

GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

3 FEBRUARY 2015

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Meredith Adams (2nd Year), Eilish Barnes (2nd Year), James Beaven (Student Chair), Cathy Campbell (Student Support Coordinator), Kerrie Craig (4th Year), Nick Hulton (Degree Programme Convenor), Patrycja Jastrzebska (4th Year), Sara Missaghian-Schirazi (2nd Year), Lauren Moffitt (3rd Year), Beth Muir (Secretary), Rachel Murchison (1st Year), Anthony Newton (Lecturer), Lydia Stuart-Kregor (3rd Year), Lucy White (4th Year).

Apologies: Razann Al Ghussein (1st Year), Campbell Keith (3rd Year).

1. Matters Arising

Quantitative methods

Feedback given to the C.O, Nick advised that the course content will be changing.

Research Electives

Feedback given to the C.Os of Archives and the Western Isles.

Personal Tutors

Cathy has contacted students whose PT has changed this Semester.

Development and Decolonization

The hand in date for the final degree essay was changed.

2. National Student Survey (N.S.S)

The N.S.S. went live last week; this provides a principal means of the university getting feedback on overall programmes. The results of the survey are made publically available, and feed into different league tables. The feedback from previous N.S.S have helped to make changes in the Geography degrees, for example; 3rd Year single Hons students take an extra Option in place of a core course, and fieldwork is offered earlier in the degree (2nd year).

Geography had the highest return rate from students last year. Nick has spoken to the GeogSoc President about encouraging students to take part this year, and will also be talking to students in the Visions class. Honest appraisals are wanted, but students are encouraged to focus on their experience of their degree as a whole when completing the survey, including any problems with specific courses in the comments.

Reps suggested the use of social media, and an e-mail from GeogSoc then Nick would help encourage students to take part.

3. Electronic marking

At the moment using hard copies for degree work submissions is a large administrative task, and also more difficult for markers to provide marks and write feedback quickly compared to electronic marking.

The School and University as a whole are looking at using more electronic marking for future Undergraduate work. Staff and students in Geosciences are being asked for feedback. There are some mixed views within the teaching staff, what do the Reps think of this change?

Some Reps have already had electronic marking in other Schools – for example, SPS uses a system called ELMA which is provided through LEARN. This has been very useful for markers to edit and make notes, and is quicker and easier for the students to read. There has been more detailed feedback.

Using electronic marking for Geography would mean students could refer to feedback when they're not able to come to the office or are studying at the library. Students who like paper feedback could print it out.

However, electronic marking could be difficult for students to access on computers if they have a learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia. Nick advised that text to speak or other software could be used to help with this.

Reps were asked to feedback any more comments about electronic marking to Nick.

4. Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

The ELIR will take place this year; there is a university-wide consultation in February, the university then writes a self-assessment, followed by two visits from the ELIR panel in October and November where they will meet with staff and students. The School may be asked to put students forward for this part of the process; Nick asked that Reps mention this to their fellow students.

There may be further discussion about this topic at the next SSLC meeting.

5. 1st Year Summary

The feedback for Physical Geography was positive overall; some students asked for a course text book and a practice essay, and felt they had to choose their degree essay topic too early in the Semester. Students also found the webScience resource difficult to use.

Anthony advised the Reps that he will look at using webScience more in the Geomorphology course to help students to get more familiar with it; it's a useful tool for all Geography students.

Students praised the GeoPALS sessions which they found very useful.

6. 2nd Year Summary

There were only two responses for S&CG and Geomorphology from the online questionnaire. Reps suggested that the timing of the questionnaire was too early in the Semester.

Social and Cultural Geography

The feedback for S&CG was very positive; students enjoyed the content, the tutorial summaries were useful, and the tutor Conor Ellis was especially praised as very helpful and enthusiastic.

Geomorphology

There were two comments complaining about the historical content of the first two lectures, although others enjoyed it. Some students struggled to follow course, and had difficulties with the tutorial essays.

7. 3rd Year Summary

Research Design in Geography

Students are finding this course really useful for preparing for their Dissertations. Some feel that the lectures could be shorter as everything is included on the slides.

Quantitative Methods in Geography

Students were concerned that it took two months between submission and getting their feedback and marks returned. Some students were told they didn't need to do outside reading, but were then marked down for not doing that.

Nick advised that the two months included the Christmas break, which is not part of the teaching or marking period for assessments. Marking was passed to Nick for moderation at the start of the Semester, but due to the cohort size this affected the length of time required for moderation. Nick will pass feedback back to the markers about the consistency of marks and comments.

8. 4th Year Summary

Visions for Geography

There has been a mixed response to this course; some students have found it difficult to follow the content of lectures if they are focused on Human or Physical Geography in depth, especially if the lecture topic is based on an Option course that students haven't taken.

Most students like that the poster is gone, but some find the date for the final submission is difficult (21st April). Some students would like more feminist or cultural Geography included in the course.

Nick advised students that Charlie Withers is putting a new course together, which will replace Visions from next year.

Resources

There are also problems with small numbers of books being available for courses, no electronic copies being offered, and journals that the University doesn't subscribe to. Students are also struggling with the limited availability of study space in the central campus.

9. Honours Options courses

Due to running out of time for the meeting Reps will send feedback on Options to James, who will collate comments and send to Beth.

10. AOB

None.

11. Next meeting

11am, Wednesday 4th March 2015, 2.05 Ogilvie Room (Drummond Street).