

1. Welcome and Introduction from the Director of Undergraduate Studies

Dr Anwen Elias welcomed everyone to the second SSCC meeting.

Robin Warren is unable to continue as a first year rep; the next person on the list in terms of votes will take up this role but is not at this meeting.

Welcome extended to Bev Herring, Careers Advisory Service.

Action: For next academic year, a larger room to be booked for SSCC meetings.

2. Matters concerning Careers (Bev Herring)

Bev Herring gave a summary of her careers-related activities thus far this year: 36 attended a session on internships, but only 5 came to a follow-up CV and application session. The outreach drop-in sessions are going quite well.

On the issue of what students want and how their needs can be met, Jonathan suggested that internship emails should be sent earlier, and that there should be a session on what an internship can do for you. Anwen suggested that such an event could be tied in with Alumni visits (a broader talk about opportunities in a particular area of work).

Jonathan suggested that students in their first year get a session to encourage them to start thinking about career opportunities sooner.

Bev suggested possibly using twitter to advertise the drop in sessions in the foyer.

ACTION: AE to consider ways of making first years more aware of careers, and of making better use of Interpol alumni.

ACTION: Bev to develop a poster to advertise the drop in sessions, so that students understand who she is and why she is in the foyer.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 13 November 2013

Action points

1. Discussion with Lillian Stevenson from the library

Students were asked to forward any suggestions for using HO space within two weeks. No suggestions were received.

Anwen is aware of problems with books ordered not in library; Jeff Bridoux has been chasing this up. The department needs to do more to encourage staff to order any new books earlier, and well in advance of teaching commencing.

2. Consider using student number as form of verification on electronic copies rather than essay cover sheets. Anwen to report back at next meeting.

This has been discussed at L&T. For now we will be still using cover sheets because of other information we still need on there, and a cover sheet allow us to organize comments clearly on the front of the essay.

3. Anwen to organize meeting with students on the European Politics scheme to discuss possible departmental events (eg talks or discussion groups etc)

Done but only one person turned up. Nevertheless useful discussion, also with Ben Whitlock. Some ideas for events in Semester 2.

Action: Anwen and Ben to continue working on possible EU-related events.

4. Clash of Essay and Dissertation deadlines

There are no essay deadlines now in the week the dissertation is due.

5. Student Reps to work on proposals for peer support for consideration at next SSCC.

No first year reps present at the meeting and Anwen has not received any proposals.

6. 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, use of personal tutors, and continuous feedback on academic work).

Personal tutors will be discussed later on the agenda.

On the issue of continuous feedback, staff collect feedback in different ways. Staff should be encouraged to collect continuous feedback, but the department does not feel it necessary to introduce a policy/mechanism that requires staff to do this. There have been experiences of low response rate for continuous feedback opportunities.

7. AE to look at the word length of essays coming in at the same time to avoid larger pieces of work being due together.

We have tried to do this and we have managed as best as possible.

8. AE to talk to Bev Herring about changing drop in hours

This has now been done; they are now 1.30-2.30 on Mondays (fortnightly).

9. AE to look into events to publicize Masters and PhD opportunities

Anwen has talked to the Director of Admissions and Recruitment; they had just done an event. There was interest in holding another event along these lines, to advertise Masters provision.

Bev suggested that a careers dimension could be integrated into such an event, thus raising awareness among undergraduates of how post-graduate study can fit into future career plans.

Action: AE to liaise with the Director of Admissions and Recruitment and Bev Herring over an event to promote postgraduate study within the department.

10. To put a notice board up

This has now been done, it is in the foyer.

ACTION: CE and AE to organize focus group of feedback and assessment

4. Items from the Director of Undergraduate Studies

NSS

The NSS is live and as from Monday (3 March) our response rate is 39 % which is broadly in line with the University response rate. The reps have been helping to get students to complete the surveys.

It was agreed that no further laptop session were desirable, as many students attending the dissertation workshops had already completed the survey. A concern was also raised about NSS-fatigue.

Open meetings with UGs

We have had two open meetings and both have gone very well, the feedback that we got was it was very useful to have these meetings. A few items were raised:

a) Personal Tutors

- Will Atkinson the Institute rep is doing some research on personal tutors and will take it to the IGHP UG committee.
- Good ideas were made for improving the personal tutor system (some of which echoed what we discussed in last SSCC). These included rethinking personal tutor meetings with first years as there's too much going on in the first week of the academic year. Consider moving these meetings to the second week, and explore a format where personal tutors can come along and meet students informally, and then arrange a first meeting.
- A suggestion was made that personal tutors could be within a student's degree scheme area.
- There was agreement that more structured contact from the personal tutor in other years would be helpful, e.g. email to see how things are going. This has been done for Semester 2. Next year the department will explore the introduction of scheduled one-to-one meetings.

Alexandra asked for clarification of what can be discussed with personal tutors. Anwen answered that this can cover anything to do with your studies or any problems that you have whilst you are in the department. Kamila noted that if you build a relationship with your personal tutor, your personal tutor will be able to write a good reference.

It was noted that the role of the personal tutor needs to be made clearer at the beginning of, and throughout, the academic year.

Kamila suggested that we put students with the person that they saw during visiting days as they would have started a relationship with that tutor.

ACTION: AE to take suggestions about changes to the personal tutor session to the next departmental L&T committee.

b) Timetable

- Comments on the inflexibility of the timetable have been forwarded to the timetable office.
- Fahreen asked if the timetable can be updated weekly if rooms change or if there are fortnightly seminars. Anwen noted that in order for this to happen Module Conveners need to let Elaine know when the seminars are.

c) Events

- The department is looking at ways of making it easier to know what's going on in the department.
- On website, getting a more ordered appearance of events is being investigated with IS.
- We are looking at the possibility of having something like Google Calendar where you can download events, or if this is not possible, a weekly email linked to the departmental webpage.

d) Degree schemes:

- There will be another open meeting to look at these before Easter.

e) Teaching programme:

- Anwen reported on progress with the teaching programme for 2014-15
- Part One: teaching programme is the same in terms of modules; two innovations: i) to complement the writing skills in IP10820 the intention is to have a module in Sem 2 which will develop speaking and presentation skills; ii) academic staff will be expected to do some of the seminar teaching at Part One, thus providing students with more staff contact.
- Part Two: a lot more choice of modules: 16 modules in Sem 1, 18 in Semester 2. Most degree schemes have at least three modules (60 out of 120 credits); there is a problem with Political Studies, but we are going back to some staff to ask them to teach in this area.

Anwen asked about student expectations in terms of module choice for specific degree schemes.

Benjamin Whitlock expressed that he would like a choice of more than one module per degree scheme. Jonathan stated that there should be a stronger core provision in the area of Strategic Studies, so that it is easier to go to an employer and demonstrate academic specialism in this area.

Sarah then asked if it is possible to make giving presentations a requirement for first years. Anwen answered that this will be introduced at Part One from 2014-15 onwards.

UCU marking boycott

Student concerns about the impact of a possible marking boycott by UCU were discussed. Anwen will write to students to reassure them that the department will do everything possible to limit disruption if the strike comes about.

ACTION: AE to send out email to all 3 yrs to let them know where we are at with response rate.

AE to look at webpage if staff office hours need updated.

AE to write a letter to students about the marking boycott

6. Matters raised by First Years Representatives

No Reps present

7. Matters raised by Second Year Representatives

Fahreen raised the issue of library opening hours, and asks if they can be extended over the weekend. Suggestion to be forwarded to Lilian Stevenson.

Alex asks about online module evaluation forms. The problem with this is very low response rates (approx. 15% when used in the past). Department will continue collecting end of module feedback on paper until a more effective electronic system is available.

ACTION: AE to ask Lilian Stevenson about Library opening hours over weekend

8. Matters raised by Final Year Representatives

Benjamin W raised a concern about feedback in pigeon holes; someone went to pick their essay feedback up and could see everyone else's marks and feedback. Anwen asked to be informed of the module in question, as this should not happen.

Alex raised the issue of books indicated as essential reading not being available in library, online or in the National Library of Wales. Anwen notes that the guidelines for staff are that every item on the reading list should be available in Aberystwyth; if not then Anwen should be informed.

Benjamin H raised the issue of reading weeks, and suggests that a departmental reading week should be introduced. Anwen responds that the preference is to allow module conveners the flexibility to build a reading week into their modules, as sometimes people do need to be away (e.g. at academic conferences).

ACTION: AE to raise the suggestion for a departmental reading week in the next L&T meeting

9. Matters raised by Welsh Speaking Representative

Bethan asked why we have to wait a long time for essay marks. Anwen answered the marks have to be sent to the external and only when these go through the exam board (which has only just happened) are they confirmed.

Bethan then asked about confirmation emails on submission of coursework. This will be provided with the switch to e-submission using Turnitin.

Benjamin H asks if students know if their work is second marked. Students are not normally told as the aim of the process is to make sure that the standard of marking is over all as it should be.

10. Matters Raised by Joint Honours Representative

Maciej raised the issue of module handbooks, and that these were late being made available for Semester 2. A case in point was Modern China. Anwen explained that in this particular case the Module Convenor did not arrive in Aberystwyth until just before the start of term.

ACTION: Anwen to ensure that for 2014-15, staff should have module handbooks ready sooner.

Alex expressed students' desire to study more Eastern Philosophy. Anwen responded that there are some members of staff that are interested in non-Western world; Mustapha Pasha

is a new member of staff and that is an area that he is actively researching in.

11. Matters raised by International Students Representative

Sarah made the suggestion that second year students would benefit from having a session on the dissertation at the end of the second year, rather than wait until the third year. Anwen responded that this is something that has been discussed, and can be raised with the module convenor.

ACTION: Anwen to forward this suggestion on to Jenny Mathers, as module convenor for the Dissertation.

12. Matters raised by the employability Representative

Everything has been covered

13. Any other business

No other business

Anwen then thanks everyone for coming.

Meeting adjourned 16.55pm.