

16/05/06 Staff-Student Committee Meeting

Minutes

Present: Eric Olson, Robert Stern, Jon Webber, Nick Tasker, Alex Goodson (Union Link), David Muhl-Richardson, Edward Grefenstette (Chair), Chris Cork, Alexis Artaud de la Ferriere.

Apologies received from: George Botterill, David Owens, Sally Smith, Tim Fiennes, Lyndon Morant, Heather Arnold, Hannah Jarry-Ryan.

1. The concerns of students suffering from a lack of feedback (essays not being returned) due to the AUT strike was brought to the attention of the department. Robert Stern responded that the department was awaiting directives from the university with regards to exam marking, but as far as essays are concerned, students are encouraged to take their essay drafts to lecturers in order to discuss strengths and weaknesses, should they wish for some feedback.
2. Certain students have expressed interest in more/longer seminars, possibly at the cost of lectures. The department expressed its concern about adding seminars at the cost of lectures, as not all students find seminars helpful. But it had no general objection to offering more seminars, although this would be difficult to implement because of staffing implications. One possible solution discussed was that of a room booked for students of a particular module to regularly meet up and discuss/debate issues related to the module in the absence of the lecturer. The matter will be discussed at the departmental meeting, where staff might propose this for their modules, to see if there is sufficient interest.
3. Students have commented upon the perceived unfairness of some module's pre-released exam questions being released much earlier than others. The department has answered that there is no official policy on release date, and that it is to the lecturer's discretion. However, it was safe to assume that release date was taken into account for marking, and students who received questions earlier were expected to be better prepared for that module's exam.
4. Single Honours first years are finding the critical thinking module too basic. The formal logic segment was appreciated, but there was demand for the in-class analysis of more complex and more philosophical arguments. The department responded that the module was under revision for 2007/08, and would most likely be split into two 10 credit modules: one more formal, and one more informal (and suitable for non-philosophers).
5. The idea of student representative elections was abandoned. The possibility of the union link nominating reps amongst candidates will be looked into. The task of preparing a more formal structure for the SSC, including specific roles, was assigned to Alexis Artaud de la Ferriere.
6. The matter of an undergraduate common room was brought up. The department responded that it was highly unlikely, but Robert Stern agreed to consider the matter further.
7. The matter of a dynamic system for requesting books and reporting library needs was discussed. Problems of communication with the library were reported, but the department assures us they are looking into it. It was suggested that a question related to specific book needs be added into the questionnaires handed out at the end of each semester. Students are also advised to contact their lecturer in the first instance about book shortages.