

Teaching Committee Minutes - Wednesday 14 October 2015

Present: B Franke (Convener), S Goldwater, K Hardman, M Matheson (Secretary), N. Nardelli (student), M Rovatsos, I Stark, H Pain, P Jackson, P Stevens, A Smaill, E Klein

1. Apologies for Absence: F Keller, C Sutton, A Storkey, P Anderson, A Lascarides

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were taken as read.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 I. Murray to liaise with Computing Support for a new 'showcase' webpage

ACTION ONGOING: B Franke to follow up on progress of this

3.2 ITO to amend the policy to allow Honours and MSc students as tutors for non-honours courses

ACTION COMPLETE: subject to the exception of capping number of hours of work due to shortage of tutors

3.3 C Stirling and B Franke to put together a working group to discuss concerns from students re the current semester 2 exam schedule and find potential alternatives

ACTON ONGOING: a small working group meeting was held looking at this and overall student satisfaction, working on a proposal to distribute

3.4 C Stirling to propose a policy on peer observation with input from the Head of School

ACTION ONGOING: B Franke to follow up

4. MSc Fee Deposit Proposal

An MSc fee deposit proposal was provided following recent very high intake of MSc students, this proposal asks students to pay a deposit so that the School can obtain a more reliable estimate of intake before the beginning of the semester. It was agreed that the amount should be substantial (some other School's implement £1,500) but there should be consideration for hardship cases. Other options were discussed e.g. making a smaller amount of offers; however this would require College approval and may not be favourable due to their desire for growth. The committee agrees in principle with the proposal and any further comments should be sent directly to B Franke who will look at the details of implementation further.

ACTION: B Franke to look at details of implementation of MSc fee deposit

5 + 6. ILW report and ILW 2016

ILW has run Smart Data Hack for three years with approximately 70 students attending each year. There was more staff participation last year and there has been three Expression of Interest received already for this year The University is considering the future of the ILW as some students do not see this week as a good investment of their time. There is a review being done on how the event is run, looking at trying to improve infrastructure. We are trying to get the Business School on board, Information Services has become more involved and will have more input in designing Smart Data Hack. The theme this year is going to be something along the lines of 'Playing with Ideas', it was noted that ILW is an excellent thing for the University to have as it allows students to talk to other students about their projects/research. N Nardelli (student representative) advised it is useful and they would like to see teaching interview workshops outside of learning week.

7. JupyterHub – programming in the browser

IPython, which is currently used, needs to be downloaded and installed on Dice accounts by students. Jupyterhub is a suggested replacement which puts all of the information on the server and the student does not need to download anything. This is still at the experimental stage and there is a trial being implemented with the Design for Informatics students. Currently working with Eddie to roll out JupyterHub which can be accessed via a University wide URL, with the intention to make this more widely available throughout the University. This will be useful for information sharing.

8. Call for discussion on exam scrutiny process

P Stevens presented a paper outlining some suggested improvements on the current exam scrutiny process. Suggested improvements from the committee included nominating a person to evaluate and comment on the paper, and then a moderator making any changes before the paper is viewed by the external examiner; assigning a Teaching Assistant to complete the exam so that exam errors can be found.; Head of School allocating exam duties so that the workload is spread and papers are being read by people that are more experienced in that specific field. One suggestion from the paper was to have even bigger scrutiny meetings, this was deemed undesirable. It was felt that Scrutiny meetings are very time pressured and therefore the best job is not done with this time pressure. It was concluded that there is an interest in changing the exam scrutiny process.

ACTION: P Stevens to create a proposal for a better exam scrutiny process

9. Year organiser reports

All of the UG reports were read and with no major comments. The MSc report highlighted that some of the incoming MSc students have a very weak maths ability, this was also discussed at the Recruitment Committee last week and decided that because of the mix of student backgrounds we should continue to take these students in and provide them with additional maths support where needed. S Goldwater noted that there is no way to email a cohort of students by degree programme, and it is therefore difficult to distribute materials before the start of semester to everyone on the programme. S Goldwater looked at the applications of some of the Cognitive Science students and it looks like they understand what the degree is offering matches what they are interested in however, there seems to be some disconnect re maths. H Pain advised College are happy to help us improve the students that we take in.

10. Year Recruitment Report

Undergraduate upped the number of offers made, which worked as we got closer to the target numbers for entry. It is noted that we should continue this. There is discussion as to whether the School Liaison/Outreach post should be an academic post rather than an administrative post however, no conclusion was reached.

11. Director of Teaching Report

The start of the academic year was challenging with last-minute cancellations of the SELP course (compulsory for the SE degree programme), timetabling issues around OS/CT, loss of tutorial space due to the recent move to FH and a record intake of MSc students. We have dealt with these challenges, but we clearly need to improve to avoid similar problems next year. Duty allocation will start in November, a deposit payment model (allowing us to get a better estimate of MSc students arriving) is currently discussed, and lecturers are once more reminded to consider space and tutor shortage when planning their courses for next year.

A working group investigating improvements to the student experience (especially teaching/feedback/assessment) has been established. The group will look into the December/April exam issue, the structure of UG3 and consider the introduction of more 20 credit point courses (reducing the number of 10 credit point courses).

H Pain noted that their used to be a questionnaire regarding who wanted to teach what however, there has not been one of these for a couple of years.

12. AOCB

12.1 M Rovatsos suggested the teaching committee meet once per month. B Franke agreed on the proviso that the meetings do not last more than one hour.