

Meeting of the History Department Staff Student Consultative Committee

Tuesday, 6 March at 1.00pm in Room G09

MINUTES

Present

Students:

Emily Barrett (BA HwEL, 2)
Catherine Bateson (BA HwYA, 4)
Jonathan Chandler (Research)
David Colbran (BA Ancient Hist & Egypt, 3)
Ella Cullen (MA MARS)
Jamie Everitt (BA History, 3)
Jack Gibson (BA History, 2)
Tali Janner-Klausner (BA History, 1)
Joe Mason (BA History, 1)

Staff:

Prof Nicola Miller
Dr Bernhard Rieger
Dr Benet Salway (Chair)
Dr Britta Schilling (Secretary)
Dr Sarah Snyder
Dr Caroline Waerzeggers

Apologies for absence were received from John Sabapathy and Richard Taylor.

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2011 were confirmed. The Committee RECEIVED copies of Module Reports and the department's Teaching and Learning Strategy.

2. Matters Arising from the Minutes

2.1 Although it was suggested that course evaluations be moved back until after Easter, it was DECIDED that this warranted further thought.

2.2 [Minute 7.2] It was AGREED that first-year students be given warning that they would have only a short time frame in which to arrange course choices from other departments once they arrive on campus. It would be helpful for incoming students to have information on which departments are popular with History students and that signing up for languages involves an assessment process. It was PROPOSED that the Undergraduate Administrator liaise with the Language Centre to set up appointments before students arrive.

3. National Student Survey

3.1 The Chair outlined how NSS data would be represented, i.e. as a key indicator for universities' performance.

3.2 Students were questioned on their views on the department's feedback, which was an area in which the department did not score well.

3.2.1 It was noted that the department had already undergone some change by amending the coursework cover sheet. However, students said they had not yet noticed any change in how coursework feedback was presented.

3.2.2 Students felt that the length of time required for getting feedback continued to be problematic. It was AGREED that the key issue was timely communication to

students about when they could expect to receive their coursework back, rather than lecturers necessarily returning it quicker.

3.2.3 It was suggested that a central issue was that compared to other universities, UCL required less coursework from students, and therefore each assignment had greater importance for developing skills. Some students were choosing to work on their writing more intensely by taking half-units.

3.2.4 Students suggested that oral presentations be included as part of formal assessment.

3.2.5 It was NOTED that a new staggering of deadlines for full-year courses may address an imbalance in feedback, currently weighted toward the end of the course.

3.2.6 Students thought that the option of having required but non-assessed (formative) coursework would be particularly helpful in HIST1002 Concepts and Categories. They expressed a strong opinion for non-assessed short essays (rather than opinion pieces), with a proposed deadline after the December break.

3.2.7 Students reported concerns with lack of assessed work and general pace of the HIST1001 Lecture Core Course. It was PROPOSED to weight the course as two units with more contact hours (and classes), providing a more rigorous overview which would be unique to UCL.

3.3 There was a general discussion about personal support, another point raised by the NSS.

3.3.1 Individual UG and MA students reported that they had a positive relationship with their Personal Tutor.

3.3.2 It was DECIDED that students need to be told more explicitly by staff at the start of session and throughout the year that lecturers have office hours and that they can come see them in addition to Tutorial Days.

3.3.3 It was NOTED that UCL's physical location and the department's space arrangements across four buildings provided a general hindrance to creating a sense of community.

3.4 Student response rates to the NSS

3.4.1 It was NOTED that the department was having difficulty getting students to respond to the survey. Students suggested using more posters. Phone calls from the NSS were also reported as being effective.

4. Feedback on Examinations

4.1 Students requested more feedback on Examinations. It was NOTED that copying exam papers was not viable with the department's current resources.

4.2 Students were concerned about the ambiguity of second marking. It was suggested that Portico may be improved to reflect both the provisional and final marks.

5. A further meeting to be held on 25 April 2012 for further discussion of remaining Agenda items was AGREED.

6. The committee NOTED a proposal from students to encourage staff to use Lecturecast, as this was deemed particularly useful to History students taking courses in the English department. It was NOTED that the provision of course and learning materials to students was currently under review.