

School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

Linguistics & English Language

Staff Student Liaison Committee Minutes

Tuesday, 17th November 2015 at 1pm

Room 7.01, Dugald Stewart Building

Present

Staff:

J. Fruehwald (SSLC Convener), L. Van Bergen, P. Honeybone

Students:

A. Zhigareva , N. Markl, E. Kouhi, J. Strenger, R. Macy, K. Wilson

In Attendance:

M. Davidson (Minute Taking)

Welcome from SSLC Convener

J. Fruehwald welcomed all those present to the second SSLC of the semester and double checked with the year 2 reps that the new sweatshirts for FamiLing had been organised.

Apologies

C. Cowie, J. Culbertson, H. Giegerich, L. Hall-Lew, B. Los, I. Youmerski

Minutes of the previous meeting

Previous minutes were approved by the committee.

Year 1 Reports and Feedback

The year 1 class representatives reported the general consensus for year 1 students is that they are really enjoying the course, the content of the course and the tutorials. Most students feel they know how to prepare for the exam but one Brief Introduction to Language (BIL) student would like practice on the essay within the exam, as they are not sure about how to go about preparing for it.

L. Van Bergen agreed that it is difficult for BIL students as they do not have the chance to practice with an assignment, but there is not a lot that can be done because BIL students are scattered around

tutorials, so to try and manage a different item of assessment in semester 1 for only BIL students would need to be considered very carefully. BIL used to be a much smaller course of only around 30 students but it has now grown to 50 students this year, so LEL may need to revisit this point.

Students have been encouraged to attend the workshops that IAD holds for essay writing and students should look at past papers (link was provided). Students should not panic, although the overall mark comes from the exam the bulk of it is taken from the multiple choice questions not just the essay.

The year 1 reps remarked that students are generally happy with tutorials but some people said that there was not enough exercises. A suggestion is to have more optional exercises for students to do. Students were very positive about the mock tests, as it was very useful and enjoyable.

L. Van Bergen will ask Rhona to inform students about particular exercises from the main textbook. There will also be an electronic self-test before the exam that students can access through Learn.

J. Strenger stressed if students would like to go over exercises from tutorials or go over mock tests then students should contact FamiLing.

Another point raised was regarding the sign language lecture because the slides were only posted up an hour before the lecture so students did not have a chance to go through them.

L. Van Bergen explained that there is a new lecturer so she is still trying to get grips with everything.

Year 2 Reports and Feedback

Students who go abroad in year 3 and have to complete a long essay feel that they do not get enough support and are worried that they will not get any guidance before they leave to go abroad.

If students want to do their long essay on something other than their main language then they are worried about resources whilst they are away. The students are worried about the length of the essay as there seems to be no workshops or lectures.

P. Honeybone stated that this is the first year that he has heard about this anxiety. Students should only be thinking about topics at the moment, there is no need to panic. There is more that LEL can offer but this will not be until the end of semester 2, P. Honeybone will look into increasing the information given. There has always been and always will be meetings with the students to discuss topics. There are now materials for dissertation work that could be made use of for the long essay. Deadlines are all in the honours handbook. Some people are keen to start the essay now but they should not try to start as it is too early and there is still more to learn.

L. Van Bergen suggested the possibility of having a LEARN page for the long essay, which will have materials/deadlines on it.

Students had difficulty understanding the lectures regarding fundamental frequency (LEL2B) and only a handful people could understand what had been taught. This was picked up by the next lecturer it was explained again and it made more sense.

R. Macy believes that this concept is difficult and needs to be explained 7 different ways before it is grasped. So it may not be the fault of the lecturer.

The year 2 reps expressed some concerns about certain lecturers that tend to go off topic throughout the lecture and therefore the lecture runs over which can then lead students to be late for their next class.)

Students are also worried about the essay guidelines as they appear to be directed towards honours essays which can be confusing but there seems to be a general air of nervousness about essays in LEL.

Year 3 Reports and Feedback

R. Macy reported that students are very happy with their PTs, they prefer smaller classes, and students like the selection of core classes and feel that their lecturers are very enthusiastic. However there are some that have problems with Phonetics and Laboratory Phonology, as the course load is too high and there is not enough feedback for students to improve in the next assignment. Many of the students felt that they didn't know what they were getting into, students were unaware of the high level of computer work such as coding, and the description of the course didn't divulge much information regarding the Laboratory work involved. Students are not certain on timelines for big final projects so would like clearer timelines.

J. Fruehwald said that he would look at DRPS and look into adding more information

Another concern is that only one of the linguistics core structure courses is running in semester 2, so it is difficult to arrange a timetable especially if you want to try to do all your core courses in year 3.

L. Van Bergen explained that the core structure courses tend to be front loaded as they are quite useful for other courses. It would be good to have 2 choices for core courses each semester.

Students are also feeling quite upset that the First Language Acquisition exam is on the evening of 21st December, it is a large class and it makes it very difficult for International Students especially as the timetable comes out so late in the semester.

J. Fruehwald explained that this is more of a university level issue and it will be students who have to complain. It would be best for the Class reps to bring this up at the student council.

Year 4 Reports and Feedback

K. Wilson reported that students are feeling very positive about the teaching on many of the courses and are enjoying the enthusiasm from many of the lecturers. But there has been some feedback on the dissertation preparation course, the attrition rate was very high, the course started off with the full 75 students and it slowly dropped to around 10 students by the last session. This could be because the first sessions focused on the experimental work and the last sessions are more general discussing areas such as resources and formatting (things that everyone needs to know). Therefore students that didn't attend the ethics presentation may not know that they need to do this no matter what their topic is and that they could fail their dissertation if they do not carry this out. The first couple of sessions were not for everyone and that could be a reason for students not returning, potentially

putting the general things at the beginning could be more beneficial but then if you need to do experiments then you need to get started straight away so it is difficult to understand what to do.

J. Fruehwald said the last thing left to do is to make it mandatory, but then down the line staff know what the feedback will be, so LEL don't want to go down that line at the moment.

B. Los set up LEARN groups so students could talk to each other and discuss the dissertation, but people do not seem to have taken this on.

J. Fruehwald said that this was challenging, because students complain that they want support and B. Los has created this opportunity but students have not been using it.

Some students were confused about anonymization of assignments because the cover sheet is stapled to the front of their essay. So are worried that it is not being anonymized.

P. Honeybone stated that this it is absolutely anonymous. The cover sheets are taken off by the TO before they are given to the markers. This is something PPLS can guarantee and do well.

AOB

FamiLing will most likely revert to a doodle poll system next year as at the moment children are not turning up and therefore wasting the parent's time.