

School of GeoSciences

Earth Science Student Staff Liaison Meeting

Wednesday 4th February 2015 - 2pm

The Museum, Grant Institute

Staff Present: Linda Kirstein (Chair), Bryne Ngwenya, Hugh Pumphrey, Wyn Williams, Rachel Wood, Richard Essery, Mark Wilkinson, Geoff Bromily, Dan Goldberg, Raja Ganeshram, Alex Thomas, Kathy Whaler, Eliza Calder, Stuart Gilfillan, Emma Latto (SSC & minutes)

Students present: Beth Hadley, James Murphy, Parissa Kohabi, Nandini Nagra, Margot Debyser, Lucia Andreattiova, Tasmin Fletcher, Megan Rogers, Mihai Cimpoiasu, Nina Khar, Raphael Say

Apologies: Jenny Tait, Mikael Attal, Hugh Sinclair, Simon Jung, Dick Kroon, Kate Saunders, David Stevenson, Ian Main, Vlad Macovei, Bria Steven

1. Introduction

Linda Kirstein (LK) welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the meeting would be split into 2 parts. The Pre-Honours courses would be discussed between 2-3pm then the Honours courses 3.15-4.15pm. There will be two SSLC meetings this semester instead of one, having this meeting early will allow time for any teething problems to be identified and sorted out as soon as feasible.

LK explained that the way we surveyed students last semester wasn't very successful so this time we have trialled a Stop, Start & Continue survey.

LK advised everyone that the Minutes and the responses from the last meeting were available on the School Website.

AP – LK and EL to advertise website to reps. Reps to rely information to class mates.

2. Pre-Honours

GESC08002 Earth Modelling & Prediction 2

- Class rep not in attendance, other reps at the meeting commented on course.
- There had been confusion with mix of lectures and not a sense of continuity. *Dan Goldberg (DG) explained that a member of the teaching team had been on paternity leave so other staff had stood in to take the lectures. DG asked*

that students email him about anything they are confused with and he will help them best he can.

- LK asked if extra tutorial(s) would be helpful. Students agreed they would be beneficial. *DG agreed to run extra session.*

EASC08017 Introduction to the Geological Record

- Overall students are happy with the course and really appreciated the hand-outs.
- However it was felt that instructions were not always clear in practical classes and some found them difficult, a powerpoint presentation before the class may be helpful to help students understand the theory.

Rachel Wood (RW) explained that this is the 3rd year the course has run and last year the field trip to The Lake District was introduced so the course had been gutted, the practical's are earlier this year however the course is still evolving.

- Some found reading topography maps tricky.
RW asked what the specific problem was. The Sea Level Curve seemed to cause problems, hard to link graphs. Everything is new and students would like more explanation. Rachel is happy to include more information on for remainder of course.
- A tutorial session was requested.
RW said the course team hope to arrange this.
- *RW asked for feedback at end of course to see if all the coursework slotted into place as the course progressed or if students still find it hard.*

EASC08008 Introduction to Geophysics

- Students found that taking Earth Dynamics before this course was helpful to them.
- David Stevenson's lectures were good.
- Ian Main's (IM) lectures were good but hard to hear. When drawing sometimes the diagrams can be small and difficult to see, can this be considered for future lectures please?
- Room that is used in Psychology isn't appropriate and the desks are inadequate.

AP – Wyn Williams (WW) to follow up with TO and report to room bookings

EASC08004 Oceanography

- Currently there are no tutorials, students would find this very helpful so as they understand what is going on.
- Simon Jung doesn't use microphone, class emailed asking for microphone to be used.
- The class rep has set up Facebook page, the class have joined but not proactive on it as yet.
- Surprised by content at start of course as it seemed basic.

LK confirmed that this is necessary for some students who are taking the course as outside course and don't have the same knowledge.

- Meriwether Wilson (MW) is well liked by class, they warmed to her and her enthusiasm.
LK urged rep to encourage class to nominate MW in the EUSA teaching awards.

EASC08020 Global Tectonics & the Rock Cycle

- Positive feedback received about Cogbooks, students felt it was an excellent learning tool.
WW explained the advantages of using Cogbooks and how it be rolled out in teaching in future years. Nandina Nagra mentioned that Physics use it for quizzes to find out what students are struggling with so as they cover more on it. James Murphy commented that sometime information appears on it that hasn't been covered in lectures, WW acknowledged there will still teething problems but these will be sorted out in due course.
- Everyone felt that the printed hand-outs are good.
- Sometimes course organiser reads off slides and doesn't expand on the information, they tend to rush though the slides and don't always wear a microphone.
- Instructions for practicals are poorly worded.
- Tutors are always willing to help in practicals though students get conflicting information from different demonstrators.
LK acknowledged this feedback and said this would be looked into so as clarity is given to all demonstrators.
- Students felt that during practical classes they were competing for help from demonstrators as there weren't enough of them for the number of students in class. Students were unhappy about this and some left the classes early because of this. Would be helpful if course organiser could go over what should be learned during practical so as students know what they should be learning.
LK thanked James for the feedback and explained that this is the purpose of this earlier meeting so as we can work on the feedback received. One of the practical classes has very high numbers due to timetabling and meetings are happening regarding timetabling across the whole of Earth Sciences to avoid these problems in future years.

AP – LK to contact T&D committee about timetable. Extra demonstrators added.

EASC08016 Physics of the Earth

- Everyone generally happy, seismology good really helped with understanding as it built on knowledge already obtained in previous year.
- Really like the structure of IM's lectures, introduction at the start and lots of notes.
- Like getting hand outs and the tutorial run by Ian are very useful.
- Happy with course content, would like to see more practical sessions, only 4 in the semester.
- Would like a more coherent structure of the course.

- Better communication of when labs are eg. date not just the week.
WW explained that course booklets had been standardised and should have all the required information, however this will be followed up with Ian Main and Nikki Muir.
WW lectures will be starting next week, they will have different style to Ian's and he will work on adding in more notes. The practical he runs will be more like a case study than hands on approach.

AP – Query on course booklet to be followed up

METE08002 Meteorology: Weather & Climate

- Rep not in attendance, this was admin error and invite wasn't sent.
- Another rep who takes the course commented that they were pleased with course so far, they are 1st year student but they are coping ok.
Hugh Pumphrey (HP) commented that this was usually a 2nd year course.
- The structure is clear but challenging course.
- Modelling & Climate has been hard, Richard Essery (RE) assured students that it would all fall into place next week.

AP – Ensure rep is invited to meeting in March

3. 3rd Year

Geophysics and Geophysics & Meteorology

- So far the 3rd year has focused on skills, eg computer, presentations etc.
- All courses are geophysics which is good.
- More practical work in the 2nd semester would be useful.
- In Fields & Waves and Earth & Planetary Structure more question and answer examples would be useful.
Kathy Whaler (KW) and WW confirmed that there are some problem sheets to come.
- Anton Ziolkowski can appear intimidating, doesn't start group discussion etc, would like to see more engagement.

Geology

- Rep not in attendance, EL to email for feedback

Geology & Physical Geography

- **Geology & Landscapes** – the course would have been ideal preparation for one of the Structural Geology practicals from last semester.
- General feeling amongst year group is that they are “add on” to Geology degree programme, they have been copied into emails regarding Geology dissertations and feel some fieldtrips are often used by lecturers as explanation forgetting that GPG cohort don't attend the same trips.
- More and earlier information about the Spain fieldtrip would be useful, at the moment students still know very little.

- The courses are better balanced between Geology and Geography options and this has been well received.

Environmental GeoScience

- Rep not in attendance, EL to email for feedback

4. 4th Year

Geophysics and Geophysics & Meteorology

- Happy with Global Geophysics and Exploration Seismology, good presentation and feedback.
- Positive reviews for Controlled Source Electro-Magnetic (CSEM) Methods, please continue with the computational exercises.
- Frontiers in Geophysics has good presentations. Students felt that full use of the time was not being used.
WW explained that the course was given 2 hour slot for sessions but this time was not always required.
- Everyone seems to be ok with dissertations, students are at different stages with theirs.
HP confirmed that feedback on the first project as due and would be available before presentations so as the feedback can be used.

Environmental GeoScience

The year rep, Vlad Macovei sent apologies but sent a summary with the feedback he had gathered and LK went through it.

- The seminars that students presented in Environmental Problems & Issues were very useful. They liked that the course dealt with the bigger picture than just experimental results.
- Jamaica and Oban trips were important for helping understanding and should remain for future years.
- Electronic feedback for all courses would be welcomed as it is more accessible and easier to read.
- Courses that are 100% assessment are liked and should continue.
- Need more course distribution in the 2nd semester.
- Students feel it is unfair they hand in their dissertations earlier than other degree programmes, they already have a heavy load in semester 1 along with exams which adds the pressure. 6000 words was extremely low for dissertation when there is no much content to be discussed. They also felt that they were given information re binding late on.
- The Hydrogeology trip was felt to be irrelevant and was understood to be an orientation trip and they didn't understand the point of it.
- Information on deadlines at start of year.
LK reminded everyone that the deadline diary was available on the TO website.
- Information about ILW and its compulsory components has been advertised quite late.

- Would be good to have more integration with other EG years, the EG social last semester was good, 4th years would be happy to organise next one.
- An EG specific careers/further study talk would be useful.
LK confirmed that she is looking at careers in general across all degree programmes.
- Improved study space, perhaps more computers in dungeon.
- Information on what students who have graduated have gone on to do.
- More integration with Ecological & Environmental Sciences.
- More practical sessions instead of just lectures would be good – like ETA.
- A second assessed field trip in the 4th year based on collection techniques would be useful.
- Degree groups should get together frequently to talk freely about feedback and improvements instead of SSLC's.

Bryne Ngwenya (BN) responded that he is aware of the semester 2 course distribution being a problem. He has contacted CO for Hydrogeology to seek clarity about the fieldtrip, at time of meeting he did not have response. BN is open to discussing a fieldtrip in the 4th year at later date, Oban in already there. Happy for the EG years to get together socially, this is great idea. BN explained there had been changes in timetables which has caused the first semester to be overloaded and he will take this forward.

Geology & Physical Geography

- **Frontiers in Research** – People generally happy with course, liked the communication from Florian Fousseis (FF) at start of course. Good that the course was not too intense and allowed focus on dissertation.
LK commented that it was good to see so many 4th years at the seminars each week. RW asked how students found the seminars, response was mostly ok and they were explained quite well. Would be good to include Hutton lectures.
- Students would like some information from Hugh Sinclair about his course, *LK will follow up on this to ensure this is given.*
- Most students chose not to take Geography option this semester so as they could work on dissertations.
- Like the later hand in for dissertations, enjoyed the presentations on them. Would like to see old dissertations with feedback on Learn.
LK thought this was already available and was going to follow up with Mikael Attal.
- **Cyprus Fieldtrip** – no emails or information had been communicated about costs.
Geoff Bromiley confirmed this should have been sent out. TO to follow up.

AP – LK to follow up with Hugh Sinclair re course info and Mikael Attal re dissertation examples. EL to enquire about email re Cyprus costs.

Geology

- **Cyprus Fieldtrip** – echoed concern that they had not received any information about costs.

- **Geology & Landscapes** – more focus on Geology would be good and some more digimap use before Cyprus.
- **Frontiers in Research** – Course liked.
- **Dynamic Stratigraphy** – Stuart Gilfillan (SG) confirmed that information for course and the trip to either Stonehaven or Ballantrae is still being worked on but confirmed that it will be updated asap. SG will check where the information is ie Learn, Euclid etc. and encouraged students that if they have any questions about course to contact him directly.

5. 5th Year

Geology and Geology & Physical Geography MEarthSci

- Last semester there was a disagreement on project proposals between staff. *Eliza Calder explained that the project supervisor and course organiser mark the proposal and that any disagreements over marks had been sorted.*
- There seemed to be inconsistency with credit loads and workload for courses. The Research Methods course had 10 technical reports and worth 10 credits, and the system is not straight forward to navigate.
- **Frontiers in Earth Science** – Going well and workload reasonable, good course.
- General comments that the teaching office seemed a bit disorganised and seemed confused about when deadlines were.

AP – To be raised with Teaching Organisation Manager to look into.

A.O.B

- LK encouraged all graduating students to complete the National Student Survey (NSS) and to encourage their peers to do so also. Paul McLachlan has arranged a Pizza Night via Geolsoc to try and get people together to promote this. The Teaching Organisation will contribute to Societies for their help.
- Non graduating students were encouraged to complete to ESES surveys.