

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

**STAFF STUDENT CONSULTATIVE  
COMMITTEE**

Dyddiad: Dydd Mercher 24 Hydref 2012

Date: Wednesday 24 October 2012

Amser: 2.15

Time: 2.15

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>	Lucy Taylor	Chair/Director of Undergraduate Studies
	Judith Shepherd	Academic Administrator
	Elin Royles	Welsh Medium member of teaching staff
	Lillian Stevenson	Library Representative
	Glesni Davies	Undergraduate Secretary/Minute taker
	Jonjo Robb	First Year Representative
	Joe Worthington	First Year Representative
	Sebastian Balcombe	Second Year Representative
	Ben Holihead	Second Year Representative
	Grace Burton	Third Year Representative
	Andras Lederer	Third Year Representative
	Sophie Davies	Joint Honours Representative
	Jacob Ellis	Welsh Medium Representative
	Lucy Sharman-Davies	Exchange Students Representative
	Henrik Jenssen	International Students Representative

**Apologies:-** Lukas Brueck Exchange Students Representative

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

Dr Lucy Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained a little about how the SSCC works, she explained that this would be a very important year due to the University re-configuration into Institutes so the student opinion and student voice would be very important, she explained that instead of the usual two SSCC meetings for the year there would be three this year and also some SSCC reps would also have the opportunity to attend the exam wash up session at the end of term on the 26 June so there would be four opportunities to voice an opinion. Dr Taylor also explained that the committee structure is slightly different from last year, the meeting had been arranged slightly earlier so that information from this meeting can be fed into the Learning and Teaching Committee that is scheduled for next week.

## **2. Matters concerning Information Services within the University**

Lillian Stevenson went through a few details from matters arising from the last meeting, Opening hours – these are continuing until Midnight and also there are extended opening hours on the weekend, it is also planned to keep extending opening hours during exam periods.

On the issue of noise, the 'Floor walking' is continuing, level F is currently a quiet zone, a proposal has been made for the Law Library to be a quiet zone also – Lillian was keen to get the views of the reps in regards to this – the general view from most of the reps was that this was a good idea, although Andras Lederer suggested that perhaps it would be an idea to address the noise level on Level F first as this was still a problem. Several issues were raised on group working, it was the general consensus that there was a lack of groups study space in the library, Jacob Ellis asked if the Department could provide some provision on this – Lucy Taylor agreed to look into this.

Lillian Stevens noted that more power sockets had been put on level F and E, this had not been done in the Law Library yet as it is still uncertain of the move to Llanbadarn.

On the issue of reading lists – Lillian Stevenson noted that the library had done an audit on 3 modules from each department at Undergraduate level, the outcome of this for International Politics that out of 600 items (over three modules) that only 12 items were found not in stock and this was rectified by purchasing £242 on 2 digitised materials and nearly £300 on books. It was noted that out of all disciplines only 8% of materials were not in the University Library. Lucy Taylor noted that when staff put on modules they are encouraged to check that the readings are in the Library for students to locate.

It was noted that the library ran a scheme on Primo last November where that anything that was viewed by students a few times was purchased automatically; this scheme would be starting again this November. Also, it was noted that purchasing would be opened up to students on a trial basis from November.

Andras Lederer expressed a concern about printing in the library on essay deadlines; he asked if staff could ensure that there is enough paper, ink etc especially on the essay deadline days, he also asked if perhaps there could be a designated computer just for printing on those days. Jacob Ellis asked if the Department has printing services, Lucy Taylor replied that there is currently no provision for Undergraduate printing in the Department. It was agreed that perhaps this could be something to look into.

Lillian Stevens was excused from the meeting

### **3. Matters Raised by the Undergraduate Students**

#### **3.1 Matters raised by First Year Representatives**

Jonjo Robb raised the issue of seminar teaching at first year, a few students had expressed to him that seminars were becoming more like lectures and that they are not getting much out of the seminar and not getting a chance to take part, they are becoming more like mini lectures. Lucy Taylor agreed to raise the issue with the Part Time teaching staff.

Joe Worthington expressed a concern that quite a few students had raised the issue with him of not enough English Language choices to Study abroad and not enough exchange places to go to. Judith Shepherd explained that Australia and Canada were on offer, Joe explained that a few students were more concerned about the European side of the exchange that they would be able to learn in English rather than in French, Spanish etc. It was suggested that any students with concerns on this should either contact Elaine Lowe who is the Exchange co-ordinator for the Department or attend the information meeting being held next Wednesday so any concerns and more clarification would be given in the meeting.

Sophie Davies pointed out that the study abroad link to the facebook page was not working on the Web.

Jonjo Robb raised an issue on a recent lecture the topic was what you do in seminars, he suggested that it would be more worthwhile to have a lecture say on 'How to write an essay'. Lucy Taylor explained that previously the Department had run study skills seminars, the attendance at these were not good at all so it was decided to integrate these into the first year modules, the general consensus from the reps was that there is no need for a lecture specifically on seminars. Lucy Taylor explained that she was due to give a lecture for Mike Foley's module in a few weeks' time about essay writing; the general feeling from the reps was that this could perhaps be earlier in the term. Lucy Taylor also explained that the 'Writing and Referencing in Interpol' handbook has been given to all First Year students in the Freshers meeting so students should use this as a guide, it was also noted that the IPS (International Politics Society) are a good source of help, Grace Burton said that Dylan Marshall is the point of contact for this – it was agreed that the Department could put a link on Blackboard to the IPS.

#### **3.2 Matters raised by Second Year Representatives**

Ben Holihead noted that he had been scheduled a few lectures in the Main Hall this year, he expressed a concern about the lack of desk space and that it is not really suitable for lecture teaching. Lucy Taylor agreed that this was not ideal but due to the problems with the timetable this year then a few lectures had to be scheduled in the Main Hall at the start of term as an emergency measure, this was not usually the case as the Main Hall is not intended for teaching. It was noted by a few students that Richard Jackson's module had been taught in the Main Hall last year, Judith Shepherd explained that a few modules such as Richards were taught in a different way, such as roundtable sessions and students are split into groups for discussions so due to the nature of the module then it would not be appropriate to timetable them in lecture theatres.

Henrik Jenssen expressed a huge concern on the issues surrounding the Timetable this year, he said that this was not acceptable at all. Lucy Taylor explained that this was an issue out of the Department's control, she explained that the University Timetable officer had been off on a period of sick leave and that a replacement had not been made, the University made the decision to bring in a person only about three weeks before the start of term, Lucy suggested that any students with issues should raise this higher up than the Department – to the Vice Chancellor or Pro Vice Chancellors as this was an issue that was out of the Department's hands. Andras Lederer asked if

this would be an issue with the Exam timetable because as an International Student he was concerned about buying tickets to go home and when he should schedule to come back. Lucy Taylor explained that the Timetable Officer post had been advertised and hopefully someone would be in post soon so hopefully this would not be an issue.

Sebastian Balcombe raised an issue on behalf of a fellow student on the topic of Registration, the student concerned had missed pre-registration and was told she could register when she came back on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, due to Jury Service she could not return at the start of term, this left her for a week and a half not being able to register as Elaine was away from her desk. Dr Taylor explained that due to a family bereavement that Elaine had to be away, Judith Shepherd explained that she had been available for student registration also.

Ben Holihead asked if the students could be told a bit more about what is happening on the reconfiguration, Lucy Taylor explained that this was still in discussions, hopefully we would know more about this by the end of this week, Lucy noted that the new Head of Department Dr Jenny Mathers prioritises communication with both student and staff and that as soon as a decision had been made then she would be sure to communicate this with the student body.

Jacob Ellis raised an issue of a particular module that the module convenor was constantly late turning up and would over run, it was agreed that any issues with any member of staff should be raised directly with Lucy Taylor as Director of Undergraduate Studies.

### **3.3 Matters raised by Third Year Representatives**

Grace Burton asked if anything could be done about the structure of the Dissertation module, could this be integrated into the second year as a module just to get students thinking over the summer, she expressed a concern that a lot of students were currently panicking about their Dissertation and perhaps that getting them started in the Second Semester of their second year would stop the panic later on. A few suggestions were discussed such as submitting the Dissertation title at the end of the second year and speaking to prospective Dissertation supervisors before the summer, maybe workshops such as a study skills workshop in their second year that is optional but at least the keen students would have the option to attend in order to get thinking about their Dissertation, the general feeling amongst the reps was that perhaps a few study skills sessions would be good in their second year. Another suggestion was to make the Module handbook available on Blackboard earlier, even if it is last year's handbook so that students can have a look.

Grace Burton also expressed a concern about seminars that are assessed; perhaps module convenors/seminar tutors should come down harder on those who don't actually do the reading for the seminar as it is very hard to have a discussion and therefore reflects bad on students grades who do actually make the effort to read before the seminar. Sebastian Balcombe suggested that seminars are currently too large therefore making it hard for everyone to have their say. Lucy Taylor replied by explaining that from her own experience she found assessed seminars very beneficial it made students make more of an effort to actually do the reading beforehand. On the issue of large seminar groups, unfortunately this was down to limited rooms and times so seminar sizes are normally up to 15 students.

Andras Lederer raised an issue on the lecture rooms, he pointed out that C4 in Hugh Owen was a poor lecture room, unless you are sitting in the front then it is very hard to see lecture slides and some staff do not make these available on Blackboard, also it was pointed out that Physics 320 and D5 in Hugh Owen were also poor spaces.

The issue of a lecture being held in the Old College was raised, Dr Taylor explained that this was unfortunate but due to the timetable issues, it was hoped that all lectures would be on campus next semester.

Andras Lederer asked a question in regards to the Module Evaluations, can data be made available to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years during registration in order to help students make their module choices? Dr Taylor explained that this had not been done in the past but the uptake on evaluations had been very poor over the past few years as it had been done in electronic form, it was noted that this year the paper format evaluations would be reinstated in order to get a better judgement. It was agreed that the Department would look into releasing any data, this would probably only be some broad data – perhaps an average point of the module but this would have to be looked into further.

### **3.4 Matters raised by Joint Honours Representative**

Sophie Davies mentioned the fact that as a joint honours student there would often be module deadlines clashing and she asked if Departments could perhaps liaise better when setting deadlines. Lucy Taylor explained that with so many joint honours students it was inevitable that there would be some clashes, her advice was that students are always welcome to hand essays in before the deadline. She explained that the policy on the zero for any late work this year had come from the Centre, this was not a Departmental policy but one decided within the University overall and also it was a policy that the essay would have to be a reasonable attempt at the question, it was not acceptable just to hand a sentence in, this would not count as a submission.

An issue was raised on the essay cover sheet, many students were having problems to attach this to their essay, it was suggested that students should save the essay template first and start their essay on this, it was agreed that Judith Shepherd would send a copy of the essay template out to students.

### **3.5 Matters raised by Welsh Speaking Representatives**

Jacob Ellis started by showing a copy of the 'Welsh Language Policy' he noted that the Department is currently not sticking to the Policy, there are several e-mails that have been sent out that do not comply with the policy, all e-mails should be sent bilingually with the Welsh either on the left or above the English, if an e-mail has to be sent out as an emergency without a translation then a sentence should be in to explain this.

Jacob also asked the question if he could find out how many modules are available in Welsh this year to compare with last year? Elin Royles agreed to look into this and reply to Jacob.

Jacob pointed out that any events that the Department runs – such as Carr seminar, Guest lecturers should have translation facilities made available.

The issue was raised on Module handbooks, can these be translated into Welsh for English medium modules, Jacob explained that as a Welsh speaker himself that he had chosen to write all his essays through the medium of Welsh then it would be nice to have, for example, the essay questions in Welsh. Elin Royles explained that it is not normal Departmental policy to translate any English medium Module handbooks as the mode of study is through English, we certainly provide handbooks through the medium of Welsh for any that are taught lecture or seminar based through Welsh so unfortunately at the moment this is not the policy but certainly the Department could arrange essay questions to be translated if a particular student wanted to.

Lucy Taylor agreed to remind staff of the Bilingual policy, she explained that she was not aware that translation facilities had to be available for Guest Speakers etc, this would have to be looked into.

### **3.6 Matters raised by International Students Representatives**

Henrik Jenssen noted that he was concerned that his fees had gone up £1000 from last year with no warning – from £8,500 to £9,500. Judith Shepherd explained that the Department does not deal

with the fees side of things and that this would be an issue he should raise with the International office or the Student fees office directly.

#### **4. Any other business**

Andras Lederer referred to the letter received by third years about Staff changes, he noted that there were no new staff in Theory related areas, Lucy Taylor explained that the Department is currently in discussions and would hope to advertise 2 to 3 new post to start next September and hopefully one of those posts at least would be in that area.

Lucy Taylor noted that the Department are offering several new Modules in Semester 2, most of these have now gone through Faculty and hopefully by Mid-November the Department would be in a position to hold a registration event to those interested in choosing any new modules.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.40pm