

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

Meeting to be held on Tuesday 18th October
12:30pm-1pm, 7 George Square - S38

Student Representation; Year 1: Meyra Coban and Tim Francis, Year 2: Vasiliki Passaris and Violet Tinnion, Year 3: Laura Altinsoy and Alessandra Fassio, Year 4: Andrew Hermsmeier

Staff Representation; Sam Bell, Dr Alix Cohen, Ani Cowe, Prof Jesper Kallestrup, Dr David Levy (Exams Convener)

SSLC Convener: Dr Nick Treanor, Teaching Director

Minutes: Sarah Nicol, Student Support Officer

Apologies: Dr Matthew Chrisman (Head of Department), Dr Elinor Mason, Thomas Cheong-MacLeod (Y4)

Staff and Students introductions.

Year 1 Report

Students reported;

- Would be useful to have overview at start of courses. Set what the expectations of the students are. For example, advise about when do reading – before or after a lecture?
- Some students feel that they are overwhelmed by high levels of questions by their peers.
- Lecturer is not repeating the question of Philosophy of Science 1.
- Tutorials – want more discussion rather than small lecture.

Discussion;

- AC (Tutor Mentor) reported that all tutors had had compulsory training this academic year. They have been trained not to lecture during tutorials, and if this is not the case, it should be reported to her. She explained the department are hoping to improve tutorials throughout the semester. NT suggested that if no-one is discussing then the tutor may want to fill the silence. AC informed that the tutors will all be observed and given feedback, and then the tutor can reflect on the feedback.
- It was agreed if Tutorials and Lectures could be more descriptive and set higher standard from the start, it would naturally be more disciplined.
- Department conveyed to the students that all students should be reading, and rereading the readings to understand. It is normal for the student to have to go back to reread original text. It was agreed that all students to be aware that the reading is not the same as the lecture. Also, it is the norm for students to not understand text on first reading.

This should be communicated to the students by setting expectations at the start of the course.

- The group discussed whether the reps had heard about PhilSkills. All reps had.
- Discussion about Philosophy Peer Support took place. The students raised it doesn't have a family system like in LEL or Psychology. It was pointed out that this needs to be led by a student, and any student can come to discuss this with the Student Support and Experience Office. The students were reminded about the Autonomous Learning Groups (ALG's) that they can sign up for.
- The committee discussed ways that students can improve their academic experience by talking to Personal Tutors, Course Organisers, attend workshops and go along to PhilSoc Drop in's.
- Peer support discussion about families that are open to other subject areas, this requires students to take forward.

ACTION: SN to send minutes to Course Organiser of pre honours courses.

ACTION: SN to contact PhilSoc about requesting they send out emails to all Philosophy students, not just the mailing list for society.

ACTION: NT to consider how to target Philosophy students only via email.

Year 2 Report

Students reported;

- No content structure compared to Y1 courses, it was reported it was interesting but incoherent. There was no closure of topics from lecture to lecture. Often felt that it is unclear how issues are related to each other as there is no overall big picture.
- On several occasions the lecture notes have not been available on Learn before the lecture. This left some students feeling unprepared.
- A small number of students asked if they could have more essay questions. In Year 1 students choose from 8, and in Year 2 they have 4 options.

Discussion;

- The group discussed whether there was enough indication and guidance about what is expected in the reading lists. Students reported the reading lists were a bit of hit or miss to being able to select the right one. They raised that the course seemed fragmented. NT enquired if student reps were only asking philosophy students these questions or all students on the courses. The reps confirmed all students were approached.
- A suggestion was to provide a big picture at the start of a lecture so students know what is happening. This is something that could be done every few weeks.

ACTION: NT – Discuss feedback with Dr Anders Schoubye, Course Organiser of Mind, Matter and Language.

Year 3 Report

Students reported;

- Year 3 students are generally happy.
- A slight unbalance of popular courses in same semester.
- Only a few students had reported they only got 2 of their top course choices. The rest were satisfied.

Discussion;

- Students reported that they feel things make more sense, everyone is more approachable and focused compared to pre honours.
- The group discussed dissertation course on Learn. NT will let students know more information. NT would like feedback about the structure of what the dissertation course was like this year after it has been complete. For example - was it too long between sessions? What is the best timeline for holding this course?

ACTION: SB send announcement the week before for Dissertation Session.

- DL raised the point that do students understand the difference between the two dissertations? Students agreed they should think carefully about their decision. NT – it would be too early to bring this any earlier as it's too busy at the start of term, and students need to have time to do some honours courses to see what they want to do once they know the options and how honours courses work.

Year 4 Report

Students reported;

- No issues raised by Year 4 students

Discussion;

- DL reminded everyone the Coursework Dissertation Submission has changed to 20th December instead of January. Yearlong and Semester 2 dissertation are now on the same day.

Any other business

- The group discussed whether, at honours, there should be some more general material rather than courses that focus chiefly on academics' own interests and research, which is currently the norm. Students think it's nice to pinpoint their own interests, pick different courses to see what you do like and get ready for year. Students like to be able to specialise. Don't think it was hurt to add general level courses. A student pointed out that often a more advanced background course

(such as metaphysics) is useful in unexpected way when doing other courses.

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- DL asked what students thought of whether some courses should have prerequisites, to permit more advanced study within the course. What do people think about advanced courses, if you have taken the first background course? Students wouldn't want to have to think far into Year 4 from Year 3. DL explained it wouldn't mean you had to do the follow on in Year 4 if you did the first course in Year 3. It was agreed it was something to consider.

Next Meeting – Tuesday 22nd November, S38 (7GS) from 12.30pm - 2.00pm