

Comparative Literature SSLC Agenda

9th June 2020

1-2pm via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance, apologies, matters arising, minutes of last meeting

- Dr Nicola Thomas (Chair)
- Dr Kasia Mika (Secretary)
- Arianna Bassetti (PhD rep)
- Sahra Isha Muhammad Jones (2nd year rep)
- Yagmur Dur (3rd year rep)

a) Minutes of the last meeting: accepted

b) Matters arising:

QReview Policy for the Comp Lit Department: A School-wide Digital Education Working Group has now been set up and is in charge of assuring a consistent, and high-quality, use of QReview and other e-learning tools. Consultations as well as additional e-learning workshops for SSLF staff are now under way.

Devising a contingency Plan for advisors' absence/illness: matter has not yet been solved yet and will be taken to the next Departmental meeting.

	What worked well	What worked less well	Other suggestions
2. Quality of the online content: the forms of e-learning in use, any IT issues etc.	Nothing more to report since last meeting (teaching ended)		
3. Ease of use of the technologies	Nothing more to report since last meeting (teaching ended)		
4. Experience of group work and group discussions	Nothing more to report since last meeting (teaching ended)		
5. Access to library resources and any course-specific software		<p>PhD Rep: PhD students still cannot access books, especially books from other libraries (otherwise available via SCONUL; so their research is put on hold, especially in cases of having to use very specific archive sources).</p> <p>ACTION: PhD rep advised to contact NT /KM with titles of required books so that we can try to reach out via our professional networks, see if any of them are available digitally while we wait for the libraries to re-open.</p>	<p>-2nd year rep raised a query whether the library can purchase specific books for undergraduate research projects.</p> <p>ACTION: Research Project students (via course Rep) to send a list of what is needed and is not there. NT to investigate this further.</p>

<p>6. Experience of online assessments</p>	<p>- 3rd year rep: Overall, it was a pretty good and useful experience; also remark that not many Comp Lit lecturers are using Grade Plus. - 2nd year Rep: many assessments were cancelled, but, overall there is nothing specifically to report.</p>		
<p>7. Advising / pastoral support arrangements</p>	<p>3rd year rep: Overall, it was very helpful that no evidence was needed to support EC claims (from Mid-march onwards). This really helped to decrease finalists' already high stress levels.</p>	<p>3rd year rep: There is a worry that due to COVID-19 grade transcripts will be released late. ACTION: KM to check whether we know the date for transcript release.</p>	
<p>8. Support from academic supervisors on projects / dissertations</p>	<p>PhD-rep: The overall good relationship with supervisors continues in an online setting. (but larger problem at Doctoral College Level; extensions) 2nd: all good 3rd : mainly good, sometimes unresponsive.</p>	<p>PhD-rep: There are larger problems at the Doctoral College level. So far, the granted extension seems to apply only to minority of students, but it is even unsure who will be covered and how. This needs urgent attention.</p>	
<p>9. Consideration of potential changes to content, modules and course delivery methods for the next academic year</p>			<p><u>Teaching and Assessment:</u> 2nd year rep: In terms of online teaching, there is a shared sentiment that, paradoxically, multiple smaller tasks might actually be more overwhelming. The challenges include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of adequate learning infrastructure when working from home (e.g. sharing laptops; - no independent study space; - difficulty coordinating workload with other duties, if teaching is still happening off campus.

3rd year rep: One suggestion is to include mini-task at the end of each significant block, not on a week-by-week basis.

Student Engagement:

Also, one course history (led by Dr Chrysostomides) uses WhatsApp group rather than QM+ to communicate, and this has worked very well.

ACTION: NT to contact the course leader and investigate this option.

10. AOB

a) BLM and decolonising our curriculum

2nd year rep: It is important to know, in the context of BLM and wider debates on decolonising the curriculum, what is the university exactly doing on the module level? There is a shared sense that, aside from colonization, texts do not sufficiently engage with these questions with issues of race, decolonizing the curriculum being relegated to last weeks of teaching.

This should go hand in hand (a matter further complicated by the on-line learning context), with increasing the visibility of and possibility for taking intercollegiate modules (e.g. in African languages at SOAS, etc.) as well as extending the thematic, linguistic, and regional scope of dissertation projects and supervision available.

ACTION: Be very clear (e.g. an e-mail) on the Dept level as to what are we doing in response, across our modules. KM to raise the issues with the Head of Dept.

b) Teaching Associates

PhD-rep: There is a need for a much more formal and transparent application process to become a teaching associate, at the School level: there must be clear criteria with priority given to people with less experience. Every PhD should graduate with teaching experience but, due to cuts and freezes in 2020/2021, this is unlikely to be the case.

ACTION: KM to take the issue to the next Dept meeting as well as the Education Committee (School-wide committee of teaching leads).