

Minutes

Philosophy Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) 2017/2018

Meeting held Wednesday 18 October
12:30pm-2pm DSB Room 7.01

Student Representation: Year 1: Aydin Simsek, Year 2: Rebecca Joyce & Meyra Coban, Year 3: Violet Tinnion Year 4: Sophie Charalambous, Alessandra Fassio

Staff Representation: Dr Bryan Pickel Teaching Director, Dr Matthew Chrisman (Head of Department), Dr David Levy (Exams Convener), Dr Jesper Kallstrup, Dr Michael Ridge, Dr Wolfgang Schwartz, Neil Fox, Teaching Secretary, David Moran SSO

SSLC Convenor: Bryan Pickel, Teaching Director

Minutes: David Moran, Student Support Officer

Apologies: no apologies

1. Initiative: (a) Personal Tutors for degree plan:

BP opens with an outline of plans to assign tutees to personal tutors who specialize in various joint degree areas. Philosophy and Math is highlighted as an example. This allocation of tutees will take place in the new academic year, and focus on sub-honour students, primarily. However, BP also mentions that it may not be possible in all cases. This is due to workload. MC acknowledges the workload factor as making it unlikely all students will be able to move into specialized areas. The Student Representatives seem in favour of this suggestion, in general, and mention that when moving into honours, it is often preferred by tutees they stay with current tutors; this is acknowledged by the academics; the discussion moves forward.

The introduction of group tutee meetings for sub-honour students is introduced by MC, DL and BP. Fellow colleagues also acknowledge this could be beneficial for both students and tutors, creating an interactive community of like minds. Student Representatives seem happy with the idea of a like-minded cohort environment, and mention tutor access being a positive for their learning experience; they also seem pleased to meet fellow joint degree students in a more intimate learning setting. The issue of student engagement in lectures, tutorials and so forth is then discussed as a key influence for students when choosing courses; this conversation is instigated by JK. Students agree that solid working relationships with established staff help them throughout their study. The academics present also agree.

Initiative: (b) ALG & Writing Support Sub Honours

Student Representatives and academic cohort discuss the benefits of ALG and writing support groups. A Student Representative concedes a lack of application from student body. Upon further inspection they also found that their fellow cohort consider the ALG to be a fine idea. At this time the conversation moves on to a side topic relating to honours events and new initiatives. All agree PPLS led events such as the honours dinner (19th October) and community learning groups are good, and help sustain and develop relationships.

2. Curriculum Change & Aims:

BP outlines the aims of changes to the curriculum, and emphasises a sense of progression between Year 3 and Year 4 courses. BP also talks about a focus on smaller group teaching for 4th years. This leads to a lively discussion pertaining to class sizes, and more popular classes having larger quotas in the future. Both Student Representatives and academics share ideas on how to impose a structure that ensures course options are comprehensive. DL and WS lead this part of the discussion. Student Representatives raise their concern about selection processes and priority of processes. However, it is agreed that most 3rd years attained their desired courses, at the time of selection. BP emphasises this is a period of transition.

Concerns about MSc students being present in Honours classes is raised by Student Representatives. The Convenor retorts that they seek to have limited 4th year contact between the two learning groups, and eliminate 3rd year interaction almost completely. It is agreed attempts to have zero MSc students present on third year courses will be made. An outline of changes to the DRPS is shared by BP; this relates to credit availability dependant on year. Attention moves to the agenda for clarity of course credit requirements in relation to year and type of degree: joint degree, single honours and so on. More details to follow in next SSLC meeting. The Student Representatives seem content with the outline.

General Discussion

A Student Representative highlights that some feedback from cohort has suggested tutorials feel like seminars. A request for smaller tutorials is then made by another Student Representative. A discussion relating to the size of school ensues, and concessions that limitations are not always possible, but will be attempted, in relation to size, are made.

3. Student Representative Reports

The year 1 Student Representative AS addresses the room. This leads to a lively discussion about clarity and volume in relation to reading lists. More sign posting is requested. MR, WS, DL and JK proceed to explain the differences in teaching methods. Ideas on how best to highlight *key readings* are made by the student cohort. M & V is then highlighted as an example of difficulty in relation to textbook selection: clarity of said textbooks and relevance of reading. BP acknowledges the reading lists can be long. This leads to another discussion about the benefits of *focused reading* and *core background* reading being highlighted in lectures, seminars and alike. The Student Representatives seem happy with this idea moving forward.

The meeting then then moves in a new direction once BP has given an explanation on the purpose of background reading.

The Year 2 Student Representatives address the room. Meyra Coban highlights the autonomous reading group as being a positive. RJ also agrees. MC and RJ mention the auto locate (tutorial allocation tool) as being an issue for students when assigning tutorials. BP and MC inform the room that there is a change to booking tutorials for students, and that centrally this change now takes place. The Student Representatives then mention concerns about tutorials not being as well contained. A tutorial plan is highlighted as being beneficial. DL and MR highlight M & R methods and plans as an example of solid outlining. The Student Representatives agree; academic feedback is then assured.

Student Representatives MC, RJ and VT then request higher waiting on coursework as opposed to exams. DL explains the nature of the course outlines and limitations to weighting. Less pressure on students and condensed periods of study are two examples given by the cohort as reason for requesting change. This is acknowledged by the academic cohort. Demands placed on the faculty to facilitate more control for students study is seen as a valid reason for structure by Student Representatives. The room acknowledges more control for students in relation to academic structure as desirable, but not always possible. The SSO then asks about influence of attendance in relation to marking. The conversation moves on once it has been highlighted by BP that K & R have a *shaving policy* in relation to grading and attendance. A take home exam is briefly discussed.

The practise of writing is an issue raised by the student cohort. This is seen as being very beneficial for essay writing. The IAD, peer support and learning groups are discussed as being in place and available to the student cohort.

MC, RJ and the general student cohort embark on a vibrant discussion about the benefits of recorded lectures. DL highlights key concerns relating to topic and teaching approach. JK, BP, MC, MR and WS echo these concerns in relation to classroom validity. MC does acknowledges that flow of lesson and attendance can suffer, and the confidence of certain student cohorts in relation to speaking up whilst being filmed in lecturers, tutorials and alike. In extreme cases of absence, flexibility is agreed.

The year 3 Student Representative, VT, addresses the room. It is highlighted that course selection for the year ahead has been a success, and feedback positive from the student cohort. The academics acknowledge this and seem pleased. The Phil. Skills workshop is also considered valuable. The room agrees.

A Learn calendar being created would be seen as highly beneficial for students when being emailed about events, deadlines and so on. This is acknowledged by BP and MC. NF agrees to feedback to the Teaching Office in relation to this request. More news to come.

VT addresses the 2 hour block of contact time with academics as not being sufficient. Reduction is seen as an issue for student cohort entering honours. A discussion ensues with all present members. It is agreed that in order to facilitate learning needs, closer

communication in a group setting could be beneficial. Tutors are to discuss how more time can be made available. News to follow. VT then addresses essay deadline dates. These are not seen as beneficial to students, and a one day hand in date is deemed to cause heightened pressure on students. DL interjects, highlighting that this deadline was requested by prior student cohorts. Also, MR and BP mention that managing time and planning are transferable skills highly valued by academics and in the workplace. Processing issues are then raised, as are pressures placed on administration staff in relation to sudden deadline shifts. VT acknowledges these reasons. More autonomy for students is also acknowledged as desirable by academics. A discussion point to return to is seen as an agreeable outcome for all.

General Discussion

A spirited discussion relating to the course *Kant* and a male dominated presence in class, ensues. All agree this is interesting, and that in general the student body is extremely well balanced. DL shows curiosity towards this factor, as do the student and academic bodies present. A lively discussion takes place.

Student Representative VT raises concerns about book availability. M Coban suggests PDF versions of highly sort after literature being made available. Academics agree to consider this option and feed-back findings.

Year 4 Student Representative (s) SC and AF address the room. Concerns relating to attendance and the implications of non-attendance are raised. Students agree in general it is beneficial to have tutorial attendance be more closely monitored, as group discussions are seen as highly beneficial for learning. A lack of numbers is seen as discouraging. Monitoring and reporting absences are discussed by SSO, BP and M Chrisman. An escalation process is explained in bone form. Participation in relation to marking is also discussed. Possible amendments moving forward are deemed possible.

SC and AF request more flexible auditing of classes. BP highlights health and safety regulations, and monitoring of student movement as being reasons for limitation. This is agreed to be understandable reasoning.

AF and SF request more assistance for year 4 students moving on to study Master Degree (s). Assistance with the application process is seen as being invaluable by student cohort. A workshop is discussed, as is the availability of teaching assistants and current post-graduate students. These are deemed to be excellent resources.

BP thanks the room for attending. The meeting ends.

4. Date of Next Meeting - 22nd of November, 12.30 2pm, S38 George Square