School of GeoSciences

Earth Science Staff Student Liaison Meeting

Wednesday 13th March 2013. 2pm

The Museum, Grant Institute

DRAFT MINUTES

Staff Present: Dr Linda Kirstein (Chair), Dr Mark Naylor, Dr Mikael Attal, Professor Godfrey Fitton, Dr Hugh Pumphrey, Dr Bryne Ngwenya, Professor Ian Main, Dr Simon Harley, Dr Greg Cowie, Dr Hugh Sinclair, Professor Gabi Hegerl, Dr Richard Essery, Dr Simon Jung, Dr Geoff Bromiley, Emma Latto, Alasdair Howie (minutes)

Students present: Eloise Littley, Callie Maron, David Smith, Lydia Bailey, Manjari Misra, Patrick Morgan, Anniina Pentilla, Georgi Konstantinov, Hannah Ritchie, Helen Le-Mar, Jenny Nohnson, Kate Evans, Laura Petrescu, Rachael Hunter, Sophie Bolton, Kirsten Deans, Marcus Lancaster

1. Introduction

LK 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 considered for response and ultimately improving the student experience.

2. Previous Meeting Minutes

LK highlighted action in previous minutes raised by Greg Cowie regarding recording lectures and the need to ask permission of the lecturer. Alasdair Howie (TO) indicated that a number of adjustments, including recording lectures, are being 'mainstreamed' (i.e. no longer exclusive to students with disability adjustment schedules) for 2013/14 academic year. More information will be circulated in the near future.

3. 1st year

EASC08018 Earth Modelling and Prediction 2

Class representative did not attend this meeting.
Action: Katie Galbraith (TO) is to email class rep for comments.

EASC08008 Introduction to Geophysics

- Class rep reported no negative issues with course.
- Lecture materials good, well taught and explained.

- Recorded lectures posted online quickly is very helpful.
- Range of academic staff with various expertise teaching on class is very helpful.
- Class rep indicated that lack of attendance is an issue.

EASC08017 Introduction to the Geological Record

- Class rep not in attendance. Another class rep who took this course reported.
- Lectures appear to be more relevant than in previous years.
- Recommended textbook is very good and helps a lot with course material.
- Practical classes are a highlight and very enjoyable.

Action: Katie Galbraith to email class rep for comments

4. 2nd Year

EASC08014 Earth Materials

- Difficult course but lectures and notes are very helpful.
- Class rep commended GB for attending practical classes in early part of course – very helpful.
- Demonstrator – student ratio is "about right".
- Feedback on assessments very detailed and returned quickly – this is very helpful.
- GB stated that he is available to answer any questions if course is proving difficult.

EASC08012 History of Life

- Class rep reported that CO, Tom Challands, is extremely positive and passionate about course which inspires the class.
- It is however evident that there is not enough practical time allocated to the course. These are timetabled for 3 hours per fortnight and 1 hour of these is allocated to tutorials. These would be more beneficial weekly rather than fortnightly.
- Not enough information on slides presented in class. More notes on the material presented and uploaded online would be beneficial.

METE08002 Meteorology: Weather and Climate

- Class rep reported that the class have enjoyed the course
- Lecture notes are well annotated and posted online quickly
- Use of clickers and time spent in labs very helpful
- International student reported to class rep that report writing was confusing. Would a lecture on report-writing help?
- Crossover of content with Meteorology: Atmosphere and Environment
  - Hugh Pumphrey explained that this is a historical issue due to the structure of the degree. HP also pleased that clicker use has had positive feedback.
- Maths notes hard to follow
  - Richard Essery reported that maths teaching on this course is under review

EASC08004 Oceanography

- Popular course with interesting content.
- Students from outside the School of GeoSciences have reported finding some of the course difficult and would benefit from more information being made available on slides and on Learn for some parts of the course. Class rep did state that most of the slides had a relevant amount of information.
- Physical Oceanography practical did not seem to be related closely to the theory and seemed to be badly designed.
  - Simon Jung stated that due to this being a 'hybrid' course a lot of the students will be from a non-Geosciences background and will struggle with some aspects of the course. ST also indicated that slides would be reviewed and revised.

EASC08016 Physics of the Earth

- Class rep stated that Ian main's lectures were good and well organised. Going through powerpoint presentation to explain theory was extremely helpful.
- Wyn Williams' lectures also good but not as in-depth as IM's.
- Also reported that WW's tutorials not well organised. Rooms and times change too often and timetable for these seems very ad hoc.

5. 3rd Year

Environmental Geoscience

- **Jamaica** field trip well organised. Number of hand-outs and literature reviews given to class is very helpful.
- **Environmental Techniques and Applications** received most negative feedback. Not organised well and students' feel they receive no guidance on report-writing following the labs. Students' feel a bit unsure of what is expected of them.
- **Environmental Pollution** option has been very good and class rep indicated a lot of the class stated that it would be of benefit as a compulsory course in future.
- Students reported that they are a little confused as to why **Geophysical Techniques for Terrestrial Environmental Applications** is a core course and asked if it is relevant to EG degree.
  - BN indicated that he would speak to EG 3rd year as a group whilst on Jamaica field trip to explain the relevance of this course to EG degree
- **EG dissertation** presentation was very helpful and feedback from academic staff and senior honours students in attendance was well received.

Geology

- **Global Tectonics** teaching was very good but course would benefit from clearer instructions, especially in practicals. Class rep stated that Demonstrating was good in this course.
  - LK reported that this was the last year this course would run. Some material moved in to Global Tectonics and Sedimentology pre-honours course

- Class rep stated that **Dynamic Stratigraphy** teaching is good, however, the 2-hour continuous lecture was difficult. This would be much better delivered in 2 x 1 hour slots.
- **Spain field trip** well organised and enjoyable. Presentation skills exercise was very good.
- **Igneous Petrogenesis** are well structured and GF lectures presented well. Practical classes were very helpful. Class rep stated that Geology and Landscapes and this course delivered too close together to comfortably get to both classes.
- **Metamorphic Petrology and Structure** very challenging. Lecture notes would benefit from more explanation.
- **Hydrocarbons** course structure is very good and runs very efficiently. Feedback and answers quickly posted online which is very helpful. Demonstrators on course knowledgeable on subject.
- **Ore Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry** very informative. Practical classes are a good insight into industry and course staff are very helpful. Two important dates within one week (practical exam and report) makes it difficult to study for both.

Geology and Physical Geography

- 'Beans' system not clear for GPG students. Clearly designed for Geography but due to differing nature of Earth Science and Geography timetables, GPG students find it difficult to make choices so early in academic calendar.
  - MA and LK explained Beans system and highlighted that choices are not 'set in stone' and can be changed if issues arise/
- Class rep reported that **Geology and Landscapes** had received good feedback and that students had found the mapping exercise enjoyable. Structure of course is good. Subtle increase in difficulty appreciated by class. Well structured.

Geophysics

- Rep reported that **Hydrocarbons** course had received goo feedback. Students thought the labs complimented the lectures well.
- **Earth and Planetary Structure** feedback from class mostly good, however, background and knowledge in Geology assumed for some parts. Rep stated that more Geology could be included in Geophysics degree programme. Equations posted online following class but it would be beneficial if these were also highlighted in class.
- Non-assessed presentation delivered early in **Exploration Geophysics** course was considered very helpful.
- Rep stated that **Geophysical Inverse Theory** notes clear and well explained. Slight issue with group presentation – groups large and class felt that smaller groups would be more representative of amount of effort put into this exercise.
- No negative feedback for **Physics of Climate.** Printed and online notes helpful but these could be highlighted on white board as well as in PP presentation during lectures as they are sometimes difficult to read.

- Rep made enquiry about marks in sem 1 **Measurement Techniques** course. IM cleared up issue.
- Rep stated that details of Geophysics-related talks were not circulated early enough for students to respond/attend/change plans. Can these be circulated earlier?
- Announcements on Learn to go to email and Learn as some students miss Learn-only posts. HP stated that this was easy to organise.

6. 4th Year

Environmental Geoscience

- Rep stated that the number of presentations in 4th year are good and that they have helped a lot of students build confidence.
- Professor Stuart Haszeldine not responding quickly enough to emails about **Environmental Problems and Issues** course.
  - GC stated that he will continue to follow up on this with SH
- Students concerned that mock oral exam will have a detrimental effect on dissertation due to the amount of preparation needed for both at around the same time of year.
  - BN stated that mock oral component marks weighting has been reduced in order that it does not affect the dissertation.

Geology

- Rep stated that most courses are well liked. **Carbonates** in particular is a very enjoyable course however, some students were given more time to submit Carbonates work than others which some students found irritating.
- Students not happy with **Hydrocarbon Reservoir Quality** course: essay length too short and question too broad; submission date changed only 4 hours before deadline; SH difficult to get hold of; one student missed a lecture due to illness but only 1st half of lecture was uploaded on Learn; room not big enough due to MSc class involvement.
- **Antarctica: Development of a Continent and its context in Rodina and Gondwana** very enjoyable course. Well designed and interesting.
- **Dinosaur Palaeobiology** course run by Zoology is very biology-slanted. High level of genetics material in parts.
- **Principles of GIS** very human geography-focussed and not ideal for Geology students
- **Tectonic Geomorphology** feedback given out at different times to different students which is not suitable
- **GeoScience Outreach** is a really good course but students find it difficult to get hold of the course team and information is sporadically sent out to class
- **Geology Dissertation** topics need to be modernised – not enough relevant ARC options.
- Rep reported that some students' found the shift from exam and essay components to almost 100% essay writing quite difficult.

- More clarity needed re' extensions and Special Circumstances and how to get these.
  - SSLC informed that they should be approaching the Student Support Co-Ordinator in the first instance. More guidance will be posted online by TO.
- Geology students felt that Innovative Learning Week activities were not suitable for Geology students.
  - LK indicated that ILW being constantly reviewed and thanked rep for feedback.

Geology and Physical Geography

- Apologies from both class reps. LK reported on rep emails
- **GPG Dissertation** supervisors were not known early enough. It would be beneficial for this information to be circulated earlier in future
- Rep's stated that **Cyprus field trip** heavily Geology-biased. Only one geomorphology demonstrator available on recent trip. Needs more focus on Physical Geography in future.
- Students asked if they can be updated with marks throughout the academic year so that they are aware of personal targets. LK stated that marks are available through the TO but more communication between Personal Tutors and TO may be required.

Geophysics

- Rep stated that **Exploration Seismology** lecture on how to write research papers was good but chronologically misplaced in academic year. Some students have already submitted Geophysics Project 1 prior to this lecture. This would be better placed in semester 1. This course is also not compulsory for Meteorology students so they may miss out on a very insightful lecture.
  - HP will look at this being delivered as a stand-alone lecture in semester 1.
- Some students had to do Meteorology-focussed projects due to lack of choice in **Geophysics projects**
- Students felt that tutorials in **Controlled Source Electro-Magnetic (CSEM) Methods** would be more beneficial if they were more representative of the standard expected in the exam (i.e. exam much more difficult than course material).
- There are not enough practical classes in **Global Geophysics** course.
- Class rep pointed out that she had been an Erasmus student in year 3 but had taken **Geophysical Inverse Theory** in year 2. There are lots of references to this course during 4th year so any Geophysics students studying abroad in 3rd year should be encouraged to take this course in year 2.
- Students felt that there is not enough Geology focus in the Geophysics degree and pointed out that this could be due to clashes in 2nd year with Geophysics and Geology options.
  - HP pointed out that Geology 2nd year changing and that year 2 Geophysics is in a state of flux due to Physics and GeoSciences schools updating pre-honours courses. Geosciences pre-honours review should open up more options for Geophysics students.

Action: TO and Degree Programme Convenors to look carefully at timetabling new pre-honours courses following Board of Studies.

Geophysics and Meteorology

- Some students do not have compulsory courses in Semester 2 due to Degree Programme Table and choices made.
- Class rep agreed with previously mentioned issues on **Hydrocarbon Reservoir Quality** but also highlighted that lecture delivery was well structured and enjoyable.
- Agreement with Geophysics class rep that **Exploration Seismology** would be more beneficial if delivered in semester 1. Also stated that Andrew Curtis response-rate was very good and students appreciated quick responses to emails from course organisers. Feedback on presentations was highly motivational.
- **ILW Transferable Skills module** feedback was confusing. Several markers and no indication of who gave feedback so students had no idea of who to approach to ask about feedback. The presentation itself was very good
- Both Geophysics and Meteorology class reps indicated that they, and class mates, had found the move to essay-based assessment difficult due to the nature of taught material earlier in the degree programme. They felt it would be beneficial to have an essay writing course earlier in their academic career and that this would put them in a better position when writing reports in senior honours year.
- Class rep also stated that feedback given on some courses was not helpful. Advice on how to amend what was done poorly rather than just pointing out what was done poorly would be of far greater benefit to the student. It was also felt that highlighting good points as well as bad would be helpful.

7. A.O.B

LK reminded SSLC graduating students to ask student body to complete NSS survey and highlighted that cash incentives were on offer. Geology 4th year rep pointed out that 2nd year direct entry students and those studying MEarthSci programmes could not complete NSS.

Action: TO to check on 2nd year entry student issue.