

Proposals for improving the AGES Interdisciplinary Project based on project evaluation meeting and other meetings, March 2024

1. Each project should be supervised by a person with a scientific/technical education with an agricultural and/or food system dimension and one from the social sciences, humanities or economics. At least one person should have a doctorate and three years of teaching experience. If these conditions are not met by two people, a third person can be brought in, e.g. to teach a credit by providing occasional, serious advice on the corresponding underrepresented dimension and also on grading the final work.
2. At least one person responsible for the project and ideally the "main person responsible" should be present at the initial project presentation. Information should be provided as to whether the project is primarily a project that is close to practice, research, inter- and/or transdisciplinarity. The German, EU and international dimensions should be presented. The degrees of freedom in the project should also be presented and how the cooperation with the supervisors will be organised (time rhythm and mode of meetings, purely advisory role of supervisors or also input, establishment of contacts, role of research projects, etc.).
3. In the summer semester (12 weeks), we suggest that the projects have clearly defined and justified the task and question in the fourth week of the semester and present them to their fellow students and supervisors in a 5-minute, recorded PPT via Moodle and justify how they plan to answer them. Changes are of course still possible afterwards. At the same time, the graded final product of the project (preliminary and almost binding) should be determined in consultation with supervisors. Fellow students and especially all of us are then asked to comment on these PPTs within a week. Alternatively, there could be 10-minute presentations in presence followed by a discussion. How to present and exchange on project aims and methods is to be agreed and presented to students by the time we meet on 17 April.
4. Students from other M.Sc. degree programmes should also be admitted, subject to sufficient English language skills.
5. At best, each project should have at least 6 participants because students may drop out.
6. The presentation at the end of the semester should clarify the following questions: Goal and justification of the project, method, intermediate status, next steps, final product. Relatively strict attention should be paid to the duration of the presentations and it should be emphasised that these should be held as "professionally" as possible unless it was agreed otherwise. The discussion should be moderated by independent persons and limited in time (students after preparation, module coordinator, t.b.d.). There should be a standardised assessment scheme for the presentations, which is discussed beforehand in the project. At least one supervisor of a project should be present at the presentation. Others can also join in via Zoom if necessary.
7. The inclusion of practice partners in the presentations is desirable.
8. Students should receive brief and concise written feedback from selected lecturers present (and on a concise form) on what could be improved and how the project could be further developed. This should be discussed in a meeting between the students and those responsible for the PJ shortly after the presentation date.
9. As soon as possible, we should agree on some general assessment criteria for policy briefs, reports etc. on the part of the lecturers and these should then be made transparent. Module coordination will make a proposal. However, alternative presentation media should also be permitted for both the presentation and the final report. If necessary, training should also take place in this regard.
10. All documents relating to projects should be collected in a Moodle platform. All students must register there. The Moodle platform should be valid for several years and also contain materials from previous semesters for viewing.
11. After this next summer semester, we will assess whether the interdisciplinary student projects should generally be moved to the (2nd) summer semester in the plan of studies.

12. The accompanying programme would then remain in the first (winter) semester. Project work introduction etc. should relate more specifically to student groups. This needs to be rethought, also with regard to content and recognition through credits.
13. Students can swap projects until the third PJ week.
14. Project supervisors should receive minutes of the project meetings ideally every week unless agreed otherwise among students and supervisors and according to a defined format. One or several supervisors should have a verbal exchange with the project every 3 weeks about status of the work, next steps and problems.
15. We should clarify whether the projects can be granted a certain amount of flexibility when applying for funding (QSL funds), as certain needs only arise in the course of the work.
16. A more local excursion at the beginning of a project is desirable but must be applied for in due course.
17. Grading: 10% Exposé presentation in fourth week; 45% end-of-semester presentation; 45% final report (or similar). Assessment criteria need to be made transparent
18. The project module coordinator is responsible for implementing the above points. This is currently me.

ANNEX

23 February 2024 - **Meeting to reflect on the first iteration of the Interdisciplinary Project module in the Master AGES**

Present:

Supervisors of the first three projects: Elsa Varela-Redondo, Bettina König, Louis Thiemann.

AGES programme leader: Andreas Thiel

Student representatives: Elisabeth Kurtz, Sushant Khadka

Intro round:

- Elsa:
- Happy with progress of the student groups
 - 5 students is ideal size
 - the Christmas break coincided with a critical moment in project work, but we could not meet for 3 weeks. -> vacuum
 - Structure of the report: So far the writing process is unsupervised
 - > **Proposal:** Academic Writing course should come after the presentations

Tobias Plieninger (co-supervisor, via email):

- Having students interact in project groups already in the first semester has many advantages for the AGES programme.

Elisabeth:

- Main challenge in her group: One member got very sick, and another only really joined in January, close to the presentations

- Project remained shallow
- Project report is a policy paper -> almost ready
- It was nice to get to know each other early in the programme
- The project group was very independent, not much instruction -> good!

Sushant: (took the project supervised by Elsa and Tobias)

- our group had closer supervision, meetings every Wednesday either with Elsa or only the students

- satisfied with the programme, deep learning process in large-batch data analysis

Louis: - Group had great interpersonal dynamic -> Excursion at the beginning was helpful!

- Group went through an agonistic process of concretising the topic and methods, since different aspects were of interest to each student

Bettina:- our group had mainly organisational difficulties:

- did not meet every week

- connection between accompanying seminars and group project was unclear at times

- topic was set for our group, so the disciplinary diversity of students could not be brought in easily

- topic focused on Germany, so intercultural aspects were missed

Andreas: - I saw extreme variation in the three presentations

- > **Proposal:** Create a more professional setup for the final presentation. Mock presentation the week before; presentation training.

- More feedback for students needed after the presentation

- > **Proposal:** Assign each student to write constructive feedback on other projects

- In some projects it appears to have taken too long to arrive at a concrete question

- > **Proposal:** Create structure of preliminary outputs, e.g. research questions have to be sent to module coordinator and supervisors in

week

3rd

- Workload high for 1st semester

Bettina:- More clarity needed on who has the responsibility of steering the process.

Ebbi: - our group was quick at agreeing on a question

- would be good to have a "project (module) manager"

- start with social event

Louis: **Proposal:** Mid-term presentation after six weeks
 - 12.6. at 1-3pm - 10min per group, then discussion.

Bettina:- Both open and pre-defined projects are valid, but this needs to be announced beforehand to the students, so they can choose

Louis: **Proposal:** Use moodle for all this: Students upload interim results, moodle offers a forum to connect

Andreas: - avoid bias for German/EU issues

Sushant: - better to move first project to 2nd semester so students can settle in first and gain disciplinary knowledge

Ebbi: - Seminar programme was useful, but the project management seminars were not directed at this type of project. More concrete offers needed, which align with project progress

 - Perhaps arts students can be involved in the presentation techniques seminar

Input Discussion Revision Ages PJ of AT (Module Leader I - PJ)

- What is the AGES unique selling point? FB 11 Support?
- Supervision doctorate / non-doctorate / practice?
- What is interdisciplinarity?
- Professionalisation of presentations (better management and delivery?)
- Protocols? Structured feedback? Interdisciplinary feedback?
- Dealing with student-induced PJs? How to maintain balance?
- Subdivision of research- and practice-orientated PJ?
- How to involve practice partners? In supervision?
- How do we get to the transformation dimension?
- Should we define a framework for the PJ to avoid "wasting time" at the beginning?
- Mandatory meetings at certain times?
- How do we ensure that we do justice to internationals?
- Balanced contribution of fellow students, how to enable?
- How are studies actually empowered via the accompanying programme?
- Grading of the PPTs? Standardised criteria, who grades, jury?
- What is the best time for the PPTs?
- What was the question in each case?
- Can we raise the level?
- Define more demanding outputs?
- Dealing with two-semester PJs?
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+++++ minutes

- Work load? When?
- Freedom, to what extent?
- Report, who defines course work?
- Group mark?
- Dropouts?
- Too early
- Good to get to know each other
- People getting to know each other, dynamic was good
- Projects better to build on previous term
- Ideally, defined outside produce....
- Public presentations?
- Fixed timing or flexible slots to avoid overlaps?
- Side events role?!
- Supportive accompanying
- Pre-discipline role?
- How flexible in projects?
- Clarity on what is due when?
- Unclear who is responsible for process and final presentation, who sets standards?
- Intermediary outputs, intermediary control...
- Who is responsible for the process?
- More creative mode of presenting projects - involve art schools....
- Start projects with excursion!

- Presentations among groups? Earlier? To compare status quo
- How to deal with diversity of projects?
- Maintain diversity
- Indicate openness or closeness?!
- More structure on who needs to do what, how?
- Global South dimension?
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FLOW:

1. set up moodle course for projects where all information and background material

2. proposal document with deadline: Students, lecturers, module coordinator

- Minimum and maximum number of participants
- Specify which degree programmes
- Who proposes?
- Region
- Research, practice, transformation
- Accompanying programme was good. Not that useful though because traditional has different organisation set-up!
- Use outside info more....
- Moodle of resources for project
- Forum function with uploaded interim presentations....

3. selection PA! Criteria:

- Examination regulations,
- balanced
- South / North
- FBs
- Research practice
- Agronomic reference
- Degree of interdisciplinarity
- Degree of transdisciplinarity
- Student proposal/ lecturer proposal

PA decides by circulation or in person: Ranking of PJs

There can also be too many PJs if lecturers agree

Then....

4. communication with proposers, improvements if necessary
5. appointment for presentation, then ranking of wishes....
6. application, briefly justify interest and Bachelor
7. contact with supervisors and, if applicable, students
8. allocation
9. switching options?
- 10 What if I leave?