

SSLC Meeting
Tuesday 24th October 2017
Informatics Forum IF 1.16

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
Martin Ruefenacht – PPAR representative
Anna Currey – ILCC representative
Michael Camilleri – Data Science representative
Hanz Cuevas Velasquez – IPAB 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 students reps to contact their students and ask the following questions:

- 1) Teaching support: if you don't do it, why? If you do, how can the experience be improved?
- 2) How should we enhance social cohesion among PGR students across the school?

1. Visit with students from the School of Health in Social Science

- a) Iris Ho and Kyoshi Nasir Bhuiyan, student reps from the School of Health in Social Science, visited to briefly discuss collaborations between their school and Informatics.
- b) This included networking events and interdisciplinary work.
- c) Informatics reps were asked to send information of these events to students within their Institutions.

Action – Institute Reps to pass on information provided by Iris Ho and Kyoshi Nasir Bhuiyan

2. General feedback from Student reps based on email correspondence

- a) Anna Currey received feedback stating the quality of the induction for new students was not comprehensive enough. Basic things like how to book rooms or what printer to use were often over looked and students had to work this out for themselves.
- b) Naums Mogers mentioned a particular case of a student who was having tensions with their supervisor. Alex has asked Naums to contact the students and tell them to contact Alex immediately so she can help with this issue.

- c) Michael did mention that the 2nd floor kitchen in the Forum often had old food in the fridge and that the taps were often broken.

Action – IGS to look at inclusion of points raised in next year's induction

Action – AL to contact Dave Hamilton regarding tap issue at 2nd floor kitchen

3. Teaching Support

- a) AL began this discussion stating that in recent years the Informatics MSc and UG cohort has almost doubled. This has put a strain on teaching support resources.
- b) It was suggested that weekly timesheets are both useless and very annoying to complete. Why was this process changed from monthly timesheets?
- c) It was also mentioned that the application was too long (lengthy questionnaire) and this did not always seem to be necessary. Confusion about when this part of the process was required or when a student could just speak directly to the academic who was running the course.
- d) If supervisors are not using the questionnaire outcomes to source their teaching support then is this process necessary.
- e) It was also mentioned that the Visa approval and contract process was also lengthy but it was explained to the students that this is unavoidable.

Action – AM to feedback requests for changes to the application process with Vicky MacTaggart (Scholarships and Teaching Support Manager)

Tutoring

- a) One of the reps stated that they had been given the same topic material to teach this topic for one week.
- b) Having one topic to tutor for one week to different groups was preferable to having different topics to tutor to the same group.

TA Roles/ Marking

- a) Being restricted to LEARN has made it more difficult to distribute some information to students. This is a University issue restricting the use of other programmes.
- b) Students mentioned they have been overworking while completing marking. These hours have to be requested or will remain unpaid. They usually are approved but with marking having deadlines the work is often completed without knowing for sure they will receive approval for the additional hours.
- c) It was suggested that academics should provide more accurate estimates of the time required to mark specific courses.
- d) One student rep had mentioned that they had not taken on any marking as they were warned by fellow students that it was not worth their while.
- e) There was also a discussion whether or not the design of assignments could be that they are made easier to mark. Would it be possible to create an auto-marker so each marker could create their own solution for this? This would make the process easier and quicker.

- f) It was agreed that 30 hours of marking was too high and something around 10 hours would be far more desirable.
- g) Students mentioned that spending so long on marking was potentially at the detriment of their own PhD. IGS confirmed to the students that no extensions could be made based on a student having completed a lot of marking.
- h) When students are considering taking on marking they may prefer to complete an internship instead and use their time this way.
- i) AL suggested the school should be better at communicating the benefits of teaching and marking as this may encourage more MScR students to help.

Action – Institute reps should inform their students that they should never complete unpaid work

Action – AL to discuss the above issues and suggestions with Stuart Anderson (Director of Teaching)

4. Social Cohesion

- a) Based on the outcome of the recent PRES and also the lack of students utilising IGS funds to organise events or use for Student Family activities, it was suggested that social cohesion within the school is not high at the moment.
- b) Due to the structure of the school there are many groups already in existence (reading groups, supervisor groups, CDT groups).
- c) The way that desks are allocated can mean students are not in an office with likeminded students so they are not able to form bonds around their research. AM spoke about the difficulty in desk allocation and how the school is currently very tight on space so allocating people together based on institute or supervisor is not often possible.
- d) CDT student reps felt that being part of a CDT created better relationships and cohesion between students.
- e) Some of the reps did ask about the Student Families initiative and what the interest levels were in this. There were also a few ideas on how the Student Families could perhaps be improved. No changes were decided after a short discussion.

Next meeting TBA