

School of History
Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
01/04/2020

Agenda

Anna Chrysostomides – Deputy Director of Taught Programmes
Sam Bennett – Secretary
Rich Evans – HSS, Library
Zhara Adal – Second year BA History
Savannah Blake – Final Year BA History
Avin Hourou – Second Year BA History

PART 1 – Preliminary items

1. Apologies for absence

None to note

2. Report on matters arising from the previous meeting and action taken

2.1 New advising system moving forward – AC to check in with central team managing the Buddy System to learn about COVID-19 Impact

Anna outlined that given the current situation, the training may now be carried out online, as supposed to face to face. Anna noted the hardship fund, which could possibly help with this sort of thing. Clarification was that some people struggle with stable internet connections or system requirements for certain features are not clear.

PART 2 – Programme delivery and other matters

3. Programme / module developments and amendments / committee volunteers

Savannah noted that ‘Collaborate’ seemed temperamental in terms of connection, with instances of people dropping in and out of teaching.

Savannah asked if the dissertation bursary fund could be extended to cover student's potential hardware limitations.

Zhara noted that many may be frustrated with online teaching, but realised there was quite little that could be done with this given the circumstances. Noted difficulty with in-class conversation online. With audio problems limiting natural conversation.

Avin raised a question as to whether a joint honours email could be sent to students, so they are more clear on where they stand.

Avin also shared concerns from some that students are struggling to concentrate on work, meaning essays are causing increased levels of stress.

Question raised about when students will find out what changes will be made to final year special subjects. Anna emphasised that subject organisers are being reminded that students cannot necessarily access the same level of sources as usual and to take this into account when marking work.

Savannah asked if ECs would be granted in the case of computer failure. This came from a student who was currently struggling with such an issue. Anna outlined that the EC form is not live yet, and won't be until May. Emphasised that any leniency will need to be applied in full and formally after the 4 May, via the new EC form.

Savannah relayed a question regarding how seminar participation will be marked in this period, given the seminars are now online and participation is mixed. Anna said this should not be counted given that it will benefit people with good internet connections.

4. Learning, teaching and assessment

4.1 Clarification about what the University and School are doing to react to the 'new normal' during social isolation and COVID-19, especially regarding:

- 'no-detriment' policy for marks - NOT OFFICIAL YET, but university is hoping to make an announcement about this soon. School of History is in favour and has communicated this to university.

Anna outlined that this means the best 90 credits marks are taken, and the weakest 30 are ignored. Outlined that this policy will also apply to second years. Noted that the policy is designed, as in name, to avoid detriment to students. Anna also noted that markers have been asked to take everything that is going on, into consideration when marking.

Anna sought clarification from Dan Peart on further steps taken. Dan advised that other steps such as cancelling some assessment and extending other deadlines had already been taken.

Savannah noted that some students will only know a small number of their marks so far, given how assessment is scheduled.

- an explanation of how second and external marking will work this year

Anna noted that this would be light touch this year, provided to members of staff who are new to QM or request it for other reasons. External marking will follow a similar pattern in that it will be light touch, although it will cover assignments more broadly. Final year dissertations remain second marked and externally marked for all, due to the weighting of this piece of work.

- dissertation bursary funds

Anna re-emphasised that people should use the various funds offered by the school if required. Savannah relayed a point that these funds had not been highlighted to students enough. Echoed by Savannah, that hardship fund was not clear to students.

ACTION: Anna to follow up on this.

- submission points on QM Plus – date changes

Anna noted that all deadlines on QMPlus should have now been updated.

- no lateness penalties up to 4 May (students should still make official requests)

Anna emphasised that no late penalties will be applied until 4 May, but this will revert to normal following 4 May.

4.2 How useful have the communications from the School of History and methods of adapting to online learning been? Have we made it clear that all of the changes we are making are for the benefit of the students?

Savannah noted that some communication had not been very clear. Zhara echoed this, noting that a lot of information was repetitive. Noted that the hand drawn pictures were morale boosting and appreciated.

Perhaps subject lines could be made clearer, with words like URGENT used if it needs reading. Updates may not be read otherwise.

Noted that lists of resources, such as the library one could be added to Dan's emails to students.

5. Academic support: Academic Advisors and Office Hours

5.1 How have students experienced academic support during the shift to online learning? Are seminar leaders answering emails in a timely manner? Is there anything new the School should be trying?

Zhara noted that her adviser had not sent an email checking in on the students yet. Avin explained her adviser had explained things and offered phone or skype calls for those who need them. Noted that final years may be more reliant on their special subject tutors, rather than their adviser.

5.2 Creative write-ins: please share with as many students as possible that the School of History is hosting online working sessions where we can all work at one time in order to help provide a sense of normalcy and routine starting Wednesday 31 March, 2020. Students can sign up here:
<https://achrysostomides.wufoo.com/forms/mso7rw31o77vr5/>

Anna asked all students to share the work ins she is hosting between 10 and 11 each day. Savannah asked if these might be extended to writing tutors or literary fellows.

ACTION: Anna to get in touch with writing tutors to have some of these set up.

6. Organisation and Communication

6.1 We will not have Student Consultations, unless otherwise recommended by course reps

Student consultations will not run this term. Feedback to come through SSLC.

7. Learning resources:

7.1 Library facilities / resources (books, journals etc.) – updates on how the library is accommodating students during social isolation (RE)

Rich outlined that there is a library coronavirus response page on the library website. Which will point students to contacts, supportive materials and more information on loans and holds.

Rich noted that the drop box at the library is still functioning with a delay on returning on student records. Fees waived.

Rich raised the free materials list that was earlier mentioned.

Rich asked about students writing on Twitter looking for responses. Avin noted that some student would use this as a starting point, Sam to share some of these from the School account possibly.

Also noted that Senate House Library is now taking remote registrations online. This has been shared from the School Twitter account.

8. Any other business:

Noted that an explanation of how to do well on a take home exam would be appreciated, as some exams were changed to these. Some students may have avoided these when choosing their modules but now are taking one due to changes.

ACTION: Anna to follow up on this.

9. Date of the next meeting.

30 April 2020