



**GRADUATE STAFF /STUDENT COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Wednesday 07 February 2018**

**12 Noon**

**Drayton House, Room G26**

**MINUTES**

**Attendance**

Ian Preston	Chair, Graduate Tutor
Fabien Postel-Vinay	MSc Programmes Director
Eric French	MRes/MPhil/PhD Programme Director
Nikolaos Neos	MSc Economics Student Representative
Aonghus O’Cochlain	MSc Economics Student Representative
Peter Reddy	MSc Economics Student Representative
Nana Akoto	MSc Economic Policy Student Representative
Valentina Silva	MRes Economics Student Representative
Andrea Smurra	MPhil Economics Student Representative
David Goll	PhD Economics Student Representative
Carlo Galli	Lead Representative & PhD Economics Student Representative
Frank Sowrey	Economics Departmental Manager
Daniella Harper	MRes/MPhil/PhD Programmes Administrator
Tina Fowler	MSc Programmes Administrator & Committee Secretary

**1. Absences**

- 1.1 Kajal Kumar, MSc Economics Student Representative.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

- 3.1 None.

#### 4. MSc Economics: Student Requests and Concerns

- 4.1 Term 2 options module selection: Sixty percent of MSc students would prefer to sample Term 2 options courses in January and make their final selections after sampling and would be willing to accept the cost of a later published exams timetable as a consequence.
- 4.2 Term 2 timetable clashes: Fifty percent of students report having at least one clash on their timetable. Of those, fifty percent remain unresolved. **Action:** FS to continue to work with Central Timetabling to resolve clashes. FS reports that the volume of timetabling needs and enquiries for the department to process is overwhelming.
- 4.3 Term 2 teaching spaces: Locations are so dispersed that students are inevitably late to some lectures.
- 4.4 Term 2 options combination: Development and Labour and Time Series as a combination of options courses results in no non-clashing Labour tutorial class for students to take.
- 4.5 Students report that some students have back-to-back lectures on Mondays. TF replied that this is the price of MSc students having so much choice of options courses.
- 4.6 Students like the options course promotional videos; dissertation topics volunteered through that medium would be useful too. FPV pointed the students to the Dissertation Topics and Supervisors document specifically for this purpose, but took the point that it would be useful for students to have this information earlier in the year, to guide options module selections. TF also reminded students of the index to the Dissertation Library, which allows students to filter dissertation library entries by supervisor, field, etc. **Action:** FPV to ask Dr Lechene if the list of Dissertation Topics and Supervisors could be circulated earlier next year to accommodate the earlier options course selection deadline.
- 4.7 Office hours: Some popular lectures require more than one office hour each week to accommodate all students' schedules. **Action:** Students to identify non-clashing time slots and present their requests to the lecturers concerned.
- 4.8 Personal tutors: On the subject of the reform proposed for 2018-19, students are satisfied with the plan to have one, or a small pool, of personal tutors for the whole MSc cohort, but continue to want to be able to speak to individual members of the academic staff on a one-to-one basis. **Action:** Students can have such meetings in academic staff office hours.
- 4.9 MSc Common Room: Students would like a bookshelf stocked with the core textbooks. **Action:** Students to supply a textbook list.
- 4.10 Students report that the Term 2 workload varies by course, but had been prepared for that. Overall, the workload is easier to manage compared to Term 1.
- 4.11 R: Students agree with the proposal to replace EViews instruction with the R programming language in 2018-19.
- 4.12 Software Instruction: Students would like a more consolidated approach to the teaching of software use. Currently, there is too much overlap in some areas and not enough coverage in others, especially in Matlab. Furthermore, Matlab instruction may be best confined to Term 2, for

those students who opt to take Macro as an options course. **Action:** FPV to raise this with the lecturers.

4.13 Dissertation supervision agreements: Some students report still waiting to hear from prospective supervisors. **Action:** TF to ask Dr Lechene to remind dissertation supervisors to respond to students' proposals.

## 5. **MSc Economic Policy: Student Requests and Concerns**

5.1 See 4 above.

## 6. **MRes/MPhil/PhD: Student Requests and Concerns**

6.1 MRes core course tutorial classrooms: 26 students cannot fit into tutorial classrooms for 20.

Students report having asked for replacement rooms, with very limited success. **Action:** FS to see if bigger tutorial classrooms are available.

6.2 Lecture recordings: MRes students would like more recordings. **Action:** DH to see if the lecture theatres support the technology.

6.3 Mid-term exam marks: Students need to know how they performed in case they need to apply to other programmes. **Action:** DH to discuss with the MRes Programme Director the possibility of early feedback for those students who might need to look for places on other programmes.

6.4 Funding: The students would like an update. DH reported that budget discussions have started but that some decisions are pending. **Action:** IP will find out more and report back.

6.5 Funding information on the Department's website: Students ask for more accurate information on the website so that they can manage their expectations. DH reported that a meeting with exactly this aim is planned for next week.

6.6 Students are frustrated that the burden of proof is on them to identify and report and try to resolve so many common problems that they encounter as students. FS responded that the department is under-resourced administratively; the solution is additional resources that are not instantly available. A re-organisation of the support system is planned and the recent IQR suggests new ways of working with Estates, Admissions, etc. Students are asked to bear with us in the meantime.

6.7 Website: Students report that the latest cohort of research students still does not appear on the Department's website. **Action:** DH to follow up with the Department's Web Officer.

6.8 Options courses: Students are broadly satisfied with the offering this year. But more Macro courses are in demand. **Action:** EF to talk to Dr Cui.

6.9 Teaching Contract Reform: Students, who are also PGTAs, ask if there are any updates. FS reported having spoken to HR about the market supplement and the overall funding package for PGTAs. It's a work in progress. The compensation model is expected to be refined for 2018-19, but the hourly model will remain due to government policy affecting Tier 4 visa students. **Action:** FS to keep PGTAs up-to-date.

**7. Any other business**

7.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results (tabled): IP will discuss with students in a separate meeting, due to time constraints.

7.2 The meeting was closed.