

Agenda
Philosophy Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) 2016/17

Meeting to be held on Tuesday 28th of March
12:30pm-1pm, 7 George Square - S38

Student Representation; Year 1: Meyra Coban and Tim Francis, Year 2: Vasiliki Passaris Year 3: Alessandra Fassio, Year 4: Andrew Hermsmeier. Kate Chen, Linguistics and English Language Rep

Staff Representation; Dr Matthew Chrisman (Head of Department), Dr David Levy (Exams Convener), Prof Jesper Kallestrup

SSLC Convenor: Dr Nick Treanor, Teaching Director
Minutes: Sarah Nicol, Student Support Officer

Apologies: Laura Altinsoy, Dr Bryan Pickel

1. University of Edinburgh Library

Anne Donnelly, the PPLS librarian explained that she would like feedback from the Philosophy reps regarding the Library service. AD explained that although the library scores quite high in surveys, the free text comments indicate that they could do more. She asked the committee for any feedback that they could give, and suggested that perhaps, if required, another more focused meeting about the library. If there is anything else that reps want to raise, then please email anne.donnelly@ed.ac.uk

The group discussed sign posting in the library, and how it can be difficult to navigate and sometimes people are unsure who to ask when they can't find someone. It was asked 'Is it easy enough to find things?' everyone agreed it takes a knack to find what you are looking for, but sometimes just walking around and getting used to it is the only way to overcome the initial confusion. It was suggested if there is a member of staff, they can help. Suggested also that students can look at the floor plans. It was discussed that there is lots of information on the website.

The new 24 hours access to the library received a positive response from the students. It was raised that people hogging a space is not very considerate of others. It was suggested that if it is an issue, the student should raise the issue with the helpdesk at the time. It was also raised that some students use the space but not the actual computer. AD promised to feed this information back to her colleagues. It was stated during exam times, additional space is made available around the University.

Counselling and Careers services which are currently based in the main library may move in the future away from the library which would give more space as sometimes it feels there is too much going on in the library.

The group discussed services available such as inter library loans for getting papers and books. Also the request a book service, which is when you make suggestions for the library to buy. It was recommended however, If you need the book now, a student should get it on the inter library loan. Also, to state that you would prefer in print (if required), but ebooks are obtained very quickly.

AD asked 'What kind of things to you want to know about?' a student mentioned that they didn't know about available newspapers in library. For example a German newspaper which is expensive to buy here, but they only discovered it 2 weeks ago. AD also told the group she has a blog in which she informs of new resources. **ACTION:** NT to send out link to students, via AD

It was stated that sometime electronic resources links don't work –if you leave it for a day or so it usually works. If the fault lies with the library, it can be fixed quickly. Sometimes takes longer, if outwith University. IS helpline should be contacted.

2. Philosophy Department's Report

NT reported that the department is aware that joint students sometimes don't feel at home within either school of their joint programme, and especially don't feel they have contact or guidance within their other subject. NT met with students to get feedback on their personal experience. He explained that the department is investigating a few options and will have more support in place for next year. It could be simple as having a named contact with other subject, or perhaps a dedicated person for each of the programmes.

Personal Tutor (PT) system within Philosophy is being reviewed – one idea is a PT assigned to specific joint programmes. Other possibilities are also being considered. This is on the agenda for the next department meeting in April.

Consultation is underway for a new Peer Support scheme with Philosophy. NT explained about the PALS scheme and how it can offer academic and social support.

Year 2 and 3 students should be aware that the department used to announce honours courses in the summer. However, NT explained that the process has been pushed forward with the teaching plan almost being finalised. Next week NT is holding a meeting with current Year 2 and 3 students regarding courses. Motivation behind this change is that not everyone reads emails and he is hoping to catch more people. Also, a chance to ask questions before the summer. Expect an email in the next few days.

On a different issue, a group of 8-10 students have interviewed academic staff about their research interests and background and this information is being

put together and will be made available to students. It will let learn more about lecturers and get a better sense of the people in the department.

3. Year 1 Report

Students are generally happy. Everyone is enjoying Dr Alix Cohen's teaching. Students reported that tutors are putting a lot of effort into tutorials.

Greats Tutorials

Students feel there is a different levels of commitment from others in their tutorials.

Logic 1 Tutorials

Students giving mixed reviews. Students felt they were behind until recently. Tutorials are currently big groups. Two tutors to help during the session but not all questions are being answered because of the amount of people and the setup of the room. Quite often only the first 5 students get help due to time. Rep admitted to sitting in the front to ensure she gets help. It seems like the current tutorials aren't working as intended. It was unclear however whether the problem was at the level of implementation (problematic rooms or tutors not dividing the group into two as intended) or in principle. Students have also felt that sometimes tutors don't lead the discussion. It was discussed that tutors used to give out a set of questions, and then the tutors would put the answers on learn after so students could then look later.

ACTION: NT to speak to Dr Alix Cohen about tutoring for Logic and look at how to bring it forward. MC fed back that Fiona has said that having two tutors meant they could get round to more groups of people.

An example of stats course in Psychology set up was suggested for Logic 1 next year. Using a room like the DHT used for the Psychology Labs, as it fit 6/7 per table, and computers to use for tutors to look at. Total students would be 30.

It was agreed that the style for next year tutorials need to be figured out.

ACTION: MC to talk to Dr Brian Rabern and Fiona about what are the best options going forward.

PhilSoc Drop In

Academic support for students was discussed as to where would you go/tell a friend to go. It was agreed that PhilSoc drop in and go to tutors would be the best course of action. The LEL rep suggested that LangSoc have a section on Learn pages for LEL subjects so that student are aware of their sessions.

Feedback

Greats essay feedback was reported to be felt to be poor by students, there were a lot of low grades and not much feedback. NT asked if all students know where to find the feedback on their essay. He told the group that in light of research the department has done on what sort of comments tend to be

most helpful to students, there is more of a focus on the overall, summary comment, which is visible in a side bar (rather than as a bubble comment). Could student reps let students know that raised the issue how to do this. What is the best way of communicating this information to students? If anyone has any feedback then let NT know. It was fed back that there is a way of showing a student before they go in to read something, like the current gif example when you submit. **ACTION:** AC/NT to look into this for submissions

4. Year 2 Report

Knowledge and Reality (K&R)

Students reported that they are not happy with the quality of feedback received. Feedback had typos, some contained quite heavy comments but didn't match mark it was given. K&R students didn't know who had marked their essays so didn't know who to ask for feedback. The department agreed to look into this further.

As previously discussed in the February SSLC, it was agreed the pre honours courses could have more unity as there is cross over with Greats and K&R with regards to Plato and Decartes. It was discussed there will be more coordination of what is happening in the courses. Students told the group they like JK teaching each week.

It was stated that some tutorial rooms are too tight for space. Not everyone can fit in the room for one of the tutorials for K&R. It was agreed that the design of the room isn't right for what they need within the tutorial which is discussion based.

5. Year 3 Report

It was suggested that students would like more information on Coursework dissertations, for example - when do they pick their courses? Students felt they would like to know what they can do before September, and information about how they go about it.

The group discussed where to find staff interests online, which is not on the main contact list for the school but on the staff research pages; <http://www.ed.ac.uk/ppls/philosophy/research/staff-research-interests>. It was agreed that the department needs to direct student to this page.

ACTION: MC ask staff to keep page updated. NT/AC to communicate link to students

The students asked about having a Dissertation preparation workshop in September, for 4th years. DL reported it is good to try and get students started as soon as possible, and he doesn't want it to seem like students should put off work until then. The department don't want to give too much support, as undertaking the dissertation itself is part of the process of learning, so perhaps something informal. It was agreed it would be good for students who have

been abroad. It was suggested that current Year 4 students could hold an informal workshop in April after submitting, briefing Year 3 students about their experience.

NT discussed the idea of degree shows, where your work is presented to your peers (like in Edinburgh College of Art). Does anyone have any ideas about how to do something similar in Philosophy to mark the occasion? If you have ideas, speak to NT.

Students raised the issue of formative feedback in courses with 100 percent exams. NT stated that the department is exploring the best way to include more feedback in such courses and also that many of the 100 percent exam courses are changing assessment methods next year, to include more continuous assessment.

6. Year 4 Report

Year 4 rep reported students are happy, no issues to report.

The National Student Survey (NSS) was discussed and MC reminded students that we can all see response rates on the chart in both of our buildings. MC explained incentives for students completing the NSS, and it was be good if Philosophy numbers would get to above 80%.

NT closed the meeting by thanking the students for being reps this academic year.

7. Next Meeting – Academic Year 2017/18