

School of Geography
Minutes of the
Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) held on Wednesday 16th March
2022
3-4pm via MS Teams

Staff Members present

Regan Koch (RK) (Co-Chair)	Senior Tutor
Shazia Sadiq (SS) (Secretary)	Postgraduate Studies Manager
Kavita Datta (KD)	Head of School
Norul Ahmed (NA)	Student Support Officer
Emma Shapcott (ES)	Teaching and Learning Manager
Richard Evans (RE)	Faculty Library Liaison Manager

Student members present

Sara Shafique (SSh) (Co-Chair)	3 rd Year Environmental Science
Aisha Ali (AA)	2 nd Year BSc Geography
Aminah Ossman (AO)	3 rd year Geography with Business Management
Billy Arthur Newman (BN)	MSc Water and Environmental Management

1. **Welcome**
AO welcomes everyone to the SSLC.
2. **Apologies**
Apologies from Tim Brown, Simon Lewis, Shamem Faizi and Caterina Duarte Moreira.
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
2021:058	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.	Completed
2021:059	TB/SL	Will report back on the reflections from academic/teaching staff about Semester A at the next SSLC meeting.	Completed

2021:060	TB/SL	Will discuss to the Education Committee to reconsider bringing back 30 credit module evaluation and formalising that process.	Completed
2021:061	RK	To liaise with the module convenors for Environmental Research Methods and Research Design (2 nd year modules) to make sure assignment instructions are clear but also good communication around questions and clarifications.	Completed
2021:062	RK	To take ask the Education Committee about the narrow selection of elective modules for the 2 nd year students, was it something that was contributing to this or expanding module choices is something the School of Geography need to consider?	Completed

RK went through actions from previous meeting and confirmed these have been completed, since the previous meeting was in December. RK suggested we should treat the actions points as minutes and if anyone has any comments on the minutes we can elaborate otherwise OK to mark has completed.

5. Industrial Action Impacts and Adjustments.

- KD gave a brief overview of the industrial action and highlighted the actions taken by the School. The School has tried to map out the impact of the industrial action on educational activities. There are 3 principles KD has advised module convenors to review:
 1. Module learning outcomes and objective – To ensure these have been met during the teaching in rest of the semester and adjust as necessary to ensure students have met learning outcomes.
 2. Assessment – to ensure students do not face any detriment. Module convenors will review if assessment is doable based on what they have been taught in the semester. KD has been reassured module convenors have adjusted assessments where they felt teaching may be missed due to Industrial action i.e removed questions where they have not been taught on.
 3. Relative balance between content and activities – Some material can be released asynchronously but that should be match up with synchronous type of activities for example staff advice and feedback hours maybe used for online/face to face synchronous activity.
- KD has advised module convenors to sign post on QMPlus what compensatory educational activities are taking place. All up to date information is available there for students to view. KD noted not all staff took industrial action so not all modules are affected.
- KD informed committee there has been notice of another planned industry action w/c 28th March for 5 days. This means there will be further disruptions and the School will review at the end of this period. There are concerns from students that there is further period of industrial action in weeks 11 and 12. The School has not been informed of this. UCU must give a 2 week notice period before going on strike so if those dates are declared, then the School will relay this to students.

- SS highlighted query from Caterina Duarte Moreira (CDM). There were concerns about scheduling of assessments and how close the deadlines are. The strikes have impacted students learning and also their mental health. RK/ES had conversation with CDM following her concerns and requested some clarification. ES highlighted there is some assessment bunching at the end of the semester. The School tries to limit to maximum of 2 assessments a week. Also it is not possible to cater for every elective combination.
 - KD requested some more information on the mental health issue CDM highlighted. RK responded he is liaising with CDM regarding this.
- SSh highlighted it is important to note the impact on mental well being and the relationship with advisors. The impact from the strikes has really been felt as students have missed the 1-2-1 support from advisors and email communications. This adds to the concern of everything adding up this semester.
- AA mentioned students have contacted her about Research Designs (GEG5214). A lot of teaching has been missed due to the Industrial Action. The assessment for GEG5214 is the dissertation proposal which is due soon and students have not received sufficient support.

ACTION: AA to meet RK and Kate Spencer to discuss these concerns further and how best to address them.

- AO mentioned one of the SBM module convenors informed students that there will be strikes in week 11 and 12. Students who are taking Geography with Business Management are concerned they have not heard anything from the Geography staff.
 - KD responded that the ballot is taking place tomorrow (17th Mar), the results would be confirmed by early next week and then a notice would be given with strike dates. This is the latest information KD has. AO will relay and clarify this information to the students on this programme.

6. Coursework and EC deadlines for Sem B

- RK informed students of 2 important deadlines this semester:
 - 18th May is the last date to submit coursework, with/out ECs
 - 1st June to submit ECs.

The School will communicate these dates to students via the newsletter and add this information to the end of every EC claim

7. Teaching and Learning matters

- SSh mentioned the long term effects of Covid. Other than the EC process, Togetherall, DSA, there isn't support available from the School/University. Most students are struggling with the impact of covid and learning online for 18 months. SSh mentioned there should be something additional from the School to support students with long term impacts of Covid and lack of engagement.
 - KD responded by highlighting Covid hasn't disappeared so a shift between online and face to face teaching is required.
 - KD requested suggestions on how the School can support the student with this, build back the moral, improve engagement, connections etc. RK suggested to amplify the things that are work and make it more inclusive, learning from advisory session or tutorials where students are engaged.
 - RK highlighted there have been a lot of resources being put into the EC process, and it has been used a lot more over the last couple of years. The EC process is normally the trigger where the School finds out that a student is having issues. They are then sign posted to Advice and Counselling as necessary and students may be connected to their advisors. The EC process does offer a lot of care, support and connection for the student.

- KD enquired is the disengagement due to not having enough face to face activity or are there other factors. KD noticed the face to face teaching we have isn't well attended, so what are the factors that are effecting students?
- AO and AA agreed that there has been a lot of disengagement across their seminars and as the weeks have progressed there have been less students attending. However, the attendance in lectures has been consistent.
- SSh mentioned there was a lot of focus on transitioning into online learning but not enough focus on transitioning back to in person teaching particularly seminars. A lot of the students struggle to speak up and it becomes awkward.
- AA mentioned for one of her seminars the questions are forwarded in the beginning of the seminar so students go in with knowledge of the lecture. The first few minutes of the seminar is spent going over the teaching content. AA mentioned it would help to have the questions earlier. KD didn't realise this was happening and suggested we can request staff to release question at the same time as material for the lectures.
- ES suggested as we are starting teaching planning for next year, it would be useful to understand these concerns and comments, what the preference is (in-person lecture or seminars)
- KD suggested to swap the lectures and have the lectures face to face and seminars online. This may help with engagement and participation.

ACTION: RK will relay these comments and feedback to EdC

ACTION: KD/RK to remind module convenors to release questions in advance of the seminar.

ACTION: Course reps to liaise with their cohorts for feedback on what has worked well and what doesn't in terms of what format and styles work well.

- RK shared the notes from the recent decolonizing meeting held on 23rd Feb. RK highlighted the meeting was very well attended and the notes cover the actions taken so far i.e. reforming the year 1 and 2 curriculum, creation of new level 5 module (Colonial Afterlives).
 - SSh showed concern that the main issue is that there hasn't been adequate communication. This is first time she has heard about this meeting. Communication can be better between the School and students.
 - KD requested students for suggestion on what they would like to see more off in terms of decolonising the curriculum. This is mainly staff led, but feedback from students would be very useful. KD suggested to maybe have a seminar series where we have a guest speaker to talk to students.
 - SSh highlighted since Alastair's email in 2020 it seems there has been a lot action taken. The email included a statement on commitment between staff and students to work together. It would be useful to follow up on this.
 - SSh mentioned that the reading lists on module is predominantly by white authors. This is a wider issue in academia but it would be helpful to review this. KD responded this has been something that has been discussed quite a lot in the School and some action has been taken to decolonize the reading list.
 - SS suggested to have a decolonising workshop seminar type meeting to get more feedback from students such as this.

ACTION: RK to liaise with Will Monteith and Kathryn Yusoff on communicating better with students.

8. Library updates

- RE update SSLC on the following:
 - As part of the Mile End Library Transformation Project there are currently works going on in the Mile End library on the 2nd floor which will continue until spring 2023. Additional 500 spaces will go into that space. Due to these works there are additional temporary study spaces in the temporary building (Geography Square).
 - There are 3 new Senior Academic Skills Advisors in the library teaching and support team. Chenee Psaros (c.psaros@qmul.ac.uk) will be supporting HSS.
 - RE shared link to Academic Skills which includes details of all the current events and workshops: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills/>
 - New online resource - Smartthinking online tutorial (<https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/academic-skills/smarthinking-online-tutoring/>)
 - Events the library is organizing: <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/library/library-skills/workshops/>

9. General matters

9.1 Campus matters

No general campus matters raised.

9.2 General concerns

- AO mentioned that the 3rd year students have handed in draft and when should students expect feedback as there are different dates going around on when feedback should be anticipated.
 - RK responded the guidance on that staff would aim to provide feedback within 1 week from original deadline but when the School discussed making arrangement for students to submit draft late it was agreed the advisor should give them a timeframe when feedback should be expected.
 - KD advised the School policy is 15 days for feedback.

ACTION: KD to request DoE to email staff with a reminder of the timescale.

- AA mentioned that some students on Fragile Environments emailed her with concerns on the deadline with another module (Ecosystem Science) which is during the Fragile Environment field trip. Students feel they will miss teaching as well as not able to submit during the field trip. AA requested for deadline to be moved, 8th April.

ACTION: RK to investigate this and follow up with the module convenor.

- RK requested to find out what is working in terms of communication with the cohort, WhatsApp or Teams channel or any other type of communication?
 - AA uses WhatsApp and seems to work best.
 - AO adds message to the general Teams channel and most students respond directly or WhatsApp.

10. Date of the next meeting

Wednesday 18th May, time TBC

Summary of new actions from this meeting

Minute	Responsibility	Action
2021:063	RK/AA	AA to meet RK and Kate Spencer to discuss concerns on GEG5124 and how best to address them.
2021:064	RK	To relay comments on teaching and learning to the EdC
2021:065	KD/RK	To remind module convenors to release questions in advance of the seminar.
2021:066	All course reps	Course reps to liaise with their cohorts for feedback on what has worked well and what doesn't in terms of what format and styles work well.
2021:067	RK	To liaise with Will Monteith and Kathryn Yusoff on communicating better with students.
2021:068	KD	To request DoE to email staff with a reminder of the timescale.
2021:069	RK	To investigate issue with deadline and field trip module and follow up with the module convenor.