

STUDENT
REPRESENTATIVES
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Half-Term Report: 2020/21

Half-Term Report on the activities of the FASoS
Student Representatives

Foreword

The Student Representatives (SR) of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) are a team of 29 elected and appointed students belonging to the Bachelor as well as Master programmes. The Student Representatives are a faculty internal body and its members represent their fellow students in various faculty bodies and in all levels of the faculty.

Among others, students are represented in the faculty board, faculty council and the programme committees. The FASoS Student Representatives connect the different student members, create collaboration between them and function as a decision-making body. Our role is to assist and inform students and provide broader student input to faculty staff. The objective of this Half-Term review is to give Faculty staff and the student body an overview of the work which has been conducted by the Student Representatives in the first half of the academic year 2020/21.

The fragility and intensity of our current times has made our work even more relevant than ever. The Student Representatives would like to take this opportunity to thank the faculty staff and the student body for their dedication and mutual support throughout the last months. We are looking forward to further collaboration.

Fee-Marie von der Brelie

President 2020/2021



Table of Contents

TEAM OVERVIEW.....	1
Programme Committees.....	1
OMT.....	1
Faculty Council.....	1
Complaints Committee.....	1
Graduate Programme Committees (GPC).....	1
Library Committee.....	1
Faculty Board.....	1
Steering Board.....	1
WORKING GROUPS.....	2
Working Group Overview.....	2
Education.....	2
DIAS.....	2
Marketing & Communications.....	2
Employability.....	2
EDUCATION WORKING GROUP.....	3
Canvas.....	3
Feedback.....	4
Honors Programme.....	4
Lecture Recordings.....	5
Citation Style.....	5
DIAS WORKING GROUP.....	6
Sanitary Products Project.....	6
Map and Computer Desk.....	6
Anecdotes Project.....	7
Spiritual Room Proposal.....	7
DIAS Recommendations.....	8
Sustainability.....	8
MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS.....	9
Campaigns.....	9
EMPLOYABILITY WORKING GROUP.....	11
Career Days.....	11
Internship Advisor.....	11
Employability Advisor.....	12
Professional Skills Track.....	12

TEAM OVERVIEW

Programme Committees

Arts & Culture

Pragya Jhingran
Pavlina Papageorgiou
Sarrah Riahi

European Studies

Michele Dalla Rosa
Anna-Maria Lipolit
Ghizlan Rebbah

Digital Society

Anne-Sophie Oppor
Serena Boukelmoun

Graduate Programme Committees (GPC)

Martina Ferrara Snider, MA ES
Niels Bierman, MA EPA
Timo Schroettke, MA RMES
Veronica Cueva Peralta, MA GDS

Tetiana Tovstenko, MA ESST
Stella Theocharidou, MA CAST
Marc Boas, MA Media

Jop Delheij, MA ALS
Maya Berge, MA AH
Antonio Prokscha, MA PS

OMT

Sen Cicalo Ikeda, European Studies
Fee-Marie von der Brelie, Arts & Culture
Lara Greczko, Digital Society

Faculty Council

Charlotte Lenhard, BA ES
Charles de Groot, BA ES
Carole Bangoura, BA ES
Beatrice Hagan, BA ES
Caitlin Reed, BA ES

Complaints Committee

Nouaman Azarzar, BA ES

Library Committee

Amelie Soares, BA DS

Faculty Board

Dora Christodoulou, BA ES

Steering Board

Fee-Marie von der Brelie | President
Pragya Jhingran | Vice-President BA
Stella Theocharidou | Vice-President MA
Ghizlan Rebbah | Secretary
Sen Cicalo Ikeda | Treasurer

WORKING GROUPS

Working Group Overview

In order to deal with the workload of the Student Representatives, our team is divided into four working groups (WG): **Education, DIAS, Marketing & Communications, and the Employability Working Group**. Below you can find individual overviews of the work that each working group has done from September 2020 until now.

Education

Serena Boukelmoun (Chair)

Lara Greczko

Amelie Soares

Pavlina Papageorgiou

Anna-Maria Lipolit

Maya Berge

DIAS

Sarra Riahi (Chair)

Charlotte Lenhard

Michele Dalla Rosa

Nouaman Azarzar

Stella Theocharidou

Veronica Cueva Peralta

Antinio Prokscha

Marketing & Communications

Dora Christodoulou (Chair)

Anne-Sophie Oppor

Marc Boas

Charles de Grot

Caitlin Reed

Jop Delheij

Employability

Carole Bangoura (Chair)

Beatrice Hagan

Niels Bierman

Timo Schroettke

Tetiana Tovstenko

Martina Ferrara Snider

EDUCATION WORKING GROUP

The Education Working-Group of the Student Representatives is dedicated to the evaluation and improvement of the quality and administration of education within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The committee considers issues, and points for improvement in this area by identifying the general opinion and/or stance of the FASoS student population and working together with the Faculty staff to ensure a positive academic experience for all students and staff.

Canvas

The transition to Canvas as a new web-based learning management system (LMS) has caused several problems for students. Through a survey conducted by the Student Representatives in the beginning of the academic year it became evident that a lack of information before the transition made it difficult to get used to the new platform. The following points summarize the feedback given by the FASoS Student Body with regards to the Canvas platform:

Problems:

- It is really confusing for students to use both portals, Canvas and the UM Student Portal (SP). Often there are problems and confusion:
 1. with finding and accessing information (i.e grades, ECTS, GPA, timetable, e-mail, feedback, assignments, course registration)
 2. there is unclarity which information is leading or/and
 3. information is lost when there is more than one communication channel used.

→ Students overall would like to see a complete merger of SP and Canvas: no hybrid version!

→ Students would prefer to learn more about Canvas via: UM Website, Online tutorials/videos offered by UM or FASoS, UM/FASoS Social media

Progress: The WG discussed the issues with the Dean of Education Giselle Bosse and created an according proposal with regards to the issues raised. In coordination with the Dean it was further agreed to create an instructional guidebook and a video for student which is published in the beginning of February. As the transition from the SP to Canvas is a steady progress and will demand some more time. The material will be made available to students in the first week of February.

Remark/Follow-up: In corporation with MarCom an awareness campaign is planned. Further, a new canvas survey should be run again in February or March in order to see an evolution and see to what are the issues that are still not solved.

Feedback

One of the greatest points of dissatisfaction amongst the student population at FASoS is the quality, quantity, consistency and accessibility of feedback given by tutors regarding the students work. The feedback that students receive is very dependent on the tutor. While some assessors provide sufficient feedback and/or justification for the given grade, others provide minimal or no feedback. Students value feedback highly as it plays a vital role in their learning process and can act as a valuable basis for their academic improvement.

Progress: With a transition to CANVAS, it was already agreed that only the CANVAS grade center is to be used by tutors to give feedback (and to grade). This way guarantees standardization and a consistent format of feedback to students work.

Remark/Follow-up: Based on current responses from the student body the WG is working on a proposal to integrate a question with regards to feedback given in the course in the IWIOS. The proposal will be discussed internally before it is presented to the respective stakeholders throughout the upcoming period.

Honors Programme

Students have noticed that the current admission requirement for the FASoS Honors Programme leads to certain problems of accuracy. Currently only students who belong to the top 5% of their programme in terms of their GPA after their first year get admitted to the Honors Programme. The problem is that only half of the courses are properly graded in the first year and count for the GPA while the other half is assessed based on a fail, pass or excellent basis and does not count to a student's GPA. Further, also the activities of a student within tutorials or extracurricular activities are not included as admission criteria. Ultimately this means that the decision on whether or not a student gets admitted for the Honors programme depends on a very small fraction of a student's overall performance.

Progress: A proposal has been created with according suggestions on how best to improve admission criteria.

Remark/Follow-up: The proposal will be presented and discussed with the respective stakeholders of the Honors Programme and will potentially be discusses with the Dean of Education.

Lecture Recordings

Due to the current global circumstances specifically throughout the last year the demand for lecture recordings has not subsided. In the current situation it cannot be taken as a given that students attend the lectures for numerous reasons, for example due to time difference, connection problems or zoom issues etc. Students from all FASoS programmes emphasized that the ability to re-listen/re-watch a lecture could aid them greatly in preparation for a course as well as studying in general. Unfortunately, recorded lectures can still not be taken for granted at FASoS.

Progress: Multiple proposals have been made in this regard already. The issue has been raised and discussed within the different programme committees and is to be reconsidered in the upcoming meetings.

Remark/Follow-up: The issue will be further brought to the OMT and to be discussed with the Dean of Education.

Citation Style

The current curriculums of the programmes offered by the faculty exclusively cover APA as a citation style and spend either relatively little or no time on others. Students have reportedly met difficulties transitioning into other fields during their exchange abroad or within their minor, when trying to continue their studies in another field or within their thesis which requires them to employ an alternative style. As Student Representatives we believe it to be important that further information and education on multiple citation styles be seriously taken into account. However, it should be noticed that reforming the entire educational programme of the Faculty is not necessary or is a multitudinous task.

Progress: To do justice to the interdisciplinary approach the Student Representatives suggested to either teach different citation styles within respective, already existing skills courses or allow students to deviate from APA if there are disciplinary constraints (at least in their BA/MA thesis) within the different Programme Committees.

Remark/Follow-up: The issue still needs to be discussed within the context of the OMT and the Dean of Education.

DIAS WORKING GROUP

The working group Diversity, Integration, Accessibility and Sustainability (DIAS) is responsible for a broad spectrum of issues that occur within the faculty working to increase capability. Issues we deal with range from the facilities available in our faculty -such as the common room- or the accessibility for people with disabilities to the buildings to the ratio of domestic/foreign students and the practice of an overall sustainable environment. We are closely connected to and often meet with the Facilities Manager of the faculty as well as the diversity manager, and it is our job to form a link between the students and the staff that deal with these subjects. It is our goal to create the best facilities possible by improving the inclusivity and sustainability of the faculty, ensuring accessibility to all students, and enhancing diversity of our faculty.

Sanitary Products Project

DIAS has implemented a 'Take one, Leave one' policy where they encourage students to replace the sanitary products they use, hence creating the idea of helping a community and working together to achieve it. This also plays a role in enhancing the level of sustainability at FASoS.

Progress: It was decided that in times of hybrid teaching and also for the future there will be continued implementation of accessible sanitary products in all bathrooms at FASoS.

Remark/Follow-up: DIAS members have successfully bought the sanitary products which will be reimbursed by the faculty, and now they need to be placed in the bathrooms of the faculty once the faculty is open again to staff and students.

Map and Computer Desk

Vincent Cordewener, the FASoS facility manager, established in consultation with the DIAS WG a map of FASoS which provides an inclusive overview of relevant spots at FASoS like gender neutral toilets, accessible entries etc. Further he installed a computer in GG 80-82 to facilitate students in a wheelchair to access a computer at lower height.

Progress: The computer is installed, and the map has been established already. Changes for the latter are however still possible.

Remark/Follow-up: Once it is possible again members of DIAS and Vincent Cordewener will check and discuss possible spots for the maps.

Anecdotes Project

The anecdotes project came from the will to stop sugar-coating the question of racial and gender based-othering at the faculty. Students appear to silence or repress themselves by fear of making others uncomfortable in class and within the faculty. Yet we consider it a necessity to allow students to articulate their lived experiences as they are, namely, without putting gloves on, if we seek to make the faculty a truly inclusive space. Hence, we aim at gathering anecdotes to provide real listening to students and to understand the experiences which may compromise one's feeling of belonging at Fasos.

Progress: The WG presented the project to the SR as a whole, which approved the initiative as well as its relevance. A collaboration with the MarCom WG was started to gather the anecdotes. As it was agreed that anecdotes shall be shared in all anonymity a 'Google form' was established as a means to collect students' inputs. A member of the DIAS WG made a teaser video to introduce the initiative to FASoS students and to gather their testimonies.

Remark/Follow-up: The video is almost done. It is refined after rounds of feedbacks and published in context of a social media campaign in the coming month, in order to communicate the SR initiative and to collect students' testimonies.

Spiritual Room Proposal

FASoS has always been an institution of progressive thinking and prides itself on being a leading faculty when it comes to diversity. Religious and spiritual diversity is as a matter of fact already part of the faculty as it represents one facet of students and staffs life. In this perspective, we argue in favor of a spiritual room that provides a safe space for spiritual retreat at FASoS.

Progress: Research has been done to understand the various factors that shall be given attention. DIAS reached out to the Diversity and Inclusivity Office as well as religious student associations to get support and created a smaller internal working group to come up with a proposal which was recently submitted and introduced to the faculty council. Collaboration with MarCom, steering board members, and SoFASoS were highly appreciated and shows that cooperation and mutual support was a real drive for action.

Remark/Follow-up: Based on the feedback given in the Faculty Council the members of DIAS WG are reformulating and developing the proposal further. A survey or questionnaire is planned to receive further feedback from the student/staff body in order to ultimately establish a room/ space that meets their needs.

DIAS Recommendations

DIAS Recommendations project was initiated to provide students with diverse material in terms of perspectives that in turn promotes inclusivity and diversity within the faculty. Hence, each week, a member of the DIAS WG picks a piece (which can vary in terms of format: book, essay, podcast, documentary). The member then writes a paragraph that introduces the chosen piece, and emphasizes why it can benefit FASOS students as a DIAS-related issue.

Progress: The project has been successfully launched! The first two recommendations have been published in FASOS Weekly and effectively shared by MarCom on the SR social media.

Remark/Follow-up: The project runs smoothly for now and we hope to make it a thing that could perdure in the long run and serves as inspiration for the different programs.

Sustainability

Sustainability has been a constant priority of the DIAS working group. DIAS aims to increase the level of awareness on a faculty board and committee level, furthermore, assess the needs of students regarding the topic of sustainability. It appeared that if UM as a whole seems to recognize the importance of sustainability, many steps are yet to be taken to implement corresponding changes, may it be in terms of education, research and operations within the faculty. Hence a *special sustainability committee* has been formed of members from the different WG's in order to address these three dimensions (educational/research/operational) to the Faculty Council. We also discussed means of increasing consequent dialogue on the matter by adding sustainability on relevant agendas as well as establishing a communication strategy with facilities managers and staff.

Progress: So far a discussion of individual as well as group capabilities has taken place in attempting to prioritize and delegate work accordingly. The committee has successfully drafted an extensive and clear document for the faculty council which outlines the SR Sustainability Vision at FASoS. Following this it was decided to come together in order to draft a clear and concise sustainability plan which includes initiatives and ideas to make FASoS more sustainable enclosing our academic and education landscape.

Remark/Follow-up: Some suggestions were submitted to Vincent Cordewener and Cerien Streefland (Managing Director of FASoS), not only to get their feedback and ideas but also to assess the feasibility of the proposed measures/changes. Both of them were highly supportive and looking forward to the final sustainability plan. First meetings have been lined up with the facilities manager of FASoS, to discuss the preliminary ideas. The *special sustainability committee* is continuing to meet in order to come up with a well-crafted plan.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

The internal working group Marketing, Communication & Events (MarComm) is primarily responsible for the facilitation of communication between the Student Representatives, the faculty and the students. The students are informed about announcements, surveys, proposals and faculty-related events mainly through the Student Representative's Instagram and Facebook-page. We are however considering to further join other platforms like LinkedIn and Twitter to expand our reach. The Marketing and Communications WG has enjoyed great success, despite an unfortunate cancellation of the planned Faculty Drinks and Spring Ball (both traditionally organized in cooperation with So FASoS) and the organized Photo Walk as well as the disruption of other potential events. Throughout the last months we have continued to closely work with the FASoS Marketing and Communications Team and have been trying to support the faculty staff with marketing initiatives where needed.

Campaigns

In order to increase the visibility and transparency of the SR and their work, we organise planned marketing campaigns, which can be separated into two categories: Monthly Campaigns and Awareness Campaigns. *Monthly Campaigns* sought to bring student-related information to FASoS students, including motivation tips and recommendations for further education. *Awareness Campaigns* addressed the goals of increasing visibility of the Student Representatives, as well as accessibility to FASoS Infrastructure - for example encouraging for student voices to be heard through filling out the IWIOs. Visibility has also been generated through the publishing of team photos on social media, so that students might recognize their representatives and feel comfortable approaching or contacting them if needed.

Awareness Campaigns

Student Reps Awareness Campaign

The Campaign includes the publishing of the team photo and pictures of the individual members of the team to increase visibility of the SR members.

IWIO Awareness Campaign

A campaign to raise awareness and knowledge about the IWIOs and to encourage students to fill them out.

Complaints & Co. Campaign

The campaign aims to elucidate on the filing of a complaint, objection and appeal.

Monthly Campaigns

Motivation Campaign

Every Sunday a member of the Student Representatives introduces their personal tips and tricks on how to stay motivated in the current times.

Recommendations Campaign

A Campaign established in collaboration with DIAS which provides students with recommendations of books, essays, podcasts, documentaries etc. which offer perspectives that in turn facilitate inclusivity and diversity within the faculty.

Employability Campaign

Campaign is currently established in cooperation with the Employability Working Group. The campaign will be aiming to highlight and give visibility to student employability services and initiatives offered by FASoS.

EMPLOYABILITY WORKING GROUP

After three successful years of our Career Day, and in response to the request of students for more employability related actions, at the beginning of the academic year 2020/2021 the Student Representatives have decided to reinvent our Career Day Planning Group as the Employability Working Group. This group is not only responsible to organise our annual Career Days but also tackles employability-related issues in our year plan. For instance, the improvement of internship support at FASoS, and the creation of additional opportunities for the training of professional skills.

Career Days

Career Days are days organised to tackle student employability. They are organised with the intention to inform students about career paths that can be undertaken after FASoS graduation, to give them insight into the job market and working practices and to connect students with FASoS alumni to open up job or internship opportunities. In order to cater to more students throughout the academic year, and to ease the planning of one massive event, our team has decided to plan three smaller Career events each year instead. These events are being organized according to sector themes (e.g. Politics, Development, Arts, Media etc.) and will follow the same (or a similar) format as the Career Day: i.e., alumni, workshops, and networking. For the 2020/2021 academic year, all three events will take place virtually.

Progress: The first Career Day event introduced the sector politics to students and can generally be seen as a great success. The team successfully overcame all hurdles and received very positive and valuable feedback from the students and the Alumni.

Remark/Follow-up: The next Career Day event is planned for the end of February and will introduce the Arts and Media sector. Due to the feedback we received it will be an event spread over two days instead of one. Details will be announced via FASoS Weekly.

Internship Advisor

Students across all BA and MA programmes have reportedly voiced their dissatisfaction with the insufficient range of support and guidance they receive should they decide to pursue an internship in the context of their studies. While the current internship support takes care of the administrative issues by providing information and material on respective procedures, students are left alone when it comes to locating and securing an internship. Hence the SR suggested creating an “Internship Advisor” position at FASoS. An Internship Advisor would actively help students to identify and secure internship opportunities, counsel and advise students in further proceedings by possessing unique information about vacancies,

recruitment procedures and policies, labour market trends as well as insights into the FASoS curricula and alumni register.

Progress: During the Student Representatives monthly meeting with Giselle Bosse, the proposal was discussed. Giselle Bosse kindly offered to introduce the proposal to Resi Schenk (FASoS Internship coordinator) later in December. As a result of this, a meeting was set on January 15 with Resi, Giselle, and the FASoS program directors with the aim of finalising the task description of the position.

Remark/Follow-up: Giselle Bosse will soon send a document presenting the position and outlining its qualifications/responsibilities based on the SR proposal, the programme directors proposal and the further input shared in this meeting to those who attended the meeting. They will then have the opportunity to comment, review it and add further suggestions. The document should subsequently circulate in at least the different bodies: in this 'education plan' meeting, the Faculty Board, the Program Committees and the Faculty Council. This way, the Student Representatives should have several occasions to review, change and consult the final proposal.

Employability Advisor

There have been increasing calls for more support for entering the labour market, the official recognition of prior experiences and skills and for insight into career options and opportunities. Hence the Student Representatives suggest similar to the Internship Advisor the creation/enhancement of an "Employability Advisor" position at FASoS to provide career education, information, advice and guidance to undergraduate and postgraduate students when it comes to entering the labour market.

Progress: Throughout the last months the main aim was to identify the concrete issues for students when it comes to accessing the labour market and to identify which support is already offered by the faculty or by UM.

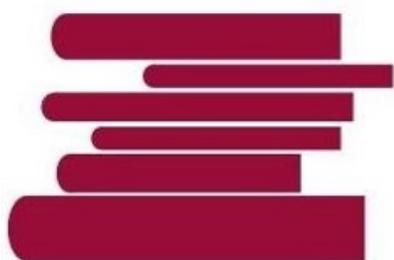
Remark/Follow-up: We would like to start to work with Ghislaine Niessen (current FASoS Employability Coordinator) on the main student concerns.

Professional Skills Track

The skills courses which are currently in place in all BA programmes at FASoS place considerable emphasis on developing academic skills, by focusing on research methodology and design. However, most of them do not offer an opportunity for students to gain hands-on experience and develop the skills which are essential to start a successful professional career.

Progress: Based on a survey which was conducted amongst students to gather their input the WG came up with some ideas and proposals on how to add professional skills to the structure and content of the current skills courses. For example, the SR suggest the introduction of extracurricular FASoS-broad (i.e., accessible for all BA and MA level students), free professional skills track which focuses on employability/professional skills and activities.

Remark/Follow-up: Our preliminary proposals will be introduced to the Dean of Education in the beginning of February and will be further discussed and developed in consultation with the Programme Directors and within the Programme Committee's.



STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

For general questions or inquiries feel free to contact out
via:

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Or reach us via:

 Facebook: Student Representatives FASoS

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