



UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Modern and
Medieval Languages

Unconfirmed Minutes

Date Friday 13 May 2016

Time 11am

At RFB 336

Subject Staff-Student Liaison Committee

Present Prof. Ledgeway (Chair), Ms Bingham, Dr Buttery, Ms Copot, Dr Crowley, Mrs Deadman, Ms Deconinck, Ms Dokovova, Ms Hollingsworth, Mr Lloyd, Dr Mander, Dr Post, Ms Rechter, Mr Singh, Ms Staunton, Mrs Taplin (minutes), Ms Taylor-Laidler, Dr Wallington

Apologies Ms Bunn, Mr Chini, Ms Dickinson, Ms Edwards, Ms Garlake, Ms Lake, Ms Lockey, Ms Nash, Ms Shakespeare, Mr Simpson, Mr Stone, Ms E. Turner, Ms J.Turner, Ms Valarche, Ms Warner, Mr Willder, Mr Wilson-Nunn

Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages Staff-Student Liaison Committee

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 11 November 2015

1. REPORTED: that it had been agreed that there would be departmental SSLC meetings in MT and LT, and a Faculty-wide SSLC meeting in ET. Therefore the meeting planned for 23 February 2016 had not taken place.
2. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record pending a correction to item 28, 'excessively' to be changed to 'sufficiently'.

Matters arising

General Board Learning and Teaching Review (SSLC MT 2015, item 2)

3. REPORTED: that the Faculty response to GBEC had been received. Some important changes to the Faculty's current structure are to be implemented in the interests of greater uniformity and efficiency. Meetings to discuss these changes have begun.

Introductory meeting clashes (SSLC MT 2015, item 31)

4. REPORTED: that the problem is confined to just one College, no easy solution is apparent.

Vacancy for SSLC member, Linguistics Part II (SSLC MT 2015, item 37)

5. REPORTED: that the vacancy has been filled.

Faculty Matters

Language Teaching Review

6. REPORTED: that a holistic review is being undertaken of all language papers across all parts of the Tripos. It is recognised that the needs of students vary according to their previous knowledge of the language as well as at different parts of the Tripos, and that all needs have to be met adequately. A detailed questionnaire is in preparation, to be sent to all students after the exams.

Teaching arrangements for Part II Paper C1

7. REPORTED: that the contact hours for this paper will be increased from October 2016. It was noted that despite some dissatisfaction amongst students, the reduction in hours had not had a negative impact on student attainment. It is recognised that there is a perception that the provision of tuition is unequal between different colleges, and this is being addressed.

Induction

8. REPORTED: that our current induction programme is inadequate and that improvements are under discussion. These include: diagnostic testing and allocation to language classes of Part IA students to be complete before students arrive in Cambridge; introduction of training, conducted by the MML Library, covering topics such as referencing and plagiarism; explanation of marking and classing criteria; induction activities across the MT, not only in week 1.

9. REPORTED: that DTAL had conducted a workshop on essay-writing which had been very successful and will become a permanent feature of their induction, moving to mid-MT. The workshop might perhaps be used as a model for MML and also for the MPhil. DTAL are also updating their Transskills pages.

10. RESOLVED: that all SSLC reps would be involved in improving induction programmes.

Student Matters

MML Part I

The AV course

11. REPORTED: that the course is unpopular in some language areas, and that the examination is regarded as a test of memory rather than of language skills. It is noted that the classes differ across the different languages, that the course needs updating, and that it might possibly include some oral work. It is also noted that the objective of the Part IB year is to bridge the gap from IA to Part II and to ensure that students are ready for the challenge of the final year.

12. RESOLVED: that the proposed language questionnaire will solicit information from students as to what they would like to see in place of the AV course and/or assessment.



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Disparity between languages

13. REPORTED: that some students perceive that there are differences between the languages as to what is expected of students. Examples given include: uneven range of teaching; varied amount of exposure to varieties and dialects; introduction of texts from different eras in some languages but not others.

Disparity between Colleges

14. REPORTED: that there is still a perceived lack of uniformity between Colleges in the provision of supervisions, especially for the AV course, and also between languages. This is, in part, because many Colleges have a lector in French but not in other languages. It is noted that a certain amount of variation is acceptable so long as the Faculty's baseline provision is met.

Extended writing

15. REPORTED: that some students feel there is insufficient writing in the foreign language at Part IA. It is noted that extended writing is one of the key topics in the Language Teaching Review.

16. RESOLVED: that the language questionnaire will address all of the above issues, and that all students will be encouraged vigorously to respond to it.

MML Part II

17. There was no representative present from MML Part II, and no agenda items had been received.

Linguistics Part I

18. There was no representative present from Linguistics Part I, and no agenda items had been received.

Linguistics Part II

Exam period

19. REPORTED: that students would prefer their exam period to be extended. It was pointed out that the dates of exams are set by the BoE, not by the Faculty.

Modes of assessment

20. REPORTED: that students would welcome more practical exams if possible. It is noted that some subjects do not lend themselves to practical assessment. Students are invited to send suggestions as to which subjects might be examined by practical assessment – excluding Phonetics – to Paula Butterly.



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21. REPORTED: that a major review of examinations and other modes of assessment is currently being conducted and a report from Prof. Graham Virgo is expected by the summer of 2017. It is noted that Research suggests that alternative modes of assessment may reduce the gender/equality gap but they do not eliminate inequalities entirely.

22. RESOLVED: that no major changes to our assessment modes should be made until the review is complete.

Overlap between Part I and Part II

23. REPORTED: that the Department is reviewing the degree of overlap between the two Parts.

24. RESOLVED: that a strategy will be proposed to address the issue if appropriate.

MPhil EuroLit/MPhil Screen Media

Library fine

25. REPORTED: that a student was fined after using the Library dropbox to return a book over the weekend.

26. RESOLVED: that the Library be asked whether this is the standard procedure for returned books when the Library is not manned.

MPhil Linguistics

Positive Feedback

27. REPORTED: that very few comments had been received, students are generally happy with the course.

Recapping session with Part II in first semester

28. REPORTED: that the session is not popular with either MPhil students – who do not find it sufficiently challenging – or with undergraduates.

29. REPORTED: that Dr Crowley and Ms Bingham are looking into ways to provide some pre-admission material online to address this issue and to prepare MPhil students for the course.

Oral presentations

30. REPORTED: that some students would prefer these to be conducted in a large group rather than two smaller groups. It is noted that there used to be one large group but it became too large, hence the decision to split it into two sessions.



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31. RESOLVED: that the Department will keep this under review.

PhD

Scanner for student use

32. REPORTED: that many students would like access to a scanner. It is noted that it is possible to scan documents using the photocopiers.

33. RESOLVED: that all graduate students must be made aware of this option.

Any other business

34. REPORTED: that a Part IA student had found the supervision provision for the linguistics module inadequate. There was only one supervision per term and too much material crammed into too little contact time. It is noted that there is a very high student to staff ratio for this module so it is hard to offer more supervisions.

35. RESOLVED: that this will be fed back to the Spanish department.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 11.58am.
