

## GEOGRAPHY DEGREE PROGRAMME

### STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING

4 MARCH 2015

#### DRAFT MINUTES

**Present:** Meredith Adams (3<sup>rd</sup> Year), Razann Al Ghusein (1<sup>st</sup> Year), James Beaven (Student Chair), Cathy Campbell (Student Support Coordinator), Katy McPhail (Student Support Coordinator), Lauren Moffitt (3<sup>rd</sup> Year), Beth Muir (Secretary), Anthony Newton (Lecturer).

**Apologies:** Eilish Barnes (2<sup>nd</sup> Year), Kerrie Craig (4<sup>th</sup> Year), Nick Hulton (Degree Programme Convenor), Magali Roy (2<sup>nd</sup> Year), Sara Missaghian-Schirazi (2<sup>nd</sup> Year), Rachel Murchison (1<sup>st</sup> Year), Lydia Stuart-Kregor (3<sup>rd</sup> Year), Lucy White (4<sup>th</sup> Year).

#### 1. Matters Arising

##### *NSS*

Nick has attended recent Visions lectures and spoke to 4<sup>th</sup> Years about participating in the survey.

##### *Electronic marking*

Reps reported that the feedback they got from other students was the same as the views expressed at the last SSLC (i.e. generally in favour). There is an institutional review of electronic marking going on at the moment.

Anthony advised that Nick will be looking at different methods used by other Schools e.g. SPS.

#### 2. Edinburgh Student Surveys

Feedback of previous years have changed the degree programmes – e.g. field work, 2<sup>nd</sup> year fundamental methods course. James emphasised the usefulness of taking part in the surveys, and encouraged Student Reps and staff Reps to spread the word about participating.

#### 7. 1st Year

##### *Physical Geography*

The feedback from students was either quite positive or negative. Some students felt that lectures were too fast and there was too much content to take in, a lot of assumed knowledge. Students from outside subject areas felt more guidance would be helpful for the essay guidelines. The Web Science tool has become much more useful. Students would like more regular tutorials.

Anthony advised that the balance in terms of difficulty and subject areas will be adjusted as this is the first year this course has run.

## **8. 2nd Year**

No reps in attendance.

### *Social and Cultural Geography*

The feedback from the online survey was mixed, but largely positive. Some student found individual topics were interesting, but others felt the course repeated too much of the 1<sup>st</sup> Year Human Geography course. Tutorials have been very useful.

### *Geomorphology*

Overall students have enjoyed this course, the lecture content has been very interesting. Some students feel the tutorials should concentrate more on preparing for the degree essay and how to research sources.

## **9. 3rd Year**

### *Research Design in Geography*

Students have found the course useful, but would have liked a session that looked at how to complete the forms that they submit with the proposal; some weren't sure if the forms counted towards their mark. The library practical was helpful to students who hadn't used Web Science, but others felt it covered areas they were already familiar with.

The assessment requirements were clear about what was required, students felt it helped them to start early, but would like more guidance on what is required for the literature review. Reps suggested that if the proposal was due a few weeks later this would be helpful, and expressed concerns about when they will get their Dissertation supervisors confirmed for next year.

Anthony advised that a change in hand in date would mean that it clashed with other submissions.

## **10. 4th Year**

### *Visions*

Feedback is the same as last meeting, students feel that there has been too much Human or Physical Geography content. One concern is that the course content is too broad, and lecturers can't tackle a subject in one 2 hour lecture (assumed knowledge). There is confusion about the content of the exam.

The pre-essay plan has been useful. Students liked the 1 hour student led tutorials (questions set by that week's lecturer), and 2<sup>nd</sup> hour goes back to the lecture and have broader discussion – lack of attendance at tutorials affects this. Difficult to focus on direction of discussion when student-led. Students given three of four questions but no further direction about how to run this student-led section.

## **11. Honours Options courses**

### *Geography of Wine*

Students on this course have found it interesting and well structured. If group presentations were assessed students would make more effort. Good cross over for Human and Physical.

### *Landscape Dynamics*

Good feedback, students have enjoyed the content of the course. The main text book has poor availability in the main library.

### *Cinematic Cities*

Feedback for this courses was generally positive, students are really enjoying the course but the readings each week don't seem to relate to the film, and there is no connection to the assessment. Students enjoy that the Course Organiser allows them to shape discussions, but there is a lack of direction about what is required – need more guidance for assessment as not clear about what he will be looking for.

Students aren't allowed to use any of the films studied in class for their essays. One student felt too much focus on cinematic aspect of the course, and not on the Geographical.

### *Minorities in Multicultural Society*

Students on this course really like the structure, including the presentations which everyone must do. The Course Organiser helps students engage with the course content, she is very clear about what is expected from the students.

### *Ice and Climate*

There was mixed feedback for this course; students found using new software in the practicals was either fairly easy or difficult. They found it usually took too much time to learn new software for each practical. There were no full notes or reference points.

There hasn't been given enough guidance from the Lecturers and PhD students, very unclear about what the degree essays are needed. Students don't know what the exam format will be, and haven't been provided with practice questions yet which are mandatory for new courses.

### *Volcanoes, Environment and People*

Students are very happy with this course. It was really helpful to submit essay plans and get feedback from Andy and Anthony, and the field trip was enjoyable.

Mixed feedback about the timetabling of the course – there is a 2 hour lecture and a 1 hour gap, then the 1 hour tutorial. Anthony explained this was due to problems with room availability, this will be made a priority for timetabling the course next year.

### *Geographies of Food*

There was mixed feedback for this course; some of the readings didn't seem related to Geography (economic based), and the reading load is large. There are not enough copies of books in the Main Library e.g. two books in HUB, but approx. 40 students on the course. Different books each week, but impacted by limited resources in library. The second formative assignment is due two days before the Dissertation (for 4<sup>th</sup> years).

### *The Geography of Health*

Further feedback from last Semester – the course is well organised, good that all readings are online. Some content seems repetitive. Students are expected to use Twitter, not all students are on Twitter or want to use it but must do this to get the full content of the course.

### *Writing Landscape*

Students have enjoyed the way this course is taught, it is really different.

### *Divided Cities*

All students are enjoying the course; it is well structured. The Course Organiser is very enthusiastic, and the field trip is really good.

### *Environmental Pollution*

Beth advised Reps that this is a course where feedback is provided through the SSLC for Ecological and Environmental Sciences (the office which runs this course). Reps can send her any feedback they have for this course, and she will send it to the secretary for the SSLC to add into their meeting.

Reps asked that Geography advertises the availability of taking outside courses in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Year more widely, a lot of students didn't know they could do this.

## **12. AOB**

### *a) GeosPALS*

One Visiting student felt really unsupported, struggled with their English.

Cathy advised that she and Katy are looking at support for visiting students, and will take on this feedback.

### *b) Low attendance at SSLC and questionnaire feedback*

Cathy pointed to the 'You said, we did' section in the School website which shows students how their feedback has been taken on, and the changes that have come from SSLC meetings. Reps suggested this section is advertised to students more widely, many don't know about it.

James suggested that next year the Student Chair and Nick go to student lectures and explain what's involved for the SSLC, and give examples of feedback which has effected change in courses and degree programmes. It would also be useful for new Reps to meet up to get to know each other before the first SSLC meeting.

Some Reps asked for more specific training for Geography. One Rep signed up to a number of EUSA sessions which were then cancelled, the ones they did attend were very generic. Cathy will follow up with EUSA about this.

### *c) Print credit*

Some students find it difficult to use the black and white printer as its not open access, and are not clear which ones they can use. Can a sign be put up to help direct students?

### *d) Election of Student Chair 2015/16*

Beth will a send message out to Reps asking for nominations.