School of Philosophy and Art History

UNDERGRADUATE STAFF/STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

27 February 2017
15.00-16.00 in 6.348

Minutes

Present: Dr Diana Presciutti (Chair – UG Director, Art History), Dr Fiona Hughes (UG Director, Philosophy), Sarah Mumford (Deputy School Administrator), Marie Gribbin (UG Administrator) Patrick Yates (2nd Year Philosophy), Iuliana Sambotin (2nd Year Philosophy and Politics), Henrikke Teian (2nd Year Philosophy (IYA), Joshua Mitchell (1st Year Art History), Stif Lazarov (1st Year Art History) Fred Lenox-Conyngham (3rd Year Philosophy (IYA).

Apologies: Ugnė Revinskaitė (1st Year Philosophy and Politics),

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Introduction of Committee Members</strong></td>
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<td>The members of staff and the Course Reps introduced themselves.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2016</strong></td>
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<td>The minutes were accepted by the meeting.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Matters arising from the Minutes</strong></td>
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<td>There were no matters arising from the minutes.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>Issues raised by Course Reps, including comments posted in the School’s Comment Boxes</strong></td>
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<td>a) <strong>Reading summaries</strong></td>
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<td>Students have expressed their frustration over the return of the Weekly Reading Summaries in one module. The students recognised that the official turnaround time is four weeks after submission, but they were concerned that this did not allow them to make use of feedback on early Summaries in later Summaries. It was reported that feedback for Reading Summaries on other modules were returned weekly. Students suggested that a statement of what is expected for each Summary would help and that also there needed to be some kind of standardisation where the module was taught by more than one tutor.</td>
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<td>It was explained that although the summaries are short there are sometimes a large number of students on the module which makes the turnaround time of a week unsustainable. In addition it was explained that this form of assessment has just been introduced to the Philosophy modules this year and feedback on how it is working is very useful. It could be that a review will be done to see if the modules with type of assessment will be capped at a certain number, to see if fortnightly summaries would work better, to see if the first summary could be marked in time to be beneficial for the second Summary, to investigate whether general oral feedback could be used during the lecture or class and to see, where numbers on a module exceeded the model number, if there could be an alternative method of assessment.</td>
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**ACTION:** SM to discuss with Departmental Manager about how the assessment can be managed going forward so that students are satisfied with turnaround of feedback.

b) Optional Essays (Philosophy)
Facebook messages reported that the students were in favour of bringing back the Optional Essay (a second assessment opportunity (for the same assessment) given to a student where an assignment is marked at a minimum of 35) as it provided a ‘fall-back’ for poor marks achieved within the year. This is in response to the number of coursework assessments increasing as a result of the dropping of exams in Philosophy 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} year modules. Discussions are currently happening between the Head of Department and the teaching staff and if agreed it will be brought back as one per student only.
It was agreed that this was more relevant to 3\textsuperscript{rd} year students who have had previous experience of the Optional Essay. Further discussion included the concerns that more marking would impact further on tutors and this would not be in the best interests of the students and that exams, in the past, have impacted negatively on the overall module marks for most students.

**ACTION:** for UG Director to update students on whether the return of Optional Essays has been agreed.

c) Philosophy Summer modules and assessments
Further reports from the students were in protest over the number of assessments during the Summer modules which will be introduced this year. The teaching will be intensive and the assessments will be throughout the 5 week modules.
Students are concerned that this will actually be harder than exams.

It was explained that the summer modules were introduced as a way to benefit the students as they have fewer modules in the Autumn and Spring term. There will be a fast turnaround of assessment feedback and this will benefit the student.

Students reps reported that one student had expressed an interest in a 30 credit dissertation. It was explained that 30 credit dissertation modules had proven to be risky in the past as students had often struggled and underperformed.

In response to the suggestion that there should be a greater choice of modules in the summer term the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Philosophy) explained that the modules on offer were limited by the amount of staff that were available to teach.

Students suggested that having the Philosophy Dissertation in the Summer term would allow for better focus on the module, as well as offering an additional option in the summer term.

d) 48 Hour Take-Home exams
It was reported that the method of assessment involving an assignment to be written and submitted within 48 hours was not popular with some of the students.
Students had found them very stressful and at times overwhelming. Further discussion highlighted the timing of these exams and also that some had been for a module that had concluded in the previous term. The expectations of the assessment were discussed. It was decided that a clear outline of what was expected from the student and also to ensure that the assessment was not over a weekend (so as not to disadvantage students that needed to work) would be a way to help.

**ACTION:** Module Leaders and Director of UG studies to write clear guidelines on the expectations and outcomes of this method of assessment.

e) **AR120 Space, Place, Locality module**

The timetabling of the field trips for the AR120 module had been causing students to miss classes. The module is currently timetabled for Friday between 15.00-17.00, but the travel to the buildings is often requiring the students to be absent for the whole of the day. This is affecting timetable events both within and outside of the department.

It was reported that the department was aware of this problem and that the future timetabling of this module would need to consider possible clashes.

**ACTION:** Departmental Timetable Officer and Module leader to discuss for next year.

f) **Offering Oriental and Eastern philosophy modules.**

The students asked about the possibility of the department offering Philosophy modules that focused on Oriental and Eastern philosophy and not just European philosophy.

The UG Director (Philosophy) responded by agreeing that philosophy study that focused on more oriental philosophy would be welcomed but as the teaching is research-based it would need a tutor with the appropriate research background to lead it – at the moment, there is not a tutor in the department with this kind of expertise. It was suggested that broader knowledge of world philosophy could be brought about in further discussion periods and these could be led and motivated by students during seminars.

5. **Personal Tutor System**

Students were asked about the current provision of the Personal Tutor System and whether it was effective and could they suggest any improvements.

Some reported not having met their Personal Tutor for this academic year, but that they were aware that they had been assigned one. It was also reported that some students (1st years) were confused between the help available to them from Peer Mentors and Personal Tutors and Course Representatives and that a list of what each of the roles cover would help students in future. The provision of adequate and timely training by the Students’ Union for the Course reps was questioned.

It was noted that the students were not aware of the Course Representatives.
Moodle page and that this was probably not being utilised to full effect. It was suggested that although the Facebook page has been useful, information had to be shared in alternative ways to inform students who were not familiar with Facebook and other Social Media.

A meeting with Josh Carter from the Students’ Union had recently taken place with a discussion about ways to improve the Student Representative system for the next year.

6. **Annual Review of Courses**

In the section under the heading ‘Employability’ it was noted that there had been some criticism about the CS711 employability module as it was believed to be delivered too early in the students’ degree study.

It was questioned whether the 2nd year version of this module could include an introduction to Master’s study.

**Action:** Students were invited to pass on further comments to the Director of Undergraduate studies.

7. **Student counter in Undergraduate Office**

Plans are underway to review the possible provision of a counter in the Undergraduate office (room 6.130). The office is fairly large and currently the four administrators sit at desks around the room with no clear space for students to stand when they enter the room. It has been suggested that a counter would provide storage space for incoming and outgoing student work and that it could provide a designated space for the students to interact with the administrators.

Students were invited to provide feedback to Sarah Mumford on how this would be received.

8. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

9. **Dates of Future Meetings**

W/C May 1st 2017