

**International History Department Student Staff Liaison Committee meeting
minutes**

Wednesday 28 January 2015, 4 – 6pm (Lent term meeting)

Present:

Uday Mehra (BSc IR and History, year 3, Chair)
Lodewijk Vriens (BSc IR and History, year 3, Deputy)
Fraser Morris (BA History, year 1)
Hayat Mohamed (BA History, year 1)
Forrest Hanson (General Course)
Kyle Houston-Floyd (BA History, year 2)
Edward Tan (BA History, year 2)
Yeva Agayan (BSc IR and History, year 2)
Eleonore Lazat (BSc IR and History, year 3)
Jack Kelly (BSc IR and History, year 3)
Sivakami Sivakumar (BA History, year 3)

Professor Vladislav Zubok (Undergraduate Programme Director)
Avninder Grewal (Undergraduate Administrator)
Paul Horsler (IH Library liaison)
Professor Paul Kelly (Pro-Director for Teaching and Learning)

Apologies:

Kiona Loo (BA History, year 1)
Alexander Hawkins (BA History, year 1)
Samar Rizvi (BA History, year 1)
Sophie Miloszewski (BSc IR and History, year 1)
Tharin Sethi (General Course)
Soo Ji Kang (BA History, year 2)
Orla McNamara (BA History, year 2)
Josh Hitchens (BA History, year 2)
Catrina Brooker (BA History, year 2)
Khanh Nguyen (BSc IR and History, year 2)
Alexander Hradecky (BSc IR and History, year 2)
Kanan Parida (BSc IR and History, year 2)
Fazeela Jahangir (BSc IR and History, year 2)

1. Welcome and introduction

Committee members introduced themselves.

2. Review Michaelmas term minutes and action points

Michaelmas term action points were outlined, along with action points.

3. Cohort feedback

First year feedback:

- The structure of some class teaching in HY116 is not always well organised and does not promote class discussion.

- In HY113 and HY116, feedback sheets from essay submissions are often not annotated thoroughly; more detail is required to help guide students to better understand marking criteria.
- HY113 lectures are not recorded and this was problematic for students who could not attend the rescheduled sessions.

Action:

Prof V. Zubok to address teaching concerns with teachers responsible for HY113 and HY116.

A. Grewal to discuss possibilities of recording HY113 lectures with the teacher responsible for the course.

General Course feedback:

- Nothing to report.

Second year feedback:

- Concern was raised over an IR lecture, where rescheduling information was not communicated clearly to students and once provided; the lecture was rescheduled for 7pm.
- IR200: an online link on Morgenthau (week two, Lent term) is not working.
- HY241: a number of readings are not digitised.
- HY206: some links not working.

Action:

P. Horsler to check if library links are working.

Third year feedback:

- Students have requested if trips to Kew for dissertation achieves can be subsidised.

Action:

A.Grewal to consult with Dept. Manager, Ms D. Frini, as to whether trips to Kew can be subsidised.

4. HY113 lecture changes during MT

A HY113 lecture was rescheduled at the same time as a HY116 lecture.

A.Grewal apologised on behalf of the Department for any inconvenience that arose from the rescheduling.

5. Library matters

Concerns were raised over missing books in the library – a formal reply will be issued from the Library soon.

The annual course collection availability survey will be taking place soon. The survey enables the library to collect statistical information on resources which are held.

Two checks should be carried out to locate a missing book. After these checks, a missing book form can be completed and the Library will inform when the book is found.

Course Collection seating has been increased to 90 spaces, with an additional 20 spaces in front of the 4th floor reading room. The redevelopment of the 4th floor may be taking place over summer.

6. To consider: Professor Matthew Jones course proposal

The committee expressed both interest and positive feedback in Professor Matthew Jones' course proposal - Retreat from Power: British foreign and defence policy, 1931 – 68.

7. Department move – access hours for UG and PG rooms

Access hours for undergraduate students at Sardinia House will be Monday – Friday until 9:30pm, which is in line with access rights in other buildings.

Action:

A.Grewal to investigate the possibility of weekend access for undergraduate students in Sardinia House.

8. Department statement on assessment

The School's statement on assessment and the Department statement were reviewed.

The Department statement refers only to 100% exam related assessments. It was agreed the statement needs to be updated to reflect the range of courses offered by the Department.

The majority of students expressed their preference for mixed assessed courses but agreed that this should be at the discretion of the teacher responsible for each course.

It was suggested the Department consider all scripts to be marked by two examiners, as there was concern over teachers detecting students' work, as there may be familiarity with writing styles. It was felt that this would further protect the anonymity process.

It was agreed that a new statement needs to cover formative and summative assessment, focusing on;

Structure – create a statement solely focused on assessment and separate this from feedback.

Methods the Department currently use – accurate information, regularly updated.

Justifications – provide reasoning for students and staff for the methods used.

9. The role of the Academic Adviser

It was discussed that the School is reviewing role of the Academic Adviser. Three questions were posed from the school and feedback taken:

1. Is there a mismatch of expectations in terms of what students expect from their Academic Advisor and what Academic Advisors expect to provide?

Feedback:

- The function, role and expectations of the Academic Adviser should be more clearly defined.
- It should be clearer in which direction the relationship is – who has the obligation to initiate the process.

- It is important to outline expectations and be flexible, as each student has their own individual needs.

2. Do students think Academic Advisers have conflicting duties? For example, providing pastoral care and also marking exams/writing references.

Feedback:

- It was agreed that duties are not conflicting. Advisers being involved in pastoral care and marking exams can help develop a stronger relationship between the adviser and advisee.
- It is necessary to provide that human face in terms of the relationship/reflection of the student and their time at LSE.
- The anonymity of exam marking means there is no conflict.

3. What are students' general thoughts on the Academic Adviser system? (not individual Academic Advisers)

Feedback:

- It was agreed that overall it is a good system, which has supported and has provided a duty of care to students.
- There can be issues when changing adviser, however due to the nature of the system, this is impossible to avoid.
- It is a positive link, which is developed throughout the three years.

10. National Student Survey

The National Student Survey and its importance was explained. The survey is open to all 3rd year students and the Department encourages each 3rd year student to complete it. The feedback is very useful for the Department and helps to evaluate processes.

A mock NSS was carried out with 2nd year students on Tuesday 27 January, during a HY300 lecture. A mock NSS for 3rd year students will be sent electronically, and students can drop completed surveys to the Undergraduate Programmes Office, E402.

11. Feedback on the UG handbook

The Committee reviewed the Department of International History Handbook for Undergraduate Students 2014 – 2015.

It was agreed that the handbook is a useful resource for students as all crucial information is held together.

To improve the booklet, it was agreed that a list of courses should be included but course descriptions should be removed as students access this information online. It was noted that the order of the booklet should be reviewed, to make it more relevant, for example providing History/Department related information first and School items later.

It was agreed that information on writing notes, essay writing and using gobbet exercises is very useful and gives students the ability to refer to a printed guide.

12. AOB.

The Teaching and Learning Centre have asked for four volunteers who can provide feedback on exams. Four 3rd year students agreed to provide this information.

It was discussed that the Department will be holding reading weeks in the new academic year structure and that there will be activities organised by the Department during these weeks. Deadlines for essay submissions were discussed – the Department have not finalised these as yet.

Action:

Prof V. Zubok to discuss finalised deadline dates during reading weeks in 2015/16 with Head of Department / Department colleagues.