

Sustainable Development
Staff-Student Liaison Meeting
18th November 2015
Meeting Room 5
Minutes

Present: Sinead McNulty (1st year)
Emily Dawson, Ming Wei Low (2nd year)
Fiona Macdonald (3rd year)
Ronan Docherty, Claire Haney (4th year)
Isabelle Darmon
Rachel Howell

Minutes: Sue Renton

Apologies: Sophie Cheney

Isabelle welcomed the Programme Reps to the meeting and all in attendance introduced themselves.

Year 1 Feedback:

The structure of SD1a is good in that it splits up subject area topics. Students are happy that the course as described is being delivered. Further discussion and thought on a replacement for Fundamentals is needed and students, in Social Anthropology in particular, are not enjoying the course as some assignments take a long time and it is not clear how relevant they are. It is important to stress to students that the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) differs from the Fundamentals course. PALS plan on arranging an exam revision session and there will be a sign up on MyEd in due course.

Year 2 Feedback:

It was agreed that reassurance in the first semester about progression to Honours and a Year 2 meeting in semester 2 would take place to clarify compulsory courses and how different pathways work in the Honours years. Isabelle confirmed that a 'Transition to Honours' meeting will take place in March 2016, at which 3rd year students will attend to give their opinions and recommend courses taken. The issue of the 2nd year programme manual lacking information about the structure of Honours was raised and it was explained that there had been a new School policy to introduce programme handbooks for each year of study. Students were keen to know if they would have the same Personal Tutor (PT) throughout their degree and it was explained that although this is a preference it is not always viable. Students were encouraged to also contact Isabelle and Sue if extra support is required. Rachel received very positive feedback from students

as a new PT. There is a requirement to see 2nd year students once a semester but Rachel is happy to also see students on request.

The new 'ground' café received both positive and negative feedback. It is a good social space but preference to the food waste bin being more prominent was raised.

The weekly SD Briefs is a great innovation and should be continued.

Students were satisfied with the transition from SD1a to SD2a. Geography pathway students would like recommendations of courses from students in 3rd/4th year on 2nd year courses which would be really beneficial. Isabelle stressed that Anthony Newton, who is the SD contact person in Geography, has set up a meeting as he does every semester precisely for that purpose, and that only half of the Geography pathway students attended (across the 4 years). It is important to attend these meetings as they are immensely helpful to hear from other students in later years regarding courses etc.

The lecture location for SD2a was not felt to be suitable this year. Students would like more transferable skills/practical skills integrated into the degree and Rachel requested more feedback on this in order for it to be developed. Isabelle suggested that the Careers Service and PTs could also advise with information on transferable skills. In 2014-15, Amanda Midhamre, a 4th year SD student, organised a careers workshop for Sustainable Development and it is hoped that this would take place again this year. Volunteers for the workshop to assist in shaping it would be welcomed.

Year 3 Feedback:

Concern that there is no SD course in semester 1 was raised. More classes in the pathway are taken than the degree programme overall. Rachel is developing a new course which it is hoped will run in 2016-2017 to specifically address this issue.

There is too much similarity between the 1st year Science and Society course and the 3rd year Nature of Geographical Knowledge course, and Geography pathway students would prefer if Science and Society was not a compulsory requirement. The Methods course is very useful but would have been helpful if the class had been taken earlier for students on the Geography fieldtrip. Students are encouraged to contact Anthony Newton about this. Positive feedback was received on the dissertation preparation workshops.

Isabelle reinforced the importance for course content of the Cases in Sustainable Development fieldtrips during Innovative Learning Week (ILW) in semester 2. Students **must not** make holiday plans and must attend. Students would appreciate receiving dates of fieldtrips in ILW and Sue will contact Eugenia for further information.

Year 4 Feedback:

Students are keen for a placement programme as part of the course. More resources and expansion of the Sustainable Development team would be required before this could be introduced. Isabelle will send out information from International Office about funding for placements. The deadline for applications for Erasmus funding for placements is the 1st of February 2016 and this is open to all years. Isabelle has circulated information about this – she is available for more help if need be.

The Anthropology pathway compulsory course, Culture and Power, in 1st semester was felt not to be relevant and would be better if Anthropology pathway students were able to select a different course option. The course Anthropology and the Environment which takes place in 2nd semester was deemed more relevant and could be added to the list of required options to choose from – to be revised at the end of semester 2.

The Friday room booking providing space to discuss dissertations is interesting and works well. However, it would benefit if more people attended. Reps are asked to gather feedback to find out if it is the scheduling or the location that is causing low attendance. Sue is happy to look into a different location and rescheduling of the session if this is the case.

The Global Learning course is useful for students thinking about going into teaching, or for students who find this topic interesting. There is doubt, however, that it should be named as a highly recommended course in the SD handbook.

It is recommended that students who are thinking about taking Social Development take the course in 3rd year rather than 4th as it is useful on learning how to do 'close reading' and critiquing literature. Claire will be teaching Sociology of Environment and Risk in 2016-2017 when she returns from Sabbatical. Sue agreed to pursue the issue of ensuring that a 2 year course projection in all subject areas for courses running in 3rd/4th year is included in the course choice listings sent out to students.

The weekly SD brief emails are good and have encouraged students to go to certain talks.

There will be a 'Welcome Back' party on Friday 15th January 4pm in 6th floor staff room and more details will follow in due course.