



Undergraduate Staff Student Consultative Committee Minutes

07th March 2012, 13:00 – 14:00. Location: Foster Court, Room 112.

The meeting was attended by the Academic Administrator (Chair & Minutes) and four students. A list of students who attended the meeting is available from the Academic Administrator .

1. opening business

1.1 minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the last meeting 7th December 2012

The minutes were agreed.

2. Provision within the department

Students were invited to comment on the following.

2.1 STS Common Room

It was noted that the department plans to apply for funds to paint and install new carpet. Students agreed that this would be welcome. They also suggested comfier/ more relaxed seating (e.g. beanbags or cushions). It was noted that there are currently only 3 computer mice in the common room for the 4 computers.

Action: JP to organise replacement.

2.2 STS Website

It was noted that students were not fully aware of where information for current students can be found on the STS website. It was noted that the Departmental Criteria for Assessment that indicate the general principles of how work is marked can be found in the appendices of STS Student Handbook. This is available online at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/sts/study/bsc/documents/sts_student_handbook.pdf

2.3 Careers Information & Activities

Careers provision for 2nd & 3rd year students was noted. Students felt that information for first years on careers and also finding part time jobs would be welcome. JP informed students that a podcast looking at overall career planning is forthcoming.

2.4 Provision of information

No comments received

2.5 Library provision

Students commented that there are sometimes not enough copies of required books even in the short term loan collections. Where reading is essential for an essay they felt that there should be sufficient copies in the library or the readings should be available on-line. Students gave the example of The Social Shaping of Technology which is required for HPSC1004 essays.

Students felt that the Science Library is often too hot. They noted this is good for sleeping but not terribly helpful as a working environment.

Students commented that the automated check-in check-out machines are often out of order with signs on

saying “An Engineer Has Been Called” but that it often takes weeks for them to be restored to working order.

Students also noted that there are 4 channels to go into the library and only 4 to come out.

2.6 Safety

Students expressed some concern over the recent corridor works to improve lighting on the ground floor of 22 Gordon Square. During this time students had felt worried that they might accidentally knock workmen off their ladders.

2.7 Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer

No comments

2.8 Other comments on provision

Students raised concerns that the refectory do not take cards and that other cafes (e.g. print-room/ Bloomsbury) do not do so consistently. There are often queues at cash machines on campus. Students felt it would be beneficial if the refectory and other cafes were to take cards. Students appreciated that there would probably need to be a minimum payment for this (as in the Student Union Shop) or a charge for taking a debit card to cover costs.

3. Student Feedback

3.1 National Student Survey – to note.

The national student survey is now open and all final year students are encouraged to complete it online (see posters for details). This was noted though no final year students were present.

3.2 Term 1 module feedback

Students are invited to comment on the results of Term 1 Feedback Questionnaires

DOC02 Term 1 Feedback Questionnaires Summary

A summary of feedback was circulated and students were asked to consider the following questions arising from the summary.

- The two lowest scoring questions were
“The Moodle Site Was Useful” and “The Tutorials Helped me Understand the Course Material”.
- Questions to consider.
What do you find useful on a moodle page – what do you not find useful?
In tutorials, what kind of activities would help you understand the course material better?

Students felt tutorial practices vary and so tutorials were dealt with in discussion of individual modules.

Moodle

Students felt it would be very helpful for the department to have a consistent template for courses in moodle as this would help them to find information and to navigate the courses more quickly and easily. It was noted that practices vary a great deal from tutor to tutor – for example some grouping information by subject, some by week. Side-bars and other displays also vary and things like assignment submission are in different places. JP noted that Moodle 2 will be launched over the summer and should improve the look and feel of Moodle.

Action: Moodle template for the department to be discussed at Undergraduate Teaching Committee.

3.3 Feedback on HPSC modules

Students were asked to 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?

- HPSC1003 History of Science
No problems were reported. Students praised the tutor for starting lectures with a re-cap of the last lecture and ending them with a preview of the next lecture. Tutorials. Students sometimes felt that the PGTA was suggesting that there are 'right answers' rather than a slightly more open debate. Students noted that the PGTA sometimes seemed nervous or inexperienced.
- HPSC1004 Introduction to Science Policy Studies
Library issues with a text for this course were noted above. Students were very positive about the seminars and felt they were often more useful than the lectures. They noted that the course title doesn't reflect that the course mostly covers the History of Science Policy and would welcome some current debate. The PGTA's contribution was highly praised.
- HPSC1007 Research methods in STS
Students felt that the module is better this term. They noted that the course feels very cobbled together and like even the people teaching the course weren't very engaged and that the course didn't 'belong' to them.. It was reiterated that the segment on essay writing in Term 1 came too late, after students had handed in work. Students felt that historiography skills might be better taught as part of a history module. The current block of sessions seems to students to be the first one that is actually about research methods.
- HPSC1011 History of Modern Science
Students felt that the timetabling of 4 hours in a row is too long. The 2 hour tutorial was not felt to be particularly helpful. A change to the tutorial where two 1 hour sessions were merged into a 1.5 – 2 hour session because people hadn't been turning up to the second was felt to be unfair. It meant that those students who did turn up now had even longer to concentrate. Students felt that classes with tutorials that need to be split onto two different days should be timetabled in the morning.
- HPSC2002 Science in the Mass Media
No comments received.
- HPSC2003 Topics in the Philosophy of Science
A student commented that the lecturing style is difficult to follow and that the non-participatory style was slightly off putting. It was noted that there had been some discrepancies in policy over word count but this has been resolved.
- HPSC2005 Philosophy of Biology
A student commented that the lecturing style is dense and can be difficult to follow. Especially if technical detail is not presented straightforwardly.
- HPSC2008 Human Sciences in Society
No comments received.
- HPSC2012 Science, Religion and Revolution
This course is well received.
- HPSC2014 Science & Global Citizenship
No comments.
- HPSC2017B Action for Global Citizenship
No comments.
- HPSC3014 Magic to Science
No problems were reported this course.
- HPSC3020 Philosophy of Physics
A student commented that this course was not what they expected and seemed old-fashioned.

- HPSC3022 Special Topics in STS (Science, Art & Philosophy)
No comments.
- HPSC3027 Evolution in Science & Culture.
No comments.
- HPSC3028 Observation & Discovery in Medicine (Advanced Philosophy of Medicine)
No comments.
- HPSC3030 Science and Global History
No comments.
- HPSC3033 Science Communication in Digital Environments
No comments.
- HPSC3004 Dissertation.
No comments
- HPSC3026 Research Project
No comments.
- HPSCM*** level modules
No comments.

4 Assessment

4.1 Standardisation of assessments

The committee noted that the STS Undergraduate Teaching Committee has proposed standardising the assessment of HPSC modules to the Faculty. The Faculty has responded by requesting revisions to the proposal – largely to give equal weighting to examinations & coursework in modules which have both.

6. Election of StARs

6.1 How should we run STS elections for Student Academic Representatives?

Students agreed that the department should ask for volunteers. If there are more than one volunteer for the post an online poll should be organised.

5 Any other business

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

None.

6.2 Other issues

- Decline in attendance from 3rd year students. What are the problems and what, if anything, can the department do to resolve them?
No comments were received on this matter.

- What is the student view on Social Events in the Department
Students felt that the last social had gone well. They noticed that students tended to gather in year groups and it was difficult to break across those boundaries. Students would welcome educational but fun trips. Students also suggested getting some savoury food at future social events.
- Environmental Sustainability. A living roof for substation behind the Gordon Square Terrace is proposed. What do students think of the idea?
Students supported this idea.
- Feedback Service Standard. It was noted that the tutor for HPSC1010 Science in the Spotlight was a long way behind the 4 week service standard. Students felt that as they had a similar project for another 1st year course it would be extremely helpful to have this feedback as soon as possible.
Action: JP to follow up with tutor.
- Course structure.
A student felt that the course structure did not include some subjects such as sociology of physics and history/philosophy of maths. The student also felt that reading around such interests could be better supported by staff.