Undergraduate Classics SSLC Minutes – Semester 2
13th March, 2017

Minutes taken by Matilda Brown (student class rep)

Present:
Mickey Ferguson (Roman World 1B)     Lily Davies (Greek and Latin Honours)
Louis Hall (Ancient History 2B)        Alex Nield (Pres. Classics Society)
Samuel Azzopardi (Classical Literature 2)  Dr. Dominic Berry
Glauco Longoni (Classical Literature 2)   Dr. Sandra Bingham
Lily Evans (Greek 1B)                   Professor Niels Gaul
Matilda Brown (Greek 2B/2hB/1D)        Dr. Richard Rawles

Apologies:
Kevin Kempton (Roman Art and Archaeology)
Sophie Cronshaw (Ancient History Honours)
Constance Champagne (Greek World 1B)
Josh Wicks (Roman World 1B)
Guy Balogun (Latin 2B)
Claudia Cockerell (Latin 1D)

Chair: Alex Nield

Minutes: Matilda Brown

Opened: 13:04

1. Welcome, Introductions, Apologies

The meeting was opened by student chair Alex Nield at 13:04. Apologies were relayed and the committee introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Handbooks: though faculty is under no obligation to create a handbook, it was requested that a concise document is created for courses and posted on Learn with all the essential information (eg, class schedule, assessment information, learning outcomes, etc.). Faculty reported that a departmental meeting approved the motion in semester one.

Some courses still do not have handbooks. Faculty promised to bring the points of this meeting to a staff meeting later in the afternoon, especially as regards handbooks.

3. Sub-Honours Course Feedback
The representative reported that students have received feedback on only one assignment, but feel that feedback is inconsistent – it is unclear why points are given or retracted. Staff did advise that essays are not graded on a 100-point scale, so knowing exactly what points are retract for is not easily explained. Nevertheless, feedback should have been posted on Learn for short exercises. Questions were put forth as to who students should contact in order to discuss their marks. Though with new online marking it is unclear who marks each essay, students should nevertheless get in touch with faculty on the course. The course representative was encouraged to pass the message back to students that they are encouraged to contact faculty or attend office hours.

Representatives for Greek World 1B were absent.

For Latin 1B, feedback on tutorials was considered positive amongst students and lecturers have been very helpful. Overall, no complaints on the course were relayed.

Representatives for Latin 1D and 2B were absent.

The Classical Literature 2 course received no formal from an online questionnaire posted on Learn by course representatives. Verbal feedback, however, requested that classes across the department be recorded as in other departments. While students with disabilities are currently welcome to electronically record lectures, the Classics Department does not otherwise allow recording. Staff responded that recording has already been addressed by the department, and lecture capture will be brought in for Classics courses excepting languages as early as next year (2018/2019). Student committee members emphasized that this will be especially valuable for courses where powerpoints are primarily focused on images or primary sources, eg. Literature and art courses.

Requests were also brought forth that students might choose their own tutorial slots in lieu of scheduling issues. Staff responded that automatic timetabling for tutorials is a school policy. Tutorial slots used to be chosen by students themselves, but the new system automatically allocates students to tutorial slots based on their extant schedules. Whilst the practice is administratively easier for the school, it may be more difficult for students. Staff advised students meeting with scheduling difficulties to reach out to their course secretary and/or course organizer.

Ancient History 2B reported several comments regarding the lack of information provided by some lecturers in the team-taught course as to how individual lectures work to support the course’s overall theme and learning outcomes. Staff responded that that this is frequently brought up with regard to Ancient History 2B, and likely remains an issue because of how often the course organizer has changed in recent years. Nevertheless, staff will in the future continue to try to remedy it.

Ancient History 2B also brought forth the point that gobbet and exam practice provided to students consist of questions on history without historiographical analysis. Staff encourage the representative to discuss the above matters with the course organizer in an attempt to gain clarity for the remainder of the semester.

Greek 1B recived overall positive feedback. Weekly quizzes this semester have been very useful, but because they take up tutorial time there has been less time for students to ask for help with information in lectures. Staff did assert that nothing can be implemented about quizzes this year as
they comprise a portion of students’ overall marks. Nevertheless, it was noted that many of the quizzes aren’t going well, which means they are not aiding in students’ individual improvement in the course. In the future, quiz grades may be excluded from final marks. The course representative maintained, however, that quizzes are a useful tool for students to track their own improvement or areas requiring further study.

The location of classes across the department arose, as many courses have classes that are difficult to access given students’ time constraints (e.g., Greek 1B classes held in Paterson’s Land), or have locations that change daily or throughout the semester. Staff responded that this is because of the construction occurring on campus, which has limited available teaching rooms across the department. Greek classes particularly suffer from scheduling difficulties because 11am is difficult to schedule. This has been brought forth consistently as an issue, and though faculty puts room requests in months in advance, they learn about class locations shortly before the semester start from central room allocation office. The issue is university-wide, and faculty continues to attempt to find a solution.

Greek 2B/2hB/1D received overall positive feedback, but requested that students be provided with specific sections of the text to translate for each class period in advance on Learn. Staff responded that posting in advance can be difficult as it might rush the class, but promised to post the line at which the class finished translating on Learn each day so that students know where in the translation to work from.

Roman art and archaeology reported overall positive feedback. Lecturers are interesting and engage with the students by asking questions. Tutorials are positive. The thematic nature of the course is also enjoyable covering a wide range of topics. Students report that there is a good level of informational crossover with the Roman World courses, but the course is still accessible for those students who have not taken Roman World.

4. Honours Course Feedback

The representative for Greek and Latin reported that students find it would be preferable to have exams at Christmas for language courses. The matter arose during the SSLC this semester for the school, where it was recognized that the work load given to honours students revising for all exams from both semesters is a step up from sub-honours. Students responded that there is no preparation at the sub-honours level for the amount of work that goes into the spring exam diet, and that it can be difficult to remember information for courses in the autumn semester by the spring diet. Concerns also arose over whether such a gap between courses and their exams might decrease final marks. This is especially a concern among students who were abroad for third year and balance their entire degree on their final year of study – though staff responded that students who studied abroad statistically receive higher class degrees than those who did not. Staff put forth that the decision to hold all honours exams in the spring is made by the school rather than the Classics Department independently, and that many other departments have the same practice. If students feel strongly about the matter, it should be brought forth to future school-wide SSLC’s as the Classics Department cannot independently choose to change the exam diet. Furthermore, holding all honours exams in the spring allows course marking to be returned more expediently in the fall, as it can be difficult for academic staff to complete their marking of both final assessments and coursework over the Christmas holidays. Putting honours exams in the autumn
would furthermore make the already difficult scheduling for sub-honours exams more complicated. Nevertheless, staff promised that the issue will be brought to the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

Requests were brought forth that more courses be offered for fourth year students that are marked solely on coursework.

For languages, students have mixed reviews regarding whether unseens during the semester should be for credit or not. Concerns surrounded the fact that honours students infrequently have unseens for practice during the semester, but have two in the exam. Students argue that if they were for credit during the year they would do that revision during the semester and do better in the end. Staff responded that unseens during the semester tend to go badly, and if their marks are counted toward final marks, students’ grades would likely go down. Furthermore, students tend to do better in unseens in exams than they do in those taken in the course.

Later Latin Poetry 2 reported that prescriptions are quite long, and that an unseen on the exam doesn’t seem fair alongside the long prescription as there is not enough revision time to focus on both. Staff responded that there are guidelines denoting how much material course organizers for languages can actually set: two books for the semester. They will investigate whether or not those guidelines have been followed for the course, and a request for further guidance will be made to alleviate some pressure felt by students.

With regard to group projects that are not for credit, students find them pointless as many students generally don’t work on them. These presentations, staff explained, have been included in courses per a request from EUSA. Students were advised to put effort into not-for-credit assignments, as it ultimately benefits them in the long term. EUSA has made requests for not-for-credit work in response to a call from students to be assigned non-assessed work so that they can get constructive feedback. If students find that presentations are particularly unhelpful or unfocused with regard to a course’s final exam, discussions should be held with their course organizer. If students are clearly not taking these presentations seriously, the course organizer should implement steps to make them.

Ancient History courses reported students are overall happy with courses, and that assessments have been returned in a timely manner.

No feedback was received for Classical Literature courses.

No feedback was received for Classical Archaeology courses.

5. **No Other Business.**

*Meeting Close: 14:06*