

GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME
STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

1 OCTOBER 2014

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Razann Al Ghussein (1st Year), James Beaven (Student Chair), Cathy Campbell (Student Support Coordinator), Kerrie Craig (4th Year), Lucy Edgington (2nd Year), Nick Hulton (Degree Programme Convenor), Patrycja Jastrzebska (4th Year), Eric Laurier (Senior Lecturer), Sara Missaghian-Schirazi (2nd Year), Lauren Moffitt (3rd Year), Beth Muir (Secretary), Rachel Murchison (1st Year), Anthony Newton (Lecturer), Magali Roy (2nd Year), Lydia Stuart-Kregor (3rd Year).

Apologies: Meredith Adams (2nd Year), Eilish Barnes (2nd Year), Campbell Keith (3rd Year), Samantha Redfern (1st Year), Josephine van den Brink (4th Year), Lucy White (4th Year).

1. Matters Arising

Beans bidding

Nick confirmed that the allocation process was successful.

Earth Surface Systems

This course has stopped running, and has been replaced by Physical Geography.

2. 1st Year

Human Geography

Overall the feedback for this course was very positive, student are enjoying the content. Some students are confused about when details will be available for the requirements for their essay and other skills training.

Students are also finding it difficult to get access to the core reading through the library as there aren't enough copies. Reqs asked if the book could be changed to a recommended text book for purchase since it's used so often in the course.

Action: Nick will speak to staff on the course about advice on essays and training.

Nick will make a note about resources at the library and check on this later in the Semester.

3. 2nd Year

Fundamental Methods in Geography

Most students are finding the course useful, and are looking forward to the field course. Some students have found that they couldn't take a Semester 1 course they wanted to do as they now take Fundamental Methods.

Nick advised that this is usual through all the different degree programmes.

Economic and Political Geography

There has been very positive feedback for this course – students like the content and the delivery in lectures. They would also like to have lecture slides available on Learn before the lectures.

Environmental Sensitivity and Change

Students would like to focus on a higher level of conceptual work. Some reading content was overwhelming at the start; students also need more resources available through the library.

Nick advised that this course has been given a significant makeover this year with a new Course Organiser; further student feedback would be very helpful.

Direct entry students (going straight into 2nd year) would find it useful to have access to the content from the core Geography 1st year courses to help fill any gaps in knowledge (and support learning on the 2nd year courses they are doing).

Action: Student Chair to speak to students on E, S&C to get more feedback about course content.

Beth to speak to Eduardo re: access to 1st year Learn pages for direct entry students.

4. 3rd Year

The Nature of Geographical Knowledge

The feedback for this course was mostly positive, students feel it is useful. Some students felt there was a very high volume of reading for the first tutorial, and they didn't have enough time to prepare. Physical geography content still felt to be lacking and giving students problems.

Nick advised the Reps that the balance between disciplines is an ongoing issue in the degree programmes which staff will continue to work on. The reading volume is appropriate to the size (and weighting) for the course in a student's 3rd year.

Action: Nick to discuss course content with the Course Organiser.

Qualitative Methods

Feedback for this course was also quite positive, and students felt it was useful. Some students were confused over assessment criteria, Eric confirmed that it's one assessment and details are provided in the handbook.

5. 4th Year

Research Electives (Iceland, Western Isles, Archives and Researching with Media)

Feedback for these courses was largely positive – the meeting for Western Isles in week 4 was very useful.

Students on the Researching with Media course were concerned about the final essay as the topic seems to include all the media types but students would like to specialise. They would also like guidance on analysing their sources (checking that they are doing this correctly).

Eric will discuss the student feedback with other teaching staff on the course and look at adjustments that could be made so the content of lectures and practicals is more useful. He

will also emphasise the office hours available for group/individual consultations, and will look to include a 5 minute slot at the end of seminars for any questions.

Dissertations

Some students are concerned that their supervisor will not be there to mark their talk at the Conference.

Nick advised that all students will be marked by other staff members as well as their supervisor. Being marked by non-supervisors helps to catch any issues that have not been picked up.

6. 3rd and 4th Year Options

Encountering Cities

Students are really enjoying this course, but in the first week the class was oversubscribed and it was difficult to fit all the students into the room. The 4 hour slot which runs every other week is difficult – students can find it difficult to concentrate.

Nick advised that this is a very popular course, staff are aware of the demand for places and problems with room size. Nick will discuss with the Course Organiser.

Development and Decolonization in Latin America

Students on this course are finding the textbook is very relevant, with interesting content. The local bookshop which provided the textbook ran out of copies so some students had to wait a long time for their copy. The teaching room was also too small, and the lectures were repeating the content covered in the book.

Principles of G.I.S

This course is very useful, and the structure is good. Some students who aren't familiar with ArcMap are finding it difficult, and feel that the hardest content comes in the first few weeks when PG students are also taking the course (wks1-5).

Anthony advised the Reps that ArcMap will be used in the Fundamental Methods course to introduce to students earlier.

Nick will discuss feedback with the Course Organiser.

Values and the Environment

Feedback for this course has been very positive. The assessment is good as students are doing a continuous reading log. Some students asked that the essay questions are made available earlier than week 3.

Development and Socionature

Positive feedback for this course, students like the lecture structure.

Remote Sensing and Global Climate Change

The lectures are delivered well, and students are finding the content interesting.

Glacial Processes and Geomorphology

Positive feedback for this course.

Some students would like access to Options courses that they aren't doing, Nick will look at this further.

7. AOB

a) Geography move to King's Buildings.

Nick advised the students that the School has been given the opportunity to move and get a new building in K.B. Some members of the School have argued against this move, but this is not an option being offered by the university.

A student consultation is planned for this semester; Nick will advise students when this is organised.

b) Beans

Nick advised students that there are currently 117 students wanting to take Human Geography courses this year, dropping Geography Matters has increased the flexibility offered but Geography is currently having difficulty keeping up with demand. More Options have been added in this year, and more courses will be brought in for 2015-16

There has also been some difficulty with unwise bidding and students having problems understanding the system (especially if using it for the first time). These problems are continuing, and will need to be accounted for with the larger cohorts coming into Honours in the next few years.

Staff are looking at updating the system so it's easier to use – e.g. using two rounds of bidding, allowing for adjustments second time round. This system is being considered and possibly further developed. Nick also asks Reps for any other suggestions that they have, and to have further discussion with other students.

8. Next meeting

- a. 11am, Wednesday 5th November 2014, G.10 Drummond Library.