STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF MODULES AND TEACHING 2014-15
REPORT TO SSLC AND ANNUAL MONITORING COMMITTEES

DEPARTMENT/TEACHING UNIT: School of Philosophy & Art History

UNDERGRADUATE ☑  POSTGRADUATE (tick as applicable)

1. Method(s) of Assessment
   A uniform, School-wide questionnaire was employed which was designed, with student input, so that the completed questionnaires could be scanned centrally.

2. Outcomes of the Process
   Overall, the scores indicate, again, a high level of student satisfaction with UG modules in Art History, CISH, and Philosophy.

   In Art History, all the mean scores were 4.2 or above, and the overall mean 4.5 (like in 2013-4). AR219, taught by Dr Jo Harwood, and AR319, taught by Dr Matt Lodder, top-scored with an impressive mean of 4.9. AR220, AR324 and AR341 also registered particularly high means (4.7).

   In Philosophy, all but two modules had mean scores above 4, and the overall mean was 4.3 (slightly down from 4.4 in 2013-4). The highest scoring modules (with 4.7) were PY114 and PY418. The drop for PY111 below 4 (to 3.9) was regrettable. The School’s policy is to ask for a report for any module with a mean of less than 4.0. The report noted that the change of contents to Philosophy of Art in the Autumn Term was not well-received by the majority – while welcomed by some, it presented a too drastic departure from expectations about Philosophy generated in Schools and the public sphere. The module contents will be revised for 2015-6, with a focus on scepticism as a better entry point for this introductory module. A report was produced for PY400, triggered by a mean score of 3.7, which is still above the University’s requirement of a minimum score of 3. Here the problem seemed to be more in the delivery of this module than its contents. For future years, it was decided that – wherever possible – experienced, permanent members of staff should teach this module, which is compulsory for some courses and presents particular challenges in its focus on early modern primary texts.

   In CISH, the overall mean was also 4.3, though underlying this was the greatest spread of scores (ranging from 2.9 to 4.9). The key lesson here is to extend the insights that contribute to excellent results in CS102 (4.8), CS201 (4.8), and CS301 (4.9) to CS101 (3.9), which is the biggest and longest-established module. A full review of this latter module is underway. The unusually low mean score (2.9) for CS261 seems to have been due to some significant problems with a GTA – compensation action had been taken in-year, but the damage in terms of student satisfaction was done.

   There has been some improvement regarding clarity about marking criteria, but it remains the lowest scoring category.

3. Action
   Action 1: change to the Autumn Term contents of PY111.
   Action 2: adopt policy of having PY400 taught by a permanent member of staff, where possible.
   Action 3: review CS101 in the light of the success of other CS modules.

4. General Comments
   The delivery of SAMT and the schedule of questions for next year will change in light of a University-wide initiative, including the introduction of a new scanner and web-based system for the design of surveys.

Head of School’s Signature: (Dr Fabian Freyenhagen)
Date: 03/08/2015
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DEPARTMENT/TEACHING UNIT: School of Philosophy and Art History

UNDERGRADUATE

POSTGRADUATE ☑ (tick as applicable)

1. Method(s) of Assessment
   A uniform, Department-wide questionnaire was employed which was designed, with student input, so that the completed questionnaires could be scanned centrally.

2. Outcomes of the Process
   Overall, the scores indicate, again, a high level of student satisfaction with PG modules in Art History and Philosophy.

   As per the action from 2013-4, more PG modules were surveyed this year, particularly in Art History. While the overall mean score dropped from a perfect 5 (for the one module surveyed in 2013-4), at 4.5 it is still very respectable. Indeed, with two exceptions, all the modules received mean scores of 4.5 or above, with Dr Gavin Grindon’s AR910 particularly impressive (5.0). The two outliers were AR911 (3.5) and AR912 (3.6). They seemed to have suffered from opposite problems. The former was probably pitched at a too high level of theory, something that was difficult to anticipate by someone who had only just arrived at Essex. The latter was inherited entirely from a predecessor, including each weekly speaker; and its very practical orientation was deemed by some students to not be intellectually stimulating enough. Both modules will be revised accordingly.

   In Philosophy, the overall mean score was also 4.5 – in line with the five-year average. None scored less than 4.2 for the mean score, and the vast majority of individual scores were also above 4. Dr Jörg Schaub’s PY952 had the highest mean (4.8) and a number of perfect 5s for individual scores.

3. Action
   Action 1: review AR911 and AR912.

4. General Comments
   The delivery of SAMT and the schedule of questions for next year will change in light of a University-wide initiative, including the introduction of a new scanner and web-based system for the design of surveys.

Head of School’s Signature: ____________________________ (Dr Fabian Freyenhagen)
Date: 03/08/15

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