

SSLC Meeting
Tuesday 26th November 2019
Informatics Forum IF-5.02

Present:

Alex Lascarides – Deputy Head of the Graduate School
Lindsey Fox – Graduate School Manager
Patrick Hudson – IGS On-course Student Support Administrator
Michael Camilleri – Data Science representative
Denis Emelim – ILCC representative
Marija Jegorova – IPAB representative
Ionela Mocanu – PPAR representative
Traiko Dinev – RAS representative
Kaan Ocal – ANC representative
Rimvydas Rubavivius – NLP 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 question:

1) Forum/ Bayes office space – What are the working conditions like for your office.

1. Matters Arising

- a) Information relating to the IGS student travel funds have been sent out to students and that they were informed that there were still funds available.
- b) Information relating to the school's student support structure has been communicated to students.
- c) Update was provided to the group regarding stationary and cleaning supplies for Bayes occupants.
- d) Tier 4 added to PPR discussion points.
- e) Marking added to PPR discussion points.
- f) PH spoke with Alex Burford regarding auto marking. A response was received. This issue is something the teaching committee are looking into so it will not be a point the SSLC will be required to follow up on any further.
- g) LF spoke with the ITO about having all of their teaching information in one place. No update on this was given by ITO. This is something that is being looked at by teaching committee so will not be taken forward by the SSLC.
- h) IGS communicated to facilities that students were keen for the spring clean being done more regularly.
- i) PGR students were contacted about office etiquette particularly relating to office cleanliness.
- j) Bayes fridge cleaning was discussed with Carol Marini and an answer from Bayes was given and distributed to the reps for future reference.
- k) Procurement added to the PPR discussion points.
- l) See point a)

2. General feedback

- a) While discussing the student travel funds budget it was mentioned that these funds are available to CDT students once they have gone past their funding period. A discussion relating to the recent changes to the CDT funding period ensued but these issues are being dealt with at a CDT level and the affected students should be aware of changes going forward.
- b) Mental Health has been well advertised through Informatics.
- c) Feedback on the recent VOX training course was good and there are plans to run this course next year.
- d) Some feedback for the 'How to do an Informatics PHD' was received. This course is usually very well received and all students are encouraged to attend in their first year. However some feedback was to the contrary and in fact it was found not to be useful. More hands on activities would improve this but it was discussed this would likely not be possible due to the attendee numbers.
- e) NLP students are finding it difficult to use their annual leave allocation during term time due course workload. It was suggested that NLP student will most likely need to take holidays in line with the academic year to ensure all course commitments are met.
- f) Some of the CDT students informed the group that there had been a bit of a delay recently in receiving their travel expenses. It was explained that this should improve due to more manpower in processing these. Also the students were told that when submitting expenses that one expense claim can be split into separate claims if the students requires some of these funds back before other expenses have been incurred.
- g) IGS were keen to discuss the student induction experience with the group. There was no specific feedback from the group relating to their experiences. It became clear that within each institute processes are slightly different so the CDT and Institute inductions are useful.
- h) One of the student was informed that they were not able to work from home outside of Edinburgh. This is not the case. It was explained that any student wishing to do this should submit a leave of absence form after discussing their situation with their supervisor.

Action – PH to contact Bluesky to check their policy on clearing up catering

3. PGR Working Environment and building feedback

- a) Hand sanitisers have recently appeared in some of the forum toilets. Students have asked that these are permanent and also rolled out to all toilets.
- b) Some negative feedback was received relating to the ongoing internal building works in the forum. Unfortunately this work is ongoing but the school is doing their best to communicate any future disruption to students and staff.
- c) Some rooms were reported as too hot. The school is working towards solutions to fix various heating and ventilations issues.
- d) MF1 in the forum is a space often used by students on their lunch. This space gets quite busy and very noisy at particular points of the day. Often after lunch students and staff will congregate in the corridors before going back to their own offices.

This can be very disruptive for students in these offices where people are chatting outside. AL suggested students should deal with this politely themselves where possible. If it is affecting the same offices constantly then perhaps signs can be put up to discourage people from congregating in these spaces.

- e) One particular complaint was received regarding a student who was having difficulty with their office mates making too much noise. This was to the extent they had to request the use of private library space. The noise stemmed from meetings in the office or loud equipment like electronic keyboards. AL suggested if this was an ongoing issue then the student could speak to her. PH also suggested if the student would like to consider moving offices then this could be a possibility and they should contact IGS.
- f) Although there are occasionally some issues with the coffee machines most students seem happy that they are provided with free coffee in their work place.
- g) An issue was raised concerning forum users not cleaning up after they have used external catering, leaving food and other rubbish but also sometimes catering equipment like tea urns. It is unclear if this is the responsibility of the meeting organisers or if the catering providers should do this.
- h) Feedback was received that students were happy with the amount of space in the forum for meetings and social events.

Action – PH to contact Carol regarding hand sanitisers and potential noise signage near MF1.

4. Teaching and Marking

- a) Further examples of students not being allocated enough hours to complete TA work were provided. It was again relayed to the reps that students should not complete any TA work if the additional hours are not guaranteed in advance to ensure they are paid for everything. The lecturer for the programme must arrange for additional funds if these are required.
- b) There does not seem to be consistency from course to course when allocating and paying additional hours.
- c) On occasions TAs are producing more work than is sometimes required in the form of feedback. Students should be aware of the course organiser's expectations when producing feedback to make sure they are not doing more than is required.
- d) Teaching contracts can take up to three months to arrange. ITO have encouraged students to submit documents earlier than the deadline so there is not a large back log of contracts to process at once.

Action – Michael (DS rep) to take issue regarding the length of time it takes to create a TA contract to the upcoming College SSLC.

Next meeting TBA