

Hebrew University of Jerusalem – Individual Staff Training 07.02.-11.02.2016

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View from Mount Scopus to the old city of Jerusalem

Preparation

Once I was selected by my home university to go on an individual staff training week to Jerusalem, I got directly in contact with the correspondent International Office. My e-mail was forwarded to Dr. Shabtay Dover, coordinator of administrative staff exchange programmes. Within the next weeks Dr. Dover and I worked together on a programme which included all university organs participating in or interested in the new Erasmus+ exchange programme (Key Action 107).

Arrival

Getting from Nürnberg to Jerusalem was rather easy and affordable. I found a flight (Turkish Airlines) leaving Nürnberg at 11:45 with a stop in Istanbul which arrived at Ben Gurion International Airport Tel Aviv at 19:00. From there I took a shuttle directly to the center of Jerusalem and very close to my hotel.

My first training day started on Sunday, February 7th at 09:30 am. Dr. Dover picked me up at my hotel and took me to the university campus on Mount Scopus, a nice campus where different faculties, like the Faculty of Humanities as well as the Rothberg International School (RIS), where most of the exchange students study, are located.

The first meeting was with Shachar Yanai, Director of Undergraduate Studies Division. In the hour of conversation we exchanged best practices about incoming students. In this discussion we found some similarities in service offers like preparatory language classes, orientation courses, accommodation officers etc. An important information for me was the risk assessment/ situational awareness programme HUJI offers to their international students during orientation. This is a measure to prepare students to be aware of possible terrorist attacks etc. in all situations. Students regularly receive information about current events through various channels (e-mail, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.).

Another important information was that students can take courses taught in English throughout all the faculties. Therefore HUJI expects a proof of English proficiency of C1.

In this first as well as my second meeting with Ayelet Abady, RIS Academic Secretary, another main topic was the issuing of transcripts of records. In RIS teachers and professors get a specific deadline for international students which ahead of the one for regular students. Therefore they try to get transcripts ready within one month after the exams and send them either to the partner university

or the student. Also the choice of courses at HUJI is supervised by a special tutor who serves as a guide for international students as well.

My final meeting for the day was with the HUJI International Relations Office (IEO) including Jane Turner, Head of the International Office, Liat Gabay, responsible for outgoing students as well as Anna Krakovsky, coordinator for incoming students. This discussion was mainly focused on the new Erasmus+ contract between HUJI and FAU as well as measures taken by the Central Office for International Affairs (RIA) of FAU in order to facilitate the exchange programme for Israeli students. Within this conversation we talked about the FAU itself, facts and figures, study possibilities offered in English, language proficiency i.e. Since HUJI has so far not had any students interested in participating in the Erasmus+ programme, we talked about a possible content of a call for applications including the possibility for students of doing a final thesis (Bachelor's or Master's) at FAU. We also focused on academic and administrative staff exchange which we found to be an important measure in the internationalization process and cooperation between both universities.



HUJI International Office: Liat Gabay, Anna Krakovsky, Yvonne Wöhner (FAU), Jane Turner

Another meeting was with Prof. Ofra Tirosh-Becker from the Department of Hebrew and German languages. Prof. Tirosh-Becker has already participated in joint research activities with Prof. Lutz Edzard from FAU. The main point of interest was to increase the mobility of students within the Erasmus+ agreement. An interesting point of discussion was the possibility to include the mobility of PhD-students within the contract. Also the possibility of academic staff exchange was an interesting topic since Prof. Tirosh-Becker herself already visited Prof. Edzard's classes and gave guest lectures at FAU before.

The second meeting of the day was with Prof. Uri Pines, Vice-Dean for Teaching Affairs of the Faculty of Humanities and Ms. Rita Vidri, Academic Secretary. The meeting was later joined by Prof. Dror Wahrman, Dean of the Faculty. The first points of interest were the areas of studies the faculty would like, or sees most potential within the study careers, to send students to FAU. They concluded that it might be most relevant or likely for students from political and religious studies to take the opportunity of studying at FAU. Even an interest in a joint degree within Religious Studies was raised and needs to be discussed further.

The next step was to organize the call for applications which had not been done before. So we discussed the application deadlines for FAU incoming students, details of the Erasmus+ contract as well as the measures which need to be taken by the Academic Secretary. We concluded that the call of proposals needs to be ready by the beginning of March in order to give the Faculty and International Office enough time to choose and later nominate potential candidates. According to the new plan everyone was highly motivated to encourage more students to apply for the Erasmus+ programme.

Another venue was the Edmond J.Safra Campus and mainly focused on research questions. The first meeting took place with Rachel Amir, Director of the Authority for Research Students (mainly PhD-students). We mainly talked about practices and the joint degrees HUJI has for example with the Freie Universität Berlin which provides PhD-students with a double doctoral degree from both universities. Since there are differences in practices concerning the grading of the thesis HUJI decided to leave the accreditation in hands of the home university of the corresponding students.

My second meeting was with Noa Edelstein, Assistant Head of the European Countries Desk and Representative of the Authority for Research and Development in Germany. First of all we talked about ongoing research projects between FAU and HUJI within the field of molecular medicine. Later we discussed the possibility of staff exchange in order to facilitate the communication between researchers from both universities.

In both meetings I also informed the colleagues of HUJI about our Welcome Center and the possibilities of visiting FAU as guest researchers/professors. Again, the topic of including PhD-exchange within the Erasmus+ contract was raised.



Edmond J.Safra Campus

The last day of my training week took again place at the Mount Scopus Campus. The first meeting was scheduled with Yael Baron of the Martin Buber Society of Fellows in the Humanities and Social Sciences. She introduced me to the Fellowship programme initiated by the HUJI and the BMBF (German Federal Ministry for Education and Research). The programme is designed for postdoctoral candidates both from Germany and Israel. The prerequisites for German/European candidates are that they gained their PhD in Germany and finished it within the previous 5 years. Candidates apply with their research projects and are, if chosen, invited to an interview in front of an international committee. The purpose is to build an international research community within the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences and to strengthen the bond between Israeli and German fellows. So far no candidates from FAU have applied within the first 5 programme years. Therefore it will be a good measure to introduce and promote the programme to FAU candidates.

The second meeting of the day was with Ido Benvenisti, Program Coordinator of the Glocal Community Development Studies. Glocal is an international Master's programme which is not a part of the RIS. The programme focuses on community work and international development and consists of about 25 students per year. Half of the students is from Israel and the other half partially from „developing“ countries, mainly African, and partially from „developed“ countries in North America and/or Europe. It lasts 18 months which include a 4-month internship. The plan is now to open the programme to international exchange students mainly from social sciences and development studies in order to increase the international contribution and awareness of students for one another. A long-term goal would be to include also refugee students in the programme. The idea of Glocal is also to facilitate the possibility of students to do their internship abroad. In order to attract more students from Germany, they now focus on the exchange of students via Erasmus+.

The following meeting took place with Miri Stern-Lev, Associate Dean, and Ronit Sasson, Secretary for Student Affairs of the Faculty of Social Sciences. Main topics were the handling of the new Erasmus+ contracts, the planned call for applications as well as the possibility of a PhD-student exchange. We exchanged practices and information concerning both universities like academic calendars, course options etc. The main conclusion was that the academic times work perfectly together since the semesters start and end basically at the same time in both universities. Application deadlines and prerequisites were discussed in order to get the call for applications published on time. Another important aspect was the structuring of the faculty in regards to international exchange. In this sense the idea of employing someone entirely focused on student exchange was raised.



Faculty of Law, Mount Scopus Campus

After the lunch break we changed to the faculty of law where we met with Ayelet Erez, Associate Dean, and Prof. Guy Harpaz, Head of teaching programs in English. The Faculty of Law is the oldest one in Israel and very international. It encourages student exchange and by now has about 25 agreements with international universities including the University of Passau and the FU Berlin. They offer a variety of courses taught in English and have about 70 outgoing and 30 incoming students per year of which 4-5 are German. Furthermore the faculty receives about 20 lecturers from abroad each year. Besides the regular programmes the faculty offers 3 Master programmes entirely taught in English including a 1 year LLM programme for international students.

In order to increase the exchange possibilities and the internationalization of the programmes, the faculty is very interested in participating in the Erasmus+ cooperation and maybe signing a new agreement. Possibilities of exchange were discussed and contacts exchanged.

The last meeting of my training week was with Prof. Meir Hatina, Department Head of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, who already has strong bonds with FAU. In the upcoming May he will be participating in the academic exchange and come to FAU. One of the main purposes of his visit will be the planning of a workshop or conference on modern topics within the field of Middle Eastern Studies. Another initiative he is planning is a joint supervision programme for German students by German and Israeli academics. In the meantime our common interest is the improvement of student exchange and the promotion of the Erasmus+ programme.

Conclusions

During the huge amount of meetings with all different kinds of staff, academic as well as administrative, within several faculties I found a common interest in

- PhD student exchange
- a structured way of promoting the Erasmus+ exchange places to students
- administrative and academic staff exchange as a means for strengthening and reinforcing the bonds between the universities and to facilitate the communication
- the demand and possibility of signing new agreements with the faculties of Medicine and Law.
- an interest in joint degrees in Religious Studies i.e.

For me the time I spent at HUJI was in many ways rewarding, not only professionally but also personally. I got to know a lot of different people and perspectives as well as a very interesting location which I can now highly recommend to interested outgoing students. The programme Dr. Dover prepared for me was extremely well-tailored and all the breaks were used for discussions about the current situations in Germany and Israel. This way I also learned not only about the university but also about cultural and historic aspects of Israel. I highly recommend every staff member to take the chance in participating in a staff exchange. It is a wonderful way to go abroad and get connected internationally.