

GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

4 FEBRUARY 2014

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Meredith Adams (2nd Year), Lynne Addison (Student Chair), James Beaven (3rd Year), Cathy Campbell (Student Support Co-ordinator), Marie-Therese Chitnis (1st Year), Lucy Edginton (1st Year), Franklin Ginn (Lecturer), Viola Heinrich (1st Year), Emmeline Hoogland (4th Year), Nick Hulton (Degree Programme Convenor), Deborah Ingram (4th Year), Patrycja Jastrzebska (3rd Year), Eric Laurier (Senior Lecturer), Tara Lohmann (2nd Year), Beth Muir (Secretary).

Apologies: Jessica Breen (2nd Year), Holly Gardner (3rd Year), Jacob Grapendal (1st Year), Sarah Manson (4th Year), Isabella Krabbe (2nd Year), Victoria Ponce – Hardy (4th Year),

1. Matters arising

T.P.R

Nick advised that Geography are still waiting for the panel's review.

Staff Hours

No action taken. Nick will chase up staff who don't have their office hours displayed on their doors.

2. 2nd Year

Geomorphology

Positive feedback for this course.

Social and Cultural Geography

Students need more clarification about the requirements for class work. They found it useful when they were given explanations about their first pieces of work e.g. piece of analysis, essay plan.

3. 3rd Year

Geography Matters

Students have largely enjoyed this course, although students who are taking the Geography of Health Option course found a lot of cross over with the content Niamh provided in Geography Matters. Students who aren't taking the Geography of Health Option feel disadvantaged.

Nick advised students that Geography Matters won't be running in its current form from next year. The issue of cross over with the Geography of Health course will be noted with the new C.O for Geography Matters.

Research Design

Students feel that 1 (instead of 2 hour) slots would be more appropriate for this course. There was mostly positive feedback (including the usefulness of resources suggested to students), but students felt a lot of the content could be integrated into a 2nd year course.

The Course Handbook was available only two days before the start of the course, students then received messages during first two lectures advising them that they should have a Dissertation topic by now.

Nick advised the Reps that staff will be organising a new 2nd year course – staff running current 3rd year courses will be consulted to see if there's any content that can be integrated into this new course (including methods and field work experience).

4. 4th Year

Dissertations

Some students felt there was a difference between the marks and comments they got for their presentation at the Conference, and the written feedback they got afterwards. There was a variety of feedback quality; some staff weren't able to offer clear feedback to students when they were asked for further details after the Conference. Students also feel there is an uneven level of help and support offered between different staff members.

Nick is aware of the different supervision styles offered by staff, and that this is an ongoing issue for students. He reminded the Reps that the usefulness of the supervisory experience also depends on the students' own attitude and approach. There are discussions about setting up some Dissertation sessions (wk 2) to ensure that students are clear about how the supervisor arrangements and the Conference works.

Visions

Some students are unsure about the Poster assessment, as they don't feel they have the creative skills. Feedback from staff could be very different. The drop in advice sessions about creating the Posters also varied a lot in content (some included 'Dos and Do Not's but others didn't).

Eric advised that the poster mark only comes from 2 staff members. The other staff will be commenting on the Dissertation subject matter, but not the poster design (they may not know much about that themselves).

Nick confirmed that Andy Dugmore has written up detailed advice for staff about how to give feedback on the day. The Visions course won't run in its current form after 2014/15. The Poster assignment may be integrated into a 2nd or 3rd year course.

Options

a) Geography of Wine

Students feel this course blends human and physical geography themes together well. Course handbook was available before Christmas.

b) Minorities

Lectures are delivered very enthusiastically. The weekly feedback and summaries are really useful.

c) Divided Cities

Interesting and engaging course.

d) Geographies of the Sea

There is some overlap with the content in the Visions course.

e) Volcanoes, Environment and People

Very interesting course.

f) Geography of Health

Students find the course is very anglo-centric, and would appreciate a more global/spatial focus. There is a lot more preparation work for this course compared to other Options. There's also a lot of media work which is useful but repetitive.

There's only one question available for the degree essay, but choices for the class essay. Students also found that slides weren't uploaded to the Learn page, and some were uploaded before the lectures but with redactions.

Students feel that the choice of Options courses is limited, and focuses more on urban geography. They would like a balance between human and physical each Semester.

Nick advised students that there are only 2 urban geography courses (one per semester), which are always full. There was an imbalance this year but the School will try to keep that to a minimum. Nick would welcome any student suggestions about how to improve the spread of courses.

There will be 5 or 6 new Options courses running next year.

5. 1st Year

E.S. S.

There was mostly positive feedback for this course, students are enjoying the lectures. There have been problems with oversubscribed practicals, where students have to share computers only one student does the work during the practical and the other student has to put aside more time to go over the software themselves before completing the quiz. Students aren't allowed to leave the session but no register is taken. Some students also had timetable clashes with Meteorology.

Nick explained that the timetable for courses has been centrally administered in part for the last 2 years. This is an ongoing project, and staff are trying to reduce the clashes and close timings between courses.

6. AOB

Assessment patterns for Options

Nick advised the Reps that staff are looking at offering more of a variety in assessments, while making sure students choose the best topic for them and don't choose a course based just on the assessment method. Courses will have up to 2 units of assessment which could be course work, or

one piece coursework and one exam. Courses that are 100% coursework will include one unit that is due later in the Semester (at some point in the exam period).

2nd Year

Nick asked the Reps to let students know that there will be a third field course offered, alongside Amsterdam and Bangor.

1st Year

Nick advised that there will be a new 2nd year methodology course in Semester 1 next year, so there will be less choice of outside courses. Students will still need to take a minimum of 2 of the 4 pre-honours Geography courses currently offered to 2nd years.