



Undergraduate Teaching Committee meeting Minutes

7th December, 1:00-3:00. Location: Foster Court, Room 112.

Present: Joe Cain (Undergraduate Tutor, Chair), Jo Pearson (minutes). Five students were present. A list of student representatives is available from the Academic Administrator, Room G2, 22 Gordon Square.

1. opening business

1.1 minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the last meeting 28th February 2011-12-01.

These were agreed.

1.2 Terms of reference

The terms of reference were reviewed and agreed.

2. Provision within the department

Students are invited to comment on the following.

2.1 STS Common Room

Students commented that they would like to be able to stay later in the common room as it is an excellent group study space and it is difficult to find somewhere else. JC explained the UCL guidelines on having students in the building if staff were not around/ available. He suggested using the Seminar Room B15 if it is available as an alternative. Students were overall very positive about the common room. In particular its secluded position on 3rd floor (not 'on the way' to somewhere else) made it feel quiet and secure. Students also appreciated access to the department kitchen.

Action: JC to look into and advise on alternative spaces. Also to investigate if the common room can be kept open later.

Students commented that ISD cluster rooms seemed full. A tour given by 3rd year students to pass on tacit knowledge about less busy cluster rooms etc was suggested for the autumn term. 1st year students thought this would be a good idea.

2.2 STS Website

It was felt that having the module catalogue and syllabi etc available on the website was really helpful in the first few weeks of term. The new layout was praised and students appreciated the calendar and news format.

There was some discussion of moodle. Generally students felt it is a good system. It was noted that some courses were not updated on moodle. Different tutors put up different material and use items in a different. Students felt it would be useful to always have the following information.

- Syllabus, Hand-outs of lecture slides/ lecture notes, TurnItIn – this should be up to date at the start of term, past papers.

Students also felt it would be helpful if things like the assignment hand in were always in the same place so that they could be more easily found.

Students asked about varying practices for handing in work across the university – some departments request two hard copies and submission to TurnItIn. Staff responded that there was no university standard practice on this. Students appreciated only having to submit once to moodle in STS.

It was noted that forums in moodle are not used frequently.

Action: Department will consider developing use of forums to reach a critical mass.

2.3 Careers Information & Activities

Discussion was deferred to the next meeting of the committee

2.4 Provision of information

The department's use of e-mail was felt to be effective. Students get the information from the department they need. However students felt slightly overwhelmed by the number of general university and union e-mails. A workshop on using folders to sort using the live system was suggested. There seem to be some inconsistencies in access to folders and sorting for students. Students confirmed that they receive the information they need.

2.5 Library provision

Students commented that it is really helpful when tutors make required readings available on-line. Andy Gregory was particularly praised. Provision of information to students by librarians, e.g. tips on using Google scholar and citations indexes were praised.

2.6 Safety

No concerns were raised. Students asked about the provision of lockers. JC noted that STS does not have space for this.

2.7 Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer

It was noted that STS's Departmental Administrator, Kate Hickson, is the departments Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer.

Students praised STS staff for getting involved with the start of session party and the student Christmas party. Students reported that they did not feel a sense of 'us' and 'them' between staff and students.

3. Student Feedback

3.1 National Student Survey – to note.

The national student survey was noted. The sample size was small and not deemed statistically significant by the survey compilers.

3.2 End of degree feedback summary

The end of degree questionnaire was noted.

3.3 Feedback on Induction Week & module registration?

1st year students reported some confusion/ difficulties regarding finding an ancillary module. They felt guidance on where to look and how to find modules not on the list that has been checked could be improved. It was also felt that it could be made clearer that students will have to find one ancillary module and that this is a high priority task for induction week.

Action: JC & JP to review materials sent to incoming undergraduates.

3.4 Feedback on HPSC modules

Please give feedback on modules running this term. What works well? What could be improved? Do any tutors do something particularly innovative or in a way you think other tutors should adopt?

- HPSC1001 History of Science
Overall this module is very well received. Students felt it was quite intensive going through two topics. Students would prefer to have the tutorial on a separate day from the lectures to get time to digest the material taught in the lectures.
Action: Review timetabling.
- HPSC1007 Research Methods
Students felt that this isn't the most interesting course. Students felt they could see why the course is useful but would like to see it more closely related to the other courses. Students suggested that the sequencing of the course could be redesigned so that they have a short overview of research/writing skills before they write their first pieces of assessed work. Students have handed in two essays by the time they get to the 'how to write an essay' section.
- HPSC1008 Introduction to Science Communication
Students reported that some students found the Teaching Assistant's tutorials less useful and focussed than the tutor's.
Action: JC to liaise with module tutor.
- HPSC2001 Policy Issues in the Life Sciences
No comments received.
- HPSC2008 Human Sciences in Society
No comments received.
- HPSC2016 Science, Communication & The Global Community
No comments received.
- HPSC2020 Revolutions in Medicine
The dissection room visit was very useful. A visit to the Hunterian museum was suggested.
- HPSC3003 Communication of Scientific Ideas
No comments received.
- HPSC3004 Dissertation
The information supplied on-line and by e-mail for this module was praised. Students are feeling encouraged to keep on top of the work-load and not leaving it to the last minute. There is a general feeling that all students are happy with their topics and supervisors.
- HPSC3007 Topics in the History of Science
No comments received.
- HPSC3026 IBS Sc Research Project
No comments received.
- HPSC3029 Medicine, Disease & History
This module is going really well. The visit to the Wellcome trust library was praised. More visits to collections and facilities close to UCL (there are a lot) would be welcomed.
- HPSC3032 Investigating Contemporary Science
Not discussed.
- HPSCM*** Feedback on M-level modules
No representatives present.

[JC left the room so comments could be received regarding his modules.]

- **HPSC1010 Science in the Spotlight**
No issues. Students commented that this is a really good module. The lecturer keeps everyone engaged and is good at taking questions and comments. It was felt that the ethics essay assumed some prior study in the field. Students felt the assignment deadlines for this course are very short compared to when the topics are set – an extra week between the final tutorial on a topic and the assignment would be appreciated. The Teaching Assistants were praised for their support.
- **HPSC2018 History of the Life Sciences**
Students identified problems with small rooms and changing room from week to week. JP explained that rooms are allocated based on the number of students enrolled in the previous year. This year's second year is much bigger than the third year. Next year the admin team will be monitoring this and will request bigger capacity rooms for any modules affected. Otherwise this is an excellent course. Complements the Evolution in Science & Culture course well.

4 Assessment

4.1 Standardisation of assessments

The STS Undergraduate Teaching Committee is considering standardising the length and weightings of assessments. We will talk about the proposals in the meeting but some questions to think about are

- Which is more stressful/ pressured – more assessments that count for a small percentage of your degree – or fewer assessments that carry more weight?
- What do you think is the right balance between coursework and exams for a module, and for the whole of your programme?

Although the students present recognised that students in other departments had fewer essays overall students felt that the current set up for the 1st year worked well. They felt 2 essays helped keep students engaged and allowed them to apply feedback from the 1st essay to the 2nd.

4.2 External Examiners Report

The USSCC is asked to note the following report.

DOC04 External Examiners Report

5 Any other business

5.1 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting not dealt with elsewhere

5.2 Start of session party

JP to send a poll to staff and students regarding availability

5.3 Other issues

It was noted that whenever possible personal students keep the same personal tutor throughout their degree.