

Minutes Philosophy SSLC

Meeting to be held on Monday 23rd November, 1pm – 2pm
G32, 7 George Square

In attendance: Dr Nick Treanor SSLC Convener, Dr Matthew Chrisman (Head of Department), Dr Aidan McGlynn (Deputy Head), Dr David Levy (Exams Convener), Tsengelsaikhan Enkhbat, Jo-Anna Schuller Hagen, Antonina Bargielowska Johnsen, Harriet Jennifer Hendersen, John Massey, Michael Awdankiewicz

Minutes: Sarah Nicol, Student Support Officer

Apologies

Dr Debbie Roberts

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the last SSLC were agreed.

2. Convener's Report

Reps should send a link to the official minutes when reporting back to the student body. This will ensure no confusion over points and all information is accurate.

Philosophy department are welcoming a new member of staff, Martin Smith. He will be covering Themes of Epistemology and lecturing for Philosophy of Science 1.

Following up from Honours courses discussion from last SSLC – NT has talked to department and now it should be around 40 honours courses being offered, with hope of doubling up popular courses, where possible. Depending on numbers, if the numbers of sign up is double, the department will try to accommodate. Trying to increase more than 10% and trying to anticipate popular courses.

Study Skills workshops – we offered 12 workshops last academic year, and uptake was low. This academic year, we offered less and advertised better. If students have any ideas of what would be helpful, let NT know. Reps reported that essay workshop was very helpful. NT stated, if anything comes to mind, we want to know. Year 3 Rep suggested a workshop on how to develop opinion within writing would be very helpful. Year 1 Rep suggested a workshop covering Logic software. This would be helpful now, but also at the start of the semester. Student confirmed there was videos, but would be good to cover more specifics, as students are left unsure whether they had done something wrong on the software or if you are wrong in your answer when doing homework. **ACTION:** NT – Logic Software discussion with year 1 Reps and B Rabern.

Translation in Philosophy workshop would be valuable, for example 'words lost in translation' how to deal with text in a different languages. DL confirmed

that they have several dictionaries in the library, we could communicate to students about this resource. **ACTION:** NT will discuss with colleagues about holding a workshops.

Year 2 rep raised that Mind, Matter and Language (MML) – students are not aware of the help they can get on the course. During a tutorial ‘personal pronouns’ were discussed yet it does not seem to be common knowledge that this can be used in Philosophy. It was suggested that perhaps study skill workshops throughout the year may be more beneficial, after a certain amount of time students then realise they may need help. NT said that workshops around submission would be beneficial and has happened like that in previous years. NT asked reps to email him any further ideas for workshops.

3. Year 1 Report

Year 1 Reps reported some issues with Logic. Students feel it’s a daunting course in the first in the few weeks as a first year student. Students may need more reassurance as they can find it very tricky. Lecture notes can be downloaded from learn – but you cannot see the full picture. Lecturer slides feel more of a supplement rather than helpful to understand the subject at a later date. They are under detailed when you go back to refer to them. Students raised that they couldn’t go to Dr Rabern’s office hours due to a lecture being held at the same time. MC confirmed that students can contact Course Organisers to make an appointment, and most staff should be accommodating and be able to book and appointment with.

Morality and Value has been a good paced course. Reps reported that it would be helpful to point out what some of the terminology is. Some students feel on the back foot with no prior knowledge. Reps stated it is hard getting feedback from students. Can the lecturer introduce them? When the student do it themselves no-one doesn’t stay.

Year 2 Rep raised that last SSLC is was discussed that a preparation package could be sent out to new students in 2015/16. **ACTION: NT** check if Logic information was sent to any incoming students in 2015/16.

It was suggest that Logic may be better suited to semester 2. AM confirmed one of the reasons it is in semester 1 was it gives students longer to decide whether they want to Philosophy of Science 1, as this is not a mandatory course.

The committee then discussed the reasons that Logic was compulsory. DL explained that the by not doing Logic in your Philosophy degree, we were producing students that were limited for post graduate studies, and we did not want to disadvantage our students. AM also reminded students that academics could only give limited tools as they could not suggest any readings that non Logic minded students wouldn’t be able to use. Therefore, now it is mandatory, the honours courses will have more suggestions of readings as students coming up Logic will have an understanding. So now in fact, teaching can be even better. Year 2 rep agreed that although that they did not enjoy Logic they can now see why it was important and essential for future Philosophy.

4. Year 2 Report

Year 2 Reps reported that they had held a survey of 48 students, and the results were that most students were happy with the course. Generally tutorials were considered helpful and learning resources were easily accessible by most.

However, students felt lectures could be more productive. They raised that having a lecture at 9am meant that there was very low attendance, and then tutorials were then affected as students were catching up on what missed at the lecture. There was a sense that some teaching styles were not as effective as others. For example, students felt that some lecturers read off the slides and add little else. Students felt there should be more explaining, as the material can be hard to understand.

It was agreed that students want more explanation of materials in lectures. The other issue with the 9am lecture was other students arriving late, which disrupted students on time. DL suggested if the lecture format works, then students should attend. The committee agreed that the time of lecture could not be simply moved. The timetabling of all the University courses and clashes are taken into account.

Year 2 felt that teaching should stress how course content translates into exams. Many feel the course has hardly prepared them for exams, unlike in Year 1 courses. **ACTION: NT** remind staff to tell students about using pass papers

The committee then discussed preparation for exams, and the idea of continuous assessment in pre honours. And if there was continuous assessment, would it be marked or not. More discussions would have to take place within the department.

Rep reported that for MML, students were happy with the reading lists apart from there had been no mention of Stich. Students asked that anything that is required for assessment or exams should be on the list.

5. Year 3 Report

Year 3 Reps reported that students in Year 3 were mainly against sit down examinations. That their peers have suggested that perhaps there be no exam, or less weighing on the exams. Currently, some courses are 20% coursework and 80% examination. They liked the balance of Meta-Ethics. Reps also raised that the fact the having the midterm essay deadline was putting some students at a disadvantage. Could the department have an extension policy that if students had a certain amount of essays due, then they could get an extension for the course of their choice? It was also raised that some feedback was later than the 15 working days for Philosophy. **ACTION: NT** to investigate when feedback was released and find out why all Coursework Submission are due on the same date.

Essay word counts, students are asking for the word count to be more lenient or have more words. The committee discussed feedback terms such as 'this could have been explained more'. Students felt that they could explain more if they have more words. NT pointed out that perhaps it would have been explained more effectively within the word count given.

ACTION: NT department to review whether the Word Count Policy should be changed.

The students raised that they would like a reading week. The group discussed the advantage to this, however the University did not have an official reading week. DL confirmed that Innovative Learning Week in Semester 2 was not a reading week, but some students may use it as, but in semester 1 the only time allocated to students is revision period.

6. Year 4 Report

Year 4 Reps also agreed with Year 3, that relaxing word limits for mid-term and end-of-semester essays, for example 10% leeway, or given as a range would be helpful. The Students confirmed this point was covered by Year 3 Reps, and they agreed for the need for either 1) more words 2) that they be a leeway range that students could use should they have extra to say. The latter being the preferred option.

Year reps suggested it would be beneficial to have a dissertation information meeting at the end of second year, for students going abroad in their third year. **ACTION:** NT to discuss with Dr Bryan Pickle the awareness that students on Year Abroad, and what expectations students have of their Year Abroad Dissertation.

Year 4 reps are planning on organising an event in Teviot for Year 4 students. This will be advertised by the department but organised by the reps.

7. Any other business

NT raised the fact that we should all be talking in between the SSLC meetings. That some issues whether urgent or not could be dealt with and reported back at SSLC. The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to extend the SSLC meetings to 1.5 hours in the future and also to chat to each other between SSLC's. All the committee felt that having discussion as well as reporting at SSLC were valuable.

ACTION: SN extend room bookings for 2016

ACTION: Year 4 to report first at SSLC in February 2016.

8. Next Meeting: Wednesday 10th February 2016, 1pm – 2.30pm, 7.01 DSB.