



**School of Politics and International Relations**

**Student Staff Liaison Committee**

**Wednesday, 17 November at 2pm in Laws 1.02**

**Present:** Dr Nicholas Hostettler (SPIR UG Senior Tutor and Chair)

Dr Stijn Van Kessel (co-convenor POL318)

Prof Laleh Khalil (Co-Director of Education)

Dr Richard Johnson (SPIR Joint Hons Co-ordinator)

Dr Tamara Popic ( SPIR staff Library Rep)

Jai Johnson (Law & Pol year 1)

Adam Omar (History & Pol year 1)

Samiha Khanom (International Relations year 2)

Salwa Sufian (History & Pol)

Setareh Dashte Bozory (Pol & International Relations year 2)

Sofia Ramos Fortunato Loemba (Pol & International Relations year 2)

Kartik Sawhney (Hist & Pol year 2)

Katarzyna Makowska (Pol & International Relations year 2)

Mai Kato (MSc International Public Policy)

Bushra Ashkir (Pol & Sociology year 1)

Judi Naim (Pol & International Relations year 1)

Ethan Shoben (Politics year 1)

**Online attendance:**

NB: Committee attempted an online, blended approach to facilitate members who could not attend in person. However, due to technical issues it was not possible to connect with the committee members remotely - Mr Jason Salucideen (Timetabling and Student Support Manager), Bethlehem Telahun (MA IR Public Policy), Daria Kozlova (MA Distance Learning).

In attendance: Ms Bronwyn Murphy (secretary)

## Part 1 – Preliminary items

### Welcome and introduction to new members

#### 1. Welcome

2021/01	Chair welcomed all new and returning members of the committee. Course representatives play an important role in representing the views of their constituents. The committee is a forum for course reps to raise students' concerns and provide SPIR with valuable feedback.
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- 2. Apologies:** Dr Javier Sajuria (MA Coordinator) , Dr Felipe (Co-convenor POL318) , Dr James Strong (co Director of Education), Binta Yada (Law & Pol year 3), Amerisida Dibra (SPIR PG administrator), Rebecca Gosov (Pol & IR year 3)

#### 3. Approval of minutes of last meeting and matters arising

2021/02	Pol and IR year 2 rep reports they did not receive the minutes of the previous meeting. Minutes and agenda circulated to members via the Outlook Calendar invitation.
2021/03	No matters arising from the previous meeting.

#### 4. Terms of reference

2021/04	Chair reports the SU Course Rep elections resulted in a number of vacancies. The by-election closed on Friday and this presented challenges for the administration of this committee. Chair thanks reps for volunteering and SPIR will work with Course Reps to fill vacant positions.
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#### 5. Induction and training of course reps

2021/05	Some Course Reps received training from QMSU. Chair asks those who have not yet been trained to contact the SU. Training will provide Course Reps with an understanding of their role, gathering opinions and feedback from the student body and representing their constituents. Students awaiting training are encouraged to consult the Course Rep information on QMSU website.
2021/06	Co-Director of Education states that SPIR wishes to improve communications between Course Reps and their constituents and staff members of the SSLC. SPIR will set up a WhatsApp group for Course Reps and encourages Course Reps to do the same for their cohorts.
2021/07	Chair recognises that newly elected Course Reps have not had much time or mechanisms for liaising with their constituents. This committee is a first opportunity for Course Reps and SPIR staff to meet and discuss feedback.

**6. Representation by Course Reps** – item discussed as part of agenda item 4.

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

2021/08	<p>Chair invites reps to volunteer to act as the SPIR SSLC co-chair. Chair and secretary will support the co-chair in organising and hosting future meetings. SPIR wishes to elect a student co-chair of the SSLC. Chair and HSS student faculty rep will interview volunteers.</p> <p>Law &amp; Pol year 2, Hist &amp; Pol year 2 and Pol &amp; Sociology year 1 reps volunteer for this position.</p>
2021/09	<p>SPIR Staff Library Rep introduces their role and the role of the Student Library Rep and invites Course Reps present to volunteer for the role of Student Library Rep. SPIR (staff) Library Rep liaises with QMUL library on the accessibility of resources, acquisition of books, journal subscriptions etc., reading lists and the broad use of library space. Three Course Reps volunteer and the Pol and IR year 2 rep (KW) is duly elected by the committee.</p>
2021/10	<p>SPIR Equality and Diversity committee aims to recruit two SPIR Course Reps (SPIR must be the home school). The reps will attend 3 scheduled SPIR EDI committees during the academic year. Three Course Reps volunteer for the 2 positions (Pol &amp; International Relations year 1 and 2 x Pol &amp; International Relations year 2 reps). SSLC secretary will forward the details of the volunteers to the Chair of the E&amp;D committee for follow up.</p>

**8. Verbal reports from student course representatives**

2021/11	<p>Pol &amp; IR year 2 rep reports students' concern over POL299 content and teaching; it has a very European perspective and students would like to see a broader use of authors, women and people from BAME backgrounds. Many students want to see positive action in decolonising the curriculum. Chair advises course reps and students to raise this issue with the module convenor and seminar tutors and utilise module feedback forms.</p>
2021/12	<p>History &amp; Pol year 2 rep asks how SPIR approves modules? Co-Director of Education explains that this is part of the role of the TLC (Teaching &amp; Learning Committee) which includes a student rep. Chair acknowledges that decolonising the curriculum is a live issue within SPIR and across the university sector.</p>
2021/13	<p>History &amp; Pol year 2 rep reports that many students complain about the amount of required readings for POL263. History and Pol year 1 rep confirms that History's assessments have lower word counts than SPIR. Chair acknowledges differences in assessments across Schools. Joint students face challenges navigating these differences between different schools. Students studying Humanities are required to read extensively throughout their degree programmes. Co-Director of Education confirmed that SPIR reviews the curriculum and assessments on a regular basis.</p>

2021/14	History & Pol year 2 rep asked why SPIR has different credit bearing modules in year 1 compared to History. Chair explains that Schools have some autonomy in determining the credit value of modules within QMUL's regulations and SPIR is unlikely to change the credit value of first year modules.
2021/15	Chair acknowledges issues raised by students regarding POL263. Some students report that the readings are difficult, in particular those by Hagel. Chair encourages students to consult the secondary readings (e.g. Hutchings) which may be more accessible and assist in student understanding of Hagel. Chair suggests the best way to approach modules is to refer to both compulsory and secondary readings.
2021/16	Pol & International Relations year 2 rep believes that some students may not read secondary sources due to time constraints. Chair advises students to use their judgement and to read as comprehensively as possible to enable understanding and enrich their understanding of core texts.
2021/17	Pol & International Relations year 2 rep again raised the Eurocentric nature of readings across modules. Chair explains that POL263 works by looking at foundational texts for world we live in and subsequent texts notice these writings. Locke shaped how society views property, patriarchy, race, gender and students should read him to understand this influence. SPIR endeavours to offer students a wide range of readings from different perspectives and times and academic reflect upon and review core readings.
2021/18	Pol & International Relations year 2 rep agrees that it is important to read these texts and discuss them in seminars but asks what assistance is available if students do not understand difficult texts? Chair recognises this issue and the QMUL Academy is working on a project to assist first year students to develop their reading, writing and academic skills.
2021/19	Co-director of Education acknowledges that some core content may be difficult but students should seek support from seminar tutors. Students are encouraged to develop good reading habits, reading more texts should assist with greater comprehension.
2021/20	POL & International Relations year 2 reps reports concern on how some modules are structured.  For some modules, seminars take place before lectures. Chair advises students to talk to the module convenors and notes that learning is recursive and does not take place in a straight line.

## Year 1

2021/21	Law and Pol year 1 rep suggests that QMSU improves marketing, communication and promotion of Course Reps and elections.
2021/22	Pol & International Relations year 1 rep reports that some students are not clear on the POL106 portfolio and the number of authors they should read. Chair advises students to contact the module convenor and/or seminar tutors for clarity. Pol & International Relations year 1 rep reports differences of opinion between seminar tutors. Chair recommends that students/course reps give this feedback to the module convenor. SPIR does not operate a 10%-word count system, module assessments will state the required word count e.g. 2500 words.

2021/23	History and Pol Year 1 rep raises issues regarding the accessibility of some online reading for POL199. Chair is aware of this and removed links which were not working.
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#### Induction –

2021/24	Pol & International Relations year 2 rep asks for clarification on the role of advisors. Chair recommends that students meet with their advisors. SPIR arranges group meetings with advisors in Welcome Week for first year students, and instructs returning students to arrange one to one meetings with advisors to reflect on the previous year of study and discuss plans and/or concerns for the new academic year. Co-director of Education reports that they met with their year 1 advisors but very few second year students made arrangements to meet.. SPIR will consider circulating a new ‘Welcome’ pamphlet, which contains information on the role of advisors. Chair encourages all students to make effective use of teaching staff office and feedback hours.
2021/25	Co-director of Education asks reps how schools can improve student engagement? POL & International Relations year 1 rep suggests additional support for academic skills. Co-director of Education encourages students to engage with the Academic Skills Unit (based in the library) and not to hesitate contacting seminar tutors/advisors for support.

#### Postgraduate students

2021/26	MSc International Policy rep reports that there is confusion regarding module selection on MySiS. Chair will pass on this concern to the Director of Post Graduate Taught programmes and the Post Graduate administrator.
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#### Joint degrees

2021/27	Law & Pol year 1-rep reports concerns that Joint students have a number of submission deadlines in the same week. Co-director of Education acknowledges this is an issue. There is a new faculty position investigating this issue.
2021/28	History and Pol year 1 rep raises the issue of the use of different referencing systems in History and SPIR. History use Chicago and SPIR use Harvard. – referencing - Hist v Pol – hist use Chicago, Pol use Harvard – Richard – qm+ page for Hist and Pol – info inc referencing, direct student to use. Nick – remind students of our own referencing and other schools differences.
2021/29	History & Pol year 2 student reports that there is a demand within the History & Pol cohort for advice relating to law related careers. However, only School of Law students can receive advice from the specialist QMUL Law Careers consultant. Chair and Co-director of Education will raise this with the Careers Service.

### Part 3 – Programme delivery and other matters

#### 9. Learning Resources

- QM+
- Information Technology
- Library facilities

2021/30	This item will be discussed at the next meeting
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#### 10. Communications

2021/31	This item will be discussed at the next meeting
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#### 11. Academic community

2021/31	This item will be discussed at the next meeting
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#### 12. Any other business

2021/29	No other business recorded
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13. Date of next meeting: Wednesday, 2 February 2022, 2-4pm. Location: to be confirmed.