

Minutes of the Graduate Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) Meeting

Date: 27th November 2019

Place: Room S2.133, Social Sciences Building

Time: 12:00 to 13:00

Attendees:

Staff Representatives:

Jeremy Smith	Head of Department
Alex Karalis Isaac	Deputy Director of PGT Programmes (MSc)
Carolyn Andrews	Postgraduate Taught Programmes Manager
Stephanie Redding	Senior Careers Consultant
Kelly Taylor	Head of Administration, T&L
Claire Gerard	Communications Manager
Lucia Ashley	Student engagement and Experience Coordinator
Bozena Beauclair	Marketing and Communications Manager

Student representatives:

Sharon Mutiti	MSc EIFE (Chair)
Catherine Ojo	MSc Econ (Secretary)
Aisha Intesar	MSc Econ

Apologies:

Helen Riley	Library representative
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1. Membership of the Committee

- Because of the presence of a new chair and a new secretary at the meeting, everyone introduced themselves again and the meeting commenced.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd October, 2019

We highlighted the points that were discussed in the last meeting:

- Successful allocation of pre-sessional accommodation and satisfaction from students.
- Decreased participation in coffee and cake sessions
- Proposal to decorate MSc study spaces
- Low levels of student engagement

3. Matters arising

- Early access to Stata license cannot be made available until students are fully enrolled to identify the number of students that the license should be requested for.

4. Teaching and Learning

- Speak to Professor Omer Moav regarding students' request for a 5-minute break during the macroeconomics lecture.

5. Student engagement and Support

a. Low level of student engagement

- Staff members have observed that the 2019/2020 student cohort seem relatively quiet and have not maximized the use of lecturers' office hours. Reference was made to Ms Mahnaz Nazneen who has not had any student going to her office since the semester began, hence raising concerns about the students' general well-being.
- The SSLC were advised to inform students that Ms Mahnaz Nazneen and other lecturers were always there to provide support academically and in other areas.
- Concerns were also raised regarding emails not being read by the students.
- As a solution, there was suggestion that course reps should highlight key information from the emails on the various MSc Economics group chats (eg. Whatsapp) for a wider reach to students who do not read emails.
- Proposed that a Wechat group should be created to incorporate students who do not have Whatsapp.

b. Socials

- Pizza night has been rescheduled for early next year and there was a suggestion to have games/quiz during the pizza event to incentivise the students to interact with each other more.

c. Coffee and cake sessions

- Send an email to students explaining what coffee and cake session is about.

6. Assessment and Feedback

- Some students have asked for the solutions to the mid-term macroeconomics and microeconomics tests.
- Ms Carolyn Andrews responded to the above explaining that the lecturers' consider it best not to provide solutions due to concerns of questions being revealed to prospective students as they may be reused next time.
- Reflect on the assessment plan of some modules for next year such as the 100% exam-based assessment of the Public policy for developing countries.

7. PTES

8. Dissertation

- The Director of EIFE will begin a series of evening sessions providing information and answering questions regarding dissertation topics.
- The Department has secured the National Institute to provide sessions discussing practical application of macroeconomics to assist students with thinking about their dissertation topics - this series is expected to take place for 3 weeks over a 6-week period during the spring term.

9. Organisation of the course

a. Behavioural Economic Science (BES)

- Ask MSc BES course rep to provide feedback on the organisation of their course.

b. Range of optional modules

- Some students have complained about the range of optional modules not including more specific courses such as Political economy, gender equality and Environmental Economics.
- The staff responded by stating that some of the suggested modules were already embedded as topics in existing modules such as Applied macroeconomics and labour economics.

c. Grading system

- Average marks from previous years deter students from modules – In response to that, Mr Alex Karalis Isaac explained that a good average mark is about 62/63% and informed the SSLC team to explain the UK marking system to the students.
- Students were also advised not to make their module choices based on past student performances but on what they interested in doing.

d. Exam dates

- Students have requested for the exam dates.
- Mr. Jeremy Smith explained that the department does not control the exam timetable but that the Wednesday and Friday of the week of the 6th of January have been requested as potential exam dates.

10. Library/IT resources

- Nothing discussed.

11. Gender Equality and diversity

- The diversity group in the department is organizing a series of videos showcasing a culture of respect represented among the members of the Economics department.
- Students who wish to take part in the videos should indicate by informing the SSLC and staff in charge.

12. Skills Development and Careers

- Ms Stephanie Redding explained the role of the student opportunity in providing support to students in their job application process.
- Students have requested for an earlier scheduling of career fairs and talks before job application deadlines in early October.
- A suggestion was made to place an emphasis on early deadlines, employer presentations and awareness of support provided by the career office in the introductory talk at the beginning of the year.
- The Chair, Ms Sharon Mutiti raised an issue regarding students not knowing the extent of support provided by the student opportunity hub (eg. mock interviews, etc).
- In response to the above, a suggestion was made to send an email to the students via the department explaining the scope/level of support provided by the student opportunity.
- Mr Jeremy Smith also suggested a subpage of careers and careers support on the Economics department page that will include links to appointment slots of other colleagues in careers team and mock interviews.

13. Any other business

a. Decoration of MSc common areas

- Pictures of proposed new visual concepts for the common areas in the social science building were shared during the SSLC meeting.
- Ms Bozena Beauclair explained the proposed visual concept in detail – inspirational quotes and colourful designs on the walls, an idea board in the common room that will consist of thoughts of the day, SSLC information to students, transfers of transparency on the doors in the MSc common room.
- A suggestion was made to place a quote box in the common to collate students' inspirational quotes that could potentially be used as part of the designs.

b. Rule guiding the use of MSc workspace rooms

- No hot foods in the student workroom.
- Rooms will need to be locked in the evenings until scanners are introduced due to increased number of thefts in the social science building.