

Undergraduate Staff-Student Liaison Committee Lent Term Meeting Minutes 21-01-10

Present:

Nigel Ashton
Matthew Betts
Louisa Evans
Lois Robson
Laura Chapman
Francesca Washtell
Javneet Ghuman

Apologies:

Pete Milwood
Astrid Barsk

1. New Course Proposal: Four Reichs: Austria, Prussia and the Contest for Germany since 1618.

HY237 has been moved to Masters level – general consensus that this would work better as level of knowledge required to properly benefit from this course was often too much for 2nd years.

Rationale behind course – most obviously that it reflects Alan Sked's research strengths (recently published book *Metternich and Austria: An Evaluation* (2007))

The course was acknowledged to be filling a gap in early European history options and that it could encourage the development of history throughout the degree programme. German history is integral to understanding modern international history and this course can better help understand the German context.

Concerns over the course: how can that long a period of time be taught over 20 weeks? And the consequences of removing HY237?

The committee resolved to approve the introduction of the new course.

2. Student views on feedback in the department.

The feedback received was all constructive and mostly positive. (Please see attached document for reference.)

Issues to be followed up on: where are essay guidelines available apart from in the handbook from the first year? And where can gobbet advice be found?

Discussion of the possibility of staggering essay dates so that not all are due in the same 2 weeks of term. Might help ease pressure on books and marking for teachers. However, it was acknowledged that writing an essay before week 4 of MT is perhaps unsuitable for first years and that practically this will be hard to implement. However, some staggering could be done across year groups.

3. External examiners' reports.

Conclusions of these reports was shared with the committee. They were generally positive crediting both students and staff.

Some points worth mentioning: examiners impressed by balance between European and non-European courses taken/available; level of knowledge of students was exemplary; exam scripts reflected high quality teaching and the high calibre of students.

Dissertations often received high marks again reflecting the work of both students and teachers, though there were some plagiarism issues.

Any issues have been brought to the attention of the department for them to act upon.

4. Preparations for TLAC review, February 18th 2010.

The assessment of the department will allow students to have their say and are encouraged to attend. Very interested in student input, praise is as useful as constructive criticism. The SSLC has put together a written statement for the review (through individual submissions). Students will be notified nearer the date of the location and time.

5. Proposal for student-led workshops for the next academic year/summer term planning.

Based on the last meeting it seemed that some students wanted more guidance and support in their first few weeks within the department. It had been suggested that workshops could be a possible solution and that other students could host question and answer sessions to help students familiarise themselves with the workings of the department.

However, the practical implications of this are quite demanding, time being the biggest issue. Plus turnout cannot be guaranteed. Also, general consensus that LSE is after all an independent learning environment and it was agreed that often you learn best from your own mistakes!

So suggestion of using some sort of web forum (off the international history website, not Moodle because of the academic implications of student advice on official resource sites!) was generally approved of. Answers to 'silly' questions such as, 'how to get a first, not a 2:1 in an essay', 'footnote formatting' (link to public folder information) 'how much reading is enough?'

This might help to bridge a gap between individual course resources on Moodle, information on public folders and questions students might not feel comfortable asking of their tutors.

6. Mitigating circumstances

Many students are not aware of the support system the LSE as an institution has in place and should anything happen during the busy and stressful exam time, it is possible to fall through the gaps. (The window to 'qualify' for mitigating circumstances is understandably small but can pass without the students' awareness.)

This would not be an advertisement of the service, but it is something that academic advisors could maybe mention in termly updates.