

# MIA Fundamentals Week 2019: Gaining Insights

by Isabel Heer & Alina Eichrodt

The fundamentals week for the MIA programme took place two weeks before the official semester start in September. We had the chance to get to know each other, gain insights from four Alumni and prepare ourselves for the job market. The first two days were mainly about understanding the goals and responsibilities of our Master's programme. This also



included getting to know each other as well as the main professors who gave us a brief overview of the diverse courses they offer – from research methods and economics to international law and governance – there is something for everyone and the best thing is, we

can shape our own profile. In the breaks the students talked eagerly about their preferences and how great it is that we can choose between all these different courses and set our own focus. That our selectable study focus will shape our future path was shown by the presentation of four Alumni who are all working in different sectors. They gave us an idea of what we can achieve with our interdisciplinary academic background. In the



Meeting Alumni: Dr. Kaspar Schiltz, Marie-Luise Walter, Prof. Christoph Frei, Dr. Gieri Hinnen and Milena Müller

afternoon, we engaged in an interactive workshop organized by the career centre where we defined

our unique selling points. On day three, we dived deeper into the study content and had the opportunity to either choose between joining a workshop about the different steps of developing a research question or participating in a case study.

In the research question group Professor Patrick Emmenegger, teaching “State and Economy”, one of our three mandatory core classes, started with a presentation on how to develop a good research question. Especially for those who did not write a thesis before, this was crucial regarding the imminent Master's thesis. After the theoretical information session, it was our task to develop our own research question in groups of three and present our work

the next day. Formulating a research question on the given topic “The Conflict in Syria” within a day, was a challenging task but every group managed it well. After the presentations, Professor Christoph Frei, teaching “International Governance”, the second of our mandatory core classes, and three of his colleagues provided us with critical feedback. We appreciated the feedback because now we know what to consider when developing our research question for the Master’s thesis.

The second group had the pleasure to work on different case studies together with Dr. Rolf Tanner, who previously held the role of Senior Risk Manager at Swiss Re. In teams, we simulated a real-life case study of a company that has been affected by domestic or international political decisions, e.g. how should Peugeot react on sanctions imposed on Iran? We had to place ourselves in the shoes of the corporate strategy team of



an international company and assess current policy decisions followed by an evaluation of possible alternatives and options. All teams were able to present their findings with the listeners acting as the board of directors who evaluated the strength of policy recommendations made. This assignment was not only incredibly fun, but also eye-opening in understanding why global companies desire individuals who are able to look at issues not just from a business and economics perspective, but also from a political one. This is the reason we give to our friends for why we chose the MIA: It provides us with an interdisciplinary know-how that is crucial in any kind of international decision-making process.



To wrap up a week full of networking, insights and preparations we visited the company Stadler Rails in St.Margrethen. An alumnus talked about the challenges and advantages of doing business in Switzerland and abroad. Exploring the rail vehicle construction company on-site was a refreshing experience after a week of rather theoretical activities at the university. In the evening, we enjoyed a great dinner of Swiss Tapas together. This was especially exciting for all the international students coming from different parts of the world.