

**School of Economics and Finance**  
**Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee**  
**Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019**  
**11.00am- GC.315**

**Staff members present:**

Guglielmo Volpe	Chair and Senior Tutor
Rachel Male	Co-director of Undergraduate Studies
Poppy Brooks	Secretary and Undergraduate Student Support Officer
Nick Vriend	Director of Undergraduate Studies

**Students present:**

Austeja Krivickaite	Economics and Finance	Year 1
Zlata Zadorkina	Economics, Finance and Management	
Cameron Storey	Economics and Politics	Year 3
Masaud Darvish	Economics and Politics	
Ahmad Shafiqullah	Economics and Finance	

**Apologies:**

Harshita Bhatia	Economics, Statistics and Mathematics	Year 1
Mohamed Daghem	Economics	
Abdullah Shoaib Sheikh	Economics, Statistics and Mathematics	Year 2
Shoaib Farooque	Economics	
Syed Naqvi	Economics	
Joythini Jeevarasingham	Economics and Finance	
Isha Paliah	Economics and Finance	
Felicia Kaspar	Economics, Finance and Management	Year 3
Bilal Ahmed	Economics, Statistics and Mathematics	
Georgia Priestley	Economics and Politics	
Danyel Butt	Economics	
Zakareeya Mehmood	Economics	
Breta Kapedani	Economics and Finance	
Aryamaan Agarwal	Economics, Finance and Management	

**Part 1- Preliminary Items**

<b>1(a)</b>	<b>Welcome and Introduction for new members</b>
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2019.01	GV welcomed members to the SSLC and reiterated that we hold an 'open door' policy for any concerns, and that students need not wait until the SSLC to raise any feedback they may have.
<b>1(b)</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
2019.02	The meeting noted apologies of members as recorded above.
<b>1(c)</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>
2019.03	The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2019
<b>1(d)</b>	<b>Report on matters arising and action taken</b>
2019.04	<p>The committee received a report on matters arising and noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PB and GV added more structure to the welcome back sessions for year 2 and 3 students in September 2019 by introducing a short PowerPoint at the start of the sessions, details of teaching staff to aid any module-related discussions and including a brief talk from our careers team.</li> <li>• PB contacted Donald and asked him to check that all the Bloomberg stations were functioning</li> <li>• PB passed along the feedback on careers provisions from the previous UGS to our careers team</li> </ul>
<b>1(e)</b>	<b>Terms of Reference and Membership</b>
2019.05	The terms of reference and membership have been circulated.
<b>1(f)</b>	<b>Admissions, Induction and enrolment</b>
2019.06	<p><b>Admissions</b></p> <p>Roughly the same number of students are applying as last year but the quality of the applications are improving, meaning that we have made more offers compared to this time last year. The School does not plan to go into clearing if all goes well but this will depend upon the rate of conversion. In line with past years, we intend to recruit 220 – 240 students for 2019-20.</p> <p><b>Welcome Week</b></p> <p>GV asked our year one course reps for any feedback on welcome week and received the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students thought it might be better to have an interactive library tour, rather than the library talk that has been running. This should be possible but we may need to remove the library talk from the other set that run alongside this talk.</li> <li>• The international student talks on the Monday morning were considered useful</li> <li>• The spreading out of Union events across the campus was much better and created more visibility as opposed to putting everything in the Hub.</li> <li>• The new spaghetti challenge event was well received. It made students feel more at ease and was fun. There was some concern regarding food waste but it was announced that all excess spaghetti was taken home by members of the admin team.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GV asked whether the spaghetti challenge made them feel more comfortable with their advisers and reps reported that it felt less daunting to be in a group.</li> </ul> <p><b>Welcome Back week (week 8)</b>  Course reps were not aware of these events and our year 1 students did not feel it was necessary. NV noted that the idea behind it was that there tends to be a lot of year 1 drop-outs between reading week and Christmas and that the sets of events were intended to help prevent this.</p> <p>GV invited reps to pass along any suggestions/ideas for helping year 1 students to feel more comfortable in the first semester.</p>
<b>Part 2- Programme Delivery and other matters</b>	
<b>2(a)</b>	<b>Programme/module developments and amendments</b>
2019.07	<p>GV reported to the committee the following upcoming programme/module developments and amendments that the School is planning to make:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BSc Finance and BSc Economics and International Relations should be set to run from September 2020. Some new modules will be developed for these degree paths.</li> <li>The year one non-credit bearing careers modules will be replicated in year 2 and 3. The idea is that we keep students consistently engaged in career development and aware of opportunities. It would be a similar structure to the current year one module where there will be some set lectures from employers and then students will be able to choose which additional events they engage with.</li> </ul> <p>Ahmad thought this was a good idea but that more emphasis on internships in year 2 and 3 would be better. It would be good to incentivise this as internship experience can often be important in securing graduate employment.</p> <p><b>Action: GV to raise this feedback with the careers team</b></p> <p>There has been a shift in the targets of our careers team away from number of events offered to students to actual student attendance and outcomes. We are hoping for the target to be based around the number of our graduates who are able to secure graduate employment, but in the interim will consider the numbers of students able to get internships and placements.</p> <p>The SEF team is hoping to get SEF alumni more involved with the careers modules and events. Ahmad noted that his Consulting Society often has alumni approach them offering advice and support.</p> <p>The end of year Boot camps that are run by the careers team can be useful and have an impact on student outcomes</p> <p>Students have some concerns about the extra assessments required. Additional work in the final year is not necessarily what students want. If it is marked in terms of participation/engagement, this would be preferable to any</p>

	<p>assessment. The intention is not to add additional pressure but to offer more support and opportunities for students to engage with career development. There should be a good range of optional activities so there would be a level of flexibility/choice.</p> <p>All in all, course reps were positive about this new change.</p>
<b>2(b)</b>	<b>Learning, teaching and assessment matters</b>
2019.08	GV reiterated that if students ever have any concerns regarding matters of teaching, learning or assessment that they are encouraged to come and speak to him immediately so that any issues can be addressed in good time; there is an open door policy.
2019.09	<p>Course reps reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course reps noted that the year 1 careers module felt a bit rushed. The content on psychometric testing and CVs felt a bit too brief and advice was generic. Course reps suggested that more time be spent on psychometric testing, spring weeks, internships and CVs in the first part of the semester and invite employers in for the second part. GV explained the history of changes made to the module- in the past employers would be invited in after reading week but attendance started to drop off at this point. As a result it was felt that the experience for employers was not a positive one and it would make more sense to bring them in sooner, when attendance was better.</li> <li>• Cameron fed-back that groups of 8 for Corporate Strategy coursework presentation were a bit large and it was difficult to engage everybody. RM (module organiser for this module) reported that she had intended to give students experience of having to work in large groups, in order to teach this as a broader transferable skill. Anonymous peer feedback forms were suggested as a potential solution to this, although there is a participation component to the assessment. RM will consider this further.</li> <li>• History of Economic Thought had two weeks of teaching affected by the strike. Noted that it seemed unfair that some students received all the teaching while others had to miss some. Cameron asked how the strike would be made up for. NV noted that this would be considered carefully at the exam board and it will be possible to change the marking process in response to the extent of disruption if deemed necessary- we do not want students to simply disengage with the content from the strike weeks as this information is intrinsically important.</li> </ul>
2019.10	<p><b>Semester-based exams</b></p> <p>For the 19-20 academic year, QM have initiated semester-based exams. This means there will be a 2 week period of examinations in January 2020.</p> <p>Course reps for the most part felt that it made more sense to have assessment closer to teaching, but that it would take some adjusting.</p>
<b>2(c)</b>	<b>Academic Support</b>
2019.11	<b>The Advisor Ketchup</b>

	<p>This semester, the School ran the 'Advisor Ketchup' day. It was re-named from 'meet the advisor' after reps reported that the title felt a bit misleading. The event was intended as an extension of the welcome back activities and was an informal way for staff/students to get together. Cameron attended and enjoyed the session- it was noted that it removed some of the awkwardness around meeting and chatting to new people.</p>
<b>2(d)</b>	<b>Organisation and communication</b>
2019.12	<p>This year, year 1 students should have the 'optimised' timetable. Year 3 reps noted that they would also like to have their timetables optimised. Year 1 course reps noted that their timetable was ok, but that they would prefer to have the classes before the lecture if possible.</p> <p>Distance between rooms means that sometimes students can be late or will have to run to their next sessions, which isn't ideal but is a logistical issue.</p>
<b>2(e)</b>	<b>Learning Resources</b>
2019.13	<p><b>Furniture on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors</b> The new furniture on the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors of the Graduate Centre has gone down well with reps. Students have even recommended getting some more.</p> <p><b>Coding skills</b> Next semester, a non-credit bearing module will run for 5 weeks. It will introduce students to the basic principles behind coding for economics as well as key software (Matlab, Maple, Mathematica etc.) It is likely to be more focused on maths</p> <p>Next year a new module will run for the first time called 'Computational Methods in Economics' and will be a mix of macroeconomics with programming.</p> <p><b>PC Lab</b> Reps noted that GC304 is sometimes being used as a rehearsal space for presentations and that it can sometimes become too loud and busy. GV suggested that we can open up GC315 (meeting room) to students for a few hours each week, if they book on the day if there is availability.</p> <p><b>Action: PB to put signs up in GC304 letting students know that they can book GC315 for presentation preparation.</b></p>
<b>2(f)</b>	<b>Consideration of External Examiners reports</b>
2019.14	<p>GV explained the purpose of external examiners and their reports, and asked students to provide any comments they might have.</p> <p>Masoud agreed that there did sometimes seem to be some discrepancy between coursework and exam grades, and that there should be a level of consistency on difficulty. NV argued that this can be quite a complex issue and that the different components often offer different kinds of skills. Exams and coursework are often very different and cannot necessarily be compared like for like.</p>

	<p>Masoud suggested that the level of maths taught could be increased but our year 1 reps did not agree and felt that the content in MMEF was already fairly challenging. GV provided the historical context of this- for many years there were two first year maths modules but it was felt that one should be able to cover the important elements.</p> <p>It was also noted that sometimes, coursework tasks can take a significant amount of time to complete, while being worth a fairly minimal percentage of the module grade. Noted that the School will look into this issue further.</p> <p>Reps suggested a maths entry test for students from different countries so that there is a consistent level of understanding from the outset. Noted that it may be worth speaking with European and international students to get a sense of whether they are struggling more with the maths content.</p> <p><b>Action: GV to contact Zlata and Austeja for more information about which nationalities of students seem to struggle.</b></p> <p>Course reps offered positive feedback on the maths support classes.</p>
<b>2(g)</b>	<b>Student feedback</b>
2019.15	<p>GV circulated a report on the 18/19 National Student Survey results, noting that there has been an improvement relative to previous years. The NSS will open again for our final year students in January. GV asked that our year 3 reps promote the survey to their cohort next semester. It was also noted that our year 1 and 2 students will have the opportunity to complete the UK Engagement Survey.</p> <p>It was noted by reps that there seemed to be a broad issue with feedback/helpful comments on assessment. Reps noted that History of Economic Thought has a good feedback system- the module organiser sends individual feedback to each of her students with the breakdown by subject/question.</p> <p>It was also felt that assessment needs to shift away from mid-terms and towards written assignment/report. RM noted that this is something that the School is already working to achieve.</p>
<b>Part 3- Any Other Business</b>	
2019.16	<p>Cameron noted that he would prefer, if possible, to graduate with the School of Politics.</p> <p><b>Action: Sarah Riley to find out if it would be possible for joint SEF students to choose which School they graduate with.</b></p>
2019.17	<p>One of our reps was involved in the Periodic Review last year and would be interested to see any outcomes of the Review.</p>

	<b>Action: SR to send the Periodic Review report through to the SEF students that took part.</b>
<b>Part 4- Date of the next meeting</b>	
2019.18	The next meeting will take place towards the end of semester B 2019-20. Further information will be circulated closer to the time.

#### Action Sheet- Student Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Progress
2019.07	Raise feedback on non-credit bearing careers module with the careers team	GV	Pending
2019.13	Put signs up in GC304 letting students know that they can book GC315 for presentation preparation.	PB	Pending
2019.14	Contact course reps Zlata and Austeja for more information about which nationalities of students seem to struggle with Year 1 maths content	GV	Pending
2019.16	Find out if it would be possible for joint SEF students to choose which School they graduate with.	SR	Pending
2019.17	Send the Periodic Review report through to the SEF students that took part.	SR	Pending
2018.006	Work on meshing the induction programmes better for joint students	PB	Completed. WW19 included amended schedules for joint students, including events from both Schools.
2018.010	School to look into re-phrasing the title of any similar 'meet the adviser' events held.	PB & GV	Completed. The event was titled 'Advisor Ketchup/Catch-up' and was significantly better attended
2018.026	Work on adding more structure to the Year 2 and 3 welcome back sessions for 19/20	PB & GV	Completed. See 2019.04 for further info.