

**NOTES OF THE SCHOOL-WIDE STAFF/STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE  
HELD AT 13:00 HRS, 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2010  
WRB G.03, WILLIAM ROBERTSON BUILDING**

**In Attendance:**

**STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES:**

Katie Jennings (Chair); Brittany Harbidge; Ben Morse; Piotr Jacobsson; Kate Cranston-Turner

**STAFF:**

Perti Ahonen; Gordon Forbes; Robert Mason; Ewen Cameron; Felix Boecking; Margaret Forrest; Gordon Thomas; Lucy Grig; Colin Campbell (Minutes)

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting and opened the proceedings.

**1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

The minutes from the meeting 18/11/2009 were accepted as a true and accurate record.

**2. Matters Arising from Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

Business discussed within the main agenda items.

**3. Items Proposed by Student Members**

**3.a Dissertation Supervision**

It was reported by student representatives that some students felt that there were discrepancies in the support provided both in information and supervisory assistance for dissertations across the School. It was noted that there was currently no History dissertation handbook, while this document existed for other dissertation codes such as Economic and SH.

However, it was also recorded that students in some areas of the School did feel that they received a very high level of information and support in the dissertation sphere and had not experienced these problems.

Ewen Cameron responded that History was potentially looking at harmonising provision between the ESH and History dissertation codes. This would also potentially include a harmonising of the dissertation handbook and administration of all History dissertations.

Some members of staff noted that while dissertation support was crucial, different members of staff did have legitimately differing approaches to how they offered one-to-one support for this independent piece of personal research.

### 3.b History in Theory & History in Practice

In relation to **History in Theory**, student representatives reported that students did not feel that they were afforded enough 'lead' time before starting the Pathway element of the course. Some also felt that the lectures at the start of the course were not tied in enough with the exams, and that the exams (in May) were distant from the taught course. It was felt that the additional timetabled sessions of reading and self-guided reading did not offer enough of a link to prepare student for the examinations.

Some student representatives voiced their belief that the conceptual content of the HIT course would be more beneficial in 2<sup>nd</sup> year rather than in 3<sup>rd</sup> year.

A consensus of feeling amongst student representatives also noted that **History in Practice** seemed to offer a relatively 'light' 1<sup>st</sup> Semester in relation to a more intense 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester. Students noted their wish to see a greater balance across the two Semesters. In particular, this feeling was heightened by perceptions amongst students that there were discrepancies in the amount of support offered by project supervisors.

Some student representatives voiced their opinion that the HIP course would be strengthened with a reduction of project options and a corresponding increase in formal lectures.

**ACTION:** Ewen Cameron noted that project supervisors were all informed of the levels of supervisory support that was needed for this element of the course, but that this would be re-visited and that this would be highlighted to all course contributors for the coming academic year.

## 4. Items Proposed by Staff Members

### 4.a National Student Survey

The meeting was informed that the National Student Survey was still underway and that the School was keen to find new ways to promote student engagement with the survey.

Current response rate within the School was at 50% which just met the University's requirement. Representatives were asked to consider progressive and positive ways in which the School could encourage and promote higher levels of student engagement.

It was noted that it was the administering company which sent out reminder emails and telephoned students, and not the School. The School did not want to spam-email students incessantly until they were forced to engage.

The proposal of offering a prize draw for those that submitted was discussed amongst the meeting. The potential engagement of Student Societies in encouraging their members was also discussed.

No definitive conclusions were arrived at on this question, but student representatives were asked to think on this issue and to please seek the engagement of their fellow students.

## **5. Library Matters**

Margaret Forrest noted that she was always seeking and happy to receive service user feedback from students in relation to library issues.

It was noted that Margaret Forrest had recently contributed with Louise Jackson to a HIP session on the use of electronic library sources. It was hoped that other similar sessions could also be rolled out as part of other key cross-subject courses. Noted that 1<sup>st</sup> year course organisers are also currently inviting Margaret Forrest to class talks.

Electronic library sources were increasingly important resources to the School and Reps were informed that the future funding for these diverse publications was subject to their recorded usage. Students were therefore asked to promote the use of such electronic sources, if they wished for their future provision to be secure.

Noted that Margaret Forrest is also currently experimenting with the use of Facebook and Twitter as means of communicating and promoting library support within the School.

Felix Boecking reported that the recent opinions expressed by students on the provision of E-Reserve had been most helpful. Comments had been forwarded to the Library Committee and would help to inform future decisions. E-Reserve was felt by many staff and students to be a most valuable resource and it was hoped that a later decision in the Summer by the Principal's Office would recommend its continued funding.

A discussion followed amongst members on the issue of missing books from the HUB. It was felt that this affected several students on courses who were seeking to use key course texts. Students were asked to keep reporting any missing books as a matter of urgency to assist the library in monitoring and responding to this issue.

There was a consensus opinion expressed by student Reps that they would not wish to see a 24hr library service if this would mean a reduction of current services offered within the library. It was noted that EUSA are currently lobbying for the provision of 24hr library services.

## **6. New Student User Group: School Move to Old Medical School**

The meeting was informed of the new Student Users Group that has been set-up to consider student issues surrounding the upcoming move. The meeting noted the following ongoing areas of concern:

- It was noted that UG students would like to see access granted to the PG lab space within the new building. Archaeology students in particular – who need access to databases – were unhappy about the planned lack of UG lab provision.
- UG students also noted their desire to have access to a common room area within the new building. While it was recognised that the new building did not provide the common room facility as such, it was clear that the new building did offer a marked improvement for provision of student areas.
- It was felt that the lack of space for local section libraries was not popular amongst UG students and it was hoped that more space for local resources could be found. Margaret Forrest noted that finding book collection space had been a real challenge with existing collections taking up most of the capacity.

## **7. Any Other Business**

All members were thanked for their valued contribution and attendance at the meeting.