DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT

STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, 29TH OCTOBER 2014

PRESENT:
Andrea Aalstad, Andreea Antuca, Jacopo Casadei, Jodie Clark, Lavinia Coroiu, Theresa Crowley, Spencer Dennis, Julianna Doughty, Natasha Ezrow, Becky Fray, Muhammad Haji Awang Zaini, Aleksandra Kamenova, Lexi Keegan, Adriana Mara, Stephen Monger, Lucia Pantigoso Vargas, Miruna-Elena Popa, Abi Reid, Evelina Semaskevic, Adriana Timeva, Roxana Tompea, Sallyann West, Merel Ypinga

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Shuaib Baig, Alexandra Claxton-Mayer Katharina Fleiner, Kristin Kvalvik, Raluca Pahontu, Oluwatomini Popoola and Rana Tawfik.

2. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes from the previous meeting were distributed before the meeting. There were no comments.

3. UPDATE FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

There were no updates from the previous meeting.

4. UPDATES ON CURRICULUM REVIEW – PLANNED CHANGES TO CURRICULUM

The Second Year Representative expressed that the second year optional modules are not evenly available across the two terms – there are more modules available in the autumn term than in the spring. She also said that the entire grade for GV252 is based on one essay and this is very intimidating.

A Course Rep commented that there is more coursework following the removal of exams for some modules, but less time to do it as exams were held in the summer term.

Reps commented that when quizzes take the place of exams, there is no guidance on preparation, no examples and too much pressure placed on class tests, which creates too much pressure for students.

• Action Point – The First Year Administrator will discuss the assessment of GV252 with the Module Supervisor and feed back to students.
5. **ARC – PROVIDE PREVIOUS YEAR’S ARC, EXTERNAL EXAMINERS’ REPORTS, STUDENT SURVEY INFORMATION**

Documents were distributed to all staff and representatives before the meeting.

Students expressed that some Law and Politics students were asking why they have to take GV110 and GV112. The Departmental Administrator explained that it is a replacement for GV200, which was cancelled last year.

An Economics and Politics Course Rep explained that she had first and second year optional modules in her list that she wasn’t able to choose. The Departmental Administrator explained that lists are updated every year and this is likely to be a technical glitch. Any technical issues can be reported to the relevant administrator.

Students discussed that their peers are not engaged with their readings. Reading groups and a monitoring system (such as quizzes/weekly reading responses) were suggested. Students commented that the module syllabus is too complicated and suggested a separate reading list of books they need to buy before they arrive.

Students commented that they need a meeting about the systems (e.g. Moodle, FASer) to be taught how they work. Peer Mentors often help with this task and a more structured job description for Peer Mentors was requested. It was suggested that an email of links could be sent to first years for the systems. All information is in the handbook.

- **Action point** – The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator will develop a structured Peer Mentor job description for next year’s recruitment.

6. **STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS**

The Third Year Rep is going to investigate methods used by other departments who have higher response rates to student surveys to see how the Department of Government can improve.

It was suggested that students are misinterpreting questions on the surveys. Course Reps agreed that they can get together to help students understand these better and to advertise them in a more positive way.

- **Action point** – Course Reps to get together and think of ways in which to advertise the student survey in a more positive way and assist students to understand them more easily.
7. STUDENT MATTERS

Team building for Course Reps
It was suggested that Course Reps could have team building events to assist with communication as not everyone was together at training. Facebook pages were a solution that was discussed, but it was expressed that students can organise meetings with each other whenever they wish.

Student Conference
The Departmental Administrator introduced the Student Conference and expressed the need for volunteers and involving more people to help organise it.

‘Tap Me In’ System
Students asked whether there will be a student system where they can see their own attendance, and when they will be called up for non-attendance. The Departmental Administrator explained that the system is currently being monitored centrally, but there is an intention to create a student system. The Senior Advisor explained that the number of non-attendance is fixed and if students miss a certain number of classes, they will be invited to a meeting with her or the UG Education Officer.

Students enquired as to what time they could tap in from and to. It was thought that students can tap in ten minutes before the lecture and ten minutes prior to the end of the lecture. It was also highlighted that sometimes teaching staff are not on time and this creates a clamour at the tap in points when classes are coming in or out. The UG Education Officer informed students that staff had been emailed about this today.

- Action Point – The First Year Administrator will investigate the timings of the tap in system.

Referencing and Plagiarism
The UG Education Officer had just given a lecture on Plagiarism and Referencing and will email students with notes from this to clear up any confusion. Any questions can be emailed to the UG Education Officer – nezrow@essex.ac.uk.

- Action Point – The UG Education Officer will distribute notes on Plagiarism and Referencing to all students.

Listen Again
The UG Education Officer explained that professors do not use Listen Again for a variety of reasons and that it is only there for students who have disabilities that prevent them from taking notes.

Students commented that it is helpful for revision, finding sources that professors use so that they can be researched for assignments, helps international students and can be used to recap difficult topics.
It was suggested that a note taking skills class could help.

- **Action Point** – The Senior Advisor and Administrators will discuss the possibility of a note taking skills class.

**Moodle**

It was suggested that having all resources on Moodle would be extremely helpful so that students could find everything in one place.

- **Action Point** – The UG Education Officer will find out what other staff think about putting all materials on Moodle.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There will be a charity coffee morning on Tuesday 4\(^{th}\) November 2014 for all Government students and staff.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TBC.**

**SUMMARY OF ACTION POINTS**

- **Action Point** – The First Year Administrator will discuss the assessment of GV252 with the Module Supervisor and feed back to students.
- **Action point** – The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator will develop a structured Peer Mentor job description for next year’s recruitment.
- **Action point** – Course Reps to get together and think of ways in which to advertise the student survey in a more positive way and assist students to understand them more easily.
- **Action Point** – The First Year Administrator will investigate the timings of the tap in system.
- **Action Point** – The UG Education Officer will distribute notes on Plagiarism and Referencing to all students.
- **Action Point** – The Senior Advisor and Administrators will discuss the possibility of a note taking skills class.
- **Action Point** – The UG Education Officer will find out what other staff think about putting all materials on Moodle.