



Undergraduate Teaching Committee meeting Minutes

13/03/2013 1.15 – 3 pm, Rockefeller G02

Attendees:

Chair: Dr Brian Balmer

DUGT: Dr Emma Tobin

Secretary: Jo Pearson

Students: 7 students attended. A list of attendees is kept in the department.

1. opening business

1.1 minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the last meeting 28th November 2012.

DOC01 28.11.12

Matters arising from the minutes.

BB reported on the following actions.

1.1

Action: BB to request tutors keep to a minimal template with syllabus and assessment submission in the same place.

BB confirmed that this had been raised at UTC and that this has also been noted in a recent moodle audit. BB reported that the faculty's E-learning will be giving notes on best practice to staff shortly.

3.2 Feedback on module week/ registration.

Action: BB to raise issue of mentoring at the UTC.

UTC response: the department is happy to provide support where it can to the mentors, for example booking rooms, but it the UTC felt it wasn't appropriate to make it a formal part of timetable. It was suggested that next years mentors could bring some second years to the induction week session who could confirm that they regretted not taking advantage of the scheme.

5.3 Other issues

JP confirmed that comments regarding South Wing Toilets and the toilets in the Science library had been passed on. It was noted that there is a leak in the Science library toilets so water accumulates on the floor when it rains.

1.2 Internal Quality Review

BB thanked students who participated in the Internal Quality Review. He reported that the panel were very impressed with students who turned up and how they engaged with the programme. No major problems with the programme or quality assurance measures were identified at undergraduate level.

2. Provision within the department

2.1 STS Common Room

The common room is generally good. It was noted that a recent problem with the computer monitors has been resolved. The improved common room is now often busy. Students confirmed that students at different levels interacted OK in the common room.

2.2 STS Website

Students reported that unless they were specifically looking for something did not often visit the STS website. Students felt that it was not always easy to find things by chance and that they tend to rely on receiving e-mails for information. The way the events calendar shows past events was felt to be confusing.

Action: JP to investigate archiving previous events in the STS calendar.

2.3 Careers Information & Activities

Students reported that the alumni event before return to session party was good. Students found it particularly helpful to get information on an international internship as it is sometimes difficult to get careers support outside of London/ outside the UK. BB asked students if there was anything in particular they would like to see an alumni speaking about. It was felt that variety is helpful as some students don't know what kind of career they would like to go into and hearing various options is helpful. BB/ET suggested central careers events. BB asked students if they felt that STS did enough to highlight transferrable skills that were being taught. Students felt it would be helpful if these skills were highlighted when taught on modules.

2.4 Provision of information

2nd year students asked when they would get information about dissertation planning. BB responded that previously students were asked to line up supervisors by the end of summer term in their second year or they would be assigned a tutor and a project.

Action: BB to address dissertations communication for next year. BB to raise for UTC. BB & JP to organise a dissertation information session for the revision week timetable.

Students complained that the official exam timetables are published too late. In other institutions it was noted that exam timetables are given out at the beginning of the year. The impact of this meant that it was difficult to organise internships and travel arrangements. It was noted that revision week is not common across all departments. Students asked if there was any way to have exams for Term 1 modules in the first week of the spring term – BB reported that this had been tried previously but found not to work. Students suggested that they would prefer to have a longer summer term with a revision week for all students/modules.

Action: BB to feed this back to Faculty/ exams.

2.5 Library provision

Continued problems with the toilet in the Science library were noted (the roof leaks when it rains). Students suggested that the Science Library toilets are perhaps not checked often enough considering the 24 hour opening so paper towels etc run out. Students welcomed being able to go to library at 24 hours. Students felt it would make sense for the main library to have self check-out/ return stations like the Science library. Students were aware that the drop box was available but felt that this often led to delays in books being taken off their accounts. Students felt that having self check-out in the main library would require less staffing freeing up issue desk staff to deal with problems & special issues.

Action: Raise self-service issue desks again with the library representative.

2.6 Safety

Students appreciated that the area behind 22 Gordon Square has been cleaned of the moss that was developing and this area is now less slippery when it rains.

Action: JP to pass comments on to estates.

2.7 Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer

It was noted that Kate Hickson is the DEOLO. BB reported that the department's equal opportunities strategy was reviewed at the beginning of the spring term

3. Student Feedback

3.1 National Student Survey – to note.

The National Student Survey is currently open for Final Year undergraduates at www.thestudentsurvey.co.uk. Final year students reported that their peers did not see the point of filling out the survey that it was “just another survey”

Action: JP to highlight reasons for filling out the survey in communications.

Students complained that forms given for feedback not relevant to all module. Not enough breadth to give an accurate reflection about the course. BB noted that forms have to strike a balance between uniformity and getting evaluation particular to the course.

Action: BB to raise feedback form for non-lecture based courses at UTC.

Action: JP to ask students for feedback on the “non-standard”/ “practical course” feedback form.

3.3 Feedback on HPSC modules

- HPSC1003 Philosophy of Science 1
No comments received.
- HPSC1004 Science Policy
No comments received.
- HPSC1008 Fundamentals of Science Communication
No comments received.
- HPSC1011 History of Modern Science
No comments received.

- HPSC2002 Science in the mass Media
Students noted that because the tutor is not full time it was sometimes hard to get in contact with her – in on Fridays then she has a Skype however it was noted that the tutor is good at answering e-mails. It was noted that sometimes tutor is unclear on the general policies and has to check. Students felt that the media analysis assessment which included framing & coding was unfamiliar to a lot of students and was not clearly enough explained in advance. Other than this it's a really good course.
- HPSC2014 Science Policy Issues in Global Perspective
Students felt that this is a good course. The teaching assistant was praised for the cover provided while the tutor is off sick.
- HPSC2017B Global Citizenship in Action
Students complained about the time constraints of this course for a project where you're encouraged to be ambitious. One group have picked an action that cannot be achieved in 10 weeks. Students felt they have to choose between carrying out a project in order to get a good grade or do something that meets the objectives of the course. This course would work really well as a one year course as it is reading week before students can really start to organise the project. In addition the course tries to fit in theoretical work in addition to organising the project. Individual assignment – took time out from the group stuff.
BB asked if the course works as a compulsory module? Students felt it was great from HPS perspective that it is a practical course where students gain practical skills that could be useful to employer. The course was praised for getting students to interact with the world outside UCL.

Students felt there were too many pieces of assessment for this module which took time away from being able to organise the action itself.

- **HPSC2022 Philosophy of Social Science**
Some students reported finding this module very difficult. Students noted that there were a lot of students in this class who are very specialised in Philosophy of Science. BB asked if students felt there were problems with the level of the course and asked if it should be a 3rd year course. Students felt that it would help if HPSC2003 could be a pre-requisite for this course. This would also cut down on the overlap. Students felt this course was the equivalent of some of the 3rd year level courses some students are encouraged to take in the 2nd year. Students liked the way the seminars are presented by students each week and felt this helped everybody to really engage with the work.
- **HPSC2023 Sociology of Science**
Students would like the seminars to be more interactive like the HPSC2001 seminars as these really helped students to engage with the material. Interactive seminars were felt to be especially useful with more difficult theoretical concepts as they gave students the opportunity to apply the concepts to real issues outside the lecture. 3rd year students commented that the starting level of the course is a bit low and doesn't delve as deep as expected for a year 3 course. Others felt that they would rather have a week or two of revision/ repetition as a starting level than find themselves thrown in the deep end and not able to understand the course.
- **HPSC2008 Human Sciences in Society**
No comments received.
- **HPSC3010 Popularisation of the Physical Sciences**
No comments received.
- **HPSC3022 Frontiers of Knowledge in HPS**
Students felt this course going very well and that the tutor is a great teacher and very supportive. However, the course repeated a lot of very basic things that all done in 1st year and felt like a watered down version of some first year courses – e.g. science & gender, social shaping of science. Students commented that the assessment is a 5000 word essay but there are a limited number of non-Russian sources.
- **HPSC3027 Evolution in Science & Culture**
The tutor's enthusiasm was praised. Students were frustrated that the hand outs continue beyond what's covered in the lectures and complained that the tutor goes into detail around the 2nd or 3rd point and ends up not getting through all the lecture material on the hand-out. Students complained that the assessment doesn't have formal questions and they felt the topics suggested don't relate to the content of the lectures. Students praised the Teaching Assistant for the help provided with essays. Some students queried why the course was compulsory as students have covered Darwin in years 1 & 2 and this course being compulsory prevented them following their interests.
- **HPSC3028 Advanced Philosophy of Medicine**
Students felt this course got better once you get away from Fleck. Though it is a really good course there are too many students for the reading group concept to work fully. It was noted that the room isn't big enough. Students suggested that if the course is run again in reading group format that the group should be split. Students reported finding the assessment format and the tutor's approach quite daunting and noted that there were a limited number of sources. Students requested that the tutor types feedback on essays as they found the tutor's handwriting difficult to read.
- **HPSC3030 Science & Global History**
Students felt this to be a really interesting course, very engaging. Lectures are well thought out and well organised. Students noted that feedback yet for HPSC3029 in Term 1 has not been received yet. It was also noted that feedback has not been received for HPSC3007 in term 1 either.
Action: BB to follow up feedback with the tutors concerned.
- **HPSC3034 Science, Art & Philosophy**
No comments received.

- HPSC3004/HPSC3026 Dissertation/ Research Project

Students complained that the requirements of the writing sample were not clear. Students would like to be told in advance who is marking the writing samples. Students initially thought increasing the number of deadlines made the dissertation more difficult and the very early presentation seems irrelevant, but students subsequently felt that it has helped to have mile-stones. Students felt the process doesn't work as well for Philosophy dissertations.

- HPSCM*** Level Courses
No comments were received.

4 Annual Monitoring

4.1 Student Evaluation Questionnaire's Summary

The summary was noted.

DOC02 SEQ Summary 2011-12

5 Any other business

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

5.2 Other issues

Assessment.

BB asked for student views on the amount of assessment. The department has been shifting towards more coursework assessment. Students reported feeling that exams were irrelevant as they learn how to argue more in coursework. Students also felt that they get more coursework than other departments for example Philosophy department sets one exam or one essay per module. Economics have coursework every week but it's not counted towards the final mark whereas all STS coursework is formally assessed. In Chemistry students have to submit lab reports but they're not counted and one lab report late or messed up it doesn't affect their overall result as much. The amount of assessment varies greatly between courses. Eg. Global Citizenship in Action has lots of assessment. Students felt that different types of assessment are good but this often meant they were tackling something for the first time. The pieces of coursework are individually really interesting but all together it can be overwhelming. Students would like to see a more gradual approach to coursework over the whole module with tutor's starting talking about the essay from the first class so people can start selecting what they're going to work on. Students felt that submitting abstracts, essay plan, first drafts for comment really helpful. Some students commented that the weighting 2nd & 3rd year should be the same.

Students reported receiving conflicting advice on taking 3rd year courses in the 2nd year. Relative shortage of level 2 courses in history meant that students were forced into taking more third year options than they felt was ideal.

Students complained that the new UCL hard word count policy is ridiculous. Students felt that this policy treats them like schoolchildren and that a rule that allowed +/- 10% on word counts should be sufficient.

Students complained that the late penalties were also ridiculous with students being penalised 5 marks for missing a deadline by 20 minutes.