

School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Philosophy Staff Student Liaison Committee

Wednesday 25th February 2015, 1-2pm
G32 7GS

Present: M. Sprevak (Chair), M. Ridge (Exams Convenor), A. McGlynn (Quality Assurance Officer), P. Vouta, J. Nygaardsmoen, O. Simpson, J. Teng, E. Hall, A. Dobre, J. Sutherland

In Attendance: S. Nicol (Minutes) and M. Avraam, Student Support

1. Apologies

T. Vierkant, T. Schmidt

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. Convenor's Report (Mark Sprevak)

MS reported that the honours courses - Philosophy of Kant and Political Philosophy, which had been requested by previous reps and the student cohort has been approved and will run in 2015/16. MS also confirmed that Feminism will run in 2015/16. The chair reminded the reps about the Philosophy-specific Study Skills Workshop being run by academics, and if they wanted more information to look at the webpage but also to please remind fellow students.

NSS and ESES feedback surveys have opened, if you are 4th year please complete NSS and encourage others to do so. We use this information so the feedback is very important. ESES survey, is for years 1-3, please encourage others. We take feedback seriously.

From the last SSLC, the following actions have taken place;

- There have been improvements made to pre honours tutorials. All tutors were provided target readings and suggested structure by Course Organisers (CO) to ensure all students are gaining a better learning experience at pre honours level.
- ALG's in pre honours will be implemented in September 2015.

- There will be support for Logic resit students, organised through PhilSoc. All students who wish to study as part of a group should get in touch.
- For applicants – the department have now created a reading list for logic to ensure preparation and expectations of what is coming in Year 1 are met.
- Introducing extra assessment for pre honours courses - it can't be implemented until the department are aware of resources but it is on the radar for consideration.
- Introducing a formative assessment for honours courses - is also to be considered by the department, during the review of the teaching plan and once resources are confirmed for next academic year.
- To hold an informal meeting before SSLC - this took place on Monday 23rd of February.
- ALG's – guidance from course organisers and/or added to course handbook for next year. It was reported that in some cases this was very helpful and others could be better. Rep to report any feedback received regarding which courses could be improved.
- ALG's were organised quicker in semester 2, as per the request from semester 1 SSLC.

4. Year 1 Items

Student Reps reported that they are helping set up a revision session for Logic 1 resits. Working along with PhilSoc, they will set up small groups to help support students who need to practice/help with Logic. They will be looking for honours students volunteers to help out. MS stated that PhilSoc should let him know if any academic help is needed.

Year 1 rep suggested that the job of a representative should be improved. They thought that if reps cooperatively worked together, things would run smoother. Rep felt that perhaps they weren't sure who to go to and what they should do with complaints. MS confirmed that if there are any complaints about lecturers or staff in general, he should be the first point of call as the Philosophy UG Teaching Director, if it was about him then it should be raised with the Head of Philosophy. It is not up to the rep to go and inform a Course Organiser of complaints. It was raised that they reps felt that no-one was checking on what they were doing and what if they for example didn't know how to do a survey. Year 3 rep confirmed that there is a handover meeting for next year scheduled. This is for old reps to pass on information to new reps.

It was raised that students would like some form of assessment before the mid-term essays. MS confirmed that the department was considering a formative essay for students that wished to opt-in, however this was

dependent on resources of tutors next academic session. The students agreed that they felt not all students would want to use this resource, but it is unknown as to how much work this would create for tutors.

5. Year 2 Items

General Update from Year 2 reps – a survey was sent out and the feedback was that the cohort was happy. There was a group of students that were unhappy about their feedback received for their Mind, Matter and Language mid-term. Upon investigation carried out by the rep, it would appear that this may only concern one particular marker's feedback.

The feedback for Mind, Matter and Language was that students felt that the Language section could cover more and do so in less depth, as the course started off very specialist and then once it moved onto the Mind section, it felt the topic broadened and students enjoyed it more. The reps reported that it was felt the course didn't always flow, and there was a lot of information at the beginning of the course. AM confirmed that the reason that Language was changed to go first was to do with the mid-term. The students agreed that once the mid-terms were done, they enjoyed the course more in the lead up to the exams. The students felt that the first 3 weeks were very demanding, and made the course jumpy.

Philosophy of Science 1 feedback was it would be better if there was help with science background - for example explaining empirical case studies for students without a science background.

Logic 1 – students who really like it want Logic 2. The lectures had positive feedback.

Students think the essay word limit is too strict. A lot of students are asking for more flexibility. MS confirmed this issue discussed frequently. However, they are keen for students to learn the skill of what to add and takeaway to make a 1500 essay. There are exemplar essays on Learn that students can look at for ideas of how to construct an excellent 1,500 essay.

Positive feedback was received for tutorials, as tutors are providing hand outs. MS confirmed that the department has sent round hand outs for tutors to choose to use, if they wished.

6. Year 3 Items

The Year 3 reps thanked the committee for the ALG 's this year and confirmed some of the tasks provided from the CO's were very good and others aren't. Specific examples will be discussed with MS.

Formal methods, students would like practice with solutions. It does take time and effort however, students want to prepare more. It was felt that in the ALG's there was only so much they could work on together. It would be ideal if they could be provided with practice questions.

Students received very positive feedback about lectures that has an element of discussion at the end. Students felt the benefit of the discussion, and the 20 minutes allocated to the end of the lecture was an ideal for this. It was felt that perhaps, having the allocated discussion section at the end meant that nothing was rushed through because perhaps discussion throughout delayed the lecture.

Year 3 thanked the department for the fact that feminism is an option next year as well as the new course Political Philosophy.

The last point the reps brought to the committee's attention was Essay and take home exam, was there a policy for how the extensions were granted for students who had hand in's on the same day. **ACTION POINT:** MS to check with Teaching Office.

7. Year 4 Items

Positive feedback for office hours made available for feedback prior to exams, 1-to-1 feedback sessions and sessions for practice questions.

Students raised that they thought there is no specific rubric for how coursework dissertations are to be graded. MS pointed out that the marking guidelines are available in the handbooks. Concern had already been raised from students about how a 5,000 word essay should look. MS confirmed there will be exemplar essays available from next academic year. If students have any other questions they should ask the CO.

Rep raised that study abroad students considering the independent dissertation were at a disadvantage of being aware of how to know what is specifically required in the topic they choose, examples of dissertation proposals, and outline of what supervisors are interested in and if they are available. MS confirmed this information was up on Learn, along with examples. Year 3 rep also confirmed an email was circulated to to all Year 3 students containing this information. **ACTION POINT:** MS to check if study abroad students have access to materials via learn.

The rep raised a point that they had received via email regarding creating an intercalated degree for medical students. MS suggested that anyone that is interested in speaking to the department regarding this type of query should be directed to the Head of Philosophy.

8. Selection Process for Reps in 2015-16

The committee discussed the rep selection process, and whether it should be an election or volunteering. The idea of an application or profile was suggested. It was decided that the matter of rep selection should go to the School Council for discussion.

9. Any other business

AM brought it to the committee's attention that there is a gender committee within Philosophy that will be looking at the syllabus throughout the years. They are tasked with looking at issues across the courses relevant to gender. This is currently run by Dr Mason this academic year.