

Minutes Philosophy SSLC

Meeting to be held on Monday 19th October 2015, 1pm – 2pm
G32 7 George Square

In attendance: Dr Nick Treanor SSLC Convener, Dr Aidan McGlynn (Deputy Head), Dr Debbie Roberts, Tsengelsaikhan Enkhbat, Jo-Anna Schuller Hagen, Antonina Bargielowska Johnsen, Harriet Jennifer Hendersen, John Massey, Michael Awdankiewicz

Minutes: Sarah Nicol, Student Support Officer

1. Apologies

Dr Matthew Chrisman, Phillipe Bawa, Louis Norman

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes were agreed.

Convenor's Report

Introduction of all the staff and students.

M&V tutorials

NT explained that this year the department want more structure within tutorials for Morality and Value (M&V). All students have a workbook that have tasks to help with work. The idea is to introduce opportunity for questions and give focus in the tutorial groups. He clarified that worksheets are not marked, but are there to give practical experience. In 2015/16 M&V is piloting this tutorial structure to see how it works, and if successful it could be rolled out more widely. Reps agreed this was a good idea. NT stated that Year 1 Reps should get feedback from the year 1 student cohort about how this went.

First year tutorial groups

NT explained this year in sub honours tutorials, the department are grouping philosophy students together within tutorials. This means that all students on a philosophy programme can sign up to group from philosophy student tutorial list, and those taking the courses as an outside course sign up for group from a non-philosophy student tutorial list. Both should have sufficient range of choice with regards to times and days, as there is a large about groups within each subject area. This will ensure that philosophy students are meeting each other in year 1 and should to help build a community within Philosophy. A Rep raised the question - would there be a chance of one student that is taking it as an outside course ending up in a Philosophy student tutorial? NT clarified it hasn't been an issue so far. The idea is just for the philosophy students to be together, in the case of Logic, some students that take this as an outside course have demanding schedules. It would be the case if a non-philosophy student needed to be in a philosophy tutorial due to timetables, it shouldn't be an issue.

Number of honours courses

In 2015/16 there are 35 honours course, which is 1 or 2 more that last year. The department is looking at offering 38 next year. The Philosophy Head, Deputy Head and Teaching Director in collaboration about the potential of running popular courses twice.

3. Year 1 Report

Year 1 Rep stated, at this stage, they had nothing to report.

4. Year 2 Report

Year 2 reps reported some students were dissatisfied with Mind, Matter and Language (MML) at the beginning of the course. Dissatisfaction was related to content and preference to Year 1 courses.

5. Year 3 Report

Course choices for Year 3 – Year 3 reps suggested that ideally they would like honours course to be allocated so that each third year student would be guaranteed at least 3/6 (single) or 1/3 (joint) of their priority choices. Rep stated this point also ties into what NT mentioned for next year, and if courses are running twice, then this might be more of a possibility. Reps clarified they understood they were not aware of the administrative issues that having this system would entail, and whether it would be possible. Reps felt it was a big issue that students weren't getting their priority courses, and then ending up on courses that all the deadlines are on the same day. A rep raised the point that perhaps some courses in honours are not popular due to the fact that the Year 2 pre honours courses are not enjoyed as much, therefore students are less likely to want to follow on with this study into Year 3. NT raised they are thinking of looking at structure for MML and K&R. AM confirmed that it was restructured slightly, but not to do with progression from year 1 to 2. It might make the following courses more appealing if students enjoy year 2 courses more.

NT - reminded the meeting that there is a 4th year priority for students. Reps are aware there may be implications, but if this could be administered, then it would be helpful to students. AM stated it would mean we would have to run double courses. Reps suggested that class sizes could be a factor and could lectures be held together, and then tutorials separately? It would only be the case with tutorials are divided. NT we can't change the structure once we know how big the class it. It has to be approved a year in advance. The department would be able to run it twice however, but not change the structure with the lectures and tutorials. Rep Y4 – Seminar format in honours is better than lectures, and changing the structure would take away from this. AM suggested the reason caps were introduced in the first place were that students wanted less students in seminars, and there are advantages and disadvantages to both.

Rooms for Seminars

In some cases, students have to move to another room within a 2 hour seminars. It takes time away from the learning and is disruptive. NT stated the issue is that students want the do the continuous group, and all signed up for this format. A rep asked, could they ask for a room to be changed? SN explained it was a resources issues across the University, and rooms were booked by a central team with regards to availability. Rep's can raise issues of rooms with Sue Richards, Philosophy Course Secretary, and perhaps for future academic sessions this can be resolved, however the likelihood it that there are no resources for change semester. Some of the course with space issues are Ancient Ethics, Ancient Aesthetics and Philosophy of Language. It was suggested that courses could have a half lecture, half tutorial to help resolve issues with capacity for the course and rooms. NT stated that staff that some staff are doing lecture/tutorial structure, but it up to the individual staff member. NT suggested we should keep talking about it at other SSLC's and mentioned that the teaching plan will be looked at earlier this year. NT stated that approx. 60% of

Philosophy students are joint honours, and year abroad students and take about half - 3 courses a year, instead of 6. That is why the department is going to offer 38 course with the possibility of double running of the courses.

The reps stated that students like the Autonomous Learning Groups but students are finding it difficult to get the initial meeting set up and no-one wants to take the lead. Reps asked if the department could be involved in the initial set up for the first meeting. The other point raised was could the tutors give guidance and once in a while come along and clarify. After much discussion it was agreed that the ALG's were for students, therefore they should be able to set up these meeting themselves. The sign up process was simple and working. It was just the initial meeting that was the problem. Philosophy has Philosophy Families and now that students will be grouped together from year 1 in tutorials, therefore this should give a sense of community and help students get to know each other and perhaps once these types of peer support have been around longer it will lead to less need for ALG's or make students more confident with initiating meetings with each other.

The reps raised that feedback was not consistent across the courses. It was pointed out that there was a huge difference in the quality of feedback given last academic year for M&V and Greats. The latter was very basic. SN suggested that for the next SSLC this semester, students will have received feedback from their mid-terms so perhaps they should ask their peers for comments regarding the quality of feedback.

It was discussed that students want more social events. It was agreed that the new initiative Philosophy Families, should be able to meet these needs that student's desire. The reps also suggested they may want to hold their own rep event to invite students to. SN asked for feedback about Philosophy Families, the response was very positive and it's great to meet students from all years. Students have found the concept of the families interesting and been able to meet new people.

Students raised they would like Exam dates to be announced before week 6, however it was pointed out that the department has no control over this, therefore agreed no action could be taken.

6. Year 4 Report

Year 4 reps raised that they would a meeting to be organised for students who are going on a year abroad to make them aware of what needs to happen when they are absent from University, for example signing up for dissertation topics etc.

7. Any Other Business

No other business. Nick reminds reps that they did not need to wait until SSLC's to raise issues. They can talk to members of staff throughout the year.

8. Next Meeting

Monday 23rd of November 2015, 1pm – 2pm, G32 7 George Square