School of Geography

Queen Mary
University of London

Minutes of the
Student Staff Liaison Committee held on Wednesday 17th November 2021
3-4.30pm 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
Simon Lewis (SL)	Co-Director of Education, BSc
Richard Evans (RE)	Faculty Liaison Librarian - Humanities & Social Sciences
Susan Smith (SSm)	Careers Consultant
Emma Shapcott (ES)	Teaching and Learning Manager
Asma Sabiha (AS)	Administrative Assistant
Shazia Sadiq (SS)	Postgraduate Studies Manager

Student members present

Sara Shafique (SSh) (Co-Chair)	3rd Year Environmental Science
Aminah Ossman (AYO) (Co-Chair)	3rd Year Geography with Business Management
Caterina Duarte Moreira (CM)	2nd Year BA Geography
Aisha Ali (AA)	2nd Year BSc Geography
Safia El-Amiri (SA)	3rd Year BSc Geography
Shamem Faizi (SF)	MA Global Development

1. **Welcome**
   RK welcomes everyone to the first SSLC of the academic year 2021/22.

2. **Apologies**
   Apologies from Tim Bown, Billy Newman & Emma Madden.

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

2021:036	CMH/EdC	CMH/EdC to produce the advice for student's document/guide in time for the new academic year	Completed
2021:037	QMGS	QMGS to nominate a QMGS rep to attend SSLC meetings.	In Progress- NA waiting to hear back from GeogSoc, has now emailed committee president)
2021:038	CM/RK/CMH	CM/RK/CMH to send another email to students about the 2pm 17th May 2021 cut off for SEM B coursework and 24th May EC deadline for any ECs from this academic year.	Completed
2021:039	CM and relevant PGT staff	CM to pass to relevant PGT staff who can look into queries about ethics form support and clarification with PGT staff.	Completed
2021:040	CM and PGT dissertation convenors	CM to pass to relevant PGT Dissertation convenors to send number of meetings to students and also make supervisors aware of this asking for these to be placed in the diary sooner rather than later.	Completed
2021:041	1st and 2nd year CReps	1st and 2nd year Creps to email CM about Welcome Week ideas	Completed
2021:042	AJO	AJO to email a save the date next week about potential social activities within SoG.	Completed
2021:043	CReps	Creps to email CM/AJO about any activities they would like to see in the June period.	Completed
2021:044	3rd year CReps	3rd year Creps to email CM about any games/virtual celebration ideas.	Completed

- RK informed apart from item **2021:037** all the others were not relevant as these relate to previous academic year and have been completed.

2021:037: QMGS to nominate a QMGS rep to attend SSLC meetings

- RK stated that we had no luck in finding a QMGS rep, will try and reach out to them again to see if can appoint a rep or delegate someone to attend our SSLC meetings.
  ACTION: RK & NA to contact the QMGS, and then QMGS to nominate a rep to   attend SSLC meetings.

5. Welcome to the new Course Reps

5.1 Introductions
- SSh introduced themselves and then asked all colleagues and student reps to introduce themselves as well.

5.2 Training
- SSh advised that student rep training is compulsory and helpful, they asked AYO what the training entails and how was their experience?
  - AYO explained that the training is around 30 minutes long and explores the different channels that can be used to communicate with students (e.g., WhatsApp, Instagram, MS Team) and so on. AYO explained that they already use WhatsApp as a platform to communicate to students in their year about informal discussions but use MS team for more formal announcements.
  - RK asked AYO is the training detailed and informative? AYO responded by stating that the training is basic only being 30 minutes long and most of it had to be figured out by themselves.
- SF was not aware of such training, SSh advised they would have been sent an email with the training materials so to look out for these or check mailbox again.

  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.

5.3 Course rep spaces to be filled

- NA announced that although we have recruited three more student reps before this current SSLC meeting we still have eight positions vacant.
- SSm asked the question why do we have so many vacant positions, to which SSh replied, could be several reasons; no follow up since Catherine Mills was in the SSO post. RK then went onto say that now we have a permanent member of staff NA who has taken over the SSO role we are in a better position.

  ACTION; 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.

6. Organisation and Communication

6.1 Meeting format
- RK informed that SSLC meetings will continue to be via MS Teams due to being flexible, monthly and will schedule for 1hr 30mins, but the aim will be to finish meeting in 1 hour.
- SSm shared her view and stated that having meetings on MS Teams is practical especially as we all have different working schedules due to covid-19. Other students and colleagues shared this view.
- RK said that we will continue with the current format and will review in a few months if things start to change.

6.2 Communicating with students, programme groups

- RK asked a question generally or specifically speaking how do the current CReps communicate to students, what methods work well?
  - o AYO informed that MS Teams groups worked very well for them, they then went onto say AYO that they already use WhatsApp as a platform to communicate to students in their year about informal discussions but use MS team for more formal announcements.

  ACTION: 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.

  ACTION: NA to include current CReps on the next newsletter.

7. Teaching and Learning

7.1 Welcome week feedback

- SF said Welcome week was great, however lots of information to take in so it can be overwhelming, suggested if regular emails can be sent to students for upcoming events or activities taking place at campus.
- SA – stated Welcome week was good, and they enjoyed it, QMPlus was mentioned which is useful for 1st years as lots of information is uploaded on there.
  ACTION: 1st and 2nd 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 various services and facilities such as Advice and counselling etc.

7.2 New/updates on EC process for 2021/22

- RK explained that EC processes should have now been explained by students allocated advisor and module convenors. There are loads of information on the QMPlus. RK has encouraged all advisors to communicate about ECs to their students as in most cases a student's first point of contact will be their allocated advisor.
- RK asked in the meeting to all, are there any ideas on how EC's can be better communicated to students?
  - o AYO – shared that they use MS teams to communicate to students about ECs via MS teams and WhatsApp. AYO recommended that it may be a good idea if module convenors mentioned this more when face to face with students during lectures, seminars, and tutorials as sometimes students do not look at emails or log onto QMPlus?

  ACTION: RK to remind student advisors to mention about EC processes to their students and more during end of semester when assignments are all due.

7.3 Settling into study – student Teaching and Learning Queries

- RK asked if there are any reflections, thoughts or feedback that anyone like to make?
  - o AYO stated that the QM mobile app is very good, helps with direction on campus, signposts other related services available, QM news and events taking place.

  ACTION: NA to mention about QM App on the next monthly newsletter.

- AO asked the question if students wanted to feedback on any of the modules taught in SoG**?**
  - o AYO stated that after receiving feedback from peers that the pre-recorded sessions for module Earth Surface Science that go onto QMPlus on Thursday/Friday is not

giving students enough time to prepare for seminars on the Mon/Tues as a lot of students work over weekend.

- o AYO provided further feedback on the Earth Surface Science module; the pre-recorded lecture is very condensed, students found it difficult to understand as its vey content heavy and some of the terminologies used are complex which made understanding the basic concepts difficult, thus this put a lot of students under stress and made them worried about assessments. AYO recommend that a question-and-answer sheet or key points can be used to aid learning.

- o

ACTION: SL/TB (Directors of Education) To discuss with the module convenor about the feedback provided for module Earth Surface Science

- o SSh mentioned that there is no ArcGIS software in a lot of Geography labs which is not helpful especially if these are required to complete assessments.

ACTION: SL/TB to liaise with IT-led module convenors and IT Dept to see if these issues can be resolved.

- − AO appreciates that students need clarity on where they can access the software's to do their assignments, seems there are some licensing issues which the SoG need to look at for the long term. AO then went onto say that there were some issues with IT equipment, QMPlus and ArcGIS not being available or adequate. AO apologised for the inconvenience this may have caused. AO acknowledged that there were issues to begin with but with the help of IT and Professional Services Staff this is now better.
- − RK mentioned about reading strategies, references for MA students - a lot of them may not have been in education for a long time and may need a refresher session.
- − SS mentioned that workshops on how to read well, referencing effectively are on the MS Teams which were pre-recorded, so they access those materials from there.

ACTION: SF will ask MA peers who attended these workshops and will get feedback from them to report at next SSLC meeting.

- − AO mentioned that the module Reinventing Britain after receiving feedback from students they found it was content heavy and there was quite a lot of reading on that module, SoG has now adjusted that module. SoG is open to other modules that students feel the same about and will see what adjustments can be made.

8. Campus Matters

8.1 Rooms and study spaces

- − RK informed that second floor of the Queens Building has lots of space for students to study. RK is advised they are working closely with the committee and working groups in order to find more adequate places for studying.
- − SA stated that there is a booking system where students can book allocated spaces in the library to study – however they raised concerns that this is not always effective, for e.g., a student may have booked a space, but another student is already seated on that allocated spot, they then must find alternative space, but this s is not always possible as spaces already booked up. SF then went onto saying that this needs to be better managed so students who have booked a space and have turned up have priority.
- − SSm suggested perhaps it needs to be 'on-the-day' booking rather than booking in days or weeks in advance, this way, students are more likely to turn up?

− SA – stated that the outside study places are great, they are not only covid friendly but also students can navigate from one building to another, especially when they have back-to-back classes.
ACTION: RK has joined the Study Spaces Working Group work on wider issues of study space on campus. Will report back on any developments.

8.2 Library update and welcome to Richard Evans

− RE – ground floor of library at mile end site has now been re-opened after refurbishments, not a quite space but plenty of spaces available to study alone or with fellow colleagues, they are trying to cater to meet as many different needs as possible but appreciate that its quite a challenge with Covid restrictions.
− RE – shared the link on MS Team chat of a link where students can see and book all the available study spaces there are around QMUL campuses.
− RE appreciates and emphasises with students and with SA comment that once students book a space and not find it vacant it can be disappointing, this process needs to be closely managed so it can run smoothly.
ACTION: RE 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.

9. **AOB**
   − SSm – Advised all about the career events page on QMPlus, which is very helpful for careers advice, students will need to self-enrol on those pages but encourage students to have a look. 'Careers Enterprise' have also revamped the newsletters which they send out to students informing them about central events happening at QMUL, and interesting topics and articles to read.
   − SSm promoted the booking service so that students can come and see them for careers advice, link to the page booking was shared on MS Team chat.

10. **Date of the next meeting:**
    − Wednesday 15th December 2021, 1-2pm.

Summary of new actions from this meeting and those carried forward

Minute	Responsibility	Action
2021:045	RK/NA	ACTION: RK & NA to contact the QMGS, and then QMGS to nominate a rep to attend SSLC meetings.
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.
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.
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.
2021:049	NA	To include current CReps on the next newsletter.
2021:050	1ST & 2nd Year CReps	1st and 2nd 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 various services and facilities such as Advice and counselling etc.
2021:051	RK	To remind student advisors to mention about EC processes to their students and more during end of semester when assignments are all due.
2021:052	NA	To mention about QM App on the next monthly newsletter.
2021:053	SL/TB	To discuss with the module convenor about the student concerns related to reading/preparation/delivery for module Earth Surface Science.
2021:054	SL/TB	To liaise with IT-led module convenors and IT Dept to see if these issues can be resolved.
2021:055	SF	SF will ask MA peers who attended these workshops and will get feedback from them to report at next SSLC meeting.
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.
2021:057	RE	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.