

School of History
Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
30/04/2020

Minutes

Present

Anna Chrysostomides – Deputy Director Taught Programmes

Sam Bennett – Secretary

Jacques Rogers – HSS Library

Constance Thomas – School of History PGR

Sophie Wilson – School of History PGR

Avin Houro – Second Year, BA History

Savannah Blake – Final Year, BA History

PART 1 – Preliminary items

1. Apologies for absence

- Rich Evans- Jacques Rogers attending to represent the library
- Zhara Adal – Course Rep
- Anisa Taznim – Course Rep

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

2.1 New mentoring system moving forward – online training in the coming months (May or June) and new call for mentors – we need more than the 9 we have!

Anna is going to try and attract additional mentors to the current 9 that have already signed up. Request for course reps to suggest members, and to try and raise some interest amongst peers.

PART 2 – Programme delivery and other matters

3. Programme / module developments and amendments / committee volunteers

3.1 There will be a survey going out on 5 May to assess what worked and what did not work in the switch to online teaching. Please encourage students to fill this in.

Anna noted that this will sit in the place of module evaluation forms that are done in person. Emphasised how useful this will be going forward when thinking about teaching next year. Also will assist in ensuring everyone is considered and no one is disadvantaged in this new way of teaching. Requested that this be shared with other students within the school by the course reps.

4. Learning, teaching and assessment

4.1 Are there any questions about how things are moving forward?

- No late penalties applied after 4 May – 13 August
- School is working on how to set up submission points during the summer

Avin noted that advice from tutors is mixed amongst students. That the date of final submission was not clear. Some were being told 4 May, others 13 August. Anna confirmed that the absolute final deadline is 13 August. Avin requested this be shared from the School to students. Anna noted that Virginia has already shared this, but perhaps many had not read this. Anna confirmed that students WILL NOT be penalised for lateness until 13 August.

Avin also passed on a question about not handing in an assignment if they are struggling. Anna confirmed that as only the best 90 credits will be taken forward, then one piece of assessment missed should not be an academic issue.

Avin added that students may be finding it difficult to get a response from some academics. Anna emphasised that everyone is doing their best given the current circumstances, adapting to new hours, working methods and caring responsibilities. Savannah echoed the same concern, that a student had not heard from a tutor since Easter. Savannah to email Anna the exact details of this case.

Noted by Savannah and Anna, that finalists who submit after the 4 May deadline, degrees will not officially be awarded until December 2020. To support students until then, the school is able to write letters confirming that students have finished their degrees.

Confirmed, that for take home exams, deadline changes are decided by each module convenor.

Avin noted that many students are still struggling to access resources even online. Noted that for one particular module, the majority of the additional reading was not available. Anna confirmed that this has been emphasised to those marking work. Noted that this may result in smaller bibliographies.

Savannah noted that all of the writing tutor slots have been booked up very quickly. Anna noted that these were only opened up on a voluntary basis by staff following the

last SSLC meeting, so it may be difficult to produce more slots. But noted that students can email Joe Cronin if there are no more available.

4.2 Please be patient as we plan for 2020-2021. The School is in the process of doing this now.

Avin raised the question about what would be happening to special subjects next year. Anna noted that decisions were currently being made and students should be hearing about the outcome of this in the next few weeks.

Avin passed on a question from a student who would be hoping to start dissertation research soon, before they begin final year. But realise that now this is not possible, are they at a disadvantage. Anna emphasised that it will be raised in the education committee and students should be hearing more in the coming months.

5. Academic support: Academic Advisors and Office Hours

5.1 What type of support will students who are completing assignments over the summer need? Have course reps had any requests/suggestions from students?

Avin noted that ideally a seminar tutor would be available and online across the summer. Noted that this has already been done by some, but if anyone doing so could make themselves known to students. Noted that with contracts, this may be difficult/impossible for some staff, but Anna will ask that someone be available.

Also requested that advisers be available for the same purpose. Anna to ask Virginia to ensure this is in place.

Issue raised that students' library access may expire before the August deadline. Jacques noted that he would look into this, and whilst it is not standard practice, hoped that it should not be an issue.

5.2 Creative write-ins: continuing on Tuesdays and Thursdays until 15 May, with the exception of 5 May. Emails sent to all UGs with links weekly.

Anna confirmed that these were still taking place until 15 May. Possibility to extend if demand emerged, but currently due to stop.

5.3 Writing Tutor information on availability

Discussed above.

6. Organisation and Communication

6.1 Would you like a SSLC WhatsApp group chat for the summer and the coming academic year?

Avin expressed support for this as a way to get quick answers. Savannah suggested this could be used, year round.

7. Learning resources:

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

Savannah asked about what she should do having taken library books home to Birmingham. Jacques advised that this should be understandable, but to email the library to let them know that there may be a longer term delay to the return.

In response to Avin's question about resources, Jacques highlighted the ever growing amount of online material being made freely available.

Jacques emphasised the list of resources on the library website. Picked out a couple of the best examples: Manchester University Press Medieval Collection. CoreText Ebook provider, currently working with QMUL academics to ensure suitable books from reading lists are made available. Encouraged students to follow the Library HSS on Twitter for updates.

Avin suggested that this information could be shared from within the school, by email. Anna to ask Dan or Virginia to share again.

8. Any other business:

8.1 PGRs, Connie Thomas & Sophie Wilson are building a women's support and mentoring network for the School of History. They will be joining us to discuss this and get course rep feedback on how this might work best for undergraduates.

Explained that, hopefully starting September, the group hopes to support women in history, supporting both UG and PG students, making connections between these two different groups. Asked the course reps what they would find most useful from this sort of forum, what they would like from such a forum.

Avin suggested that this idea would be very popular, noting that a number of students would be interested in using this to help guide their future plans.

Asked as to whether the UG students knew any of the PGR students. Avin noted that she only knew if they were teaching on a module, but saw many of the PGR students around the campus. Sophie noted that one idea was to get these students to share their research over lunch. Sophie also noted that the idea of a podcast was floated, Avin said she would be willing to share the podcast amongst student groups. Suggested that help with MA applications, or archival research would also be welcomed. Savannah noted that this would particularly be beneficial to those who are interested in going into academia. Perhaps the possibility of an informal mentoring opportunity, too.

Noted that discussion around further study amongst students currently is around the change of programmes offered by the School. Less so about how to apply.

9. Date of the next meeting.

TBA