

**Cognitive Science MA and BSc**  
**Staff Student Liaison Committee Meeting**

Thursday 3 December 2015 at 1pm

Room G.32, 7 George Square

Present: Dr Alex Doumas (Chair Cognitive Science/Psychology), Dr Richard Shillcock (Chair Cognitive Science/Informatics), Dr Alistair Issacs (Coordinator Philosophy/Cognitive Science), Dr Hannah Rohde (Coordinator Language Science/Cognitive Science), Claudia Libbi (Year 1 Rep), Emma Jones (year 2 Rep), Alex Greenwald (Year 3 Rep), Simka Senyak (Year 4 Rep)

In attendance: Mrs Tamsin Taylor-Welch (Minute Taker)

Apologies/Non-attendance: Alistair Mowbray (Year 1 Rep)

**1. Minutes and Action Points**

**The minutes were considered an accurate account of the meeting.**

**Action Point 1: *Amendment to Prospectus - ADDRESSED***

HR reported that the section of the prospectus that incorrectly stated that students can choose between three introductory courses has been removed.

**Action Point 2: *Student Cohort Information - ADDRESSED***

The Psychology Course Secretary Fiona Graham had provided student numbers per-year to HR.

AG informed the meeting that EUSA had informed him that Student Representatives have the right to also know the names of their cohort. TTW informed the meeting that she'd subsequently liaise with Judy McCulloch as the School's Projects Administrator to find out whether this is School policy.

**Action Point 3: *DPT Pathways - ONGOING***

HR reported that this is still a work in progress and will be liaising with Year 4 Reps as to the pathways that they've taken. Approval has been given for this to be written up as an official guide for DPT pathways.

**Action Point 4: *Careers in Cognitive Science – former students meeting with current cohort - ADDRESSED***

HR has contacted former students and a student will be visiting the University to discuss his work as an IT Consultant

## 2. Chairs' Report

RCS informed the meeting that both he and Chris Lucas met to discuss *Introduction to Cognitive Science*. They're trying to get it to gel with the first semester course, rather than overlap. It was acknowledged that there is a small overlap of students that is manageable, but if the course expands this could be an issue. This is already apparent in Language Science. (Language Science is covered in Psychology 2, Linguistics and Philosophy.) Students benefit, however, as they gain different perspectives and ideology.

Informatics staff have noted that the course is over-assessed (Labs) and so are looking at reducing the number of labs and updating the programme handbooks accordingly.

## 3. Year 1 Feedback (BSc)

CL reported that the BSc students felt that the labs were not very helpful, or structured well enough. This was a particular issue with the lab that was held until the topic of 'Beauty', where students were simply asked to look at a series of pictures and state whether they thought that the images were images of Beauty. No further explanation was given and no follow-up provided at the end of the lab.

Students also felt too stretched in some cases, during the lecture that involved the topic of Correlation. The lecturer presumed an in-depth knowledge that the students have yet to acquire.

Schools Informatics and PPLS don't work particularly well together. Informatics doesn't want to use Learn, which has posed problems, as students have had to get to grips with differing systems.

## 4. Year 2 Feedback

### *Information on Year Abroad*

Students who wish to study abroad for their 3<sup>rd</sup> year have found that there is no individual Coordinator to go to and ask questions. Academics seem unsure as to which Higher Education Institutions to go to and in which country; they also don't appear to know what College will and will not permit (course-wise) and so students are not confident that they will be able to go abroad.

AD explained that the DPT is incredibly complicated regarding this and time needs to be taken when advising students to ensure that students are not misled. RCS stated that someone in Informatics should be able to coordinate this.

**Action:** Staff in the School of PPLS and Informatics to liaise with the International Office and draw up a super-set of HEIs

**Action:** Staff to draw up a strong DPT pathway

RCS suggested that a starting point would be to obtain the list of HEI's that the School is already linked to and pass this to the students. AD highlighted how competitive places are and that CogSci students would be vying for a place that Psychology and Linguistics students would be applying to.

SS stated that when she had a (cursory) look, the USA was really the only place to study, so focus when hunting should also be to find places in Europe and to emphasise the spread of Cognitive Science.

AD informed the meeting that there should be some form of flexibility as regards entrance requirements that benefits the Cognitive Science students because Cognitive Science doesn't have the prescribed requirements that Psychology has.

HR agreed, and stated that a pathway that includes Study Abroad should be included in the new Cognitive Science pathways that are being created.

### *Psychology of Statistics*

The timetabling of this course for Cognitive Science students is an issue. AD reminded the meeting that as Psychology 2 will be split into two 20-credit courses next year, the issue of the 40-credit Psych' course pushing out the 40-40-40 'ideal' (where a student undertakes 40 credits worth of their studies in the 3 subject areas of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences each year) when covering subjects will not be an issue in future.

Under the new Psychology programme, students will be able to take Psychology 2a, or 2b and then undertake the Statistics course.

SS reinforced the need to undertake Statistics. AD felt that students who've undertaken Informatics' courses (of which statistics is a part) at pre-Hons will be fine when entering Year 3.

## **5. Year 3 Feedback**

### *Cognitive Science Handbook*

The Year 3 students have stated the need for a Handbook that has all information as to how things work and what students can do (course-wise). AD informed the meeting that the pathways, once developed will be uploaded to the School web page.

### *The need for a Cognitive Science Coordinator*

The meeting agreed that ideal would be to have an academic who straddles both Schools. Students wish to have someone who can tell them what can and cannot be done. RCS informed the meeting that it's been done in a distributive way, due largely to the small number of students.

Students reported that when they've approached Informatics with pathway options and have been told 'no' by staff, simply because there are no written rules or guidelines. Staff are afraid any other answer may result in College and the student complaining after the event when it is deemed that something shouldn't have been permitted.

RCS suggested that things will crystalize once the trajectories are drawn up. The meeting agreed that a Personal Tutor/Coordinator who has a Cognitive Science handbook to refer to would be ideal.

The general feeling from Cognitive Science students is that they don't feel a part of Informatics – again due to their low student numbers.

AD stated that the bringing of two disenfranchised groups together and working as one would be hugely beneficial to students and strengthen the bridge between the two Schools. (Informatics doesn't have Student Staff Liaison Committee meetings, so it's even more important for BSc students to have their voices heard during this SSLC.)

**Action:** Staff to Liaise with Hons convenor to find out whether this would be feasible to draw up a handbook.

*Being kept abreast of changes made to the degree*

Current students need to know how the degree has changed. AD agreed that with the actions they are implementing ALL students will be notified of the changes being made and there will be a clear understanding through the years as to how students progress through the degree.

## **6. Year 4 Feedback**

Students struggle with timetable clashes, due to the fact that not all Courses have the timetable information when advertised on EUCLID. It was explained that this was invariably due to the Course Secretaries not having information from the Organisers by the EUCLID deadline.

Similarly when it comes to signing up for courses when students are required to submit their applications CogSci students struggle, as they have to look through all the courses; form deadlines are also different.

AI informed the meeting as to how they go through selection (prioritising final year students, etc).

Action: AI to ensure that Cognitive Science students have priority over key courses for them.

EUSA has stated that students have the right to know the students names.

**Action:** TW to liaise with Judy McCulloch

*How the classes work and how the degree works, and who's who?*

Nobody knows. Reinforced the need for a handbook..one that covers all 4 years and a Personal Tutor that covers all 4 years/has a knowledge and understanding of Cognitive Science both BSc and MA and in all subject areas.

RCS led students back to trajectories.

## **7. Any Other Business**

RCS and AI as Chairs of the meeting put it to those present to increase the length of the meeting from 1hr to 1.5hrs. The meeting agreed that this makes sense, as there's a struggle to get through all items satisfactorily.

**Action:** TW to change the bookings for 11 February and 24 March from 13:00 to 14:00 to 12:30 to 14:00.

**Time, Date and Location of next meeting:**

12:30pm Thursday 11 February 2016, G.32 7 George Square.