

Minutes of the Michaelmas Term meeting of the Staff Student Liaison Committee

In attendance:

Yuxiang Ge
Kate Gillett
Cees Heere
Kanika Saigal
Stephen Casey
Arne Hoffman
Nayna Bhatti
Demetra Frini

Absent:

Robert Eisenberg

A: Follow-up on previous agenda items

1. Proposed Course: The International History of the Balkans Since 1939
 - There had existed concern that there would not be sufficient demand for the course. Fortunately, however, that turned out not to be the case: thirteen students have subscribed.
2. Columbia Dissertations
 - The deadline for the Columbia dissertation is embedded in a complex legal framework and cannot be easily changed.
3. Advisors
 - There was agreement that, for most of the students involved, having the same person as the academic and dissertation advisor worked rather well.
 - It was noted however, that in certain cases, a student may wish to change his/her advisor to someone more closely affiliated with the topic of their dissertation. To that end, it was agreed to review the assignment of advisors by the time the dissertation proposals would be submitted in January.
4. Reducing Workload
 - The reduction of the workload to two essays and one mock exam was noted with approval.
 - It was re-emphasised that the essays should be split over the two terms, one in each.

B: Points raised by the staff

1. Feedback on the Library and LSE IT services.

- There is still insufficient study and computer space, and the printing of PDF's is sometimes still very slow.
 - Issues were noted concerning the conversion of documents from Mac to Windows.
 - It is helpful to have chapters from books available on Moodle, and it would be great to have more of them.
 - Vandalism of the books is, unfortunately, still endemic. This makes for a great nuisance.
 - The graduate course choice system was met with approval, but a way to show timetable clashes would be very handy.
2. HY499 Dissertation Workshop
 - There was general agreement that the expansion of the HY499 workshop to include general study skills was a substantial improvement.
 3. The induction process.
 - There was approval of the sequence of this year's departmental induction: department-wide issues first, specific programmes later.
 - It was noted that many students would prefer to have more information available to them prior to arrival. Putting the actual course pack on the internet would be unpractical and confusing, but having a 'What to expect in your first two weeks' document or section on the website would be handy.

C: Points raised by the students

1. Pre-arrival information PKU programme
 - Some students in the LSE-PKU degree had a lot of trouble making the deadline for visa applications. It was felt that the offer letter for the programme should indicate the need to apply for a visa as soon as possible.
2. Course packs
 - Of the courses that still use course packs rather than Moodle, e.g. Persecution in Europe, the second term course pack is not yet available in the first term.
3. Financial support in the two-year programmes
 - There exists a lack of clarity about the possibility to apply for the graduate support scheme when enrolled in a double degree, i.e. Columbia or PKU. Students sometimes get rejected twice without further explanation.
 - It may be that the system is not prepared to cope with applications for the two year programmes. Dr Hoffman raised the possibility that in these cases, the scheme would reject a student in their first year because LSE will not give them money to study at Columbia/PKU, and the second year because the student has already applied. This is a Catch-22 situation that needs to end.
4. Length of Master's seminars
 - Some seminars, e.g. HY421 Empires, take 1,5 hours rather than two. Since the seminar is the most intellectually stimulating part of any course, it was proposed that all courses in the programme offer at least two hours of seminar time per week.
5. Availability of computers and printers

- It was proposed by Robert Eisenberg via email that, since there is a never-ending problem with computer/printer availability in the Library, that a few computers and a printer be added to the study room in E509.