

**School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences**

**Psychology MA and BSc**

**Student Staff Liaison Committee Meeting**

**Thursday 17th November at 12.30pm**

**Room S.38, 7 George Square**

**Present :** Dr Alexa Morcom (Chair), Dania Abu-Sharkh (Year 3 Rep), Dr Kasia Banas (Snr Teaching Coordinator), Dr Dave Carmel (Year 4 Course Organiser), Dr Martin Corley (Head of Department) Robert Dudek (Year 1 Rep), Taranah Gazder (Year 2 Rep), Dr Michelle Luciano (Year 3 Course Organiser), Megan McDougall (Co-Chair and Year 4 Rep), Alexandra McGregor (Year 3 Rep), Dr Adam Moore, (Year 1 Course Organiser) Dr Rene Mottus (Year 2 Course Organiser) Eliina Takala (Year 2 Rep) Aleksandra Tkacz (Year 1 Rep)

**In attendance:** Sarah Nicol (Minute Taker)

**1. Welcome, news and apologies**

**Welcome;** Chair DR MORCOM welcomed the meeting and reminded the Committee that it's a shared chairing procedure. Megan McDougall is co-chair.

**Apologies;** Tamsin Taylor-Welch (Student Support Officer), Laura Cobban (Year 4 Rep), Dr Eva Murzyn (Teaching Coordinator).

**News feeding back from 'conversations' meetings with Honours students.**

- Students are happy with RMS and Critical Analysis, and like the 'clinic' sessions.
- Students would like lecture recordings, but department is waiting for University decision and this will likely this will have to be discussed schoolwide.
- Some requests for small group work with options – staff are considering if and how this could work, e.g. how best to use Autonomous Learning Groups (ALGs).
- Assessment timing to avoid clashes, no perfect solution but may be different if Honours programme structure changes; draft due date was adjusted for the literature review.

**Other news**

- Online presence including Facebook – new, linking to seminars etc. Open to suggestions from students.
- New Writing Workshop Careers events semester 2 are available.
- Teaching Coordinators roles to be clarified in handbook, along with about roles Personal Tutors.
- BPS Conference date is likely to be 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017, to be confirmed.
- Social Events – Year 2 Reps are organising a treasure hunt. Department are hoping to hold a Final Year dinner after dissertation hand-in, everyone will be updated in due course.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting 10 October 2016**

Matters arising from minutes:

**Basement labs usage;** DR BANAS reported that waiting for lead from reps if posting timetables would be useful for semester 2, please get in touch. Wouldn't do it unless there is a real need for it. DR BANAS had sent link of timetable to Year 4 reps. DR CORLEY reminded the committee that in Week 11 all the equipment is cleared out for revision.

**Writing clinic update;** DR BANAS confirmed this is now on. Communication to Year 3 has been sent and received. 1-2-1 appointments available, and also ideas for workshops. Student should contact DR BANAS.

**Exam feedback day update;** DR LUCIANO reported that feedback was that date didn't work well. Department is looking at improving the day for next year. Would welcome ideas and suggestions from reps. It was suggested that Lecturers could be there for access by students. Students were informed that this was the format in previous sessions, however with low attendance by students after the first year this did not seem a good use of staff members' time as often they were sitting at an empty table. Discussion led to a suggestion about perhaps having the lecturer only available for the first 30 minutes of the session, and if students require more of a 1-2-1 they can use office hours. It was felt that perhaps some students may feel too embarrassed to approach a lecturer in front of their peers. Everyone agreed that getting feedback about 'what went right' was just as valuable as 'what went wrong', so perhaps this should be emphasised to students.

**ACTION:** Department to communicate to students about the importance of feedback and explore alternative formats.

**RMS and Labs in timetables;** DR BANAS reported that a meeting with timetabling had been set for next week with Moira Avraam, Head of UG Administration. There will be an update by next SSLC meeting.

**ACTION:** Minutes of next meeting to include outcome of timetabling meeting.

**Welcome Week queuing;** SN reported that the idea for a fast track queue for confirming attendance for returning students has been brought to the attention of the PPLS Induction Team. This will be considered for next year's welcome week arrangements, when working out logistics and requirements.

### **3. Year 4 report**

**Use of Labs;** Students have requested to be able to use lab rooms when there are free tables. The committee had a lengthy discussion about the advantages and disadvantage about allowing this. There was concern over distracting students and the tutor who are in a lab, making larger labs harder to manage from a teaching prospective when trying to see who requires help and assistance and students who aren't supposed to be there are using resources that is for teaching. It was agreed that the room primary function was for teaching. DR BANAS has suggesting she speak to the tutors about allowing students use the 3 most unused desks.

**ACTION:** DR BANAS to discuss the use of the 3 empty desks to tutors, and suggest that they should assume students using these are not part of the lab.

**Presentation clinic;** Students have asked for a clinic to help them with their lack of experience with presentations. It was discussed that this is being addressed in classes, however Year 4 is the last cohort with this issue as other years will have the experience from previous years.

**Postgraduate application;** DR BANAS asked for Year 4 reps to send out a poll to figure out interest for a preparation for postgraduate applications.

**ACTION:** Year 4 Reps need to send out poll asap as applications deadlines start in December.

#### **4. Year 3 report**

**Timing of assessments;** Literature Review Draft deadline has been extended. An issue was raised about multiple deadlines being on the same day (01.12.16). Students voiced that peers are frustrated that the assessment is so late for Critical Analysis. DR CARMEL explained that he has given students the maximum time possible for competition. Students stated that there was an issue when there is a take home exam at the same time as the assessment. DR CORLEY put a general question to the students and asked the students what their preference would be between 1) Department micro managing deadlines throughout the terms or 2) having one deadline at the end of term but students have to manage themselves. The reaction was that most felt that having different deadlines were better, but they just wanted the assessments earlier. DR CORLEY would like input from students in the near future about what their thoughts are on this this matter. It was discussed that the department can look at dates and timing of take home exams but there will always be crossover, and part of being at university is learning to multi task.

**Discussion about clarification;** Students raised that closer to the deadline dates, some clarifications of assessments was sent round but students were frustrated as they had thought they have completed their assignments. This then demonstrated the disadvantage to the committee about having assessment questions available too much in advance. DR CARMEL stated that for Critical Analysis, they did not want students to start until after all tutorials had taken place. It was agreed there is no perfect solution.

**ACTION:** Keep tweaking it.

**ALG's issues;** students reported it is hard to get everyone in the group together. It was suggested that perhaps looking at the way they are allocated in future. Feedback was that some students were motivated wanted to do it. DR MORCOM suggested that perhaps students could sign up in groups at first, and then after a period of time it would be done at random. It was suggested that there should be a future discussion about potentially adding small assignment in the ALGs to encourage students to engage.

#### **RMS issues;**

- Last year students got 2 attempts on the test, and this year they only get 1 attempt. There was a technical issue for 5 students, which has been dealt with by the department.
- Changing of Grades; It was raised was that grades had been given, however there was a change to the marking and then students were given a new grade. The department confirmed there were errors in the marking scheme, and this had been resolved at the time.
- Cohesion between lectures and labs; students feel that links between the labs and lectures could be better, it was brought to the attention of the committee that some students don't understand why they are doing it a particular task, and how that relates back to the lecture. It was discussed that different functions are used in a lecture than a lab, and this caused a disconnect. The group discussed the importance of readings, and this may help connect the lectures and labs.
- Ambiguous Homework; it was raised already, and had been brought to Tom Booth's attention. The group discussed that perhaps getting a coordinator or tutor to check the questions, however students should raise if they need clarification.

- **Marked Examples;** students have asked for marked examples of RMS because they don't have past papers to look at. Tom Booth went over in detail in a lecture, but may be useful to have more examples for students.

**ACTION:** DR LUCIANO to feedback to Tom Booth about having more examples available. It was brought up however that the last two lectures will likely be revision, so it may be covered anyway. DR CORLEY stated that the department only want to create documentation that students will engage with and staff want to know they are producing is having the maximum effective.

## 5. Year 2 report

**Stats preparation;** staff to give students a draft plan so they have something to discuss about having stats preparation from Year 1. Students agreed this was a good idea.

**Tutors in labs;** students reported that they felt support could be better. For example the worksheets say the tutor will demonstrate, and sometimes they don't actually do this. This was addressed with DR MOTTUS and resolved prior the SSLC taking place.

**Tutor support;** student would like tutors to be more proactive and approach them during labs. It was discussed that there was various factors which were that 1) students are not sure how to ask for help 2) tutors not wanting to disturb students due to being shy or feel they are interfering. **ACTION:** DR BANAS will talk to tutors about approaching students more often.

**Word Count and Feedback;** Lab and literature summaries word count is limited. Students feel they are cutting out important parts to expand on what tutors are asking them to expand on. It was discussed that students need to be more economical with their words but they can also ask for guidance about their feedback, and what can be traded off for what.

**Feedback;** it was discussed that the range of feedback from different tutors can be varied. Lit review got guidance this week, but some students started last month and felt this information would have been valuable earlier. The committee discussed that tutors are just trying to be helpful, giving tips about spacing and introductions. DR MOTTUS pointed out this provided in the first lecture. Students felt that there was more detailed information passed out now.

**ACTION:** DR MOTTUS/DR BANAS to check what information has been given out.

## 6. Year 1 report

**Camera Obscura:** students and staff had really positive feedback about the event. It was felt that PsycSoc's presence was a good addition this year.

**Honours Information for Year 1;** it was discussed that it would be good to have advance information about option courses in Honours years available to Year 1 student. The group agreed that the most efficient way for students to find this information was looking at the handbooks, as the department had complete control over the content. If students had any suggestions about what content could be added that would be valuable to a pre honours student then they were open to suggestions.

**MCQ Marking;** DR MORCOM and DR MOTTUS explained that there is an ongoing discussion within the department about how best to mark the MCQs.

**Feedback;** students felt the essay feedback was inconsistent from marker to marker. The group discussed that there will be range of difference as the markers all have their own personality and stamp. Students raised an example that one marker in particular has given little feedback. For those who'd held back on their next assignment until they're received comments, there was frustration

and a sense that time had been wasted. It was discussed that it is important that everyone is aware of what is expected to manage expectations. However, students can follow up their feedback should they wish to get more.

**ACTION:** DR BANAS will remind the tutors about the rough guidelines expected.

**Feedback from students;** it was discussed that students might like to contribute to a leaflet/ explanation for students about feedback and how to use it . If any reps are interested they should speak to DR MORCOM about getting involved. Reps from variety of years would be ideal.

## **7. AOB**

No other business.

Next SSLC will take place Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2017, room S38 7 George Square