

Staff Student Liaison Committee Minutes MT 2009

Matthew Betts
Nigel Ashton
Louisa Evans
Francesca Washtell
Barbara Kratuik
Laura Chapman
Pete Milwood
Astrid Barsk
Lois Robson

The meeting began by confirming Louisa as Chair.

Review of the induction process for new undergraduates:

There was some confusion regarding reading lists. It might be impressed upon new students how to set about organising their reading during the first few weeks of term. Maybe more guidance is needed here.

The meeting expressed the general feeling that more guidance about how to start work was needed to prevent students feeling left behind by about week 4.

There was some discussion of the possibility of student mentoring for first years going beyond what is now offered → The History Society suggested they would be willing to help with this, to give advice at the start of the year, maybe in the form of workshops rather than individual mentor-mentee relationships.

Nigel Ashton said he was happy to facilitate peer assistance but highlighted that this system would have to be set up a year in advance.

It would require ST preparation from 2nd years so they could fulfil the commitment in the following MT.

Any further student initiatives would be backed by the History Society. The possibility was discussed of sessions throughout the year, possibly at exam time too.

Francesca Washtell asked about uploading some essay samples onto the public folders or Moodle to show what different grades look like. (How to write at LSE so as not to write off your first essay). The possibility was discussed of essay banks on Moodle, which might be uploaded by students? The 3rd year historians present pointed out that around exam time students form their own essay banks which are very useful. Also they expressed some reservations because the first essays, as they don't count for final assessment, are an incredibly useful, if steep, learning curve!

Elections of new representatives:

Lois = Library User Group
Astrid = Undergraduate Forum
Barbra = General Course Rep
Lois = IR Dept rep

Nigel Ashton and others discussed the benefits of creating a new representative a BA history degree rep. This rep could deal with specific questions about life as a History student and field questions regarding the required historiography paper, Paper 5, dissertation, etc. and liaise with the other representatives.

It was agreed to create the post and Laura Chapman was elected as BA history rep.

Any other business:

Laura Chapman raised the issue of teaching – It seems like a lucky dip as to which teacher you get, and teachers are sometimes moved round the classes. This tends to create discontinuity. The view was expressed that some teaching is very good, some is not.

Astrid raised the possibility of 'compulsory' handouts to give structure to the class which might be emailed after class for review. It might be emphasised that these are for structuring the class and to help direct discussion.

She felt that such an approach would not limit discussion too far and would help structure the classes so that students knew what they were supposed to learn from each class.

Astrid also raised the question of more preparation for exams with more practice papers earlier in the year (one in each term?)

The 3rd year students present pointed out that the SU offers practice essays and that you can practice essays in your own time. They were aware of how long it takes a teacher to mark essays. They also believed that some students might not want to be forced to do more essays. There was no consensus on these points.

It was suggested that study groups in the Library might be promoted. Here again the History Society could be of help.

Matthew Betts indicated that he would be able to book a room through formal timetabling if there was a specific group formed that wanted to meet on a more regular basis.

Matthew could then give the 'study group leader' names and general emails of anyone else interested in these groups.

Barbara Kratuik raised the issue of a fault in the Mentoring Scheme – some General Course students had been left out. She didn't know who her mentor was and didn't meet him/her.

Pete Milwood pointed out that the mentoring scheme is organised centrally and so the Student Union should be made aware of this failing!

Lois Robson raised the issue of restructuring some of the courses with an emphasis on assessed essays throughout the course, not just the end exam result. She wondered if discussion could be opened on this?

Nigel Ashton explained that plagiarism has sometimes been an issue in the past with assessed coursework, that all formal assessed work has to be double marked and available to external examiners too; that it was treated as a formal examination, and that this limited formal feedback in relation to unconfirmed marks. However, School policy on feedback on assessed coursework has become more helpful so the dept would certainly be looking at introducing it more widely at UG level. Some students expressed the view that they were happy with the way the courses are structured at present and that some courses do already offer assessed coursework.

Closed meeting with the arrangement of the next meeting: Thursday 21st January, 1pm (LT Week 2).