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|  | | | Confirmed Minutes |
| Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages | | |
| Date |  | Friday 6th February 2015 | |
| Time |  | 11am | |
| At |  | RFB 326 | |
| Subject |  | Staff-Student Liaison Committee | |
| Present |  | Professor Roberts (Chair), Mr. Cooley (minutes), Ms. Bingham, Ms Conway, Dr. Darlow, Ms. Deadman, Ms. Dobrinin, Ms. Klein, Ms. Monsalve, Ms. Pastorino, Mrs. Smith, Ms. Tudose & Professor Wilson | |
| Apologies |  | Dr. Jones, Mr. McKeegan, Mrs. Speed | |
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Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages Staff-Student Liaison Committee

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record pending a correction to the numbering of items 22 onwards

Matters Arising

2. REPORTED: that, in response to concerns raised about room bookings in the Lecture Block (SSLC MT14, item 18), the Faculty have regained control over rooms in the Raised Faculty Building.

3. REPORTED: that work to install networked computers in the Lecture Block is well under way (following concerns raised at SSLC MT, item 19). These machines should be ready by next term, possibly before.

Student Matters

MML Part I

Class sizes, frequency and content

4. REPORTED: that several students have raised concerns about class sizes (being too big and anonymous, making some students reluctant to contribute), mainly in language classes. It has been suggested that the teacher takes a roll call at the beginning of the class, especially for first years, to allow students to learn the names of their peers. Students have expressed a preference for more frequent translation classes (every week rather than fortnightly). Students have expressed confusion that for a modern language degree the language component of various courses decreases every year.

5. REPORTED: that translation group sizes have not changed significantly, and if anything have become smaller over recent years.

6. RESOLVED: to pass on the suggestion of a roll call to departments, to increase inclusivity.

7. REPORTED: that reducing the size of classes would be a very difficult matter, given resource implications.

8. REPORTED: that the Faculty are aware of a number of issues relating to language and translation teaching and their frequency, and that these are under discussion. Mark Darlow will inform the SSLC of the outcome of the discussions on these matters.

9. RESOLVED: to feedback to students through the representatives that these matters are under discussion.

The workload in second year

10. REPORTED: that second year students have raised concerns about the number of papers they have to take, resulting in reduced time to dedicate to the languages. There is often limited choice, as language papers are heavily oversubscribed, leaving many students disappointed. Students have also raised that it is very difficult to read all of the primary texts on the reading lists, resulting in students suggesting a book limit for each course, restricting the number of texts that can be set.

11. RESOLVED: to take this matter to the Undergraduate Studies Committee and feed comments into ongoing discussions.

French and Latin

12. REPORTED: that students doing French and Latin do not feel very supported by the department as they feel there is a lack of communication between the two Faculties. There are numerous lecture clashes, and the paper options are poorly weighted, with an increase in difficulty or an increase in content/reading. Students have also reported an unsympathetic attitude from staff.

13. RESOLVED: to take feedback on support and communication to Dr Brundin (the MML liaison for the joint course).

14. REPORTED: that the numbers of papers are equivalent to MML. Directors of Studies have, to an extent, not been entirely clear as to the structure of the course. Classics have been working on a handbook, but this is geared towards Classics students. MML has a webpage which details the regulations affecting these students.

15. RESOLVED: to look at the technicalities surrounding the lectures, so as to mitigate against clashes in the future.

Library fines

16. REPORTED: that students think that 50 pence per day is quite steep, especially if no one has requested it or the student has forgotten to renew online.

17. REPORTED: that before MT14, the Library did not increase fines for over six years. Fines are designed to ensure materials are returned. The fines are comparable to other Faculties, and are vital for paying for Invigilators to keep the Library open out of normal office hours (weekends and evenings). The Library has a range of methods for renewing books (Online Search, telephone or email).

Positive feedback

18. REPORTED: that students have commented positively on the German department and how it is well organized and helpful, as well as Paper Fr3, which students feel is well organized and are very happy with.

MML Part II

Language work

19. REPORTED: that students are frustrated that there is not a strong language component in the fourth year, with translation into English only twice per term (and into the target language twice per term) for only one hour each time.

20. REPORTED: that these matters have been brought up repeatedly in the SSLC, by external examiners and the National Student Survey. Discussions are on-going, with the Learning and Teaching Review set to address these matters. The USC has already looked at the pedagogical issues, and Mark Darlow and Rachel Deadman would appreciate any feedback on these issues students may have.

21. REPORTED: that a working party has been set up by the Faculty Board to look at the language papers. The party will report to the Faculty Board at the end of this term, with a view to implementing changes for the academic year 2015-16.

22. RESOLVED: to feedback to the SSLC the results of the working party’s investigation, with this being an agenda item at the ET 2015 meeting.

Restriction on taking up papers in another language

23. REPORTED: that students expressed dissatisfaction that they can pick up a paper from another Faculty, but cannot pick up an translation paper in their other language. Students feel the degree is more Modern Languages and Cultures than Modern Languages.

24. REPORTED: that the Faculty are the only Higher Education institution in the UK to require two languages for our Modern Languages degree, meaning Part II brings us into line with the rest of the UK.

25. REPORTED: that the reduction of the proportion of language work is, in part, deliberate, with the intention that it increases private study in preparation for research.

26. RESOLVED: to discuss the feedback raised here further.

Hot Drinks Machine

27. REPORTED: that students had asked if it would be possible to have a hot drinks dispenser in the Faculty.

28. REPORTED: there is a drinks machine in the lobby of the second floor.

Linguistics Part I

Lack of lecture time (especially for Li4)

29. REPORTED: that students had raised the lack of lecture time, especially for paper Li4. Only a small part of the lecture is dedicated to commentary, leading to the suggestion that a whole lecture be dedicated to this subject.

30. REPORTED: that some supervisors were focusing predominantly on grammar rather than commentary.

31. RESOLVED: to feed this back to David Willis, the course convenor in the department.

Reading lists

32. REPORTED: that students had expressed concern over the lack of an accessible reading list. Students would prefer lists to be divided into sections (basics, more extensive, useful for future years).

33. REPORTED: that there are basic lists for each paper, and specific texts should be highlighted in lectures.

34. RESOLVED: to forward the lists of essential texts (that are sent to College libraries) to representatives if they would like these.

Course content covered before examinations

35. REPORTED: that students would like to have an idea as to what content they need to cover in advance of the examinations (students are told by lecturers that they cannot cover everything, leading to uncertainty about the extent of each paper).

36. REPORTED: that the best guide as to what material will be examined is past examination papers. Students can access past examination papers in the Library. Revision lectures will also be provided in the first week of Easter Term, where students can ask questions.

Inconsistency in marking

37. REPORTED: that students receive varied levels of feedback, with some being extremely detailed whilst other feedback is very brief. Students have asked whether a minimum level of feedback could be established for supervisors.

38. REPORTED: that supervisions should provide formative assessment, as opposed to summative assessment (in exams). Students should raise specific examples with their Director of Studies or the course convenor so these can be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Access to weekly tasks before they are assigned

39. REPORTED: that students would like to have access to weekly tasks before they are assigned (for example at the start of the term, or two weeks before they are set).

40. REPORTED: that tasks are being made available early for several papers, and enquiries are being made as to why this is not taking place elsewhere.

Linguistics Part II

Brown Library

41. REPORTED: that a student had enquired about making the Brown Library available for 3 to 4 hours a day during the Easter Term so that students have a quiet and controlled atmosphere to work in for exam preparation.

42. REPORTED: that the Faculty would need to look at what bookings have been made, and whether reading groups will be using the space.

43. RESOLVED: to investigate whether the space could be set aside as per the student’s request.

MPhil EuroLit/MPhil Screen Media

Feedback system

44. REPORTED: that students from both the EuroLit and SMC courses have suggested that it would be useful to have a feedback system for the Lent term, so lecturers could know what aspects of their course worked well and what could be improved. Students were familiar with reviews at the end of their undergraduate courses.

45. REPORTED: that this is the first year that feedback has been requested from students so early on in their course (i.e. The Student Registry implemented the Masters Student Self-Evaluation Reporting Scheme for MT14). There is no Self-Evaluation Reporting Scheme for LT15. However students will be given the opportunity to complete the nationwide PTES survey, and will also asked by the Faculty to complete an end of year survey. The results of both are fed back to the course directors and the Graduate Studies Committee.

Lack of set texts in the library

46. REPORTED: students have raised concerns that there are a lack of set texts, meaning access to texts is limited. In one example, there was only one copy of a compulsory text, with twelve students on the module.

47. REPORTED: that the Library tries to purchase as many copies as they can, but MPhil courses are unfunded, so spending comes from the Library’s own budget. For undergraduates, the library tries to buy one copy for every ten students, and they try to meet this for graduate texts. For some texts the Library do have multiple copies.

48. RESOLVED: that the Faculty Librarian continues to work to secure funding for the MPhil texts. Charlotte Smith will pass this feedback on to the Librarian.

MML library opening times and self-service machines

49. REPORTED: that students find the Library opening times restrictive on the weekends, and some students have suggested bringing in self-service machines (as in the English Library) as a way to keep the Library open for longer.

50. REPORTED: that a self-service machine would represent a massive investment (of ca. £80k) given the re-tagging and procurement involved. This matter has been carefully considered, but even with a self-service machine, staff would be required for health and safety reasons, given the size of the Library and the fact that it spans three floors.

Lecture/seminar structure of the Michaelmas course

51. REPORTED: that SMC students have concerns about the structure of the Michaelmas course, for example the Narrative 1 lecture class is several weeks from Narrative 2. Students have also suggested that the classes did not have a sense of progression or continuity, or that the content of the courses had little to do with the title. In some cases, staff were reported to be uninterested in the course they were teaching.

52. REPORTED: that the MPhil is currently being reviewed and student feedback is being taken on board. The course was set up before there were dedicated film staff, but the Faculty are now in a much stronger position with the appointment of Lecturers in film in MML and English.

53. REPORTED: that the split in the narrative lecture and seminar was deliberate, with one session on each of the eight topics in the first term, to give a sample of the course before students had to choose their essay topic, with the topics being covered again in the second term.

54. RESOLVED: to consider feedback very carefully and look at course questionnaires from previous years, with a view to making changes in MT15 and major changes in MT16.

Early deadline to submit essay and thesis topics for EuroLit

55. REPORTED: that EuroLit students have complained about the early deadline to submit essay and thesis topics as well as supervisors. Students understand that the course is fast-paced, but an extension of just one week would be appreciated and could have a positive impact.

56. RESOLVED: to take this feedback on board, with a view to consulting the senior Examiner on any proposed changes. Topics and names of supervisors are sent to the Degree Committee, so the dates of this meeting may restrict any movement to the submission deadline.

MPhil Linguistics

No agenda items received

PhD

Facilities for PhD Linguistics students

57. REPORTED: that a student has raised a query about PhD facilities, specifically that the department has not made students aware of what facilities exists, and what desks are available to them or whether they are allowed to use these. It is not clear if the desks in the EFB are assigned to specific users, or are free to use for all PhDs, as the same students appear to be based there.

58. RESOLVED: to refer this issue to the Head of Department to address this concern.

Stationery

59. REPORTED: that students would like staplers and hole punchers in the Graduate Centre.

60. REPORTED: that students are welcome to come to the Faculty Office to take items or have Mary order them.

National Student Survey – charity donation

61. REPORTED: that the Faculty will contribute £1 to a chosen charity for each survey completed. Student representatives are asked to seek suggestions for the charity that the Faculty will contribute, and nominate these in advance of the survey closing in April.

Procedures for allocation of places on undergraduate papers with capped numbers

62. REPORTED: that the USC has this week discussed the matter of capping student numbers. The Faculty understand that no one likes capping student numbers, but oversubscription places a burden on resources, particularly supervisions.

63. REPORTED: that the Faculty has been developing a policy for the capping of student numbers. This has involved aligning the varied timetables that currently exist across departments. The aim is to make the process more transparent.

64. REPORTED: that the expectation is that the majority of papers will not be capped, and that this will apply to a small number of papers.

65. REPORTED: that the mechanism of allocating how many student can take a particular paper that seeks a cap and how students are allocated to these places is being very carefully considered.

Learning and Teaching Review – student participants.

66. REPORTED: that the LTR will visit the Faculty on the 2nd March 2015. Some students will be asked to meet with the Committee. These will be picked at random by CUSU. Representatives are asked to inform their students that some may be asked to contribute to the exercise.

AOB

67. REPORTED: that in response to some feedback from the Space Survey, the Library has implemented some new signage and floor guides. Student representatives are asked to enquire amongst students whether they find these helpful.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 12:30 p.m.