

School of Geography

Minutes of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Wednesday 14th October 2020
at 14.00- 15.00 via MS Teams

Staff Members present

Dr Philippa Williams (PW) (Co-Chair)	Senior Tutor
Catherine Mills (CM) (Secretary)	Student Experience and Admissions Administrator
Prof Alastair Owens (AO)	Head of School
Andrew Loveland (AL)	Professional services manager
Dr Tim Brown (TB)	Director of Education
Prof Kate Heppell (KH)	Deputy director of Education (BSc)
Dr Regan Koch (RK)	Senior tutor from Jan 2021
Martin Beeson (MB)	Faculty library liaison for HSS
Shazia Sadiq (SS)	Postgraduate Studies Manager
Sam Halvorsen (SH)	Deputy director of Education (BA)
Kate Amis	Minuting meeting

Student members present

William Robertshaw (WR) (Co – Chair)	3 rd Year Human Geography
Aminah Ossoman (AYO)	2 nd Year Geography with Business Management
Rianno McFarlane Thomas (RT)	3 rd Year BSc Geography
Alice Mills (AM)	1st Year Physical Geography
Inayah Oosman (IO)	1st Year Environmental Science
Andrei Roman (AR)	1st Year Geography with Business Management
Albert Newton (AN)	2nd Year Human Geography
Frederic Klein (FK)	2nd Year Human Geography
Buse Baspinar(BB)	MSc Development and International Business
Marina Ponticelli (MP)	MSc Development and International Business
Aminah Ossman (AOs)	2nd Year Geography with Business Management
Ami Gandy (AG)	3 rd year Geography and business Management

1. **Welcome** from WR who chaired the meeting.
2. **Apologies** received (none)
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
2020:36	PW and TB	Check on making slides available before lectures for masters students. TB to message module convenors to sort this.	This proves to be a business not geophraphy issue. PW to chase business dept on this
2020:37	SH	Set up open discussion forum for all on decolonising agenda on Teams	No action yet
2020:38	AO	Raise question of support if another spike to the HoS Faculty meeting	This was raised by AO at the faculty meeting. Report under section 5 below

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

5.1 Response from faculty meeting on covid planning

The issues of action in the event of another spike was raised by AO with the principal. The head of history raised the issue also. The university is making plans for the event of a further lockdown. There are currently 16 student cases and 2 staff cases to date. So far there has been positive feedback on the provision of food and welfare support esp. compared to other universities. The principal is keen to receive direct feedback going forwards

WR asked if students would be made to pay for additional food. AO replied that initially food was free to students in halls of residence quarantine and we would lobby for continuing to b free or at cost going forwards.

Action: AO to investigate plans for charging for food to those locked down on campus

AR raised issue that he had not received any help when he was quarantining. WR asked if the university had not made clear a route to get help / testing. AO told the group that there was now a new testing centre in Mile End Park

Action: AO to follow to with AR about the specifics of what happened in his case.

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

6.1 The student support survey

CW informed us that we have extended the deadline to 16th Oct. The more info we receive the better the support system we can organise

PW reported that from what has come in so far the picture is positive about what students feel about the online offer. The issues coming to the foreground are

- Managing workload
- Lack of structure to managing work
- 80 – 90 % of students feeling well supported by advisors
- A significant level of mental health issues in the pandemic
- Additional support is available for those who live in Tower Hamlets, which includes students who live on Mile End campus. CM to be in touch with specific people who need support as needed

Action: PW and CM to prepare a short report on data from survey for next SSLC

7. Teaching and learning and teaching resources

7.1 Student workload

TB reported on the reasoning behind the workload requirement. This is 4- 6 hours of learning activities per 15 credit module. (This reflects what we used to do also however now a more structured offer) The aim is to offer stretch and challenge without overwhelming. He said that the SOG would continue to reflect and hone the offer / support available.

AM had asked 1st Yr peers for their feedback and shared this in a document (summarised by KA for minutes) as follows

Discussion: The workload was very variable, additional webinars are being set, the reading load and lack of direction in how to tackle readings is very heavy.

Suggested actions:

Readings

- *Having specific questions to investigate/ answer for the readings and being told what we need to look out for within the readings*
- *Resources/run a lesson on how to tackle readings efficiently and productively, focusing on tips to make it easier to spot key points, ideas and general understanding (Push this to all of geography)*

Other

- *We have an extra live webinar that is not on our timetable*
- *Microphones issues /improve audio quality*

7.2 Communicating with groups and break out groups

AG: There has been confusion about how to communicate with your group though this is more of a problem on Business courses. In all areas though as long as you are in a formal group to start with it makes all the difference. TB said that academics had been working on online formal group work strategies and follow up work in groups and he would ask module convenors to communicate with students about this. MP advised that BB collaborate has the ability to set up breakout groups easily.

Action TB to ask module convenors to communicate formal group work strategies to their students

7.3 Group work with peers in different time zones

RT raised an issue re the environmental hazards module where 3/ 7 people are not in the same time zone and this creates huge challenges for group work and meetings. This will impact final grades if people cannot get their work completed. TB agreed that this was serious and encouraged RT to feedback to the module rep. KH added that they had been concerned in advance but college had not been able to provide the info in advance about which students would be affected by living abroad. KH asked this to be fed back to Alex Henshaw

CM added that it would be helpful if people living abroad would let us know

Action: RT to feedback to Alex Henshaw regarding time zone/ group work issue

7.4 Library updates and study space

MB asked if students were finding enough study spaces on campus at the moment and if there was the right type of space such as space for group work etc? BB responded that even though she lives close to campus the booking in advance system is onerous and so therefore she was currently only using space in the geography building.

MB advised that college was now planning to make additional spaces available such as in the Bancroft building. MB advised that additional physical items had been added to the geography library resources in response to requests raised in focus groups.

AM asked if there was any progress on granting access to larger rooms such as lecture theatres for study on a non -bookable basis. TB to follow this up

Action: TB to find out about students being allowed to use larger rooms on a non-bookable basis.

8. Advising and student support

No specific items raised- but see item 6.1

9. Organisation and Communication

9.1 Course rep elections and responsibilities

There is to be a by election for the unfilled course rep posts. Nominations will close on 16th Oct with voting by 23rd October. New reps to attend next SSLC meeting

All course reps are asked to create a 100- word profile and provide a photo. This should be emailed to CM before the next meeting.

Action All reps to send 100- word bio and photo to CM for their course rep profile

9.2 Communication

PW asked committee to think about how best to garner peer opinions on issues and how best to feedback the discussion and decisions at the meetings. WR suggested using Instagram to flag up that meetings are happening and ask for comments etc.

10. AOB

None

11. Date of next meeting. Wes 28th Oct 3-4pm on MS Teams

Actions from this meeting and carried forward from previous meetings

2020: 39	AO	To investigate plans for charging for food to those locked down on campus
2020: 40	AO	To follow up with AR about the specifics of what happened in his test/ quarantining case.
2020: 41	PW and CM	To prepare a short report on data from survey for next SSLC
2020:42	TB	Ask module convenors to communicate formal online group work strategies to their students
2020:43	RT	To feedback to Alex Henshaw regarding time zone/ group work issue in Environmental hazards module.
2020:44	TB	To find out about students being allowed to use larger rooms on a non- bookable basis.
2020:45	All student reps	Send 100- word biog and photo to CM for their course rep profile
2020: 36	PW	Check on making slides available before lectures for masters students (business).
2020:37	SH	Set up open discussion forum for all on decolonising agenda on Teams