

School of Geography

**Minutes of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Wednesday 3rd June 2020
at 14.00- 15.00 via MS Teams**

Staff Members present

Dr Philippa Williams (PW) (Co-Chair)	Senior Tutor
Catherine Mills (CM) (Secretary)	Student Experience and Admissions Administrator
Prof Alastair Owens (AO)	Head of School
Dr Emily Lines (EL)	Deputy Director of Education
Dr Stuart Grieve (SG)	Engagement, Retention and Success lead
Dr Tim Brown (TB)	Director of Education
Dr Will Monteith (WM)	Invited
Martin Beeson	Library services
<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
Rianno McFarlane Thomas (RM)	2 nd Year BSc Geography
Tilly Walker Wood (TW)	3 rd Year Environmental Science with Business

1. **Welcome** from PW and DE who jointly chaired the meeting.
2. **Apologies** received from Joseph Brown and Aminah Ossoman
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.**

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
2020:29	AO	Seek clarity on location of teaching and learning on offer for whole of academic year inc a date for students to be able to	AO fed back to meeting that learning will be available online throughout the next academic year with a small face to face component blended in during semester A and a larger component of face to face blended in for Semester B. This has been

	clarify their plans with landlords etc	communicated by Colin Bailey to all students in an email. The university is keen to encourage students to return to London and though most teaching will remain online there will be wider support services like the library available on campus and some aspects of social life etc. See follow up comments in section 7(i) below
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5. Well- being check and pastoral support

No issues were raised in this section, but comments recorded under the following heading below have relevance

6.3 Integrating anti- racist practice into SOG teaching and learning

6. Teaching and Learning and Learning resources

6.1 Library updates

MB advised that the library had set up two book return boxes for the return of hard copy print books. He advised that books would continue to be automatically renewed and no fines would be imposed until the actual library building was re- opened.

WR asked about how the library would cope with social distancing. MB advised that the SMT were planning this at the moment and information would be shared once the plan was agreed.

6.2 Module changes and timetable for next academic year

AO reported that SOG had almost finished planning the line- up for next year and were making a plan which maximised the opportunities for lab work, fieldwork etc. The School had placed modules in the appropriate semester depending on how suited they were to be entirely taught online. The precise date for when this info will be released is not yet determined but AO said this would be *soon*.

RT asked if this meant that students would have to change their module choices. AO explained that the changes required would be minimal but acknowledged that a small number of modules would not be running and that, yes, as some would be switching to a different semester, reselection would be necessary. TB clarified that there were only one or two modules which wouldn't run and they were ones with very low take up.

6.3 Integrating anti -racist practice into our teaching

Will Monteith was welcomed to the meeting to present and gather ideas on how best to enable an SOG initiative to encourage reflection and action on anti- racist teaching and learning and ensure best support for our BAME community. He asked if discussions around this were taking place amongst students. RT said that in her experience people were having these discussions but generally amongst their own safe group e.g. amongst BAME students. AO acknowledged that everyone is greatly distressed by recent events relating to COVID here and the events around the death of George Floyd in the USA and that whilst other universities are putting out rather bland statements we would like to do something more meaningful. The University has made a statement on Twitter.

TB explained that SOG had already started discussions/ work on decolonising the curriculum but this had been disrupted by COVID. He said we could go further than just integrating – that we could extend and add huge value here. RT agreed that integrating new approaches and extending the curriculum would be ideal as it is the duty of geography to cover these real -life contemporary issues.

WM asked if there is a need for a discussion around how safe some groups feel about returning to campus. RT thought this a good idea acknowledging that the risk is not equally spread and as a BAME student she was potentially at greater risk for example. A consultation should happen. CM asked how best to engage students in this consultation. RT said she was happy to take a leading role in this and that it should initially be student led and then later get staff involved. AO suggested getting Nevroz Fehimli involved in her capacity as a student member of the equality and diversity committee and that ideally the results would be available to be discussed at the staff away day of 29th June 2020.

Action PW and CM to help RT and NF set up student consultation on best anti-racist practice in teaching, learning and curriculum in the SOG

7. Communication

A wide range of issues were raised and responded to at the meeting as follows:

- i) **Advice available on the location of teaching and learning for the next academic year to help students with planning:** Following on from the action point addressed by AO, WR quoted from the letter from The VC which informed students that the provision next year would be “ A blended scheme with a backbone online”. WR asked that students be given further, clearer information than this. AO advised that the SOG would be shortly emailing prospective students with guidelines and that this would be adapted for current students. TB reiterated that in semester A the great majority of teaching and learning will be online with a move to greater proportion of face to face in semester B. All this caveated with adherence to social distancing, mindful of a second peak etc. Academics are working hard to deliver the best for next year. We acknowledge that there remains a degree of uncertainty.
- ii) **New intake Sept 2020:** RT asked if new students who had accepted a place would be able to defer to 2021. AO confirmed that whilst this was absolutely possible, we were hoping that many students would still attend this September.
- iii) **Building a new learning community:** AO opened a discussion around the idea that SOG is looking for input into how we can build a learning community which is welcoming and inclusive despite the lack of face to face contact. RT suggested that the Geog Soc should have a key role in this. TB advised that SOG is trying to learn from their experiences so far of online learning this term and to build a better blend which incorporates more task based, small group learning. CM suggested that the buddy scheme would be impactful and that the capacity of this is huge if everyone gets involved. RW asked if we could set up online evening lectures and invite speakers from other parts of the world. TB added that the series of staff seminars which currently runs weekly which could be opened to undergraduates. Also, the SOG are discussing possibilities of buddying up with USA institutions to share such online seminars across both institutions. TW suggested that citizen science projects could take the place of Green London

week for first years. PW suggested building themes across year groups to grow our sense of community. AO suggested we could have a weekly online interview with a member of staff or member of Geog SOC. PW suggested, and it was agreed, that SSLC set up a subgroup led by students initially to collate feedback on what students want in terms of the new learning community. CM asked for the subgroup to include ideas for a virtual welcome week in their discussions.

Action : PW and CM to enable this group as soon as possible.

iv) Communications around changes to module timings

WR asked about the issue of some modules being moved around to accommodate online learning focus in semester A. He asked what the date when students would find out about changes and when they would need to respond by. AO reported that the SOG have almost finalised the new line up for the new academic year. The new line up would maximise opportunities for labwork, fieldwork etc. There is no precise date yet for when this info will be released but it would be soon. RT asked if students would have to change their module choices. AO responded that there would be some changes needed but they would be minimal. TB added that there would only be one or two modules not running and they were ones with very low take up.

V) Feedback on IGS and other modules: RT asked when students would hear if their IGS had been accepted. TB explained that all advisers have been engaged in reviewing IGS proposals and they have reported back to Simon Lewis who is i/c IGS. This process has enabled us to identify any problems. The deadline for this process is this week and then supervisors will be communicated with so that they can feedback to students over the next couple of weeks and certainly before the start of July.

RT asked when students would receive feedback about coursework submitted by 18th May. TB explained that as per usual staff were working on a four-week period for coursework. For exams it is different. Feedback on all will be online. TB offered to follow up on an instance mentioned by RT in which a peer had submitted coursework to a deadline of more than 4 weeks ago but not received feedback.

vi) Final results and graduation: RT asked when final results would be released. CM reported that ES would be sending out communications about final results dates over the next week and the final results date will be 4th August. TW asked about graduation. CM reported that the website currently says the events are postponed. AO suggested we could do something as the SOG and would welcome suggestions on this.

8. AOB

No additional items raised

9. Date of next meeting

Weds 17th June or Weds 24th June - date and time to be advised.

Summary of actions to be carried forward		
2020:30	PW and CM	Enable student led group to feedback on new learning community and virtual welcome week. Send emails to course reps to set framework etc
2020:31	PW ,CM, RT NF	Action PW and CM to help RT and NF set up student consultation on best anti- racist practice in teaching, learning and curriculum in the SOG