

School of GeoSciences

Earth Science Student Staff Liaison Meeting

Wednesday 12th March 2014 2.30pm

The Museum, Grant Institute

MINUTES

Staff Present: Linda Kirstein (Chair), Raja Ganeshram, Alex Thomas, Mikael Attal, Dick Kroon, Hugh Pumphrey, Kate Saunders, Mark Wilkinson, Mark Chapman, Kathy Whaler, Simon Jung, Richard Essery, Wyn Williams, Alastair Robertson, Katie Leith (minutes)

Students present: Rebecca Briedis, David Smith, Marcus Lancaster, Liam Perera, Elliot Noble, Francesca Ballard, Maris Sunatis, Henry Traeger, Robert Smith, Rebecca Astbury

Apologies: Chris McDermott, Gabi Hegerl, Eliza Calder, Godfrey Fitton, Jenny Johnson, Helen Le-Mar, Amy Muir, Jennifer Findlay

1. Introduction

Linda Kirstein welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose was to gain as much feedback from the class reps as possible about their courses and their experience throughout semester 2. All feedback/comments will be recorded and given a response. The minutes will be available on the TO webpage. Ask Katie Leith for directions to this webpage if you have any issues.

2. Pre-Honours

EASC08008 Introduction to Geophysics

- Happy with the lecture contents. Attendance is quite low, they say they have done it before. The reps used a survey for the 1st time and only had 5 responses.
- *LK will be having a meeting with new reps to discuss how to use the surveys in future.*
- From the lecture notes they don't know what's expected.
- Some people have requested that they have tutorials and record lectures.
- *WW said that many courses will go like this. Unfortunately they have moved room and can't record. He had hoped to do this with his lectures but didn't have time. In future this will hopefully happen.*

- Practical time between outside demonstration and follow up is too long. They didn't know what to expect when writing the report. The Seismic Interpretation location was not good.
- They have had feedback from David Stevenson but no others.
- *WW explained that feedback can take longer as some can't be given until another lot has handed in.*
 - They would like more assessed practical's.
 - They enjoy the Seismic Magnetic Field of Earth lectures.
- *WW agrees with the tutorial work. He explained they could look at past papers online and said he could set a past paper or a tutorial sheet with specimen answers.*

EASC08016 Physics of the Earth

- Class rep not in attendance

EASC08020 Global Tectonics and the Rock Cycle

- Class rep not in attendance.

EASC08004 Oceanography

- Class rep not in attendance.

EASC08017 Introduction to the Geological Record

- Feedback has been good, negative with regards to the course content. What they have been told and taught doesn't match. It doesn't really relate.
- The fieldtrip is worth 40% of the final grade and they feel unprepared.
- *MA explained that the fieldtrip is a training week; they will go knowing nothing and be trained. They are assessed on what they have learned. He said none should worry about it and that next year this will be made clearer at the start of the course.*
- *MW emphasises the field course was a training session with some emphasis on mapping. There is a lecture next week where they will find out more.*

EASC08018 Earth Modelling and Prediction 2

- Class rep not in attendance

3. 3rd Year

Environmental Geoscience

- Everyone is generally happy.
- **Environmental Pollution** – Happy and they find they new dimension interesting. There are mixed feelings on the fieldtrips, with some being unnecessary.
- **Environmental Techniques and Applications** – They like the lab work, it's good for their dissertations. 100% on 1 report is a bit daunting.
- **Geophysical Techniques for Terrestrial Environment Application** – Some feel it's good but others think some of it is irrelevant. Feedback on work submitted has not been great. They would like more feedback.

- *KW didn't realise there was as little feedback, she will pass this information onto the lecturers.*
- In general they would like more choice for this year.
- *RG said that this was difficult. Next year there will be a lot of options.*
- **Jamaica** – Literature reviews are to be in-depth but only 1500 words, they find this difficult.
- The rep asked when the dissertation topics will come out?

Geology and Physical Geography

- Class rep not in attendance, apologies given.
- They are happy but clarity need on the GPG dissertation. It wasn't clear that mapping wasn't a possibility beforehand.
- *MA gave a presentation and made it clear that they couldn't do a mapping dissertation. It is also in the booklet. Students should have asked the GPG dissertation course organiser for clarification.*
- *LK also gave a presentation at the start of the year and explained this.*

Geology

- **Volcanology** – Everyone enjoyed particularly John Stevenson's lectures. The practical's were good but fed up of plotting points on graphs.
- **Quantitative Methods in Earth Sciences** – Everyone loves using Python, it will come in handy in the future. Some lectures don't relate to practicals.
- **Hydrocarbons and Geophysical exploration** – Same comments as Geophysics re using computers.
- **Ore Mineralogy and Petrology** – They are enjoying the content. The 3hr lab session is too much and they can't maintain concentration. The assessed practical is a bit daunting, they are nervous as this counts for 50% of the course.
- **Geology and Landscapes** – Feedback has been good and very useful. The Geology students are struggling with geomorphology.
- **Igneous Petrogenesis** – Wouldn't change it.
- Everyone would like to praise the Spain fieldtrip staff, in particular Tom Challands, they found him very enthusiastic.
- In general, they don't seem to enjoy as much as last semester.

Geophysics

- **Earth and Planetary Structure** – There were no complaints, they found this interesting and clear. Ciaran is a good lecturer. There other lecturer Brian Cameron was a bit quick going through the lectures.
- **Geophysical Inverse Theory** – No issues or complaints. The computer practical's were good. They were given in a good clear concise way by KW. They asked when they would be getting the marks for this?
- *KW responded that HP was moderating and they would have them shortly.*
- **Hydrocarbons and Geophysical Exploration** – The lectures were good but they wanted more interesting modern methods in the labs. Overall they

- enjoyed the course. They felt 3 hours in 1 day was too much. They want more tutorials/problem sheets to do themselves. Lectures are at a good pace.
- *MW explained these were not out of date methods. They are introducing Seismic Interpretation to the course. They don't have enough workstations.*
 - *HP said they are trying to do something but it's hard.*
 - **Fields and Waves** – Lectures are good but there are no tutorials and nothing has been uploaded to Learn. AZ can see this but students can't.
 - *KL has looked into this and it's now available.*
 - **Volcanology** – Lectures are good.
 - **Physics of Climate** – 2 tutorials were computer based. This didn't add to the understanding of the concept. More could be done to add into the course. No other complaints.
 - It has been positive vibes from Geophysics students.

Geophysics and Meteorology

- As mentioned in Geophysics. Reps reported together.

4. 4th Year

Environmental Geoscience

- **Dissertations** – Supervisors have been giving out lots of different information on what students should do. They have also been treating students differently with the help they are giving, i.e. 2 students 1 supervisor, treating each student different. The rep spoke to all EG students individually. In particular SJ was a great supervisor and should be given credit for his work. Students were also very confused about the word count limit. The handbook for the dissertation hand in was wrong, it said 44th January. Everything else is really good.
Students have not received marks or feedback yet just a grade scale.
- *KL checked the EG4 handbook and dissertation hand in dates correct.*
- *RG explained that feedback sheets are not normally given at this stage. The way in which they are done would have to be changed.*
- **GEC** – In general the students enjoy the seminars; they think they are excellent and should be continued.
One lecturer is very repetitive and the slides are the same as the previous year. More in-depth research needed for seminars.
- RG explained this all depends on how prepared they are when they come. Read the papers and come to lectures. This is a paper based course not a lecture based.
- There were issues with lecturers not being contactable last semester. Students are still waiting for marks from a talk in December. This particular lecturer has not been contactable. The Rep has spoken to BN about this.
- They wanted to stress how great GC personal feedback is and he deserves credit for the time he put in.
- They also wanted to praise MW for the Marine course, she was very enthusiastic and DK for his enthusiasm and support. Students have went to these staff instead of their PTs.

- The students felt like 4th year needs reorganised. It doesn't make sense that semester 1 course exams are in semester 2. They also felt limited to what course options they could take. They want more of a balance.
- **Hydrogeology 2** – No one has any idea what is going on, topics are not outlined. Understanding what the maths is used for is difficult. They are also unsure about hand ins. Students have asked Chris but not had many answers.
 - *RG commented as DPC that there was no simple solution to the balance of courses. This was an ongoing issue.*
- Students felt that 2 course (Earth Surface processes and Environmental Geochemistry) were pointless. If its 100% essay they feel like they don't need to turn up. They don't know how to approach the ESP essay as they have not done this before. No outline has been given. They have emailed BN and OK but had no response from OK.
 - *RG commented that students have an option whether they chose to do a policy based paper or scientific.*
 - *LK explained that if you attend lectures you gain more knowledge and will do better. Its helps prepare for the outside world.*

LK encouraged students to complete the NSS survey. EG have the lowest return rate of 47%. There is a money incentive at the end which can be used for a big end of year party.

Geology

- Lecturers don't communicate with each other, in particular Frontiers in Research. There is not one place for students to go. If someone is confused, they can't find any information. All information should be put on Learn.
- In general for all courses students what to know what hand ins there are and what is expected of them. Especially Carbonate Sequence Stratigraphy and Frontiers in Research, even after emailed FF they are still not clear.
- Students feel overloaded with assessments in semester 2. There are too many big hand ins over a couple of weeks. They also mentioned having the Enterprise Initiative and 24 hour essay in ILW.
 - *LK said there was no other good time for this and ILW seemed a good time. She agreed that having the dissertation hand in before this would have been stressful. The hand in deadline document will be sent out again next year making it clear when hand ins are due.*
- Students feel like it's not quality but quantity that's looked for. How much can be crammed in.
 - *LK said topics will be given earlier next year and will speak to everyone.*
- Students have not received marks or feedback on time for their 24 hour essays and Carbonate Sequence Stratigraphy.
- There have been some concerns over the dissertations. There a few people unhappy and wanted to know what the marking criteria was? They felt it was biased marking based on their own knowledge. The blue books are also out of date.
 - *LK said that feedback sheets are split into sections. All the stuff is looked at. They are now marking completely blind as there is a knowledge of the area. The common marking scheme is applied to the dissertation. LK will make sure*

the new mapping co-ordinator takes this on board re the blue books. Lk couldn't comment on other markers marks but looking at the marks she was only out by 4%. LK advised that they should speak to their mapping advisors with their feedback sheets.

- There was a complaint about the lack of seats in the room where Hydrocarbon Reservoir Quality is held and the same for Carbonate Sequence Stratigraphy.

Geology and Physical Geography

- As mentioned in Geology. Reps reported together.

Geophysics

- Class rep not in attendance, apologies given and feedback emailed.
- **Germany fieldtrip** - someone suggested that in the coming years the 'field' marks on the fieldtrip should be worth less of the Transferable Skills course. There are concerns that this part of the course can't be marked fairly. There was one nationality (French) of students, in many of the groups, that didn't work as hard as everyone else. They may have worked with the equipment on the field, but for many groups, they didn't pull their weight in the evening. We would like to know whether the work we did in the evenings will also be part of the 'field' marks? There are also worries that the staff from different countries will be biased towards their own students.
- There have been no other course issues. There have been a few personal concerns, but these have been resolved.

Geophysics and Meteorology

- Class rep not in attendance, apologies given.

5. 5th Year

MEarthSci Geology and Geology and Physical Geography

- RMTS and PDLA were both really good courses, possibly because Tom Challand's put so much effort and knowledge into them. Playing with the machines in the department was enjoyable and useful.
- The day trip to SUERC was incredibly useful and should be made a permanent feature.
- The conference for PDLA in semester 1 should also be kept.
- Reflective diaries are a bizarre method of assessment. Two or three reports on the technology and uses of various analytical methods would be better.
- It would be useful to have a session at the start of the year about the role of project supervisors, e.g. what we can expect in terms of support/help, what they expect from us, how often is good to meet etc.
- The choice of course options was awful, especially for those interested in hard-rock geology. The choice was very limited in 4th year, so we did all the interesting ones then, with nothing left for 5th year.

- Kate Saunders is an excellent petrologist but lacked confidence and experience being in charge of the Iceland fieldtrip. Without Thor and Will we wouldn't have learned as much.
- The Iceland fieldtrip was very geology-centric, with much less geomorphology than could have been included.
- Some assignments have been ambiguous, and if we all knew what was expected we may have got a better marks. These included the Iceland fieldtrip and RMTS.
- There has also been much confusion with deadlines. These should be clearly set at the start of term.
- The weighting of the year's credits seems imbalanced. 40 credits for the project seems low and 10 credits for a token essay in Frontiers in Earth Science is too high.
- Overall very useful and enjoyable course that has led directly to several of us getting PhDs next year.