



MPCT Study Programme Report 2005-2006



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Introduction

This report is based on the evaluations carried out at the Centre for Peace Studies. All subjects have been evaluated through quest back lecturer evaluations, quest back student evaluations and SSL-meetings (regular meetings between students and staff, SSL = Student-Staff Liason). The results of these evaluations is analysed and the most relevant matters are presented in this report. The analyses also include a comparison with last years report to be able to identity different developments within the study-programme. Additionally the report contains analyses of statistics on applications and admission to the programme as well as analyses of the results in the different subjects. It is the program board that is responsible for the MPCT Study Programme Report 2005-2006.

An overall assessment of the MPCT-programme is that it on its fifth year it is running well. Here are three important programme achievements from 2005/2006:

1. The establishment of a new programme board for the MPCT with the mandate to oversee and facilitate long term programme development.
2. The Establishment of more comprehensive methodological training for students in both the first and second years of the MPCT programme through the development of SVF-3023 and SVF-3025.
3. General maturation of the MPCT courses on the MPCT. Courses and routines are sufficiently settled that they can, subject to evaluations, run as a rolling programme in the short term. Meanwhile, the context for broader considerations for MPCT's future developments can be developed through the programme board.

Still, there are some important challenges for the programme ahead. When the programme now is starting to settle down, more resources can be allocated to focusing on long-term strategies for the programme. Three of the main challenges ahead are:

1. To improve recruitment and retention of highly qualified students to the MPCT with a focus upon recruiting more Nordic students.
2. To improve thesis completion rates within the timescale of 2 years, particularly those of Nordic students.
3. Continuous improvement of teaching and supervision standards and to ensure that teachers and supervisors are aware of and able to competently carry out programme expectations.

Admission quality

The MPCT- programme has an international recruitment of students, with a mixture of students from Nordic and non-Nordic countries. It is directed at students trained in social sciences or humanities, law or health sciences. Applicants must document at least three years of studies at university level beyond the basic entrance requirement, equivalent to a Bachelor degree or similar. Preference is given to applicants who can document academic work, experience and interest in topics related to peace and conflict transformation. Applicants must therefore enclose a statement of purpose or personal essay of approximately 2 pages describing their interest and/or experience in this field. The programme is taught in English and accepted applicants must have documented adequate English proficiency in order to enrol.

The admission process 2005

The MPCT-programme has three categories of applicants; quota scholarship, self financed international applicants and Nordic applicants. There are 24 seats available every year where 12 are for international students while the other 12 are for Nordic students. The application pool over the past three years follows:

Category of application		Numbers of qualified applicants by year		
	2003	2004	2005	2006
Quota students	95	185	179	25
International self financed students	24	79	27	16
Nordic students	32	20	11	14

As we can see, the relative number of quota students has been quite high. This has, however, changed dramatically in 2006. The reason for this change is the University's new restrictions in the application process for quota scholarships. Following the new restrictions, the Centre is required to have a cooperation agreement with the university of the quota scholarship applicant. This drastically narrows down the numbers of students who are qualified to apply. For the MPCT programme, the diversity of students from different places, also those who are not already attached to the Centre, is of great importance. Considering that the centre only has one academic staff member, it is limited to what degree the centre can manage to establish these cooperation agreements to an extent that is desirable. This is a real challenge for the centre in the future.

Going to the Nordic applications, we can see that in 2006 there are just barely enough applicants to fill the seats available. For the centre to fill its seats and be able to pick out the students most qualified for this programme it is vital that this number is higher. It is important that the centre looks into reasons for this and discusses how we can increase this applicant pool.

Looking at the international applicants that are self-financed, there is some important background information that needs to be explored and attended to. Many of these applicants were highly qualified students from the United States. Unfortunately, once admitted, these students were not able to come here because of difficulties with securing financial support. The students studying abroad get financial support from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if the College/University they are going to have a working relationship with this organisation. The University of Tromsø is not on their list of colleges/universities with whom they have a working

relationship. Nonetheless, it is possible for UiTø to apply for accreditation by FAFSA. This process must be initiated by the University of Tromsø, and the Centre for Peace Studies is now working with the central administration to get the University to apply for this accreditation. Staff at the CPS are aware of this issue and have been working to try and resolve this matter in order to retain current students. From a longer term perspective if the MPCT and UiTø wish to attract and recruit students from the US it is essential that UiTø respond to deal with this matter positively, as the current policy operates to the detriment of the University as a whole.

A second matter is that all MPCT activities are conducted in English, and it is therefore important that all students admitted have good knowledge of English. Even though the applicants must be able to document adequate proficiency in English, language still seems to be a problem for some of the students. The Academic Coordinator has raised the issue of English language skills with some students, particularly in relation to performance in oral examinations. In the future, MPCT could create a requirement for students' whose English language skills are documented to be too poor to function adequately in the programme to take English classes to get them to the required level.

Action points

- 1. Establish more relationships to potential universities for quota scholarships.**
- 2. Pursue the application process for FAFSA.**
- 3. Develop a strategy to recruit Nordic students.**
- 4. Determine standards and practices that ensure that students have adequate English proficiency to actively participate in MPCT.**

Input quality

The centre coordinates 4 mandatory courses, 1 elective and the master's thesis. With only one academic staff member in place at the centre and with an intention to cover all the different subjects represented in the programme, these courses rely mostly on external lecturers. Additionally, all of the subjects in the MPCT make use of external examiners for the evaluation of the home and oral exams. The centre is also relying on supervisors from other units at the university in addition to some external supervisors for the master's thesis. Hence, the centre spends a lot of administrative time coordinating the programme. In 2005 and 2006 the centre has deliberately allocated more administrative time into the coordination of these courses. This has made the programme run more smoothly for both teachers and students.

The main question for the centre regarding input quality is how we hire the external lecturers. There are mainly two ways of doing this. The lecturer can either take on teaching at the peace programme on top of their duties at their home departments or they can arrange with their home department to do the teaching as part of their regular duties (*pliktarbeid*). In the first case, the centre pays the lecturer directly. In the latter it is the department that gets paid. The majority of the departments are reluctant to include teaching at the MPCT-programme as part of their employees required duties for the department. Consequently, many lecturers do not have the extra hours available for teaching or supervising the peace students. It can therefore be difficult for the centre to recruit teachers internally. It is important that the centre acknowledges these challenges

connected to hiring teaching personnel for the programme, as well as maintain a dialogue with the faculty and the departments about productive ways of doing this for all concerned.

Action point

- 1. Identify and/or negotiate successful strategies for facilitating the recruitment of internal human resources to the Centre.**

Result quality

The main challenge for the centre is how to get students to graduate within the allotted time for the MPCT programme. Only 4 international of 23 students graduated this spring. The centre needs to carefully study the reasons for this and identify strategies for changing these low numbers.

Regarding the grades results from the different MPCT courses, they don't deviate much from the results of the faculty as a whole. The overall results for master's degree courses within the Faculty of Social Sciences and within the MPCT programme are distributed as follows:

Subject	A	B	C	D	E	F
Overall distribution social sciences	17,9%	36,1%	33%	9,1%	2,1%	1,5%
SVF-3021	10%	45%	20%	25%	-	-
SVF-3022	30,4%	43,5%	21,7%	4,3%	-	-
SVF-3023	14,3%	42,9%	23,8%	19%	-	-
SVF-3024	11,1%	44,4%	38,8%	5,6%	-	-
SVF-3901	6,25%	50%	37,5%	6,25%	-	-

The main differences between SVF and MPCT results is that there were no E's or F's assigned in any of the subjects at the MPCT-programme and that MPCT has awarded more D's than the faculty as a whole.

SVF-3022 is the only subject that is clearly different in its distribution of grades. Here the main emphasis is on A's and B's with only five C's and one D. The same occurred the previous years in the programme. This has been discussed in the SSL where the students expressed that this course has a more defined theme and literature and is easier to relate to than for instance SVF-3021.

Action points

- 1. Understand and address the reasons why students don't finish the programme in time**

Teaching quality

The average results seem to be more or less around 3 on a scale from 1-5 where 5 is the best. This is a common average grade in the different MPCT courses as a whole, though ratings differ more by teacher. These results are not published in the report due to personal considerations, which will be discussed later.

The SSL has been a great help in solving problems along the way, and the matters that have been discussed there have been taken into consideration by the staff. For example, the students expressed some dissatisfaction with SVF-3021 especially. Their concerns were primarily, due to how the lectures were coordinated and structured. The academic coordinator then asked the lecturers to include structured class discussions next time the course was offered. The lecturers were also to provide the reading materials in advance so that compendiums could be available on time. Since some of the lectures were hard to follow because of their lack of structure, the lecturers were asked to prepare and structure their lectures using Power-Point to present their material. Lecturers were also asked to relate their material more to the overall theme of the course.

This seems to have given results already in the spring, when most students express that they are more satisfied with the courses this semester.

Still, one of the main challenges within the MPCT-programme is creating an approach to peace studies as a whole. While some students emphasise the multidisciplinary approach, others struggle to find the connections between the different parts of the whole offered in each of the courses. This poses some demanding challenges to the coordination of the course. Last year's programme report focused a lot on improving communication and coordination of the different subjects, both regarding content and teachings. Actions have been taken to improve this. Nevertheless, it is an ongoing process and definitely one of the biggest challenges for the centre.

Examinations within the programme

From August 2006 the plan of study has been revised related to the 10 credit course SVF-3022 Culture, conflict and society. The oral examination has been omitted and replaced by a mandatory oral presentation in class. Up until this revision was initiated, all MPCT courses had oral examination in addition to a written essay as take home assignment. The revision was addressed as a first step in a broader revision process of the current plan of study, and will be discussed in detail throughout 2006-2007.

The MPCT programme has hired external examiners to assess all course examinations. This has led to very high costs related to examinations and negative budgetary implications. Through a process of adjusting the current examination forms, the financial situation must be taken into consideration to find the best possible solutions.

Evaluation of the teachers

All teachers are personally evaluated. The results of these evaluations are not published in any reports due to personal considerations. Up until now, there has not been a routine for how to handle these results. This year, course evaluations have been monitored and followed up on by the academic coordinator. It is important that every teacher has access to their course feedback in

order to be able to revise their teaching, if necessary. It is also important for the Centre to systematically evaluate these results in order to see which lectures work and which don't.

What could make this process easier and more systematic is to make a personnel file for each of the teachers that only the staff of the centre and the teacher have access to. This way the centre could give the teachers the feedback from the results, and make it possible to go deeper into evaluations that over time shows some problems with one teacher.

Supervision

All students at the MPCT-programme have a supervisor when writing for SVF-3023 and when writing their master's thesis. The evaluations indicate very mixed experiences with this supervision. Some students are very pleased and happy with their supervision whilst others are not so satisfied, feeling that they don't get the help they need from their supervisors. The Academic Coordinator has provided detailed information in the new supervisors contract about what is expected of them to prepare students for data collection, fieldwork and methodological approaches to their thesis. Supervisors are also sent information about SVF 3023 early in the spring semester. This information clarifies their role and what is expected. It is also stressed to students that they have a responsibility for their own learning and that if they experience problems with supervision then they should raise this issue with the Academic Coordinator. One student changed supervisor early in the spring semester as a result of such discussions. Every effort is taken to ensure that student's legitimate concerns about supervision are responded to.

Action points

- 1. Examine and work to improve the use of appropriate exams for each of the MPCT courses.**
- 2. Seek to balance the use of external examiners in the course examinations**

The learning environment

The students on the MPCT-programme are provided with reading rooms and computer in the Lower Pavilion. The Centre also provides them with a library, containing required readings for the programme and other relevant readings. Travel grants are provided for field work, and some course-related trips and other social arrangements are offered by the centre.

The evaluations show that the students are satisfied with and appreciate the infrastructure at the Centre.

The students on the MPCT-programme are a very diverse group which poses high demands on the administration for how to best coordinate the programme and keep students well-informed on programme-related matters. This eats up a lot of the administration's resources. Plus, it is challenging to filter all the information given to the students in a proper way. How much should one expect the students to figure out for them selves and how much and what kind of information has to be provided from the administration?

Action point

- 1. Identify the barriers to effective communication and work on improving the facilitation of programme-relevant information to all students.**

Appendix

Resources spent on teaching:

SVF-3021		Competance	Hours of teaching
Academic Coordinator	Stuart Robinson	Associate Professor	0
	Diane Lister	Associate Professor	2
Other lecturers	Vidar Vambheim	Associate Professor	12
	Thomas Nilsen	Deputy General Secretary the Barents Secreteriat	1
	Randi Rønning Balsvik	Professor	8
	Tor Dahl Eriksen	Associate Professor	5
	Laila Susanne Vars		6
	Carl Erik Schultz	Professor	6
	Jens Petter Nielsen	Professor	2
	Jill Wolfe		8
Guest lectureres	Roy Bhaskar	Professor	8
	Rob Walker	Professor	6
SVF 3022			
Academic Coordinator	Bror Olsen	Assistant Professor	10
Other lecturers	Ragnhild Dybdahl		4
	Ingvild Flaskerud	Assistant Professor	4
SVF-3023			
Academic Coordinator	Diane Lister	Associate Professor	50
Other lecturers	Alberto Valiente Thoresen	Universitetslektor	24
SVF-3024			
Academic Coordinator	Diane Lister	Associate Professor	2
Other lecturers	Kirsti Stuvøy	Doctoral Fellow	6
	Gunhild Hoogensen	Associate Professor	16
	Holger Pötszch	Research Fellow	4
	Tone Skinningsrud	Associate Professor	2
Guest lecturers	Gavriel Salomon	Professor	7
	Álvaro Cedenõ	Negotiation arbitration	16
	Anette Giertsen	Redd Barna	8
	Mauricio Gabroit	Professor	14
	Wenche Hauge	Senior Researcher	4
	Roy Bhaskar	Professor	8
SVF-3025 (This is an elective course for the students, but is mentioned			

here because it is coordinated by the Centre.			
Academic Coordinator	Diane Lister	Associate Professor	7
Other lecturers	Tone Skinningsrud	Associate Professor	8
	Kari Myklbust	Assistant Professor	4
	Bror Olsen	Assistant Professor	8

Resources spent on supervision (hours of supervision for students who graduated in 2005-2006):

Supervisor	Competence and affiliation	Hours (= work hours)
Vidar Vambheim	Associate professor, IPLU/CPS	260
Torjer A. Olsen	Research fellow, IRV	108
Walter Schönfelder	Research fellow, ISO	60
Bror Olsen	Associate professor, ISA	90
Trond Thuen	Professor, ISA	60
Trond Waage	Associate professor, VCS	60
Stuart Robinson	Associate professor, IST/CPS	120
Kirsti Stuvøy	Research fellow, IST	60
Sven Gunnar Simonsen	Senior researcher, PRIO	60
Gunhild Hoogensen	Associate professor, IST	120
Inge Amundsen	Senior researcher, CMI	20
Rune Ottosen	Professor, UC of Oslo	20
Dag Erik Berg	Research fellow, UiB	20
Tormod Sund	Research fellow, ISA	12

List of electives offered at the programme:

Emnekode	Emnenavn
Spring	
HIS-2002	Den samiske nasjon. Urfolk, minoriteter og det flerkulturelle samfunn i historisk perspektiv
SPL-3007	Globalisering og utvikling
STV-3052	Model United Nations
STV-2005	International political economy
REL-3004	Åpent emne
SOA-3005	Sosialantropologiske perspektiver på vold og konflikt
SOA-3007	Urfolk og ressursbruk
ENG-3108	Engelsk litteraturvitenskap: Koloniale diskurser i britisk 1800-tallslitteratur
HIF-3620	Representations and self-representations

HEL-3011	Fred, helse og medisinsk arbeid
SVF-3106	Film som praksisbasert forskning
Autumn	
PED-3009	Peace Education
HIS-3005	Introduksjon til urfolkshistorie: Fra kolonisering til revitalisering
SPL-3010	Kultur og planlegging i et Nord/Sør-perspektiv
STV-3006	Menneskerettigheter og minoritetsrettigheter
SOA-3006	Indigenous Culture and Ethnicity
ENG-3105	Grensepoetikk
ENG-3103	Toni Morrison og den afro-amerikanske litterære tradisjon
JUR-3650	Urfolksrett Indigenous Studies
SVF-3105	Film i krysskulturell forskning