

Earth Science Staff Student Liaison Meeting

Wednesday 21st March 2012 @ 2pm

The Museum, Grant Institute

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Linda Kirstein (Chair), Chris McDermott, Rachel Wood, Mikael Attal, Godfrey Fitton, Thor Thordarson, Mark Wilkinson, Simon Jung, Emma Latto (minutes), Nina Seale (History of Life), Helen Le Mar (Physics of the Earth), Clement Hutin & Jenny Johnson (Weather & Climate), Amy Muir (Introduction the Geological Record), Georgi Kantantinov (Earth Materials), Sophie Bolton (3rd year Geology), Julia Docherty (3rd year GPG), Ruth Saint (3rd year EG), Melissa Gray & Ewan Macmillan (3rd year Geophysics & Meteorology), Catriona Spencer & Alex Cooke (4th year Geology), Maeve Glover (4th year EG), Hugo Scrimgeour (GP+4)

Apologies: Andrew Curtis, Alastair Robertson, Hugh Sinclair, Sue Rigby

Introduction

LK welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose was to gain as much feedback from the class reps as possible about their courses and their experience throughout semester 2. We welcome all feedback good and bad and will take all comments on board. An example feedback document from Chemistry was distributed to all reps and LK asked for comments on the form and any ideas on how it could be adapted to Earth Science to be emailed.

History of Life

- Very good and interesting course, lectures and practical classes were structured well and the practical folder given out was good. Compliments were given to Sue Rigby and the course team.
- An issue was raised that sometimes when students asked demonstrators questions they don't seem to know anymore than the students do.

Physics of the Earth

- Positive feedback given, only issue was that the second set of lectures and practicals were not available on WebCT.
- More exam practice would be good.

Weather & Climate

- In the first lectures it would have been helpful if the maths had been done on the board as it was hard to follow.
- The lectures were not proof read and this caused confusion during classes.
- Marking schemes were given out after work was handed in, it would be useful to have this beforehand.
- A test on WebCT was confusing, more clarity on assessments and what is expected would be good.

Introduction to Geophysics

- Notes available on WebCT after lectures were good.
- Field work was good.
- First exercise did not have clear instructions, clarity and example of a good report would be useful.

Introduction to Geological Record

- Students worried about Arthur's Seat fieldtrip as they don't feel prepared for it. MA was able to respond and say that the fieldtrip was planned to start from scratch so students would be shown everything.
- Course seems a bit disjointed, lab classes were maps only and lectures not connected.
- Smaller practical groups or more demonstrators would be beneficial.
- There are 2 weeks where there are no lectures, this may have been better at end of course or the times used to give more practice with maps.
- It was felt amongst the group that the lectures given by Mike Edwards were not fully understood and students left not really understanding what they had been told.
- 1 lecture or even half a lecture with basic map work would be useful.
- Fieldtrip was very good, Alastair Robertson good at explaining throughout.

Oceanography

- Class rep not present, Emma to email for feedback

Earth Materials

- Good course, demanding at times. Geoff Bromiley and Godfrey Fitton gave good lectures and the practical's were interesting and demonstrator's helpful.
- Lecture notes were available beforehand on WebCT which was very useful.
- Students enjoy the course

3rd Year Geology

Global Tectonics

- Lecture slides had lots of information on them which was great.
- It would be good if lecture notes were available beforehand to look over.
- Handouts in lectures and lots of feedback would be useful so students knew they were understanding correctly.
- It was felt the lecturing was substandard and that JT was bit nervous and lacked enthusiasm.

Igneous Petrogenesis

- Great course, everyone enjoyed it.

Metamorphic Petrology & Structure

- Metamorphic section was hard but students enjoyed it.
- The Structure section slides could do to have word on them.
- Alpine Study was good idea but the theory to back up would be great.

Quaternary Environmental Change

- Dick Kroon was great on this course.
- Some lecture slides were bit strange.
- Could lectures and practical's be linked more.

Hydrocarbons

- Great lectures and practical's, everyone enjoys the course.
- Very helpful when John Underhill summarised at the end of the practical class.
- More computer practicals would be useful, Mark responded that we don't have the resources for this and that it is a school issue.
- Rachel Wood said there was a new course next year which may help with problem, all degrees would do it except Geophysics.

Ore Mineralogy Petrology & Geochemistry

- Good course, learn a lot in classes but felt that the project on industry not using what they have learned. The project is weighted heavily and more guidance would be good.
- Demonstrator's on course were great.

Dynamic Stratigraphy

- Good course, great handouts and lectures.

3rd Year Geology Field Trips (Spain)

- Trip was good, crammed with information. The field guide was good but would have been better if day order was the same. LK explained that the sequence had been changed late on in the trip.
- The lecture on presentations was good/useful, Rachel Wood asked if this would be useful to have as part of formal teaching, students agreed it would.
- Students would like more time for payment of fieldtrips, they are expensive. A lecture at start of year on what trips will be and likely costs was suggested. As well as advice on early dissertation planning and costs.

3rd year Geology & Physical Geography

Geology & Landscapes

- Good course, student's really enjoyed it.
- Mikael gives weekly feedback and WebCt was updated with information about where things have gone wrong with work etc. This was very useful.

GPG Beans System/Geography

- Students not a fan of this system, it doesn't make sense. LK confirmed that she is in discussion with Geography to see if changes can be made.
- Lecture given in geography from 3rd years to 2nd years, not invited this year?

Volcanoes, Tephra & People

- Students expected this course to be harder.

Eroding Landscapes

- Students enjoyed this course.

General Comments

- More Option in Geology would be good.
- LK explained that Macro-geomorphology will be running with new name of Dynamic Landscapes.
- Some of the 3rd year courses are exam only, bit of a shock, felt it would be better if there were some tutorials or class tests so as students could be sure they understood the course content.
- Some GPG students complained that they were not able to go on the Mull field trip this year, LK explained this was due to high numbers in the year.
- Geology students have been saying that they had better accommodation in Spain than the GPG students are going to in April.
- Courses in Geology worth 10 credits had more work in them than some of the 20 credit courses in Geopgraphy. (To be fed back to TO)

- Exam timetable was very close, LK explained that we have no control over this.

3rd Year Environmental Geoscience

Environmental Pollution

- Lectures were just read from slides, more engagement needed.
- Field trip was not that useful, the information was covered in lectures already.

Environmental Techniques & Applications

- Labs and demonstrators good.
- Students unsure about report and what is expected, feedback session didn't give enough information. Raja Ganeshram responded to say that students need to use a thought process and come to tutorials having giving some thought to it beforehand. Raja to talk with students about feedback.

Field Course in Tropical Marine & Terrestrial Geoscience

- Jamaica trip very expensive along with the hidden costs with equipment etc, it also falls close to Mull and Oban and students struggling with costs and are finding they are not able to plan their summer and dissertations.

General Comments

- More guidance on dissertations needed.
- 3rd years have a list of topics but they have to do another proposal and deadlines have been pushed back till after Oban and students worried they won't get the topic they want.

3rd year Geophysics, Geophysics & Meteorology

Physics of Climate

- Interesting course, Gabi Hegerl goes through lectures too quick at times. The tutorials Gabi does are great!
- Some of the work in the course have been covered before, LK to take these comments to course team.

Earth & Planetary Structure

- Course ok, more assignments perhaps as there is currently only one.
- Lecture from JT was too crammed and she seemed nervous.

Exploration Geophysics

- Great course, excellent feedback and handouts.
- Possible danger that content may be similar to other courses and have overlap.

Geophysical Inverse Theory

- Kathy Whaler was excellent course organiser, excellent feedback was given on both assignments.
- Would have been better if demonstrator on course had more knowledge of computer work to take some of the pressure off Kathy during this section.

Global Tectonics

- Geophysics students perhaps struggle with this course as they don't have enough Geology knowledge.
- Hydrocarbons section good, a lot of geophysics it should be compulsory course.

4th year Geology

- Query on the essays for Transkills/Evolution of the Modern Earth, students can get marks but have not had any feedback. Confusion on what is expected and on the course weightings.
- Feedback generally good, though it does take a long time to get marks back.
- Students who took Geography options had problems with hand in clashes with their dissertation.
- Hard to know how they were progressing and how work fits into final mark, RW explained that all that information was clear in the 4th year booklet.
- Will there be a practice synoptic run, yes Simon Harley organises this.
- Simon Harley was away during the dissertation hand in and students feel disadvantaged that they couldn't seek advice from him.
- Are there any pointers or contacts that staff may have to help students get internships?

4th year Geology & Physical Geography

- Class rep met with LK and gave feedback direct.

4th year Geophysics, Geophysics & Meteorology

- Second semester has been good and interesting.
- Projects titles were limited as each supervisor can only do so many in a semester.
- There have been problems accessing computers, upgrade to windows 7 has caused some problems. Hugh Pumphrey should be contacted if you have a

problem, he has experience and may be able to help if not he can contact IT and ask for help quicker.

- Frontiers in Geophysics was a self taught, good. Options were easier to take in the 4th year.
- RW asked if Geophysics staff have lectures on Industry? There is no special tuition, it was noted that careers services were good at helping with cv's etc.

4th year Environmental Geoscience

- Options have always been a problem, the students are angry about the credits and the availability of option courses in the first semester. In the second semester the courses had a deadline each week so it was a struggle to plan ahead.
- LK confirmed that she had asked for a quota of 5 places to be reserved for EG and Geology students in the bean system in Geography so as they have more options to choose.
- There were no options run by EG staff in first semester, LK confirmed that there have been 2 new options added for EG next year.
- Having Hydrogeology as compulsory would be good. Hydro 2+3 were good courses, heavy workload due to an issue with the EG4 options. Chris McDermott confirmed that the course could be moved into semester 1.

Innovative Learning Week – General

LK explained that ILW took a lot of work to organise for the staff involved. 70% of students signed up for activities but only half of them then turned up for the trips.

Students not committing to what they asked for, pre honours students showed lack of commitment, 3rd & 4th years good attendance.

Any comments/feedback on ILW should be emailed to LK.