

School of Geography

Minutes of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught  
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Wednesday 24th June 2020  
at 14.00- 15.00 via MS Teams

Staff Members present

<b>Dr Philippa Williams (PW) (Co-Chair)</b>	Senior Tutor
Catherine Mills (CM) (Secretary)	Student Experience and Admissions Administrator
Prof Alastair Owens (AO)	Head of School
Andrew Loveland (AL)	Professional services manager
Emma Shapcott (ES)	Teaching and Learning Manager
Emily Lines (EL)	Deputy Director of Education
Stuart Grieve (SG)	Engagement, retention and success academic lead
<i>Kate Amis</i>	<i>Minuting meeting</i>

Student members present

<b>Deanna Emeny (Co-Chair)</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Environmental Science
William Robertshaw (WR)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year BA Geography
Rianno McFarlane Thomas (RM)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year BSc Geography
Joseph Brown (JB)	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year Geography with Business Management
Tilly Walker Wood	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year Env SC with business

1. **Welcome** from PW and DE who jointly chaired the meeting.
2. **Apologies** received from Martin Beeson and Tim Brown.
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting were approved** with edit that SS attending in last meeting referred to Shazia Sadiq not Sara Shafique.

**4. Matters arising from the previous meeting and action**

Minute	Who?	Details	Action to date as reported Green= complete Orange= in progress and to be reported next meeting Red =Awaiting action/ roll over
2020: 32	CM and PW	Add item deferred to agenda for next meeting – online marking and feedback	Actioned

2020: 33	CM and PW	Add item deferred to agenda for next meeting- How to build an online School of Geography community	Actioned
2020: 34	PW and RT	Action PW to discuss the specifics of this GIS marking issue via email with RT	PW to arrange this with RT but also may be dealt with by moderation process
2020: 35	ES	ES to check the FAQ regarding borderline results	CM reported back to meeting that FAQ info all up to date and available on QMPLUS

## **5. Well- being check and pastoral support**

No items.

## **6. Teaching and Learning and Learning resources**

### **6.1 feedback from student led meetings - How to build an online School of Geography community.**

Please see the notes from the original student led meeting from 17<sup>th</sup> June attached as appendix one to these minutes

WR gave a summary of the key points raised and discussed at meeting which had been attended by 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> yr students as follows:

Online platform for sharing news: From 1<sup>st</sup> year perspective, the group thought about how to ensure that new students were immediately integrated into the community. WR had researched suitable online platforms for newsfeeds etc and Yammer appeared to be a good fit with advantage that it is linked to Microsoft which we have across the uni already .You would have a profile for yourself and be able to set up subgroups for, for example each course and / year group. At the meeting Aminah had reported that she had found it difficult to integrate and get to know students outside her immediate tutor group etc and this platform would enable this wider communication and sharing of news etc.

The buddy scheme: Considered a very positive scheme and one which we should be promoting. CM reported that so far 20 people had signed up as buddies for next year.

Getting people up to speed with IT: Suggested making this training in addition to the existing Navigator training which we already run in welcome week for 1<sup>st</sup> years to help them navigate QMPLUS, learn how to submit coursework etc. Post Covid we should continue to make use of the best of online platforms etc to enhance the student experience. Students had wanted advice to be given on which online platform the university would be using from September and suggested that most people were more positive about Teams than the blackboard collaborate option. AO reported that the uni had decided to sue Blackboard Collaborate but that it might be possible to use alternative platforms for non lecture based activities, especially

smaller group work. The advantage of the blackboard system is that it can be integrated with QMPLUS and each student timetable etc.

Online graduation this year: This had not been covered in the meeting, but DE suggested we have some online talks/ celebration and advice for the next part of the graduate journey. This could be in course based cohorts and include space for reminiscences/ memories/ shared photos and we could ask Rebecca Dixon, the outgoing Geog Soc president to make a short presentation. AL reported that central marketing and comms were currently working on putting together a virtual celebration event for each school using the FlipGrid platform. AO added that he would be including an introductory video from himself and the plan could also include some short presentations by inspiring alumni.

Welcome week Sept 2020: CM raised need to focus on 1<sup>st</sup> Yr experience in welcome week. RT suggested that buddies could each host video calls to small groups of up to 9 people where they could run fun games etc.

Social distancing: WR asked if the new 1m rule would change plans for coming back to campus earlier than interim plans had suggested. AO responded that in reality the change would still not allow sufficient space in lecture halls for our group sizes and that in theory campus will be opened up for some face to face activities as the term moves on, such as for tutorials, in reality the bulk of learning in semester 1 will be online. DE reminded group the guidance was still that 2m distance was preferred and 1m should only be the norm when 2m was not possible. AO reported that the university will be issuing each student with QMUL face masks.

## **6.2 Online marking and feedback**

Students were asked to give feedback on the new online marking and feedback system

DE: People report that they like the new system. It is much easier to use. It is accessible. You can view the comments easily and you can re find the comments again when you are writing a subsequent assignment which is useful.

WR: Convenience is the key word. People are reading their comments, but I wonder if the comments are less actionable because they are online. This is more because you are not in the building and can't pop along to an academic's office for a quick chat as follow up. Adopting instant messaging on Teams (rather than having to write a longer more formal email) could be a way forward to make this more actionable.

TW: I read the comments in the margins. They are useful for understanding the detail of where you need to improve. I suggest we should flag up that these comments are available to all students. Not sure everyone knows about them. PW and RT agreed that training for all students on how to use these comments would be useful.

## **6.3 Library updates**

Received via email and reported at meeting in Martin's absence

1. Mile End Library Redevelopment: Detailed planning continues apace for the Ground Floor refurbishment. There has been an amendment to the timeline. The building works are now provisionally scheduled to take place from March 2021 to September 2021.

2. Return to Campus: The Library Management Group has agreed a set of Principles of Operation During the Covid-19 Pandemic, to help address the complex challenge of returning to campus. This is shown below. In line with the first Operating Principle (Health and Wellbeing) we are beginning to schedule risk assessments for the library buildings and service points to take place by the end of June. The risk assessments will capture everything that we need to prepare, such as screens at service points, one- way routes, social distancing in queues, at service points and in reading rooms.

**7. Communication**

No comments reported.

**8. AOB**

Student led meetings

CM raised idea that as student led meetings have been so helpful and informative for the committee it would be useful to continue these going forwards. Student reps would chair these meetings and lead discussions, feeding back to SSLC. DE and RT agreed that these would be useful. PW suggested they could be hosted on the Yammer platform if that was to be adopted.

9. **Date of next meeting.** Weds 8<sup>th</sup> July. Time to be agreed

Actions from this meeting

Carried forward		
2020: 34	PW and RT	Action PW to discuss the specifics of this GIS marking issue via email with RT

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**Appendix One: Key notes from the Student Led Discussion held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020, 12pm, via MS Teams**

Attendees

AO Aminah Ossman  
 RT Rianno Thomas  
 DE Deanna Emeny  
 SS Sara Shafique  
 WR Will Robertshaw

**How can you stay connected with peers when returning in September? What online social and study spaces do you think would work/be welcomed?**

SS: Has been hard to stay engaged with online classes, somethings were uninteresting.

WR: Retention may also be difficult looking forward.

AO: Also, a lot of our lectures were not in real time. Having classes in real time may be more beneficial and increase engagement.

WR: Our priority should be establishing a very large online community.

AO: Personally, I haven't been able to meet new people. The first-year chat isn't as active as it used to be.

WR: Yammer (aka Communities) is a Microsoft owned app. We all have a membership and log in. It is like a company social network. We could use it to create different communities e.g. SoG, Geography society, year1, 2 etc. Some of the things you can do are ask questions, polls. It is also hashtag integrated.

WR: Planning to formulate and circulate (through course reps) Survey for returning students. Some of the key questions Do you want recorded lectures, will you be watching them live, do you plan to come to campus in September?

**How do you want to stay connected with staff in the School of Geography? What kind of online interaction do you want with staff around lectures and outside of these?**

SS: There hasn't been much contact between First years and our tutors and advisors

AO: Lack of attendance to tutorials that occurred. Tutor altered it so that they would be available on Teams for drop in chats during scheduled tutorial times.

WR: Using the chat on MS teams rather than emails would be more engaging. We can have teams with different groups. This instant messaging seems quicker than emails. Agreed that it takes time getting used to

WR: Training sessions for teams /QMPlus along with highlighting where to go for information would be crucial for integrating first years as well as returning students to the online learning environment.

WR: It would be nice to have conversation with general teaching staff about what they are comfortable with doing, what they want to or will be doing with regards to online teaching.

AO: We would benefit from a more of a bridge between students and staff.

**How can we welcome first year students into the School of Geography community? How can current students be involved?**

BUDDY SCHEME& FIRST YEARS:

Aminah and Will have signed up. Course Reps to encourage peers to sign up.

DE: Arranging a system to put people together by signing up, get rotated around to different activities, whether that be virtually or in person

RT: If we link this to the buddy scheme, we could have buddies running different events throughout the days of welcome week through zoom/teams/Yammer etc. Quizzes, online games

DE: Even if there aren't enough buddies, we could post online games/links with times. That way the new first years could join and interact together.

**Third year graduation? There is a Queen Mary virtual event scheduled for early August, but should we, or how can we mark graduation within Geography as well?**

### THIRD YEAR GRADUATION

DE: The idea of getting an online speaker would be good. Maybe Alastair could lead on online event, it doesn't have to be long. Just something to conclude/ solidify the completing of our degrees.

**Any other ideas, comments, concerns, questions about temporarily shifting to an online social and learning community?**

WR: Although this is meant to be a temporary measure. Even if we can have full-size lectures, we should still use teams as a communication network. Another point is understanding whether students and lecturers want to keep using it. Should we be putting in things in place that are long term, we can use both online and face to face interactions, even when things go back to normal.

DE: Having the option to do a class online would make a big difference even when we no longer have social distancing. Especially if students for example have one class for a day.

### COURSE REP ACTIONS

1. Encourage peers to sign up to the buddy scheme
2. Will to create the survey and put in in course rep chat for distribution
3. Look into other online games to play
4. Have a look at Yammer/Communities App on MS Teams