

School of Geography

Minutes of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Tuesday 7th April 2020 at 10-11am 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
Dr Emily Lines (EL)	Deputy Director of Education
Andrew Loveland (AL)	PS Manager SOG
Richard Evans (RE)	HSS Faculty Liaison Librarian
Stuart Grieve (SG)	Engagement, Retention and Success Academic Lead
Leigh Rooney (LR)	QMUL Students Union Education co-ordinator
<i>Kate Amis</i>	<i>Minuting meeting</i>

Student members present

Deanna Emeny (Co-Chair)	3 rd Year Environmental Science
Aminah Ossman (AYO)	1 st Year Geography with Business Management
Dominik Nagel (DN)	2 nd Year Geography with Business Management
Joseph Brown (JB)	3 rd Year Geography with Business Management
Rianno McFarlane Thomas (RM)	2 nd Year BSc Geography

1. **Welcome** from PW and DE who jointly chaired the meeting
2. **Apologies** received from Sophia Fassbender (SF) and Tilly Wood (TW)
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
2020:13	CM	Put survey on QMPLUS	Things have moved rapidly since last meeting due to COVID crisis. CM had sent email re new EC process and core messages to reassure. Will now action

			survey before next SSLC. This last point agreed in 6.1 below
2020:14	AO JB	AO would be meeting with CS. JB to summarise detail in an email direct to AO	AO met with CS and was able to also forward feedback from JB. CS welcomed feedback and will make adjustments using this feedback to module teaching for next year
2020:15	AO	To ask if lecturers willing to provide access to materials for lectures cancelled due to strike	AO reported that many lecturers had already posted handouts and resources from these sessions. AO would give staff a further nudge in staff meeting but stressed this was to be voluntary on behalf of staff.
2020:16	CM	CM to ask Lisa Belaya to clarify regarding new rules on assessments and which could be discounted etc	<p>Response from Lisa Belaya</p> <p><i>The advice we've received from ARCS is: 'Where the lowest 30 credits do not fit within two 15 or one 30 credit modules (e.g., a 15 credit is lowest, then a 30 credit second lowest), the weighting of modules will be amended for the purpose of classification only (e.g., in that case, the 30 credit module would count only 15 credits towards classification).'</i></p> <p><i>In your example, the year average would be calculated based on Modules 1-5, with Module 4 double-weighted (15 credits x 2) and Module 5 single-weighted (15 credits x 1). The calculations are done on the overall module marks, not individual items of assessment. I hope that makes sense.</i></p> <p><i>Note also: 'Where a module has the lowest mark due to an assessment offence penalty, that module will not be excluded and we will look at the next lowest module.'</i></p> <p>Further discussion on this issue is reported in agenda item 6.1 below.</p>
2020:17	AO	Follow up on lack of response to student enquiry from principal's office	AO had followed up – The university is not planning to offer refunds. Asked students to follow up with principal's office any lack of response with further emails.
2020:18	PW	Follow up with Lisa B to make sure students are not penalised on short courses.	<p>Response from Lisa Belyea:</p> <p><i>None of the 'short course 1' assessments were affected by strikes. The deadline had already been extended from 09 March to 24 March + the 7-day grace period (a total of 22 days). (For anyone who contacted Catherine to discuss ECs, the grace period would be converted to 14 days without the need for EC evidence.)</i></p> <p><i>For 'short course 2', lab-work and field-work were missed due to coronavirus; teaching was delivered online, where necessary, and alternative assessments were set for students to work with datasets similar to what they would have collected. The deadline is 23 April (+ 14-day grace period).</i></p> <p>Lisa added that if PW could recap the specific issues raised by students she will discuss with Geraldene again</p>
2020:19	CM	Send out reminders to all students prior to next SSLC to prompt feedback and questions for reps	This is now incorporated into SSLC system and will be ongoing
2020:005	CReps	CReps to ask for feedback on feedback sheets again	Ongoing

2020:006	TB	TB to explore how to facilitate individualised feedback	All feedback on all assessments will now be provide online
2020:007	CM to SA	CM to ask SA if we could include a banner on QMplus about the Graduate Attributes.	To be actioned
2020:008	PW	PW to take GEG4003 being compulsory for all first year programmes to TLC	SOG is planning wider review of provision to include student voice so this will be kept in mind for when this review occurs
2020:009	CM to Serena	CM to speak with Serena about where the survey goes that is completed when students re enrol	To be actioned

5. Wellbeing check and pastoral support

5.1 New EC process: PW updated the committee on the new EC process further to LB's email response posted above in matters arising action 2020:16. Criteria for an EC could relate to a wide range of new challenges around employment, housing, childcare or caring, access to technology etc . All would be taken into consideration. CM would get back to student within 5 days of their application. JB asked how proof would need to be provided and PW confirmed that all proof would be self-certification e.g. no formal doctor etc notes would be required.

6. Teaching and Learning and Learning Resources

6.1 Assessment/ progression changes including Queen Mary's 'no detriment' approach: DE and JB led with concerns about how taking 30 credit modules this semester would have disadvantaged students. JB had been keeping up with the change.org petition to lobby Queen Mary on their no detriment policy. He stressed that this did not go far enough and that a safety net is needed. CM clarified that the principal of the 'safety net' is that you can't go below your current average mark but you do still need to pass.

AO has received many emails around this issue and has emailed Christina Perry, the Deputy Dean for Education in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) who had responded to say that she does sympathise and iterated that our principals are compliant with good practice. QMUL is reviewing and working on guidance. They are constrained by the office for students (OFS). This is a constraint but has been put in place to protect the quality of our degrees by ensuring rigour and robustness. JB asked that surely as these are exceptional circumstances there could be greater consideration given. AO responded that the approach should be the same across all universities however he acknowledged that there would be some differences in interpretations of the guidelines. AO stated that the QMUL no detriment policy had been in development for two weeks and was recently published. He had asked other faculty heads if they had been receiving emails regarding this from their students but they had said not as yet.

TB asked that if JB and DE have access to info about other universities no detriment policies that they forward this to him and AO.

Action: DE and JB to forward info they have about other universities no detriment policy to TB and AO. Action 2020: 20

EL: Can we use moderation to look at marks across individual modules? TB: Yes, we can do this at school level within the principles that the University has set out. We can adjust marks across the whole cohort as part of exceptional circumstances. This is something that the School of Geog management group is currently considering. We are working to be sure to give the best advice. We can use the tools of the exam

board to look at adjustments across modules in Semester B. We apply our understanding that everyone should complete to 'best endeavours' and then we will use the mechanisms we have at our disposal. TB stressed that It is not in our interest to disadvantage students.

JB: Was the 30 credit module allowance made by QMUL or SOG? Is there any chance it could be made 60 credits instead? AO: The allowance was made by QMUL. TB: We are operating within QMUL guidance and the figure that can be discounted is 30 credits. TB currently looking at a range of No detriment policies from other universities. He clarified that currently a degree can be classified by the best 90 credits from the 3rd year and weighted alongside achievements in first and second year.

DE: Everyone is trying to complete everything but people are very stressed by the current situation and in addition they are stressed that they will get lower marks. JB and RM reiterated this point saying that students are facing very difficult working conditions. CM reminded the committee that we now have the new EC policy to support students by offering extra time. JB replied that it was more about the stress of trying to work in difficult conditions rather than the time element per se. He gave an example of a student who was trying to write their IGS on their 'phone as an example of how poor conditions were for some students. CM asked that any student facing such difficulties should contact PW or CM who can offer support. AO reminded committee that the hardship fund is available for equipment and the possibility of late summer exams if this would alleviate the issue for an individual.

TB: (on behalf of EL) Should we reinstate the idea of the survey so we can have a better idea of the scale and specifics of the issues regarding current working conditions and challenges? There was discussion around this and it was agreed to prioritise sending out the survey. It would be traceable by CM but would present as an anonymous survey. This way CM would be able to pick up key concerns linked to individual students.

6.2 Changes to Examination assessment: no comments

6.3 Quality of online content and ease of use of technologies: DE reported back that feedback on the availability of content had been positive. RM reported that feedback on the virtual Florida FW trip was positive. DN reported that this had been good in geography but some there were issues with business management where there were no lectures and no solutions as yet. PW would help to follow this up.

Action PW to follow up online content in Bus Man Action point 2020: 21

6.4 Support from Advisors: RM gave feedback that the overall support has been good but a few students had yet to get feedback on their project/ IGS proposals PW asked RM to contact her with these names so she could follow this up. If extensions/ EC were required they should contact CM.

6.5 Library updates: RE reported that the library website has a full and updated list of essential details and a detailed list of e- resources made available from publishers etc in response to the COVID – 19 working conditions situation.

7. Organisation and Communication

CM – If students complete the survey on QMPLUS we will be able to identify each of them though it will appear as anonymous. CM will prioritise this survey this week.

AO- Many students have been in touch over issues raised for their studying at this difficult time. How can we engage students in this dialogue here at SSLC? Can we continue to meet every two weeks? There was widespread agreement to this by the committee.

RM- Where a course rep hasn't really engaged could we co- opt others in their stead? PW asked RM put her in contact with the suggested co-optee and she would invite them to participate in SSLC

Action RM and PW to liaise over potential co-opted human geographer for SSLC Action 2020: 22

8. **AOB** – no points raised

9. **Date of next meeting:** Weds 22nd April time to be confirmed

Summary of action points from this meeting		
Action 2020: 20	DE and JB to TB and AO	DE and JB to forward info they have about other universities no detriment policy to TB and AO
Action 2020: 21	PW	PW to follow up online content in Bus Man
Action 2020: 22	RM and PW	RM and PW to liaise over potential co-opted human geographer for SSLC

Plus action points carried forward from previous meeting:

2020:007	CM to SA	CM to ask SA if we could include a banner on QMplus about the Graduate Attributes.	To be actioned
2020:009	CM to Serena	CM to speak with Serena about where the survey goes that is completed when students re enrol	To be actioned

