

SSLC Meeting
Monday 26th March 2018
Informatics Forum IF 1.15

Present:

Alex Lascarides – Deputy Head of the Graduate School
Amanda MacKenzie – Graduate School Manager
Patrick Hudson – IGS On-course Student Support Administrator
Stefan Fehrenbach – LFCS representative
Naums Mogers – PPAR representative
Michael Camilleri – Data Science representative
Stefanie Speichert – Informatics PGR representative

Meeting was conducted as an open forum and representatives were asked in advance to bring any issues or discussion points with them to be raised with other students in attendance or IGS staff. Also prior to the meeting Alex Lascarides sent out an email and asked the student reps to contact their students and ask the following questions:

- 1) Teaching support: What further improvements can be made? Have any of the changes we have made helped? Also how can we incentivise teaching support to make it more appealing?
- 2) How could The Universities Career Services help our PGR cohort?

1. Matters Arising

- a) Institute reps passed on the information provided by their colleagues from the School of Health and Social Science. There have been a few events which have now been collaborated between the two schools.
- b) The induction for new starts in 2018 was updated based on feedback regarding computing support. This will continue to be updated for the September, 2018 arrivals.
- c) Dave Hamilton was informed about the tap issue on the 2nd floor and this was fixed though this continues to be an issue. AL suggested that all reports in future can be sent directly to building-issues@inf.ed.ac.uk.
- d) Feedback about Teaching Support was sent to Vicky MacTaggart and some of these points were improved upon. Also, some suggestions were passed onto Stuart Anderson who is currently in the process of updating teaching support. Stuart was asked to provide an update for this meeting but did not submit anything on time. This is an ongoing matter.
- e) Institute reps contacted their students regarding unpaid work. This was also in the minutes which were distributed to all students.

2. Teaching Support

a) Tutorials

- There is a deficit in the number of tutors and some who cannot do their job efficiently.
- Tutors are given one hour paid preparation time for each tutorial session, this is not sufficient and is at the detriment to their teaching.
- This also can mean additional time is used in preparation and can then eat into their time which should be for their research.
- It was discussed, as in the previous meeting, regarding the same students teaching the same classes instead of the same group therefore cutting time for preparation.

b) Marking

- A lack of guidelines from lecturers makes marking difficult and also means that there is a lack of similarity in results. This causes different standards of marking.
- The time estimated for marking is often not realistic. Not enough time is offered for this task. This can result in PhD students being put off from taking part in marking because they know the workload will not warrant what they will be paid for it.
- NM had suggested that he used an auto-marker called Automated and has helped to save time. He did also mention that on occasions markers were writing their own auto-marker.
- It was suggested by AL that a platform for lecturers to share best practice would be beneficial.
- Students thought that having a platform to share feedback may speed up the marking process if they were able to use more generic templates.

c) Teaching Assistants

- None of the students present at the meeting had experience of this role.
- The role of teaching assistant requires a lot of additional work and therefore puts a lot of students off when considering this.

d) Online Timesheets

- Feedback was good regarding the change to online timesheets.
- One negative piece of feedback was that the calculation of hours remaining on the online forms does not include anything previously claimed for that month, which can cause some confusion.
- Another piece of feedback was that students were unable to edit a submitted timesheet if they made an error. AL pointed out if students make mistakes they should contact the ITO to make the changes on their behalf.

e) Applying for a teaching post

- The feedback for this was good. The process is very quick.
- It was mentioned that compared to other schools our system seems to be a lot more efficient and easier.
- There are some delays on Theon to update what teaching spots are available.

Action – AL to discuss this feedback with Stuart Anderson for inclusion in his Teaching Support plans.

Action – AM to forward this feedback to Vicky MacTaggart for consideration

3. Career Service

- a) Career Service had offered to come to The Forum to deliver careers sessions to PGR students and IGS wanted to gauge the interest for this and what topics they may want covered.
- b) Students suggested that they received a lot of career guidance and advice from their supervisors and fellow students.
- c) Career Service do offer one-to-one interview prep and this was something that students felt would be useful.
- d) The interview prep was a service that students were not necessarily aware of and it was decided that maybe an overview session of career services targeted to PGR students at Informatics would be useful.
- e) Various CDT and other industrial partner events were discussed as good ways to plan for future careers and network with companies. Though this is not something that Career Service can arrange, it was noted that there is often a lot of interest in these types of events.

Action – AM to co-ordinate a PGR-specific Careers Service session for Welcome Week in September and invite all PGR students.

4. General feedback from Student reps based on email correspondence

- a) Shower facilities in The Forum were not always kept clear. People often leave old bottles etc and wet clothes in the shower areas. This means others using the space are unable to use the space as they would like. It was suggested that something similar to the 'fridge clearances' could work for the showers. AL suggested more hanging space could help with the problem.
- b) MC noted that a student raised concerns that they had with Computer Clusters and how these do not run very well. It was suggested that there was not enough of these and providing more would help with the issue. The performance of these clusters is hampering students work if their research is very compute intensive. AL mentioned that with IGS not paying for the VOX courses next year some of the IAD budget could perhaps be used for additional clusters. The student also mentioned that when reporting this issue they did not receive a response from computing support. It was suggested that this might be due to recent strike action. AL had suggested that this issue could be raised with the Head of Computing but this post is currently vacant.

Action – PH to contact Dave Hamilton regarding the clearance of shower space and the possibility of additional hanging facilities

Action – AL to raise student concerns regarding computer clusters at next appropriate time

Next meeting TBA