

GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME

STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE

28 NOVEMBER 2013

OGILVIE ROOM

MINUTES

Present: Faten Adam (Student Support Co-ordinator), Lynne Addison (Student Chair), James Beaven (3rd Year), Lucy Edgington (1st Year), Holly Gardner (3rd Year), Franklin Ginn (Lecturer), Jacob Grapendal (1st Year), Emmeline Hoogland (4th Year), Nick Hulton (Degree Programme Convenor), Patrycja Jastrzebska (3rd Year), Eric Laurier (Senior Lecturer), Sarah Manson (4th Year), Beth Muir (Secretary), Victoria Ponce Hardy (4th Year).

1. Apologies: Meredith Adams (2nd Year), Eilish Barnes (1st Year), Marie-Therese Chitnis (1st Year), Josephine van den Brink (4th Year).

2. Previous minutes

Approved.

3. Matters Arising

T.P.R

Nick thanked all the students who were involved. The T.P.R. panel praised the enthusiasm and encouragement they got from the students. Nick explained that the panel gave a brief presentation of the main outcomes – commendations and recommendations will be published shortly. Commendations included the Dissertation conference, and the quality of students. Recommendations included the introduction of more fieldwork, and more innovative forms of feedback.

Dissertation Conference

Staff were very impressed by the student presentations, and felt it served its purpose. Nick asked for student feedback. The Student Reps found it useful and received positive feedback. Nick confirmed staff will work on the issues raised in the last meeting.

Dissertation supervision

Students are generally satisfied, but some require clarity about what supervisors expect or require from the students. Group meetings as well as individual meetings would be useful.

Nick noted the challenges staff have faced in the past with group meetings, including how this is allocated against their teaching loads. Alternative arrangements e.g. sit-ins might be useful?

Nick asked if students remembered the guidance they were given in their Researching with People course? Would having the information re-iterated at the start of 4th year be useful? Maybe have a plenary session about rules of engagement?

Geographies of Development and Socionature

Students are clearer on the assessment rules, but have had a lot of mixed messages. Students on the course had only seven presentations, one tutorial instead of a lecture, one on the presentation, and many were only an hour or an hour and a half (instead of the scheduled two hours). The changes in assessment were felt to be the most problematic – some groups started on presentations, then had to change topic due to changes in the criteria. Nick apologised for the problems this has caused.

Staff Hours on doors

This is pending; Nick will send a reminder to staff.

4. 1st Year

Human Geography

Students again raised the issue of fortnightly tutorials (instead of weekly ones). Staff at the meeting suggested that having weekly tutorials for the first half of the course, then fortnightly ones for the rest of the Semester might help?

Nick advised it would be a challenge to resource this but will investigate to see if it's possible.

5. 2nd year

Economic and Political Geography

Some students found it difficult to write summaries when only looking at one article. They would like a set of questions for assessing an article, rather than just focusing on article (would also help to standardise tutorials). Summaries are not always marked. Otherwise students have really enjoyed the course.

Environmental Sensitivity and Change

Some students struggle with the physical geography side of the course, there is assumed knowledge which they don't have. The course also feels a bit disjointed, and there is a lack of material on Learn. Students would like the provision of questions so they know how to tackle lectures. Help sessions on writing exam essays, and guidance notes for presentations would also be useful.

Nick advised the Student Reps that the course will be led by a new Course Organiser next year (Caroline Lynman), and there will be many changes to the course.

Year Abroad

Students would like clarification about how the year abroad affects your final degree classification.

6. 3rd Year

Nature of Geographical Knowledge

There was mostly positive feedback for this course. Some students understood the broad essay questions while others didn't. Franklin highlighted that the point of the essay questions he set was that they test individual students' abilities – this negates the usefulness of essay examples.

Qualitative Methods

Students on this course feel there have been inconsistencies in the marking of their essays. Some students would like the option to do Qualitative Methods as MA students, and BSc do Quantitative Methods. Eric highlighted that the essay feedback is consistent with the Grade Related Criteria, and he will feedback students comments to the other marker for the course.

Quantitative Methods

Students on this course feel it has been badly taught and organised, and the practicals haven't been constructive. They also feel the course doesn't prepare them for the final assessment. Some students haven't done maths for 6 years.

Nick has engaged closely with the Course Organiser due to student feedback, and will continue this. Nick reminded students that the intention of the practicals is to give them the skills from which they draw on to do the final assessment as a separate piece of work.

Catchment Water Resources

Students needed information to write the report for this course, but didn't get replies to their e-mails. Nick will raise this with the teaching staff on the course.

7. 4th Year

Dissertation Conference and supervision

Students asked when would they receive the feedback from the Conference? Beth confirmed that marking was due to her earlier this week but not all of it has been received – marks and feedback should be available next week. Beth will e-mail students after this meeting to update them.

Students also highlighted that they needed clearer instructions about what is required for the presentation. Nick reiterated that this was debated amongst the staff, and splitting it into a mark for the presentation on the day/a mark for the electronic presentation was designed to be fair to all students.

Research Electives

There were similar comments for the Western Isles as in the last meeting. For Iceland students would like more contact time after returning from the trip, having data on time, and more group meetings.