



School of History
Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
18/11/2020

Minutes

Present

Anna Chrysostomides – Deputy Director of Taught Programmes (Chair)

Sam Bennett – Minutes

Rich Evan – Library (HSS)

Mark Potter – BA History 2nd Year

Zhara Adal – BA History 3rd Year

Rosanna Matthews – BA History 1st Year

Halle Breed – BA History and Politics 1st Year

Inaya Zaman – BA History 1st Year

Avin Hourou – BA History 3rd Year

PART 1 – Preliminary items

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Report on matters arising from Tuesday Education Meeting with Dan P, Dan T, Martyn and Chris S

2.1 QMUL app – email history-taught-programmes@qmul.ac.uk with screen shot and details about how the app is not working. Needs to be sorted out on an individual level by Matt L.

Anna outlined the ways in which students can get any issues with the app resolved.

2.2 Heating is turned on, any residual coldness sadly a result of the heating not being up to dealing with an empty building. System built for full occupancy.

Anna also outlined that students should email the events and ceremonies team in order to try and get some dates secured for graduation.

PART 2 – Programme delivery and other matters

3. Programme / module developments and amendments / committee volunteers

3.1 Thank you to everyone who gave feedback on the new Level 5 module for next year!

Anna thanked the group for their feedback and noted that it had been fed into the planning of the new module.

3.2 Thank you to everyone who is on the module approval committee!

Noted.

4. Learning, teaching and assessment

4.1 Is there anything anyone would like to raise?

Avin provided feedback from students. Noted that the Germans and the Jews module workload feels very high, particularly in terms of reading. Noted frustrations that some courses require large readings, that are then not discussed in the seminar. Suggestion that readings could be prioritised on the basis of whether they will be used in seminars. Another suggestion that reading could be less in weeks where there are dissertation workshops, so that students can attend and participate.

4.2 Have we found a good workload balance for years 2 and 3?

Mark noted that workload seems to have improved for most modules, but a lot of feedback about the Totalitarianism module workload. A lot of students struggling with that amount of work and reading.

Mark fed back that it might be helpful to have recorded lectures posted further in advance, meaning students do not have enough time to watch these and note through them as thoroughly as necessary.

Noted that assignment turnaround time for some modules is taking a long time. On other occasions, reading lists have gone up quite late in the day, not given much time to prepare for essay preparation and writing.

4.3 What are the issues surrounding workload for first years? What needs to change on which modules?

Anna also asked the first year course reps about first year workload. Halle feedback that the workload had not seen significant change in recent weeks. It still seemed quite high, with particular feedback on the high level of reading this week. Rosanna suggested that there may have been some change, but that History in Practice was still very high.

A note that in terms of accessibility, there were still problems with resources. In particular the VLE resource and the format that the system produces for download. Rosanna suggested she would prefer a PDF format. Rich Evans followed up on this, by noting that it may be that some books have download limits on them which may prevent students from downloading them. Rich noted the 'more books' form through which students can request more copies of books. Rich also noted the DDS service that may be able to assist with accessing more accessible versions of materials.

Rosanna also mentioned that previous interaction with the DDS service had not worked for some materials in particular. Anna offered to speak to Martyn Frampton about these issues.

5. Academic support: Academic Advisors and Office Hours

5.1 What type of support might students need that we are not currently providing? Have you heard of any needs not yet being met?

Halle suggested that students could receive more support with assignments and the fact that it is not always clear what is expected from each assignment. Perhaps an example piece or standardised descriptions of assignments. Echoed by Rosanna, who noted that some seminar leaders are more hands on with this sort of advice. Whilst students share this info in group chats, it does need to be clearer.

6. Organisation and Communication

6.1 Does anyone want to bring anything up here?

Nothing to note.

7. Learning resources:

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

Rich Evans noted that the school has received £10,000 for additional resources. Matt and others met with JSTOR to set up a Patron-Driven Acquisition Scheme to ensure books being used by students are paid for and available.

Rich also fed back that Matt Jacobsen has identified key sources and is working with JSTOR to secure and purchase these titles from the School of History's book budget.

Rich updated the group on the library study space booking feedback from the last meeting. Lead in time reduced (to 0 in future), time bookings are available increased, longer opening hours for bookable study space and other improvements developed directly from student feedback. Rich noted that usage was well below capacity during the new lockdown period.

Rich noted the Library Bitesize sessions that are running and asked if students could share the link if students are interested. Anna requested that mentors share this in their groups.

7.2 Matt J is working with the library to deliver more sources for history (RE or AC?)

Anna noted that Matt Jacobsen is working on securing further resources for the School and that Anna is happy to pass questions on to Matt.

Also discussed in 7.1.

7.3 Thank you for your library survey, Anisa! This was praised by Dan T, who also thanks you.

8. Any other business:

8.1 Student-Staff Quiz will be happening in Week 10, Tuesday Dec. 1 at 4:30.

Anna shared the date with the group.

Anna also noted that she will set up a course rep handover meeting to ensure new members can speak with existing course reps and ask any questions. Date TBC via DoodlePoll.

Halle noted that in some seminars, participation was lower and that perhaps students could be made to feel a little more welcome at the start of seminars to ensure greater participation. Echoed by Rosanna from her own experience. Noted by both that the talking often falls on a smaller group of students which is not the most productive for anyone's learning. Zhara passed on some good examples from her seminars, where the leader asks a general question (what have you done this week, what have you eaten this week) to everyone as they join the class to ease people into speaking for the rest of the class.

9. Date of the next meeting & meetings this year:

3 February

14 March

28 April

All meetings are from 12:00-13:00