

Philosophy Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) 2018/19

Wednesday 17th October 2018

1pm-2.30pm, 7.01, Dugald Stewart Building

MINUTES

Student Representation; Year 1: Andrea Gimeno Solaz, Year 2: Jose Luis Nera and Siena Wotherspoon, Year 3: Ruby Sullivan and Rebecca Joyce, Year 4: Freya Gordon and Rebecca Phipps

Staff Representation; Dr Nick Treanor, Dr David Levy, Dr Alasdair Richmond, Dr Brian Rabern, Dr Debbie Roberts

SSLC Convenor: Dr Bryan Pickel, UG Teaching Director

In attendance; Emma Nelson (Student Support Office), Alison Lazda (Undergraduate Teaching Office)

Apologies: Dr Guy Fletcher

1. Welcome from SSLC Convenor

- a. Introductions took place.
- b. The Convenor explained the purpose of the meetings – to facilitate effective communication with students.

2. Events and Initiatives – the Convenor talked briefly about some of the events and initiatives that have been happening;

- a. A dinner has taken place for honours students.
- b. Lunches for specific degree programmes are ongoing – these allow students to meet peers on their programme, meet Personal Tutors, and get programme specific feedback.
- c. Guy Fletcher is in the process of organising a pre-honours social event.
- d. This is the first year of the new, separate year 3 and 4 course as part of the honours curriculum reform.
- e. Dissertation groups, split by topic, have been running. These will help provide extra support for students undertaking coursework or independent dissertations.

3. Taught Programme Review (TPR) – the Convenor gave an overview of how students have been involved in TPR so far and further opportunities for as it progresses;

- a. Thanks to students who filled out the survey and to the students representatives who collected the responses.
- b. It was explained that the department could contribute three topics for the review team to consider on top of their remit. The student feedback helped with the selection of these topics; learning community, curriculum reform, and joint honours programmes.
- c. The review team will visit 14-15 March and the department is still looking for students to participate. The representatives were asked to look out for more information about this and encourage their peers to take part.

4. Year 1 Report

- a. Lecture recording – it was reported that students want Morality and Value (M&V) to be recorded for revision and accessibility reasons. The pros and cons of lecture capture were discussed with staff advising that this is a complex issue. One issue is that sensitive topics are discussed, and staff are reluctant to have students recorded discussing these. AR has been recording summary lectures (approx. 15 mins long) and has received good feedback about this. Discussions about lecture recording will be ongoing.
- b. Discussion Forums on Learn – students are unaware of these and they aren't being used regularly. DR advised that using the forums isn't compulsory, but she is happy to advertise there more widely. **ACTION** – DR to remind students of discussion forums at lectures and via learn announcement.

5. Year 2 Report

- a. Students would like the readings for Philosophy of Science to be published further in advance. AR told informed the Committee that readings were posted 1-2 weeks in advance, and that, realistically, it would not be possible to post them further in advance. A new member of staff was hired just before the start of the semester, meaning that teaching planning could not happen as far in advance as usual. This is, hopefully, a one-off situation.
- b. Students reported that they really like the summary lectures for Philosophy of Science that AR has been recording, along with the handouts for the class. They were concerned that the summaries lectures are now behind the actual lecture schedule. AR advised that he has a plan to have these caught up in the next couple of weeks.
- c. Students taking Mind, Matter and Language (MML) reported some confusion about the textbooks and whether they needed to buy these – it wasn't made clear that these would be available on learn and some students were unhappy that they spent money on the books. BR explained that he didn't advertise that the books would be made available on Learn because these are core books for Philosophy students that should be bought where possible. They are available on Learn just to be sure that all students have access to them.
- d. Year 1 students taking MML have reported that the logic examples used in classes are unfamiliar as they haven't taken the year 1 Philosophy course Logic 1. BR explained that the logic examples are not required and can be ignored – they are for the benefit of students who are interested in logic. BP explained that students taking MML as an outside course are, where possible, advised that the course is designed for year 2 Philosophy students and that they will be at a disadvantage compared to the Philosophy students. The student reps asked that this be communicated more effectively to students. **ACTION:** BP to investigate whether this can be made clearer on the DRPS/PATH entry for the course.
- e. The student representatives asked if it was possible to publish mid-term essay questions for MML sooner so that students would have more time to work on the assignment. There was a debate about the pros and cons of this. It was concluded that for pedagogical reasons the questions should not be released too far in advance. These reasons are to be better communicated to students.

- f. There is a lack of study space available in PPLS buildings and across the University more generally. BP advised that this is something that the department is aware of and they are fighting for more space. However, this requires long-term planning. **ACTION** - Students are encouraged to raise this during the TPR. NT explained that the lack of seats in the library was on the agenda at the most recent meeting of the University's Executives in September, so this is being addressed.

6. Year 3 Report

- a. Some courses have been assigning particularly long readings that students were finding excessive compared to other courses. DL asked the students about their expectations for readings – how long is too long? It was agreed that this was dependant on the subject of the reading and how dense it is. Students were advised that prioritised reading lists would be available that include what reading is compulsory and what is just recommended.
- b. Year 3 students are disappointed that the number of contact hours per week has dropped compared to year 2. However, students liked that the lecturers also take the tutorials as they feel this has allowed for better relationships to develop. It was explained that staff time is distributed across a greater number of courses as, as there are more year 3 courses running than year 2. DL asked that the year 4 students reps survey the current year 4 students who are being allowed to take year 3 courses as part of the transition to the new honours curriculum. These students will be able to compare year 3 courses in 2017/18 and 2018/19. **ACTION** – Teaching Office to compile list of Y4 students taking Y3 courses and give to Y4 reps. Reps to survey students. It was also pointed out that staff are usually willing to meet with students to discuss topics and assignments outside of their regular office hours. **ACTION** – student reps to communicate to peers that they can email staff for appointments outside of office hours.
- c. Honours deadlines are all on the same day and students are finding it difficult to manage their time accordingly. There was a discussion about this and why the department has scheduled the deadlines like this. It was decided that one potential compromise would be to release essay questions earlier in the semester. **ACTION** – BP to start a department discussion on the timing of release of mid-term questions for honours courses.

7. Year 4 Report

- a. Positive feedback was received on The PPLS Writing Centre, the variety of courses running this year, the dinner and other recent Philosophy events. Many students would like to be able to run more events. BP advised that there is funding available through the PPLS Student Initiative Fund. For more information, students should contact Shian Holt, PPLS Head of Student Support and Enhancement. **ACTION** – students reps to let their peers know about the fund.
- b. Students reported that they wanted more variety of assessment and incremental assessment - presentations and participation marks were specifically cited. There was a debate about the merits of this type of assessment concluding that in a big faculty like Philosophy there are a variety of different views and, therefore, assessments available.

- c. Theories of Mind – there was a complaint about the lack of space available in the room.
 - d. Knowledge, Ignorance and Power – because of lecturer availability the essay draft review session happened too far in advance of the deadline. **ACTION** – BP to pass on this feedback to lecturers.
 - e. Philosophy and Linguistics students are unsure of whether they are invited to a lunch. **ACTION** – Teaching Office to check that communication about the Philosophy and Linguistics lunch was sent out, as this should have happened.
 - f. Students are unclear on the Philosophy word count policy. DL clarified that it's a hard limit with 1 mark removed for every 100 words over this. Footnotes are included in the word count, while bibliographies are not. **ACTION** – BP to send policy to student representatives.
8. The meeting closed at 2.30pm. The Convenor thanked everyone for attending. Next meeting – Wednesday 21st November.