

Philosophy Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) 2019/20

Wednesday 12 February 2020 12pm

G32, 7 George Square

MINUTES

Student Representation; Year 1: Rainier Pilotte and Monika Zon, Year 2: Steven Anderson, Year 3: Jose Luis Neira and Siena Wotherspoon, Year 4: Rebecca Stoll

Staff Representation; Dr Tillman Vierkant, Dr Jonny Cottrell, Dr Brian Rabern

In attendance; Emma Nelson (Student Support Office), Ani Cowe and Vera Spiliotakou (Teaching Office)

Apologies: Dr Bryan Pickel

Meeting Chaired by Year 4 rep, Rebecca Stoll

1. Welcome from Y4 Rep

2. Points for discussion:

- a. Pre-honours reception – this went well. Thanks to Alistair Isaac for planning this.
- b. 2020-21 honours course choice update – the course selection for next year is being finalised. The plan is to release this information in March.

3. Actions from previous meeting:

- a. BP to investigate linking PhilSkills workshops more explicitly with the activity of PhilPALS – **in progress**. It was noted that there are also plans to link PhilPALS activity with PhilSoc academic support hours.
- b. GF to share rationale for unrealistic lecture examples in Morality and Value – **complete**.
- c. BP to check with the Exam Board Chair that assessment dates for honours take-home tests are correct – **complete**. TV checked with the regulations expert who confirmed that take-home tests can be scheduled for revision week. TV is looking into whether take-home test dates can be moved regardless of this, but it may not be possible.
- d. BP to check on the status of the Philosophy and Theology joint honours lunch – **in progress**. BR clarified that it may not be possible to run a lunch for a non-PPLS programme, but given the strength of feeling from reps he would look into this.
- e. BP to discuss the availability of books in the Late Modern Course with the course organiser – **complete**. It was noted that the course organiser may be changing for next year.

4. Year 1 report

- a. There was feedback from students that they are unhappy with the scheduling of lectures for Greats and Logic – Greats is a 10am and Logic at 5pm, leaving a large time gap between the two. Students reported that this impacted on their lecture attendance as they didn't want to have to wait on campus between these, and would end up only attending one of the two. Staff reported that they had attempted to change this in the past, but they found that there was no leeway for this given that they needed a large lecture theatre and to be mindful of clashes with compulsory courses for students on joint programmes.

- b. There is some general worry among students about the upcoming exam diet. JC will be holding a PhilSkills workshop on exam prep so students are advised to look out for a learn announcement about this.
- c. Students have found it difficult to differentiate between the similar colours used for Plato and Aristotle on Greats slides.
- d. There are some general concern about upcoming industrial action – students have had emails from other Schools about this but nothing from PPLS.
- e. There was feedback that students would like more Philosophy course options at pre-honours. It was clarified that taking outside courses is part of the Scottish system and that students will have the opportunity to specialise once they reach their honours years.

5. Year 2 report

- a. There has been some very positive feedback about the Knowledge and Reality lecturers.
- b. One person provided feedback to the year 2 rep that they felt the lectures and readings were too reiterative of each other. Staff explained that they need to cater to differing learning styles, which mean some students prefer reading while others listening to a lecture. They also explained that there is further suggested reading in the reading lists which will go beyond what is covered in the lecture.
- c. There was feedback from a student that they did not think there was progression with difficulty between year 1 and 2 courses. Staff explained that there is a progression which is less visible as the topics covered don't directly progress. Progression is taken into account when marking and there are elevated honours hurdles for students to meet.

6. Year 3 report

- a. Students are unclear as to the process for submitting a dissertation proposal and how to approach potential supervisors. AC clarified that the dissertation co-ordinator, Aidan McGlynn, is currently reviewing the year 3 dissertation learn page – this is in progress. Students can direct their dissertation questions to him and he will be arranging an FAQ session.
- b. Students were also concerned that the dissertation proposal deadline is three days before the deadline for final essays this semester. JLN agreed to pass this feedback onto Aidan McGlynn.
- c. The reps reported that students were initially concerned by the action taken to mitigate the impact of the evacuation of the Logic 2 exam in December. However, students are much happier now they have seen what this means in practice and have been given their final results.
- d. There was positive feedback about the increased interactive nature of classes this semester. While this was likely a coincidence and depending on the courses running, students were happy with this.

7. Year 4 report

- a. The year 4 rep reported that they struggled to get feedback from their peers.
- b. Feedback received seemed to be mostly about dissertation stress. Students wondered if it was possible to set general milestone deadlines (e.g. by this deadline students should have completed 2000 words). Staff explained that these informal deadlines are normally set between supervisor and supervisee, as they can work out what would be most beneficial for the individual student's work.

- c. There was feedback that Belief, Desire and Rational Choice is a challenging course if you do not have a maths background and could this be advertised more clearly when students are selecting their courses.

8. Events/socials to collect feedback

- a. There was a general discussion about feedback events and upcoming events. Year 1 reps were successful with a pizza feedback session. There are other upcoming events such as Plato's Rave with PhilSoc and the PPLS Ball. The year 4 reps are planning an end of semester event but the format of this is yet to be determined.

9. Thank you to Rebecca for chairing this meeting. The meeting closed at 1.15pm.

10. Action Points

- a. None.