

School of Geography

**Minutes of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Weds 22nd April 2020 at 2- 3pm via MS
Teams**

Staff Members present

Dr Philippa Williams (PW) (Co-Chair)	Senior Tutor
Catherine Mills (CM) (Secretary)	Student Experience and Admissions Administrator
Dr Tim Brown (DH)	Director of Education
Prof Alastair Owens (AO)	Head of School
Olumide Popoola (OP)	Student Study Skills Coordinator
Richard Evans (RE)	HSS Faculty Liaison Librarian
<i>Kate Amis</i>	<i>Minuting meeting</i>

Student members present

Deanna Emeny (Co-Chair)	3 rd Year Environmental Science
William Robertshaw (WR)	2 nd Year BA Geography
Tilly Wood (TW)	3 rd Year Environmental Science with Business
Joseph Brown (JB)	3 rd Year Geography with Business Management
Rianno McFarlane Thomas (RM)	2 nd Year BSc Geography
Mima Moyo (MM)	PGT Human Geography
Sara Shafique (SS)	1 st Year Environmental Science

1. **Welcome** from PW and DE who jointly chaired the meeting
2. **Apologies received from** Dr Emily Lines (EL), Leigh Rooney (LR), Aminah Ossman (AYO), Dominik Nagel (DN), Stuart Grieve (SG)
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting were approved**

4. Summary of matters arising and action points from previous meeting/s

2020:007	CM to SA	CM to ask SA if we could include a banner on QMPlus about the Graduate Attributes.	This is now completed. Sam Atkinson has added this banner to the QMPLUS Geography landing page which links to the web pages at http://www.distinction.qmul.ac.uk/
2020:009	CM to Serena	CM to speak with Serena about where	Completed. Serena can provide a report on undergraduate career readiness The

		the survey goes that is completed when students re enrol.	committee confirmed they would like this and agreed to ask for this earlier in subsequent academic years
Action 2020: 20	DE and JB to TB and AO	DE and JB to forward info they have about other universities <i>No detriment</i> policy to TB and AO	Completed. This information was passed to TB and AO. TB took this info to the SMG however QMUL management have said there is no movement from our existing stated <i>No Detriment Policy</i>
Action 2020: 21	PW	PW to follow up online content in Bus Man	To be actioned
Action 2020: 22	RM and PW	RM and PW to liaise over potential co-opted human geographer for SSLC	Completed. William Robertshaw co opted and in attendance at meeting

5. Well-being check and pastoral support

5.1 Update to the EC Process

PW: Recently we have had advice from central QMUL to the effect that students will now automatically be granted an EC when work is not submitted on time. An extension will now automatically be granted for standard coursework until 18th May .Students who miss this extension deadline may submit instead without penalty to the late summer resits/first sits deadline as a first sit (date to be clarified) The deadline for all exam work is 1st June. Similarly, students will automatically have a first sit opportunity for exam work that is not submitted by 1st June 2020.

WR: If students have essential paid work e.g. they are a key worker in front line retail will they be entitled to use the EC process?

PW: Yes, essential work is recognised as an extenuating circumstances under the modified EC process.

TB: In addition to extensions and first sit opportunities, staff in the School of Geography have been advised to take the following mitigating circumstances into careful consideration when marking any future assignments:

1. Poorer access to library resources (many resources are available on-line but access has proven difficult especially because of point 2 below).
2. Many of our students face IT-related issues, including: limited access to computer facilities and poor internet connectivity.
3. Poorer working environments; many of our students have difficult home environments and can no longer access on-campus workspace.
4. Health-related and wider social and economic impact of Covid-19; including, extra caring and/or work-related responsibilities

Action: CM to communicate revised EC policy to all students asap. Action 2020: 21

5.2 Covid-19 SOG Student UG survey

The survey had yielded 164 responses. PW and CM thanked the students course reps for pushing on this as they acknowledged it would yield good quality data to enable the school to respond to individual and cohort challenges in the face of COVID crisis.

CM and PW covered some of the initial detail from the results of the survey including

- Approx. 13% do not have sole use of a laptop/ computer. Of these 21 students only 5 had heard about the FAF. CM to email others about this.
- 25% do not have reliable Wi-Fi. CM to emphasise that this is an EC.
- 20.5% are key workers with some students working 30-50 hours. CM highlighted these and if they have given a name will email to check up on how they are doing.
- Majority of students are stressed with the three biggest stresses being studies, mental health and health of family members. With people specifically emphasising caring responsibilities, passing the year, impact of the strike alongside Covid-19, motivation, living conditions and university guidance.
- On the scale provided there was a spread between 0-9 about how confident people felt regarding the measures taken by QMUL.
 - Marking leniency and deadlines pushed back further but also the current deadlines being pushed due to the strike and then this has lead to bunching of coursework hand in dates. Volume of work to be completed during pandemic is a lot!
 - Distribution of credits and not managing to complete work to the best of their ability leading to mental ill health.
 - Lack of face to face contact/ contact hours/ motivation
 - Concern about the current measures not being motivating and graduating with a good grade.
 - Library resources not being available and accessing quite spaces/ study spaces.
 - Strikes
 - Distraction of the pandemic.
- Additional things to look into not covered by survey
 - No detriment policy and worried Queen Mary's policy will leave students disadvantaged when applying for jobs and graduating.
 - Fees to be refunded/partially refunded
 - Job prospects
 - Concern about what will happen with year abroad students
 - Study space
 - First year want to be graded on the work that was completed while actually at the university.

MM: On behalf of PG students expressed that more clarity was needed on a wide range of issues including how quickly financial assistance will be made available if students had made a claim.

CM : Advised that in her experience Advice and Counselling were processing claims quickly but advised that students should follow up directly with A & C. CM would pass this info on to all students

Action CM to email all students advising them to make contact with A and C if they had a financial hardship claim. Action 2020: 22

6. Teaching and learning

6.1 Assessment / progression changes

TB : On the question of marking leniency we have sent an email to all our academic staff and TAs involved in marking advising them that a) we are bound by the no detriment policy b) staff should work on the basis that ALL students have been affected by COVID crisis.

The email includes the list as shown in full in item 5.1 above. TB stressed that rather than changing the marking criteria staff should use their academic judgement.

TB: Explained that when it comes to the exam board we do have the capacity to look at achievement across a cohort on a module where there have been specific problems or challenges for that module.

JB: Asked if marks for an individual student could be scaled up if they under- perform?

TB: Responded that yes it would be possible to look at both the individual and the cohort level. The key guide is that any queries raised on marks by a student should focus on the process rather than the academic judgment.

TW: Reported that students were asking how the *No detriment* policy works and that there was lack of synergy between what was in our School handbook and what was published on the Registry website

TB: Replied that the School of Geography should communicate clearly how the No detriment policy will work. TB suggested that short talking head style videos would be a useful way to communicate the guidelines on the new EC process/ the *no detriment* policy and other changes newly introduced. There was broad agreement that this would be a welcome alternative to more emails which several student committee reps felt were overwhelming and too time- consuming

Action TB to investigate talking heads style videos for communicating key messages on new regulations and guidance etc Action 2020:23

6.2 Changes to exam assessment.

No comments

6.3 Support from advisors

MM : Reported that some PG students were having problems getting through to supervisors. TB reiterated the importance of communicating with our students when supervising and asked MM to give more detail so he could follow up

Action MM to give detail on issues with contacting supervisors to TB so he could follow up Action 20:24

6.4 Library updates

MM: Asked if was possible to get institutional log- ins to make it easier to access a wide range of library / journal resources as with FW no longer happening students will be relying more heavily on archival resources.

AO: Reminded committee that he had sent out links to all students with a wide range of journals etc and that Senate House could now be joined online.

RE: Emphasised that an increased range of resources are now available as online resource and also from Senate House. He also explained that inter- library loan system is still running and this might enable students to get hold of rarer articles etc. The library pages contained lots of FAQ and were constantly being up- dated.

RE: Updated the SSLC to say that this would be his last meeting with us as a newly appointed colleague, Martin Beeson would be taking up this liaison role from now onwards. Martin will have specific responsibility for geography and politics. PW and TB thanks Richard for his contribution to the SSLC over the years. CM would send any specific library related questions arising from the survey to RE

6.5 Academic skills team update

OP: Explained that he had recently joined QMUL and will be expanding the range of academic literacy courses on topics including revision and critical thinking. In particular he will be expanding the range of support for Masters students next week in 4 days of 9am -1 pm available time slots for chats and student advice. This information will be disseminated through the *Study well* initiative at QMUL <https://www.qmsu.org/studywell/>. He stressed that this is to a developmental service ie not just for those who are struggling. PW and CM offered to liaise re disseminating this information about this new initiative

Action OP to send *Studywell* info to CM and PW for dissemination to geographers. Action 2020: 25

7. Organisation and Communications

On the volume of emails MM asked if we could have a centralised place where all comms could be accessed to avoid students receiving so many emails. If we have to stick with emails can we make them shorter, clearer and bite sized. AO reminded committee that we do have the FAQs available on the website

On communicating the new EC policy to all students RM asked when the new EC policy would be sent out to all students and if those who had put in for an EC recently would be entitled to the new considerations. CM Replied that all EC applicants would be emailed to offer these new considerations. PW replied that the EC would be sent out immediately. PW reminded committee that forms would still be required for all ECs.

On the official line regarding fee reimbursements. TW commented that it would be useful to feedback to all students regarding the official line on fee reimbursements. TW had received no reply to her emails regarding this from the principal's office. CM guided students to go through the Students Union with their comments about this and PW suggested that they forward their unanswered emails to the Students' union.

On What will happen in September. WR reported that many fellow students had been asking about what would happen in September and what the current thinking was. AO replied that it has been confirmed that we are planning that the majority of content for September to be delivered online. There may be a limited amount of face to face contact. A blended approach which allows for social distancing. With a view to returning in January to the campus. This announcement will be made soon. In the meantime the SOG is thinking about which modules will run in Semester A. This is an emerging picture, but it looks increasingly likely that we will be online for the first semester. TB commented that the priority was to learn from what had worked and what we need to develop further and this forum, the SSLC, is key to gathering feedback to enable us to review our practice.

8. AOB

AYO: The weighting of the 1st year as part of the final degree result (via email..from the people I have talked to, no concerns have been raised and people have found the 14 day grace period and the coursework clinics very helpful and has reduced pressure on completing assignments. However, one thing I found was that people need a bit more clarification on is how first year impacts our final grade i.e. second year is worth 30% and 3rd year 60% and first year will only be included if it raises our final grade' PW to clarify with Lisa Belaya and report back to SSLC

Action PW to clarify weighting of each year of degree with LB and report back to SSLC Action 2020: 26

Ramadan – OP reminded the committee that Ramadan is imminent. AO replied that last year Shereen Ferdanez wrote some useful advice and tips on study during Ramadan

Action AO to pass this written guidance to SA to upload to QMPLUS Action 2020:27

9. Date of next meeting: Weds 6th May 2020. Time to be confirmed.

Summary of action points		
2020:21	CM	Communicate revised EC policy to all students asap.
2020:22	CM	CM to email all students advising them to make contact with Advice and Counselling if they had a financial hardship claim
2020: 23	TB	Investigate talking heads style videos for communicating key messages on new regulations and guidance etc
2020:24	MM and TB	MM to give detail on issues with contacting supervisors to TB so he could follow up
2020:25	OP and CM	Action OP to send <i>Studywell</i> info to CM for dissemination to geographers.
2020:26	PW and LB	Clarify with LB weighting of each year of degree and report back to SSLC
2020:27	AO	Pass the written guidance on <i>study in Ramadan</i> by SF to SA to upload to QMPLUS