

# School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

## Psychology Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Monday, 15 October 2018 at 12.30pm  
Room S38, 7 George Square

### MINUTES

**Present:** Dr Alexa Morcom (Chair, UG Teaching Director), Dr Kasia Banas (Teaching Coordinator), Dr Tom Booth (Statistics Curriculum Organiser), Dr Martin Corley (Head of Psychology), Beth Gribben (Year 1 Rep), Shifra Hiley (Year 1 Rep), Dr Adam Moore (Year 1 Course Organiser), Dr Eva Murzyn (Teaching Coordinator), India Pemberton-Pigott (Year 2 Rep), Helen Stocks (Year 3 Rep), Maggie Szymanska (Year 4 Rep), Elina Takala (Year 4 Rep), Prof Caroline Watt (Year 2 Course Organiser), Dr Alex Weiss (Year 4 Course Organiser), Eleanor Williams (Year 2 Rep)

**Apologies:** Dr Elena Gherri (Year 3 Course Organiser)

**In attendance:** Sarah Larios (Student Support Officer)

#### 1. Introduction and Welcome from SSLC Convener

The Chair welcomed all the new Programme Representatives, and reminded everyone of the structure of the meeting. The Chair will report on any general news and updates, and any actions outstanding from the last meeting, and then hand over to the fourth year co-chair, who will go through the reports and feedback from each year.

#### 2. Year 4 Reports and Feedback

##### Dissertation and course allocation

Students were generally happy with Dissertation allocations. There were some concerns about allocation of course choices, as a number of courses were oversubscribed and some students were unclear about how courses were allocated. Dr Banas explained that this was a large cohort this year, but everyone was able to get at least one of their top choices. Information about how courses are allocated was given to students at the talk at the end of third year, and was included in the emails sent to students.

##### Additional exam feedback

Some students were not able to make the exam feedback session. Reps were asked to remind students that they can view their exam scripts at the Teaching Office, and make an appointment to meet with the relevant course organiser to discuss their exams. Reps were also asked to find out if students want an additional feedback date scheduled for this year. For next year, the date will be communicated further in advance, and included in the handbook.

**ACTION:** Year 4 Reps to remind students of availability of exam scripts at the Teaching Office, and find out if students want an additional feedback session arranged.  
Teaching Coordinators to arrange date for next year further in advance and include in handbook.

##### Accessibility of a life coach or equivalent for fourth years

The Business School is piloting a programme where fourth years can make an appointment with a life coach. Dr Corley explained that this would unlikely to be feasible at School level, but it may be possible to arrange for the Institute for Academic Development to run tailored

workshops for the School, if there's enough interest in certain topics. Reps were also asked to remind students that the Student Support Office is available to help students with any academic or personal issues that they may be experiencing.

### **Statistics and joint honours students**

Psychology and Business students taking the Dissertation in Business felt they should have been given the option of taking the statistics courses offered through the Business School. Dr Morcom explained that for the purposes of BPS accreditation, students must have taken the Statistics courses in Psychology. If there are problems with the expectations around Stats and the Dissertation in Business, students were advised to bring this to the attention of the Business School. The contact person is Dr Sara Chaudhry.

### **Confusion regarding Marxist psychology**

This was resolved prior to the meeting.

## **3. Year 3**

### **Psychology in action positive feedback**

Students have had very positive feedback about the course. Students have found the Ethics section particularly interesting, and useful for the Mini-Dissertation and Dissertation. Students would have liked to have had a course like Psychology in Action earlier on in their University careers.

### **Pre-week 1 induction day positive feedback**

The students who were able to attend this found it very beneficial, especially in providing an overview of the year as a whole. Students noted that it made the transition to Honours easier and less overwhelming. Some students weren't able to attend because it was in the Friday of Welcome Week, before classes had started. For next year, the date will be communicated to students at the end of second year, so that students can plan well in advance to be back in Edinburgh.

**ACTION:** Teaching Coordinators to arrange date for next year and advertise to second year students in Semester 2.

### **Psychology in Action**

Students wanted markers to check their progress in the material covered.

**ACTION:** Dr Murzyn will send information about how students can make their own checkpoints for themselves.

### **Access to Psychology in Action material for fourth years**

**ACTION:** Teaching Coordinators to give fourth years "visitor" access to the Learn page for Psychology in Action. Dr Weiss to communicate this to students.

### **RMS2 workload**

Students feel that the amount of work for RMS2 is out of proportion to the number of credits for the course. Dr Booth explained that the course contains fewer "independent learning" hours than other courses. These independent learning hours have been replaced with more structured activity. The course team have tried to calibrate so that tasks will take a set amount of time. If that estimation is off for the majority of people on the course, then it's important that it is brought to their attention.

**ACTION:** Rep to survey students about how much time they are spending on tasks.

### **Mini-Dissertation**

There was confusion because there are no marking points, and each group is different. Students felt that it would be helpful to have more guidance/structure. Dr Murzyn explained

that it's difficult because all of the projects are very different, but if students feel they need more structure, they should approach their supervisors directly.

## **4. Year 2**

### **RMS**

#### **Number of questions in labs**

Dr Booth explained that the course team is in the process of revising this. It will be a few weeks before this is noticeable in the labs. Dr Banas reminded students that it's important that students complete the problem set in advance of the lab.

#### **Disparity between lectures/readings/labs**

This concern was raised by one student, and the Reps will refer the student back to the Study Guide. In general, students appreciate the content of the study guide, but have suggested that the link be higher up on the dashboard, and that it include a Contents Page.

#### **SWIRL and Learn forum positive feedback (FI)**

Students have commented that SWIRL and the Learn forums are helpful.

### **Psychology 2A**

#### **Tutorial quizzes**

Students raised the issue that there is inconsistency between tutors on the amount of time given for the quiz.

**ACTION:** Teaching Coordinator to communicate to tutors about administering the quizzes. Reps to remind students that if they have an excused absence, they should contact Dr Murzyn to arrange a make-up for the quiz.

#### **Support for lit summary**

Students have suggested that having a template summary on Learn would be useful. Dr Murzyn explained that information will be made available on how a Lit Summary differs from an essay, the support available from the Writing Centre, and how to get feedback on drafts.

**ACTION:** Dr Murzyn to send out an announcement with guidance on Lit Summary.

#### **Ensuring students have back-up degree option**

Students felt that they didn't have enough advice in first year on choosing a back-up degree path. Dr Corley explained that, since last year, the School has appointed a new Senior Personal Tutor, who has developed a detailed guidance handbook for Personal Tutors, which stresses the importance of helping students choose a back-up degree path.

## **5. Year 1**

#### **Camera Obscura positive feedback (FI)**

The Camera Obscura event was well-attended, and students had very positive feedback about the event.

#### **Students ratings of lectures/ tutorials so far (FI)**

Students have had very positive feedback about the lectures and tutorials so far.

#### **Essay guidance (FI)**

This item was dealt with prior to the meeting.

#### **PsychPals positive feedback (FI)**

#### **Improvements to Psychology homepage/ handbooks**

Incoming students found it difficult to find information on recommended readings. Dr Moore is working with the PPLS web team to make it easier to find information on the Psychology

webpage, including links to PATH and the course handbooks. They are looking at adding a tab with links to suggested readings for students.

### **Varied reception of labs**

There has been varied feedback from students about the Psychology 1A labs, but not all students will have had labs yet. The feedback on the first lab was that it was small amount of work for the amount of time allocated, while the second lab took much longer. The lab assistants were generally very helpful, but some groups of students were missed out when they were going around the room. Dr Moore asked students to let them know if there were any systematic issues with any of the tutors,

### **Varied reception of PT system**

Students had very mixed feedback on support from their Personal Tutor, with feedback ranging from satisfied to very unsatisfied. Some students reported that their PTs were unhelpful, and not responsive to emails. A number of first year students still have not yet been able to meet with their PTs.

Dr Corley explained that this is not how the Personal Tutor system is meant to work, and we want to hear about these types of issues. Students were asked to let the Student Support Officers know about these issues, so that they can be escalated appropriately. Students can also feedback anonymously about any issues, through the anonymous comments box in the Concourse.

**ACTION:** The Reps were asked to get feedback for next time on the linking of PTs and the Psychology 1A tutorials.