



Queen Mary
University of London

School of Politics and International Relations
Student Staff Liaison Committee
Wednesday, 11 November 2020
2pm-4pm via Microsoft Teams
Approved Minutes

In attendance:

SPIR staff: Dr Nicholas Hostettler (Chair), Mr Alex Foster (SPIR PG Administrator, Prof Laleh Khalili (SPIR Director of Education), Dr Patrick Diamond (SPIR Chair of Exams), Dr Daniel Gover (SPIR Library Liaison), Mr Marlon Gomes (SPIR School Manager), Dr David Williams (Head of SPIR), Mr Jason Salucideen (Timetabling and Student Support Manager), Dr Stijn van Kessel & Dr Chris Phillips (SPIR module convenors for POL318), Dr Joe Hoover (SPIR Careers Liaison)

Course Reps:

Krista	Tingbrand	School of Politics and International Relations Rep
Vida	Stanic	International Relations Year 1 - Rep
Heidi	Mustafa	International Relations Year 1 - Rep
Ayan	Warsame	International Relations Year 2 - Rep
Alan	Kakkassery	International Relations Year 2 - Rep
Bilen	Barzaghi	International Relations Year 3 - Rep
Shahin	Patel	International Relations Year 3 - Rep
Vanessa	Beale	International Relations Year 3 - Rep
Antony	Demetriou	Politics Year 1 - Rep
Adam	Rook	Politics Year 2 - Rep
Rebecca	Jackson-Walley	Politics Year 3 – Rep & SPIR Equality & Diversity Rep
Dorela	Imeraj	Politics and International Relations Year 1 - Rep
Michael	Mere	Politics and International Relations Year 2 - Rep
Stephanie	Boateng	Politics and International Relations Year 2 - Rep
Haroun	Lazim	International Relations (MA DL) - Rep
Mark	Simpson	International Business and Politics (MSc) - Rep
Ivie	Edebiri	International Public Policy (MSc) - Rep
	Andriantsiferan	
Mickaella	a	Law and Politics Year 3 - Rep
Halle	Breed	History and Politics Year 1 - Rep
Satria	Ali Setiawan	Politics PG Taught (Overall) Rep
Pietro	Barba Navaretti	Economics and Politics Year 2 - Rep
Leonardo	Goehmann	Economics and Politics Year 2 - Rep

Secretary of SLLC: Ms Bronwyn Murphy

1. Welcome

2020/21: 01 Noted: Chair welcomed all new and returning members of the committee and invited each member in attendance to introduce themselves to the committee.

2020/21: 02 Noted: Chair received written reports from IR Year 1, POL year 1 and SPIR School Reps.

2. Apologies for absence

No apologies received.

3. Approval of the notes of the previous meeting

2020/21:03: Reported: Chair confirmed that the last SPIR SSLC took place in February 2020. SPIR held an extraordinary meeting of the committee in June 2020 – notes circulated.

4. Terms of reference and membership

2020/21: 04 Noted: Chair introduced the importance of the SSLC. It is an important communication channel between SPIR and students. Communication is two way. The aims of the committee are to inform students of QMUL and SPIR processes and policies, hear the voice of students and seek to improvement the experience of students.

5. Induction and training of course reps

2020/21: 05 Noted: No comments or feedback received.

6. Representation by Course Reps

2020/21: 06 Noted: Director of Education (LK) discussed how best to communicate with students with the SPIR School Rep and QMSU. QMUL schools use different methods and technologies and SPIR wishes to find the most effective way to do this. SPIR suggests that course reps use WhatsApp groups with cohorts. Reps from joint programmes ease and effectiveness of WhatsApp. should also ensure that they can communicate with their cohorts. Course reps may wish to use email lists in place of social media.

2020/21: 07 Noted: Course Reps reported the effectiveness of WhatsApp in communicating with fellow students.

2020/21: 08 Noted: Int. Business & Pol (MSc) raised concerns that WhatsApp is not accessible to students based in China. Chair acknowledged this concern.

2020/21: 09 Noted: Course reps also recommended group chats to communicate with students.

2020/21: 10 Noted: Director of Educations suggested Course Reps can also email fellow students. Course Reps raised concern that students receive a large volume of emails and may not always check emails.

2020/21: 11 Noted: Pol Year 1 rep surveyed students in their cohort and was pleased with the response rate.

7. SSLC Co-chair, Library Rep and Equality and Diversity positions

2020/21: 12 Reported: Chair invited reps to volunteer for three roles. Equality and Diversity School rep attends SPIR's Equality and Diversity committee. SPIR student library rep is a new position and works with the SPIR library to raise and address library issues. The SSLC co-chair works with the Chair to plan and host SPIR SSLC meeting. The SSLC co-chair can be a rotating position, a different co-chair for each committee, or one co-chair for the academic year. This will ideally be a second year rep who has previous experience of attending SSLCs in their first year.

2020/22:13 Noted: Pol Year 2 rep volunteered as co-chair of the SSLC and this was agreed by the committee

2020/21: 14 Noted: Pol Year 3 rep was the SPIR Equality and Diversity Rep in the previous year and volunteered to continue in this role. This was agreed by the committee.

2020/21: 15 Noted: SPIR PG administrator requested that a PG rep volunteers as the School PG Equality and Diversity rep.

PART 2 — Student Reports

2020/21: 17 Reported: POL318 Module convenors attended SSLC to address some of the issues in the School Course Reps report. Students report the different approach of supervisors in offering support. Module convenors want to ensure students receive adequate supervision and request that students raise concerns with them directly. The minimum standard is for 3 meetings between student and supervisor. Due to Covid 1 and social distancing, meetings are likely to take place online.

2020/21: 18 Noted: Convenors reported that some finalists request more direct contact with supervisors and while some supervisors may offer additional meetings, SPIR cannot instruct supervisors to offer additional meetings as supervisors have other work commitments. The module is structured as an independent piece of research and SPIR provides a series of workshops to help students develop the skills to succeed in planning, researching and writing their dissertations.

2020/21: 19 Noted: Module convenors remind students that feedback on POL318 is ongoing, the first milestone is feedback on the research proposal. This feedback provides a structure for planning and researching the dissertation. It is important for students to develop relationships with their supervisors at the start of the academic year and respond to their emails and requests for meetings.

2020/21: 20 Noted: Chair addressed the request for reduction in tuition fees. SPIR cannot authorise discounts on tuition fees. Students can email the Principal.

2020/21: 21 Noted: Students requested the reintroduction of the 'No detriment policy' and discounting of academic credits in the academic year 2020/21 as many report difficulties and frustration with online learning and the challenges of studying remotely. Chair acknowledged the challenges facing students this academic year. The 'no detriment policy' was introduced during the first national lockdown as was an emergency measure to enable students to progress and mitigate against the sudden move to online learning and the difficulties presented to students.

2020/21: 22 Noted: The policy allowed all students to progress but some students did not achieve sufficient academic credits which may jeopardise their ability to graduate in the future. SPIR introduced additional support to assist these students to complete outstanding modules from 2019/20 alongside the modules in 2020/2021. The situation at the start of this academic year is different to March 2020. QMUL planned for a 'blended learning' approach in semester 1 and communicated this to new and returning students. QMUL will continue to review its provision and assessment policies and will update students on a regular basis. SPIR staff will continue to support students within the existing academic regulations.

2020/21: 23 Reported: IR Year 2 rep reported that many students report difficulties studying at home and IT issues which are not considered grounds for extenuating circumstances and some students are not comfortable applying for ECs.

2020/21: 24 Noted: Senior Tutor acknowledged the difficulties of studying at home and advised students to speak to family/house mates about their requirements. SPIR sent all students the SPIR Guide to Blended Learning which outlined IT requirements and circulated information on QMUL's Hardship Fund which can provide financial assistance to purchase IT equipment. Senior Tutor advises all students to read the guidance on applying for ECs. The EC process is in place to support students.

2020/21: 25 Noted: Chair noted that the PASS scheme is available to support first year students with transition to university.

2020/21: 26 Noted: Chair noted concern of students of 'bunching' of deadlines. Chair of Exams reported that the School carefully considers submission deadlines. It is not possible to schedule deadlines earlier in the semester as students will not have covered module content. Invariably deadlines will be set for the latter part of the semester and SPIR does everything possible to spread deadlines. Chair of Exams noted Joint programme students may have deadlines from both schools on the same dates.

2020/21:27 Noted: Chair acknowledged feedback from students on transition to university. This is an important topic and will be discussed in more detail at the next committee.

2020/21: 28 Reported: SPIR Library Liaison rep reported students' concerns about the changes to the algorithm in the School Reps' report and requested that they contact him with specific concerns and issues.

Action: School Reps to contact SPIR Library Liaison Rep to highlight specific issues raised by students.

2020/21: 29 Reported: POL PG Taught rep reported concerns about the lack of information for the dissertation. SPIR PG administrator confirmed that information was sent to all PG campus students. Preparation for the dissertation will begin in January 2021 with a series of workshops. Comprehensive information will be circulated to students.

2020/21: 30 Reported: POL PG Taught rep reported concerns of Turnitin scores. Chair confirmed that Turnitin scores are used by teaching staff and students do not need to concern themselves with the scores. Students should understand the protocols of writing academic assignments to avoid plagiarism.

2020/21: 31 Reported: International Business and Politics (MSc) rep reported the frustration of students of the promotion of the 'blended learning' model of teaching in the academic year 2020/21. Students were under the impression that there would be more face to face and on-campus teaching and many students incurred expense by relocating to London.

2020/21: 32 Noted: Chair acknowledged the frustration of students and this was echoed in the report by the Year 1 Pol rep. SPIR communications to students before the start of the academic was very clear about the limited opportunities for face to face contact during semester 1. SPIR informed students that teaching was online and where possible, offered on-campus 'enrichment' activities.

2020/21: 33 Noted: Director of Education reported similar conversations with students. QMUL's communications may have suggested more on-campus activities than Schools can provide. Schools must maintain social distancing and QMUL's campus estate and seminar rooms are not suitable or appropriate for large group events under current social distancing guidelines.

2020/21: 34 Noted: Chair reported that teaching will take place online in semester 2 but QMUL will, where possible, offer on-campus enrichment activities. Teaching staff want to have face to face contact with students and a return to seminars. Staff understand the frustrations of online learning and how this can impact on students. Students benefit from face to face contact with staff and peers.

2020/21: 35: Noted: Chair drew the committee to a close. Items not discussed will be brought forward to the next committee and he thanked everyone for their contributions.

PART 3 — Programme delivery and other matters

9. Learning, teaching and assessment

This item will be discussed at the next committee

10. Learning Resources

This item will be discussed at the next committee

11. Communications

Discussed earlier in the meeting under agenda item Representation

12. Academic Community

This item will be discussed at the next committee

13. Any other business

14. Date of next meeting: 27 January 2021, 2- 4pm