



Undergraduate Staff Student Consultative Committee - Minutes

28th November 2012, 1:00-3:00. Location: 16 – 18 Gordon Square, Room B10

Students who are unable to attend the meeting but wish to raise an issue can e-mail comments to sts-aa@ucl.ac.uk

Attendees

Chair: Brian Balmer – Undergraduate Tutor

Secretary: Jo Pearson

7 students attended the meeting. 4 students sent comments by e-mail. A list of attendees is available on request from the department.

1. opening business

1.1 minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the last meeting 7th March 2012.

DOC01 Minutes 07/03/2012

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters arising from the minutes.

Action 3.2 Moodle template. It was noted that this was discussed at UTC. Students again commented that although they could see that different courses required different set-up depending on the course content – they would still like to have a minimum amount of consistency. In particular for the syllabus and the essay submission to always be in the same place. Students suggested that this should go in the first ‘topic’ of the moodle course.

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

Students also asked that where a reading was not able to be digitised or a link to an online version provided tutors should note in moodle that this is the case. Students requested that essential readings be digitised and available via a link on moodle/ on moodle where possible.

Action: Brian to raise the issue at UTC

1.2 Terms of reference

This document is about how the committee should be run and who attends it. It has to be reviewed and agreed each year.

DOC02 STS USSC Terms of Reference

The terms of reference were agreed.

2. Provision within the department

Students are invited to comment on the following.

2.1 STS Common Room

Students were very pleased with the new common room. It was noted that the printer is still not working.

Action: JP to follow up with IT re: printer connection.

2.2 STS Website

The STS module catalogue was praised by students from outside STS. Students felt that the scheme of award for current 2nd & 3rd years is confusing – particularly guidance where compulsory modules are not running.

2.3 Careers Information & Activities

Students were asked to comment about poor attendance at a recent CV workshop with 12 students signing up and 6 students turning up. This was found to be caused by a schedule conflict that students didn't realise they had. In future the department is asked to avoid scheduling careers events that conflict with module teaching. Students appreciated the individual podcasts but felt that it would be nice if there was something a more general careers guidance event for 2nd years. It was noted that a general guidance can be organised via the careers service. Students reporting feeling put off using the careers service because you have to go along at 9am to book an appointment.

Note: Students can telephone the careers service to book a short guidance appointment

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/students/advice/shortguidance>

Students felt the following events/ guidance would be helpful

- an alumni event. It was noted that an alumni event is planned for the start of term 2
- an event or specific guidance for 2nd years/ getting internships
- an event hosted by STS highlighting careers related to science that are not lab based or science research jobs.

Action: BB to raise with careers officers at UTC

2.4 Provision of information

No problems were reported.

2.5 Library provision

Students felt strongly that the 10 book limit is too small. They commented that they do not have one essay to do at a time and do not take out just one book per essay.

Students expressed frustration that the Main library has no out of hours returns system. This facility exists in the science library. However it was noted that the automated machines in the Science Library are often out of order.

Students continue to complain that the Science Library is too hot making it ideal for sleeping not for working.

Action: Comments to be passed to the library representative

2.6 Safety

No comments were received regarding safety in the department.

2.7 Equal Opportunities Liaison Officer

It was noted that Kate Hickson is the EOLO for Science & Technology Studies.

3. Student Feedback

3.1 National Student Survey – to note.

To note. The number of responses for STS was deemed too small for a separate report. The MAPS Faculty report is available on request. It was also noted that NSS statistics are presented on the <http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/> aggregated with feedback from other departments. Students felt strongly that this meant the department would be constantly misrepresented in the statistics and requested that this be noted on the department website.

3.2 Feedback on Induction Week & module registration?

Students complained of several issues with module selection.

A timetable clash between HPSC3002 and HPSC2018 prevented many students taking both modules. 2nd year students complained that the cancellation of HPSC2012 and the relatively small number of courses running at level 2 meant that students choices were severely restricted. It was noted that some of the problems this year were due to new staff recruitment and in future years planning should be easier.

Some problems with the mentoring system were noted. The first years are not using the mentoring system resulting in mentors waiting for students who don't turn up. When this happens mentors don't get paid. Various options were suggested including putting mentoring sessions in the timetable. Also suggesting that tutors give over one tutorial for each of the Term 1 first year courses to the mentors for peer assisted learning.

Action: BB to raise at the UTC.

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: Antiquity to Enlightenment
No comments received.
- HPSC1007 Investigating Science & Society
No comments received
- HPSC1010 Revealing Science
Comments received by e-mail in general praised the course and the quality of the teaching describing it as engaging and interesting. Students felt that some of the lecture notes lacked detailed. The tutorials were felt to be less helpful and students commented it would be useful to discuss the lecture topics more and for essay guidance to be more specific to the course. It was felt that students could be given instructions for coursework earlier and that these instructions could be more clear.
- HPSC1012 Sources in History of Science
No comments received.
- HPSC2001 Policy Issues in the Life Sciences
Students found this course to be very interesting. The lecture/ seminar format works really well and students present really enjoy the seminar activities. Students felt a seminar/ tutorial dealing with writing reviews would be helpful as this is a different format of assessment from essay writing.
- HPSC2003 Philosophy of Science 2
Students thanked the tutor for bringing snacks to the 9am lecture. Students felt this course suffered slightly from its placing in the timetable at 9 am in the morning and also on a Friday early afternoon. Students felt that the tutor was slightly frustrated to not be getting more feedback from the group however the students reported that they felt this was because there is a lot of material to cover in the course and much of it is

quite difficult. Students commented that as they often requested clarification of difficult topics in seminars these sessions sometimes turned into a second lecture.

- HPSC2008 Human Sciences in Society
No comments received.
- HPSC2016 Globalisation in Theory & Practice
Students noted that this module doesn't appear to have a syllabus in moodle. The reading lists are confusing – there is no specific reading list for the course – but there are often 20 readings listed in moodle per week. It was felt that the teaching doesn't flow between the two tutors and that overall the first half of term it was difficult to see what issues were being focussed on and their relationship with STS. Students would prefer overhead slides to contain bullet points as well as picture etc – they found it difficult to organise/ take notes around SL's picture heavy slides. Students also commented that there is a lot of material delivered very quickly in the lectures. It was noted that the second half of term seems more clearly related to STS topics. Students suggested that if this course is co-taught in future the tutors should alternate weeks.
- HPSC2017A Global Citizenship in Action
Students felt that not enough emphasis is placed on the short amount of time they have to design and complete a project at the beginning of the module.
- HPSC2018 History of the Life Sciences
No comments received.
- HPSC2020 Philosophy of Medicine
Students commented that the tutor's absence has prevented them being able to submit plans/drafts of essays. Students commented that in general where a piece of work contributes 50% of a module mark they should be able to submit a plan or draft for comment as standard practice.
Action: BB to raise submission of draft plans at UTC.
- HPSC3002 Science, Warfare & Peace
Students praised the seminar structure. They also liked the alternation of lectures and appreciated the session where the tutors were both there and had discussions. Submitting an abstract was felt to be a very useful exercise.
- HPSC3003 Communication of Scientific Ideas
Students are very positive about this course and commented that it feels like the kind of thing that is missing from some University degrees. Steve's humour was praised. Students appreciated the opportunity to submit multiple drafts. They felt that an additional session on feature writing would be helpful. Students appreciated that the course is 100% coursework but did feel that the workload is high. Students suggested mixing up the groups between coursework pieces so that the students are not always working with the same group.
- HPSC3004/HPSC3026 Dissertation/ IBSc research project
It was noted that students feel the process is currently working well.
- HPSC3007 Topics in the History of the Physical Sciences
Students commented that they enjoyed the research responsibilities that went with this course. However the workload expectations and difficulty made some students feel it was definitely a level 3 course and not suitable for second years. Comments received by e-mail praised the course as an excellent, if challenging, preparation for undertaking independent research.
- HPSC3020 Philosophy of Natural Science
The very good student to tutor ratio was praised. This is a difficult module but students found it very interesting. Students really liked the process of submitting an essay plan and first draft etc for comment.
- HPSC3029 Medicine, Disease & History
Students commented that this is a great course. Once again students commented that the style of

powerpoint presentations with more pictures than text/bullet points was not particularly helpful for revision of lectures or catching up.

- HPSC3032 Investigating Contemporary Science
No comments were received about this course.
- HPSC3036 Governing Emerging Technologies
Students commented that this course is really good. The students are enjoying the blogging assignment. Students would appreciate the opportunity to hand in an essay plan or drafts.
- HPSCM---- level courses
No comments received.

4 Annual Monitoring

4.1 External Examiners Report

The USSCC is asked to note the following report.

DOC03 External Examiners Report

4.2 Programme Organisers Report

The USSCC is asked to note the following report.

DOC04 Programme Organisers Report

The documents were noted.

5 Any other business

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

None

5.2 Start of session party

No issues raised. Details of this session will be circulated shortly.

5.3 Other issues

Students commented that there are two 3,000 word essays worth 50% of a module mark due on the same day. It was noted that the department tries where possible to spread deadlines out. However the department will be asked to look at the size and weighting of essays when considering this.

Some students commented that having assignments due on the first day of the next term was difficult as there are administrative and 'back to university' issues to sort out at this time.

Action: BB will raise the issue at UTCL.

Students complained that only one hand-dryer in the ladies toilet in the South Cloisters is working.

Action: JP to pass comment onto Estates.

Students complained that the toilets in the Science Library are disgusting.

Action: JP to pass comment onto Estates & Library representative.

5.4 Draw

The draw was carried out.