

Meeting of the History Department Staff Student Consultative Committee

Wednesday, 25 April at 1.00pm in Room G09

MINUTES

Present

Students:

Emily Barrett (BA HwEL, 2)
David Colbran (BA Ancient Hist & Egypt, 3)
Leonard Hodges (BA HwEL, 2)
Tali Janner-Klausner (BA History, 1)
Joe Mason (BA History, 1)
John Tiholiz (MA Ancient Hist)

Staff:

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

Apologies for absence were received from Bernhard Rieger, Jonathan Chandler, Sushma Jansari, Jamie Everitt, Catherine Bateson and Ella Cullen.

1. The Committee RECEIVED the Transition Programme Evaluation 2011/12 and the new schedule for electing StARS.

2. Feedback to Students – the Chair asked students for further comments on feedback, following on from the discussion of the NSS in the SSCC meeting of 6 March 2012 [Minute 3].

2.1 Students raised concerns about feedback during coursework return meetings, including the impression that they need to explain their argument to the course tutor, and that structure is valued more than argument in essay writing. It was AGREED that course tutors should try to focus their meetings on explaining why they gave the mark they did to students.

2.2 Tutorial Days – Students found it ineffective to talk about coursework and class performance with their personal tutor since it was impossible to discuss this beyond a rudimentary level. They would prefer to have this sort of feedback from their course tutor directly. Students PROPOSED having comments on class performance beyond coursework [i.e. Tutorial Report forms] accessible to students on Moodle.

2.3 Students PROPOSED that the MA model of keeping a research diary with comments from the course tutor may be a useful one to adapt for Special Subjects and Second Year Long Essays.

2.4 Students again emphasised the need for feedback for exams, since for many courses they comprise most of the final grade. This was NOTED by the Committee.

2.5 It was PROPOSED that Tutorial Days be used as an opportunity for students to voice their opinions and concerns to Personal Tutors, rather than simply listening to an evaluation of their performance. Students AGREED that a different focus for meetings, possibly involving

students bringing essays along to the tutorial days to discuss general writing skills, would be very useful.

2.6 Coursework cover sheets – Few continuing students had noticed that comments on their coursework were different from previous years or explicitly adhering to the rubric at the top of the cover sheet. It was AGREED that the criteria stated at the top of the cover sheets be numbered so that course tutors could structure their comments around them more easily.

3. Provision of Course Materials

3.1 Students said they preferred printed versions of course materials, although electronic versions available to print on demand were also useful, particularly when revising for exams.

3.2 Course packs available for purchase were considered to be an attractive option; however there were concerns about costs.

3.3 Students reported to have depleted their print quotas by the end of the first term; many had used up their quota by the end of Reading Week in the first term.

4. TA Teaching

4.1 Students reported that in general they received good feedback from TAs and had a good relationship with them. It was NOTED that although students' one-to-one relationship with TAs was good, their group experience in seminars was less satisfactory. Students also commented that the lack of consistency in teaching styles made it difficult to build up a relationship with the course tutor or TA.

4.2 It was AGREED that alternative channels need to be found for students to communicate issues with TAs so that any problems can be addressed by the department as soon as possible.

4.3 General discussion on TA experiences followed, and it was AGREED that the topic would need to be discussed further.

5. Other Matters Arising

5.1 It was suggested that the Lecture Core Course be organised thematically rather than chronologically but this was considered impracticable.