

Sociology Staff-Student Liaison meeting

20th March 2013

Meeting Room 6

Present: *Staff:* Ross Bond. *Students:* Katie Gonser, Sinead McKendry, Elisabeth Ottosen,

Chair: Martin Lam

Minutes: Sue Renton

1. Committee members introduced themselves. No 1st year representatives were in attendance.
2. **Staff items/Matters arising and action from previous SSLC:**
 - 2.1 The issue about clarity of assessment criteria, in particular DDSR, is being addressed and the School has now provided guidelines that state all future course manuals must provide assessment criteria. Michael Rosie has addressed the issue regarding word length of assignments ensuring all staff in Sociology follow consistent procedures. Ross will be approaching the DDSR course convenor to discuss exemplary coursework being made available to students in the future.
 - 2.2 The facility of Personal Tutors being able to access tutee grades and feedback earlier this academic year was delayed. The viewing of feedback sheets is more complicated with the need for further implementation. However, there is now a strong possibility that within the next few weeks PTs will be able to view their students' grades for all assessed work.
 - 2.3 Ross will table at the next Sociology staff meeting the concern about submission deadlines at the end of semester 1, particularly for year 3 and 4 students where the deadline for all coursework is required on the same day.
 - 2.4 There was no update on future plans to refurbish the building and the provision of undergraduate lockers being available in the basement or ground floor and Ross will follow this up with the School Administrator. The main front doors may become electronic and ideas are being explored to have a café, similar to

the one provided during Innovative Learning Week, on a permanent basis.

- 2.5** Ross gave an overview of the School's curriculum reform with the introduction of a non-credit bearing Fundamentals course for 1st years which will be introduced in the next academic year. The intention is for students to gain competence and confidence in key study skills including, literature searching, essay writing, numerical literacy, critical sociological thinking and evaluating online sources from a sociological perspective. The 2nd year SPE and SPT courses will be discontinued and subject specific course reinstated in 2014-2015. A new intake in September for the MA Global and International Sociology was also announced. The School has applied for funding to develop quantitative teaching to improve the student experience before reaching 3rd year. Elisabeth supports the idea of students being offered more skills specific courses and that statistical compulsory courses are useful.

3. Student items: matters to be raised by year reps and discussed

- 3.1** Martin reported that he hadn't received any feedback from 3rd year students to report. Katie praised the assistance given in the DSR lab sessions and that worksheets were very explicit. However, while Vernon Gayle's lectures were very good at generating interest in the material, for revision purposes the students would like to see his lecture slides include definitions of key terms as well as examples. Ross will raise this with Vernon. Elisabeth announced that students would like tutorial participation to be included in assessments, and Sinead finds tutorial peer participation valuable. Elisabeth found the South Asian Studies hand in summaries valuable which were then followed up with student-led discussions. Sinead pointed out that tutorial participation encourages student attendance and helps to produce quality essays. Katie informed us that groups of 5 students discussed readings in the Gender and Development course. In Youth Culture general discussions would take place based on the lecture hour.
- 3.2** Technical problems with Pebble Pad were raised. Sue pointed out that there had been more of an issue of students not following the correct instructions. One of the most common problems had been that when a receipt is received to confirm the upload of an essay to Pebble Pad students believed they had completed the submission process. Essays, as stated clearly in the instructions, are then required to be sent to the 'gateway' where students can click the

link to double check successful submission. Sue will send a message to stress this point to students.

3.3 Following an email from Sue about final degree marks being posted on the notice-board as soon as possible after the Exam Boards, Elisabeth reported that some 4th year students were disgruntled at not being able to know their final degree mark if they were not in Edinburgh. Sue apologised for being unclear and will send a follow up email reminding students that marks will be able to be accessed through MyEd. The Project marking meeting will take place on 22nd March with marks hopefully being released shortly after The Project Presentation. Sinead highlighted the improvement of course feedback with more in-depth comments being provided. Katie stated there was a preference for typed and not handwritten comments and Ross will feed this back to Sociology staff.

4. Any other business –

Ross reminded the committee that The Project Presentation will be held on March 27th in Seminar Room 2 and 11 students will be participating. Third year students are especially encouraged to attend.

5. The next meeting will be in held in 2013-2014.