

**Minutes of the
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Wednesday 15th December 2021
1-2pm via MS Teams**

Staff Members present

Regan Koch (RK) (Co-Chair)	Senior Tutor
Norul Ahmed (NA) (Secretary)	Student Support Officer
Alastair Owen (AO)	Head of School
Tim Brown (TB)	Co-Director of Education, BA
Anthea Chou (AC)	Library Information Assistant
Emma Shapcott (ES)	Teaching and Learning Manager
Shazia Sadiq (SS)	Postgraduate Studies Manager

Student members present

Sara Shafique (SSh) (Co-Chair)	3 rd Year Environmental Science
Caterina Duarte Moreira (CM)	2 nd Year BA Geography
Aisha Ali (AA)	2 nd Year BSc Geography
Yoshalin Soledad Rojas Cerrudo (YC)	2 nd Year Geography with Business Management
Paula Daiana Negru (PN)	1 st Year Geography with Business Management
Sheikh Eisha Rahman (SR)	1 st Year Environmental Science with Business Management
Robert David Elphick (RDE)	MA Global Development
Billy Arthur Newman (BN)	MSc Water and Environmental Management
Shamem Faizi (SF)	MA Global Development

1. **Welcome**
SSh welcomes everyone to the last SSLC of 2021 and Semester A.
2. **Apologies**
Apologies from Simon Lewis and Aminah Ossman
3. **Minutes of the previous meeting**
These were approved.
4. **Matters arising from the previous meeting and actions**

Minute	Responsibility	Action	Action to date as reported
			Completed/In Progress

2021:045	RK/NA	ACTION: RK & NA to contact the QMGS, and then QMGS to nominate a rep to attend SSLC meetings.	Completed
2021:046	RK/NA	ACTION: RK/NA to contact Jonathan Otter (Students Union) to get a copy of the slides and when the next training will be, making sure that all our course Reps have been invited.	Completed
2021:047	RK/NA	RK to work with student advisors for those courses that are still vacant and see if they recommend any students who they believe are suitable CRep's. NA to then follow this recommendation and ask students if they are willing to take part and include them in the next SSLC.	Completed
2021:048	All CReps	CReps to communicate with their peer groups introducing themselves as the CReps, and provide the channels in which they can communicate with them e.g., WhatsApp, MS Teams etc and provide the details.	Completed
2021:049	NA	To include current CReps on the next newsletter.	Completed
2021:050	1 ST & 2 nd Year CReps	1 st and 2 nd year CReps to communicate to students in their year groups on upcoming events and signposting students on where to go for more information about the numerous services and facilities such as Advice and counselling etc.	Completed
2021:051	RK	To remind student advisors to mention about EC (Extenuating Circumstances) processes to their students and more during end of semester when assignments are all due.	Completed
2021:052	NA	To mention about QM App on the next monthly newsletter.	Completed
2021:053	SL/TB	To discuss with the module convenor about the student concerns related to reading/preparation/delivery for module Earth Surface Science.	Completed
2021:054	SL/TB	To liaise with IT-led module convenors and IT Dept to see if these issues can be resolved.	Completed
2021:055	SF	SF will ask MA peers who attended these workshops and will get feedback from them to report at next SSLC meeting.	Completed
2021:056	RK	RK has joined the Study Spaces Working Group work on wider issues of study space on campus. Will report back on any developments.	Completed

2021:057	RE (Richard Evans)	Will feedback about the booking productivity of the booking system to Library Management, recommendation of this to be managed more sharply so students are not disappointed. RE will consider with Library Management whether 'on the day' bookings can be made available.	Completed
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5. Welcome to the new Course Reps

5.1 Introduction of new reps not at last meeting

- SR introduced themselves as they are a newly appointed CRep.
- NA- informed that we also have Aidan (1st year student) who is a new CRep who accepted the invitation but is not present at the meeting.
- TB introduced themselves and gave a brief background of their role and responsibilities.

5.2 Course Rep spaces still available

- RK – informed since our last SSLC meeting, we have recruited a few more students to be Creps, previously we had nine vacant positions and now we have around 4-5 positions still left to fill. Both RK and NA are making progress, but it is proving a lot more difficult to recruit students than previously thought and they will continue to send the message out to module convenors, share it on newsletters and emails informing and continue our efforts in the spring semester.

6. Organisation and Communication

6.1 How are Reps communicating with cohort, what is working, what is not?

- SSh – related back to action point 2021:048 from SSLC meeting held on 17-11-21; and asked Creps if they have completed this task, if so, what methods of communication worked best for them, and which ones did not? SSh advised previously that WhatsApp works well for them.
- RK asked SSh how they set up the WhatsApp group or was it from an existing one?
 - SSh advised that the WhatsApp group already existed from when they were 1st year student, when they introduced MS team last year, they asked new students to provide their phone numbers if they wanted to be added to the WhatsApp group, which is specific to their programme.
- SR – advised they too have a WhatsApp group for 1st year Environmental Science programme to communicate with students, they advised current cohort that they are a CRep, they have around 30-50 students on the group.
- SSh – proposed for anonymous feedback; module convenors have been using that throughout the semester, would be useful for Creps as well – it will make it easier for students to approach CReps anonymously and raise any issues/concerns without being identified in a group chat. In turn, they believe it will increase a better take up.
- SF – advised that they have multiple groups chats for different modules, but they will create an overall MA group for the entire year group.
- CM informed that they too use WhatsApp as a form of communication to 2nd Year BA Geography students and currently have around 120 students on it. They asked if they could have an email list for all students on the course as they think giving feedback from meeting will be better coming from an email to students rather than messaging on WhatsApp.

- ES & NA advised that individual email addresses is not possible due to data protection and GDPR issues, however if a CRep would like to send out an email to students they can email UG Support so that a member of the PS Team can check and approve the emails before sending it.

ACTION: SF to create an overall MA programme group chat for MA Global Development students in addition to the separate group chats already exists for different modules.

7. Teaching and Learning

7.1 Teaching & Learning: What worked well in Sem A?

- SSh – noted that just recently we had with Turnitin issues on QM+, however the communication between staff and students have been good, the EC processes was recirculated again to all students which were followed through by the action point 2021:051. SSh went further onto saying that they provided feedback about the module using the Note pad on QM+ which is on all the individual modules; this way students can provide feedback anonymously.
- TB – mentioned that it is useful to get feedback from students on how things have panned out in Semester A, academic and teaching staff are also reflecting on this too and have their own thoughts about what worked well and what did not. TB went onto say since the Covid outbreak there has been lots of changes to the delivery methods of teaching from face-to-face then all online and now recently with the blended learning of both on and off campus.
- SF – Enjoyed Interactive aspect of being an MA student, in comparison to being an Undergrad where mostly teaching is one dimensional and your being talked at, MA sessions have been more engaging with them feeling its more productive that way. SF went onto saying that they are required to produce PowerPoints slides every week and they use that in the session to form the basis of the topics discussed. In addition to this, they commented that these sessions can get carried away at times and MA students provided feedback to module convenor so that they can make alternative arrangements for next semester.
 - TB asked SF – how did they communicate this issue to the module convenor, was it in the session itself, or was via email? SF response was that the module convenor willingly asked the student at the end of the last session what they enjoyed and what could be improved, that’s when students openly discussed this with them.
- AO – Stated that a student emailed them and asked whether we could evaluate a 30-credit module, that run across the entire academic year, 15 credit modules have an evaluation process at the end of each semester but nothing in place for 30 credits, assuming at midpoint, AO advised the school did run a mid-point internal questionnaire but something for the school to consider reintroducing.

ACTION: TB/SL: To report back on the reflections from academic/teaching staff about Semester A at the next SSLC meeting.

ACTION: TB/SL: To discuss with the Education Committee to reconsider bringing back 30 credit module evaluation and formalising that process

7.2 Low engagement within modules; encouragement and monitoring

- RK informed that in general, having feedback from module convenors that we do have a solid cohort of reliable students who are present in class, doing the reading, attending the content online etc. but there is also a substantial proportion of them who are not. RK also mentioned that as a school we do not make threats, we encourage our students to the best that we can to help them engage. The considerable proportion of non-engaged students could be down to the current pandemic, or it could be the ways in which we can improve our services to cater more towards the students’ needs differently?

- SF stated about group work; each student must prepare something and bring to discuss at the next session; this meant that the student had to engage and felt included in their learning.
- TB wanted to hear from 1st & 2nd year students who have transitioned from school/college, how prepared students feel for university methods of teaching, as a lot of emphasis has been on seminars, is there any additional support students feel they need in the interactive learning in comparison to being just talked at?
 - SR- responded on behalf of 1st Year students to say that the transition has been difficult, prior to this most students would have been learning online, now it is a blended learning on both on and off campus along with extensive list of reading that student are expected to undertake. Students in general are struggling to keep up week after week but as time went on students have been adapting to university life.
- CM – added that 2nd year student was not satisfied with the pre-recorded lectures, they find them demotivating, this could be resulting a lot of students not engaging. This was a result of CM asking for feedback about pre-recorded lecture and around 10 students have mentioned that they were not happy with the pre-recorded lectures.
 - SR also reported the same for some of the 1st year modules too, the Earth Surface Science.
- SSh stated that for one of their 3rd Year modules where there was two members of teaching staff on the same module, one chose face-to-face teaching and the other chose online, they noticed that the switch from in person to then online significantly dropped the number of students turning up to those sessions. They recommend that the same mode of teaching should be throughout the whole module.
- AA informed that they had quite a few students reporting to her that they are not happy with the way the coursework instruction has been delivered, they find it poor and uncertain as to what is expected from them to complete the assignment, this for the 30 credit modules. They then went on to say how students are falling behind due to this and stressing, they are focusing on other modules and not the 30-credit module, although this one has more weighting towards the final award. In addition, students have reached out for help but responses from teaching staff have been to seek out the help themselves or they could not help at all.

ACTION: RK To liaise with module convenors for Environmental Research Methods and Research Design (2nd year modules) to make sure assignment instructions are clear but also effective communication around questions and clarifications.

7.3 Looking ahead to Sem B – ideas, concerns?

- RK asked if there any specific suggestions on the final semester on the teaching and learning point? - No comments to address.

8. Fieldwork and class trips in Geography

8.1 Student feelings about fieldwork and trips; hopes, concerns

- RK spoke about that staff members are keen to know from students more about their thoughts on fieldwork and trips, issue here is that field trips in UK (United Kingdom) and international trips have been put on hold since the pandemic. Teaching staff had a meeting recently about what place does trips have on the geography programme. The important emphasis is on the notion that students study Geography to get out and study the world. The question here is that as we go back to some sort of normality what shape these trips should be for the future? Staff have raised their points at the meeting, but RK wanted to

hear from the students what trips students want, should they be international, local, should we consider climate change and carbon footprint and so on.

- SF –pointed out that it is important to reflect on why are we going to these places, what are we researching on, what gives us the right to carry out this research on a place or people, what are giving back in transaction of this research? They would even consider doing field trips within the UK which can be as fun and productive as to going abroad.
- SSh agreed with SF and advised that during open days and events most prospective and current students tend to ask about field trips and the locations of these, they get excited if it involves field trips so it would be disappointing to have some rather than none which they have experienced.
- AO asked the question, if other Universities offered the same course with more field trips and exotic locations would students be interested and studying there, or would they still have come to QMUL (Queen Mary University of London) to study which had fewer or less appealing field trips destinations?
 - SSh – replied that they still would have come to QMUL,as there are very few universities in London offering Environmental Science as a course regardless of trips.
 - SR - informed that she was born and was brought up in east London, so it was a no brainer for them to choose a local university which also happened to be part of the Russel Group.
 - SF – added by saying that when they applied for MA Global Development a year ago, it advertised trips to India and Malaysia, however due to Covid all of these were cancelled but it did not have an adverse effect on them as they chose the course because it was interesting to them and not because of the trips involved.

8.2 Key considerations for future trips

- RK stated as to what staff should be thinking about regarding future trips, for e.g., UK vs abroad, having a bit of local sensitivity as to why we are taking the trip in the first place, reducing carbon footprint as Geographers as it affects climate change. RK asked what other factors we should be thinking about in our staff meetings to which there was no response as RK covered most of the key factors.

9. General Matters

9.1 Campus matters – any concerns?

- RK asked about anything around campus, buildings, programmes, anything within or outside of school of Geography that students would like to address?
 - CM – informed that students felt there was a narrow selection of elective modules in Year 2. TB responded by saying that; he believes that the modules selections offered are broad and cover a wide range of aspects in Human Geography.

9.2 General student wellbeing

- RK informed that communicating EC's is a general wellbeing issue for himself and NA, we are getting a lot of EC requests and students are asking for help and guidance for new policies in place from the school, NA and RK and all advisors are advising students however possible by emails, calls and meetings.

10. AOB

- SSh and RK thanked AO for their contribution towards the School of Geography.
- AO- informed that this will be their last attendance to these SSLC meetings, his new successor will be Prof Kavita Datta, who will be taking over the role as Head of School in January 2022 and joining this SSLC committee. AO enjoyed being part of the SSLC committee meetings.

ACTION: RK to ask the Education Committee about the narrow selection of elective modules for the 2nd year students, was there something that was contributing to this or expanding module choices is something the School of Geography need to consider?

11. Date of the next meeting

- Wednesday 16th February 2022 - 3-4pm.

Summary of new actions from this meeting and those carried forward

Minute	Responsibility	Action
2021:058	SF	To create an overall MA programme group chat for MA Global Development students in addition to the separate group chats already exists for different modules.
2021:059	TB/SL	To report back on the reflections from academic/teaching staff about Semester A at the next SSLC meeting.
2021:060	TB/SL	To discuss with the Education Committee to reconsider bringing back 30 credit module evaluation and formalising that process.
2021:061	RK	To liaise with module convenors for Environmental Research Methods and Research Design (2 nd year modules) to make sure assignment instructions are clear but also effective communication around questions and clarifications.
2021:062	RK	To ask the Education Committee about the narrow selection of elective modules for the 2 nd year students, was there something that was contributing to this or expanding module choices is something the School of Geography need to consider?