by Jordanian students (housing circumstances, family, children, employment etc.) that menace to undermine their motivation.

Ingo Bode notes that also in Germany students’ distance learning and studying settings are by no means barrier-free. He declared himself in favour of restoring face-to-face study conditions.

Ralf Roßkopf explains that the concept presented by him does not imply cancelling any physical study programme; he pleads for considering the special situation of the transnational character of the GJU with a compulsory core of mobility-based study elements; as long as the pandemic imposes constraints on student mobility, digital forms of distance learning must be considered as unavoidable.

In addition, he mentions attractive prospects of offering online study programmes to students from countries in the region;

Salah Al-Salman reminds the audience of the necessity to face and accept new conditions that are bound to stay in force even once the pandemic will have been overcome; as an example of a fundamentally new situation, he mentions that for Master’s defences virtual committees had been heavily contested until recently, whereas it has become an approved practice now with one or two members of the committees attending via Skype or other online tools.

Vathsala Aithal confirms that it will take quite some time until the risks and consequences of the pandemic will have been overcome and that exclusive face-to-face study settings in their traditional form will most probably not be available in the near future. She therefore holds that it is necessary and worthwhile investing energy in establishing good conditions for distance learning, possibly in a blended setting.

3 Performance of Network partnerships: Past and future

Updates for MoUs, revised MoU with FHWS

Participation in Erasmus Plus calls, Joint Research projects, Publication platform

In accordance with discussions held in the 2019 Network Meeting in Frankfurt/Main members are requested to check the MoU in force between their universities and the

GJU. In most cases, the wording of these agreements **is** sufficiently flexible to accommodate and cover on-going and new activities. If needed, the Network Head and the GJU International Office will support members as well as new partners.

Achim Förster gives a brief feedback concerning the state of reviewing and up-dating the MoU between UAS Würzburg-Schweinfurt and GJU. The amendments are on their way; Würzburg prepared a proposal for the up-dated version of the MoU which will cover cooperation not only for Social Work exchanges, but for a wide range of exchange activities in different Schools.

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt urgently calls for support of the GJU Department of Social Work in creating opportunities for joint research projects and publications. She explains that these dimensions will be of highest importance for successfully re-accrediting the Social Work study programmes.

Sigrid James explains the possibilities of “research internships”, which, at Kassel University, have been successfully implemented for an individualized embedding of young researchers with an international background within a research team or project; she emphasizes that this formula can also be made fruitful from a distance.

Members of the Network are invited to reflect on possibilities of supporting the GJU Department in this and further regards. Contact person for this within the GJU will be the newly appointed exchange coordinator Bader Madi.

Monica Heitz describes means of supporting flying faculty missions at the GJU. Until 2022, i. e. until the end of the present funding period, the Project Office can finance up to 40 missions per year for the GJU. Schools and Departments in coordination with the International Office formulate their needs and suggest a list of flying faculty candidates which will be forwarded to Magdeburg at end of November/beginning of December for the following year. In the current pandemic situation, all flying faculty missions are realized online only.

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt describes that this new situation has led to the positive side-effect that German faculty, instead of teaching block seminars in a compacted period of one week, can now teach a full-scale course spread over the semester.

The GJU Department of Social Work can nominate two candidates to be invited as flying faculty. Based upon the needs of the Department and its study plans, the Head of Department and/or the Exchange Coordinator will contact the members of the Network in due time.

4 Feedback on Protracted Displacement Conference

New Focus in Curriculum, Research and Teaching: Refugees in Higher Education

Jochen Pleines gave a survey of the organizational efforts with regard to the international Conference “Protracted Displacement - Hopes, Perspectives and Solutions? Governance – Social Dimension – Academia” held as a four-day virtual conference. He referred to details of the partners and funding institutions and of the programme of the conference.

For further details he referred to the website of the conference:

<https://protracted-displacement.org>

It was mentioned that the Network “Social Work” played an important role as well in the Steering Committee and the Scientific Committee as well as coordinators and moderators of many sessions. In addition, it is worth mentioning that a considerable number of network members (from Jordan and from Germany) were active delivering lectures in the academic programme of the conference.

In the discussion it was noted that the results of this endeavour will open up possibilities and perspectives of reflection.

Sahar Makhamreh encouraged network members to make students benefit from the conference results in follow-up lectures or study groups.

She also strongly recommended establishing a special preparatory service for exchange students, i.e. Jordanian students going to Germany and also German students going to Jordan; in an initiative focussing on students of Social Work, the Network with its rich experience and practical knowledge of objectives and needs should play a decisive role.

Christine Huth-Hildebrandt announced that the GJU department of Social Work had decided to organize a workshop addressed to all their staff and students.

5 Election of new Network Head

For this item of the agenda, Stefanie Kirsch took over the moderation.

In accordance with the regulations for GJU networks, the Vice-President of International Affairs, nominates one or up to three candidates for the function as Network Head. In agreement with the GJU Project Office Magdeburg-Stendal and the corresponding Exchange Coordinator of GJU Ralf Roßkopf suggested and put to vote the following tandem solution for the new period:

Sigrud James and Jochen Pleines shall be appointed as a team, with Jochen Pleines being the network head for the first year and Sigrud James as deputy head; for the 2nd and 3rd years, roles shall be inverted accordingly.

The voting procedure is organized by Stefanie Kirsch.

Each partner university has one vote.

A secret vote is carried out using the private chat channel provided by Zoom.

Stefanie Kirsch announces that the suggested tandem solution was accepted unanimously.

Sigrud James and Jochen Pleines thank the members for their vote and accept their election.

- **Closing session:**

- Final discussion and future prospects on further collaboration**

- Scheduling the network meeting 2021**

The newly elected Network Heads announce that they will establish and communicate a list of topics to be discussed between network members in the near future. This list will be based on the discussions held in this meeting as soon as the minutes will be available.

The audience expresses its hope that it will be possible to hold the annual network meeting in 2021 as a physical meeting again. Members approve the plan to schedule this meeting in autumn 2021 (end of October/first half of November). Provided that legal conditions will allow such a procedure, the Network applies for having the annual Network Meeting 2021 in Amman/Madaba.

The meeting was closed at 12.10 p. m. (German time).