

**PWYLLGOR YMGYNGHOROL I STAFF AC  
IS-RADDEDIGION**

**STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE**

Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher 13 Tachwedd 2013

Date: Wednesday 13 November 2013

Amser: 2.00y.h

Time: 2.00pm

Lleoliad: Ystafell Gorllewin,  
Adeilad Gwleidyddiaeth Ryngwladol

Place: West Room,  
International Politics Building

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***MINUTES OF THE STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE***

<b>Present:</b>	Anwen Elias	Chair/Director of Undergraduate Studies
	Charalampos Efstathopoulos	Deputy Director of Undergraduate Studies
	Christian Enemark	Deputy Director of Undergraduate Studies
	Brieg Powel	Director of Welsh Medium Studies
	Glesni Davies	Academic Administrator
	Lillian Stevenson	Library Representative
	Stephanie Gwillim	Undergraduate Secretary/Minute Taker
	Robin Warren	First Year Representative
	Omar Saleh	First Year Representative
	Fahreen Syeda	Second Year Representative
	Benjamin Holihead	Third Year Representative
	Benjamin Whitlock	Third Year Representative
	Sarah Then Bergh	International Students Representative
	Arthur Belsey	Employability Representative
	Maciej Blasiak	Joint Honours Representative
	Jonathon Naylor	Exchange Student Representative

**Apologies:** - Kamila Stullerova Deputy Director of Undergraduate Studies

**Absent:-** Alexandra Hird Second Year Representative

## 1. Welcome and Introduction from the Director of Undergraduate Studies

Dr Anwen Elias welcomed everyone to the first SSCC meeting of the Academic year and introduced herself. Anwen then congratulated everyone for getting elected, and noted how important the role is.

Anwen informed everyone the meeting is being recorded to help with minute taking.

**Action:** AE/GD to find a bigger room for next meeting.

## 2. Matters concerning Information Services within the University (Lillian Stephenson)

The library is seeking ideas about how to use the space that has become vacant in the Hugh Owen Library. Possibilities include making the Law Section of the Hugh Owen Library a group study area, then level E and F to be silent study; the ground floor will not be silent.

Lillian would like feedback on these ideas, and hear of any others.

Jonathan Naylor expressed a concern with the number of computers in the library; Lillian stated they are thinking about re-arranging the layout of computers within the Hugh Owen library.

Benjamin Holihead raised the issue of noise levels in the library. Lillian noted that there is no staff on the middle floor and they have machines on the upper floor that register noise above a certain level. The Keele system of having a number on every work bench that you can text to report noise was discussed; Lillian said they will look into this.

Jonathan Naylor and Benjamin Whitlock noted that students have been having problems with using printers. Lillian stated that the department is very good in letting them know when essay deadlines are.

Fahreen Syeda noted that stated during the talks given on borrowing books left the students unclear, Lillian stated she will put forward the problem.

Sarah Berg asked if it is possible to have all Interpol text books online because we are a large department and to extend online loans, Lillian noted that:

1. There is a policy on buying books,
2. Information is sent to lectures about the policy
3. Some of their suppliers are using credits so every time someone uses an eBook it uses a credit.

Maciej Blasiak expressed some text books are old versions and new versions don't come in time.

Robin Warren asked if there is any way that the student card can be used in the National Library, Lillian states that she doesn't think it would as the Aber card is used for so many different things so you would still have to register with the National Library.

The need to raise awareness of the National Library was discussed. Benjamin Whitlock suggested if someone from the National library could go to freshers' week so that students could sign up; another option would be going to lectures as freshers' week is very daunting.

**ACTION:** Students to forward any suggestions for using HO space within two weeks; AE to forward these to Lillian Stephenson.

### 3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 25 April 2013

Under item 2:- Involvement with Careers service in the department should happen earlier in the Academic year.

- Bev Herring has gone and talked to students in the welcome meetings
- Bev is in the foyer between 1-2 every two weeks
- Information is in the 'What Not to Miss in Interpol' handbook
- Sessions on Internships and CV writing organised

Under item 4:- Introducing Study Skills sessions into a new Part One module

- IP10820 Approaching the Political introduced in Semester One
- Seminars for this module have skills sessions built into them
- Anwen has talked to the Module Convener and PTTS and they seem to think it works well
- At the end of the module there will be a chance to collect feedback from all students on the module

Suggestions for improving the module further included reminding students of what they should be doing for the skills element of the course and making reading groups mandatory. Session where students get to know each other would be useful.

Under item 6:- Request to put the early submission box more in advance

This has already been implemented.

Under item 7:- Consider using student number as form of verification on electronic copies rather than essay cover sheets

Anwen to report back at next meeting.

Comment on lack of European modules on the programme

In the last round of job recruitment, candidates were sought in the area of Europe, but no appointment was made. As a consequence the European Politics UG degree scheme is no longer open to recruitment, as we are not able to offer sufficient module choice in this area.

Anwen said she is still aware that our teaching is very poor in the area of European Politics.

Benjamin Whitlock expressed that they changed European Security to European Politics and there were a lot of students who wanted to take European Security. Anwen stated the reason we had to go back to that module is because it is the core module for the degree scheme. As we have pulled the degree scheme we are still offering optional modules in European. Anwen then stated if there is interest in this then next year we might put something on in European Security next semester like round table or discussion group we can consider that.

Bethan asks if the department will be recruiting anyone who specializes in European Politics, and Anwen answers at the moment we don't have any plans to recruit any more staff if we do this will be something we will consider.

Arthur asked if this is the same problem as with the degree scheme for Interpol and Third World as this year there is no modules for Third World. Anwen answers the situation is different as the

people that have been teaching on that degree scheme are on research leave, we have recruited a new member of staff so there will be more modules on offer in the future. Anwen then states that we are in the process of rethinking that degree scheme in terms of renaming it, Lucy Taylor is leading on this and she will be consulting with students.

**Action:** AE to organise meeting with students on the European Politics scheme to discuss possible departmental events (eg talks or discussion groups etc)

#### Under item 8:- The new role of the institute

The Institute of Geography, History and Politics has been up and running since the 1 August this year. More details to be provided under DUS business.

#### Clash of Essay and Dissertation deadlines

This has been addressed for 2013-14.

### **4. Items from the Director of Undergraduate Studies**

#### Item 1 : Developments in IGHP:

Anwen provides an update of developments in the establishment of IGHP. This includes an overview of the organisational structure (flow charts circulated), and the different responsibilities of IGHP Directors (including IGHP DUS, which is also a role undertaken by Anwen in 2013-14). The UG rep for IGHP is Will Atkinson from DGES. Anwen notes that the creation of IGHP is unlikely to have a big impact on student studies; the only change thus far is that unfair practice hearings used to happen in the department and will now happen at Institute level. Also, it will hopefully become easier for the students from the three departments to take modules from all three departments; this is work in progress.

Bethan asked about the funding arrangements within IGHP, but Anwen noted that this remains unclear because the financial model is still being finalised.

Maciej raised the the implication of creating the institute for joint-honours students (especially when some of the degree is taken outside of the institute). Anwen explained that degree schemes with departments outside the institute will be retained. The aim is to make it easier for students to take modules from the departments within the Institute and outside the Institute.

#### Item 2

##### New staff:

Anwen states that we have got eight new staff since the committee last met, we put three new modules on in Semester One and there will be four in Semester Two.

#### Item 3

##### Results of NSS

1. Anwen states that the result is an overall satisfaction, which increased from 90% last year and 91% this year, but when you break down the different components the results are not so good and the department declined in all component areas of the NSS. Some of the issues of the satisfaction are out of our control, for example the timetable; the University has taken steps to resolve this issue. Anwen then explains that the NSS is important for how the department is perceived from the outside world, and has implications for recruitment. The

Department takes this seriously, and discussions have identified three key areas that need to be addressed:

- i. **Assessment and Feedback** – Aim for next academic year is to undertake a whole scale review of assessment and feedback. Also trial Turnitin. Focus groups will be organised in Semester Two to explore perceptions of, and expectations from, assessment and feedback. Many reps raised concerns about the feedback process and format.
- ii. **Library Resources** – This is an area that we did badly on this year, and we need to examine what the problem is and what we can do about it. A working group is to be established to undertake this work, and will involve students in making recommendations to the department. Student reps raised concerns about accessibility of electronic material via the library, and were advised to alert Lillian Stevenson and the DUS to any problems.
- iii. **Academic support and personal development** – Ways of encouraging students to make more use of office hours are being investigated. There were some suggestions from the Reps, e.g. scheduling one-to-one meetings every semester; recording of lectures. Reps also flagged up the value of students providing their peers with support, albeit not necessarily via a formal mentoring system. Interpol Society is already offering such support on study skills.
  - Also, several initiatives have been brought forward in relation to employability via the IGHP Employability Working Group. There was a discussion about how students could provide their peers with support, both for their academic studies and in terms of enhancing their employability.
  - Plans for Open Meeting for UG students in early December were outlined and discussed. In future years, it is intended to make such meetings a regular feature of the departmental calendar. A discussion was had about how student expectations had changed since the introduction of £9k fees. Reps felt in general that having such a meeting was a good idea.

**ACTION:**

1. Student Reps to work on proposals for peer support for consideration at next SSCC.
2. DUS to take several issues raised forward to the Department's Learning and Teaching Committee (including one-to-one meetings with personal tutors, how to make better use of personal tutors, and continuous feedback on academic work).

**5. General matters raised by the undergraduate studies**

Everything discussed

**6. Matters raised by First Years Representatives**

Everything discussed

**7. Matters raised by Second Year Representatives**

Everything discussed

**8. Matters raised by Final Year Representatives**

Benjamin Whitlock wanted to touch on the subject that a lot of third year students are applying for Internships, and that we received an email yesterday about the Internship but the deadline is Friday it is not enough time to put a good application in. A discussion was had on a more effective way of communicating internship opportunities. One possibility is a notice board in the foyer, another is

developing a web presence for employability for the Institute and use that as an electronic notice board. Jonathan states that the careers email him every day about internship and possible jobs anyone can join up.

Maciej raises the issue of emails being Welsh first and the top subject is very long so you don't see the English. Anwen states that it is University policy to put Welsh first. Anwen then states we can raise it with careers about shorter headings in the subject box.

Arthur suggests that putting a notice board by seminar rooms as students waiting for seminars will read it while waiting.

### **9. Matters raised by Welsh Speaking Representative**

Bethan asks about the introduction of Cascade calculator on Blackboard. Glesni answers that it is released on their record after semester one exam results.

Bethan raised issues about submitting essays at weekends. Glesni and Anwen said using the letter box outside would be safer and to email a member of staff to let them know that you have submitted your hardcopy through the outside letter box.

### **10. Matters Raised by Joint Honours Representative**

Maciej raises the issue of insufficient modules that complement each other (especially politics and economics). Anwen answers that this is an area where students have requested modules for a long time and finally will have a capacity of staff to provide this. Anwen states that some of the meetings she has been to in the University want to make it more flexible for students to take other modules in other departments. It is something we need to improve.

**ACTION:** Anwen states that she will take it to the learning and teaching committee as we are in the process of reviewing all of our degree schemes to see if they can deliver what they promise.

### **11. Matters raised by International Students Representative**

Sarah raises a concern about essay deadline clashes. Anwen says we can look to avoid three essays of longer word length coming in on same day.

Sarah mentions the cost of the Crisis Game, which is too expensive for most students. Anwen answers this year is the first time that the Crisis Games did not recruit because of this issue. We are thinking about bringing down the cost to students.

Concern that feedback is published too late for international students, and these students also need to know about the exam timetable a lot sooner as we need to book flights. Glesni notes that this is set by the timetable office.

Maciej asks why the reading week before exams was canceled. Anwen notes that this gives teaching staff time to mark work and it allows students time to prepare before the new semester.

The issue of anonymous feedback was discussed, specifically the idea of a box in the foyer as well as a notice board. Suggestion for the DUS and the reps to get copies of any feedback provided.

**ACTION:** AE to look at the word length to avoid too many lengthy essays coming in at the same time.

## **12. Matters raised by the employability Representative**

Arthur notes the problem of apathy among students in relation to careers and employability, as well as the lack of foreign language capacity (which is necessary for careers in international politics). The suggestion was made to change Bev Herring's drop in sessions to half-past-the hour, so that student with lectures can attend.

IGHP 'Relive the Experience' competition is discussed. Other initiatives for this year include: funds to support students who arrange their own Internships (uptake to be monitored and if popular, more funding could be considered); financial support for parliament placement scheme; some money for alumni talks; alumni mentoring scheme. Future plans include establishing internship opportunities for IGHP students.

Benjamin Holihead asks if they could do more stuff on further education (Masters and PHD).

Jonathan refers to the Skills Grids provided in Module Handbooks, and asks that these be made more prominent; Anwen suggested that reps could think about how to re-work these, for discussion at next committee. Discussion follows on the assessment of key skills.

The AberAward was discussed, namely a bronze, silver and gold award depending on different extra-curricular activities which can go towards a certificate. Benjamin Holihead refers to the PDP, a University program to encourage undergraduate students to think from the outset about their career development.

**Action 1:** AE to talk to Bev Herring about changing drop in hours.

**Action 2:** AE to look into events to publicise Masters and PhD opportunities

## **13. Any other business**

Jonathan voiced it could be useful to have names of the other committees representatives. Anwen answers she can circulate them and put it them Blackboard.

**Action:** AE to make names of other student reps available.

Anwen then thanks everyone for attending and that the next meeting will be in March. Meeting Adjourned at 17.15