

School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Linguistics & English Language

Teaching Review Meeting & Staff Student Liaison Committee

Agenda

Tuesday, 13 October 2015 at 1pm

Room 7.01, Dugald Stewart Building

Present

Staff:

J. Fruehwald (SSLC Convener), L. Van Bergen, C. Cowie, A. Turk, B. Los

Students:

N. Markl, E. Kouhi, J. Strenger, R. Macy, I. Youmerski, K. Wilson

In Attendance:

M. Davidson (Minute Taking)

1. Welcome from SSLC Convener

J. Fruehwald welcomed all those present to the first SSLC of the year and explained the format of the meeting; a report would be given by each year. This is the first year where there LEL will be having two SSLC per semester this is due to feedback from the SSLC's last academic year. J. Fruehwald will be informing colleagues in the next staff meeting that another SSLC will be occurring this semester, to try and get feedback from staff that can be mentioned in the convener's welcome.

B. Los informed the meeting that there will be an Internal Teaching Review next year for LEL.

2. Apologies

K. Smith, L. Hall – Lew, J. Culbertson, A. Zhigareva

3. Minutes from Previous Meeting

Minutes were approved by the committee.

4. Year 1 Reports and Feedback

N. Markl reported that the year 1 students appear to be satisfied with the course. Some of the feedback related to more material to be discussed in tutorials rather than just going through the exercise that is set as homework, as this is not the best of use of time. Students should be given the chance to ask questions about the exercise but then the tutorial should turn into a deeper discussion about the topic.

L. Van Bergen stated that tutorial groups can be different from one another, a less confident class may be happy to just go through the exercise and benefit from having the structure and more confident groups prefer a more open discussion. L. Van Bergen strongly recommended that students that are in a more confident group should talk directly to their tutor as it will help the tutor to tailor lesson more appropriately.

N. Markl reported some students think there is not enough information on upcoming exams and there are not enough past papers for practice. Students are also having problems with the vowel parts of phonetics and the lecturer is moving too fast on this topic. The lectures for Language Communication and Cognition, does not provide students with enough information after the lecture and not all the reading is available.

L. Van Bergen explained that the multiple choice exam papers are not published because some of the questions need to be reused. As the December exam is entirely MCQs there will be a mock exam in week 6 tutorials. In the second part of the semester there will be an online self-test on LEARN that students can do at their own leisure. With regards to the Language Communication lecture there was a glitch with these particular lectures, and the lecturer is now aware, so there will be lecture slides posted in advance.

5. Year 2 Reports and Feedback

E. Kouhi and J. Strenger conducted a short survey to obtain information from year 2 students. The results were as follows:

83% of students thought that the LEL 1 exam was okay, 1 student believed it was too easy and a few students found it too difficult. Students commented that it would have been useful to have more information on how to write an essay for LEL or to be able to practice essays. There were also some problems with some of the tutors in LEL 1, they were not ranked well throughout the course and when it came to the essay the same tutor marked people down and could not explain their reasons fully in the feedback sessions.

J. Fruehwald told the committee that there is a new website which gives details on how to write a LEL essay so this should help with the incoming LEL students.

L. Van Bergen said that the first thing students should do if they are unhappy with their mark is to talk to the marker and if that does not help then it may be possible to take things further as long as there is good reason. If the student simply disagrees with the mark then they cannot appeal a mark, but if there is a very specific problem then the course organiser would then take charge. Each essay in LEL is moderated, this means that it is double marked by another a tutor and then there is a sample of marking checked by the external examiner. The external examiners do not read every single paper unless they think that there is a problem.

Unfortunately it seems that the delivery of the feedback was poor but it does not mean to say the academic judgement was incorrect.

Another point made by the year 2 class reps is that it would be helpful to go through last year's exam in the first tutorial of the current academic year. It was also felt by some students that the course was too rushed at the end of the last year.

LEL2A

Many students would like H. Giegerich to use slides in the LEL 2A lectures as some people are visual learners, so when the lecture goes on a tangent it keeps students focused. Some students are

complaining about the amount reading, and suggest that reading before the semester begins would be helpful to ease students back in. LEL 2A is going very quickly and the content is quite abstract, this is maybe why having reading in advance would be helpful.

H. Giegerich now uploads lecture summaries and it is possible for students to record lectures but staff are not obligated to record their lectures as the LEL department have discussed that the potential downside of recording lectures outweigh the potential positives so LEL as a department are not obliged to record lectures.

L. Van Bergen suggested reading LEL 1 material that should still be on LEARN before returning to second year.

Action: J. Fruehwald to look at uploading some reading material about returning to year 2.

LEL 2B

Many students feel that that it is too soon to have an assessment in LEL 2B that is worth 20% of the mark.

A. Turk explained that after changing the course structure many times, the course organiser has found that student's marks go up when they have less time between assessments. Learning outcomes have improved and the current structure seems to work best.

6. Year 3 Reports and Feedback

The year 3 class representative reported that students had not passed on any feedback but students had been talking about the fact that H. Giegerich mentioned caps on classes, as there are some classes with less than 10 people. But in First Language Acquisition there are large amounts of students, and some tutorials have 20 students.

B. Los stated that the issue with putting caps on classes is rooms, the teaching office need to book rooms very earlier on, so PPLS do not know how many people will be attending the class.

J. Fruehwald reported that timetabling was a terrible this year due to renovation reasons.

B. Los there were 200 classes that did not have rooms at the beginning of week 1.

7. Year 4 Reports and Feedback

The year 4 representatives K. Wilson and I. Youmerski agreed with R. Macy about the First Language Acquisition problem, most fourth years have also noticed that it is a very large class because the other courses are very small. K. Wilson and I. Youmerski have suggested that it runs across two semesters to diminish the numbers.

J. Fruehwald replied that the course will need to run another year before any decision can be made, the reason First Language Acquisition is such a large course is because it ran every other year rather than every year. In LEL there is a good faculty to student ratio so smaller classes should be the norm.

B. Los pointed out that although there are 20 students in tutorials, it is still a small number. The LEL department are against capping because for students it is better to have the chance to take the course with large tutorials rather than not having the choice to sit the course at all.

I. Youmerski stated that First Language Acquisition is so popular because people have to take it as part of the core areas, and it is also a pre requisite for some other courses in year 4. So perhaps it would be a good idea to have a larger number of courses to choose from in the core areas e.g. a few

courses from structure. I. Youmerski also believes it to be unusual that pragmatics is not part of the core areas.

B. Los informed the reps that LEL are currently looking at restructuring acquisition so any input that the students might have will be accepted and appreciated. With regards to pragmatics, it is a new concept within in LEL and therefore has not been included before but believes I.Youmerski's point to be valid.

J. Fruehwald stated that the 4 core areas are driven because it was believed to make up the curriculum for Linguistics and English Language. However he will highlight these points to the Head of LEL.

K. Wilson read out an email from a fellow student regarding the dissertation course as it captures a lot of other views in the year. Many students feel that the first 2 sessions on the dissertation were heavily biased on experimental work when everyone does not necessarily have to conduct an experiment. It seems to come across that if you are not doing an experimental dissertation you are deviating from the norm and therefore it might not be worth as much. The statistics and experimental design course should have been encouraged at the end of year 3 in the dissertation course. If statistics is such an important course this should be made much clearer.

J. Fruehwald stated that there is persistent feedback from externals in LEL relating to the lack of statistics in dissertations especially when the topic could have used statistics but decided against it. It is the direction that LEL appears to be moving in.

Action: B. Los will speak to Heinz about emphasising statistics and experimental work in dissertations in the pre honours introduction to honours talk.

8. AOB

Peer Support

E. Kouhi and J. Strenger informed the meeting about the new Peer Support Scheme in LEL, FamiLing, there are currently thirteen 2nd year volunteer parents who have office hours and have use of the 7th floor common room in DSB. James Reid, a postgraduate student is the Academic Support Officer within LangSoc so he is there to help with academic related questions.

First years are assigned to one parent in second year and if they are feeling particularly panicked about something they can contact their parent but if it is just a general question then FamiLing holds office hours for more general questions. James held many review sessions last year, so this year he is available for any questions that parents cannot answer.

E. Kouhi suggested that FamiLing could be a good tool for discussing topics if they are not getting what they need from tutorials, E. Kouhi will post a message on LEARN to get the word out.

If any students want to join FamiLing now then it might be an idea for them to pop along to the office hours to see if it is for them and then they can join officially join up at the start of semester 2.