

Minutes OLC Meeting 19 February 2015

Present: M. Carmody, J. Fynn-Paul, D. Polackova, K. Robbe, H. Ruud, T. Vesters, F. Volz

1. Program Board response to minutes

We are pleased to see that the mid-term evaluations are being done electronically, and hope this will contribute to the lessening of their workload.

The rest of the response has been noted, and we thank the program board for their reaction.

2. Follow-up from last meeting: role of OLCs in other programs, OLC website and accessibility, student monitoring of email and communication with students

We are happy to see that the website is more accessible for students to contact us and see what they can approach us for.

3. Student feedback on subjects: overview

Configuring the World still has problems with the reading material, as the book is incomplete and poorly edited, however other issues seem to be solved with good progress.

Culture courses: It is unclear that the culture courses were meant to be culture and linguistics, renaming the courses to make this more explicit might help alleviate some concerns. Additionally, the relevance of the two tracks in one course still seem unclear, making many courses seem incoherent to the students.

The low ratings of some of the lecturers are concerning. Perhaps some of the lecturers getting consistent low scores might not be suitable for the program.

This segment is definitely the weakest of the second year first semester, and many of them need substantial restructuring.

Economics courses: Feedback seems to be a recurring issue, as it takes a long time for many students to receive it. We feel this is not necessarily to blame to individual tutors, but rather their workload which can detract either from the quality, or expediency of the feedback and grades.

Languages:

Overall: There seems to be a direct correlation between class size and performance, with language courses requiring more intensive training. This especially detracts from conversational training. We propose that a lower cap should be placed on the amount of students per class (at say 12) so as to improve performance.

General progression between levels seems to cause problems (Say between Spanish 1 and Spanish 2). The speed of the language courses seems to be a problem across the board. We would like to know why the current speed maintained is proscribed, and what the end goal is. We do however recognize that despite this most of the students pass the course, though from hearsay we gather that this is with a lower average than the GPA.

Indonesian: The course material seems to create problems, as they are unclear due to being written in Indonesian as well, which might demotivate students trying to catch up.

Spanish: While the feedback was generally very positive, the fall-out from the results isn't incorporated. The amount of people failing definitely speaks in favor of restructuring the course or grading.

a. Particular issues in feedback 1: online components

All of the online components, save for NA: Culture, seem to receive very low evaluations. We feel this proves that the current form of Blended Learning is simply not working. Students do not feel there is a reason or idea behind it apart from the idea itself. Online components can only be useful when actually used in a web environment with interaction and constant attention of the community. Simply put, we feel it complicates the courses, and only add to the workload of tutors and students without much recompense.

Recommendation to the Board: On-line assessment components, particularly blogs, be removed.

b. Compared to Faculty

When compared to the Faculty IS is getting lower scores for the lecturers, the same lecturers receiving higher scores at their 'native' studies. We feel this might be due to their distinctly different audience, inter-disciplinary vs. specialized. A clearer communication and vision presented from the program management as to the nature of multidisciplinary study programs and the different nature of large-scale lecturing and teaching and the particular goals it is trying to achieve, might solve these issues.

4. BAIS Academic Writing: Current Issues, 3rd year theses and internship papers

The Academic research and writing level of third-years is simply not enough, this highlights great problems within this course. They seem also not to have been taught well how to perform research, and the difference between that and personal opinion.

Current Issue is a recurring problem, and has not noticeably improved with compared to the last two years. We feel that such an essential skills course should be one of the most well-taught ones, and perhaps deserves a different approach. We feel the recent Plagiarism problems stem from the fault at the core here.

Additionally, the amount of essays written by students seem to be low, often only once per course. We feel this needs to be higher, and in incremental word count.

Recommendation to Board: Therefore we feel that a joint meeting with the OLC, the Faculty Board, and the Program Board is necessary to solve the issue of Current Issues and the Academic Research and Writing in the program as a whole. This meeting should occur urgently, within the next month, with a view to making changes effective fall Semester 2015/16, to ensure that new students coming in will not be subjected to the poor quality of essential skills which will impact them throughout their academic career.

Recommendation to Board: That a coordinator for the Thesis Seminars be appointed. This is to solve organizational and communication issues, as well as to strengthen the methodological and research skills content of the seminars themselves.

5. Accreditation Committee report and NSE survey

We feel a lot of the lower scores of the study compared to the faculty or University is simply put a lack of coherence between the funding and the amount of students present. For example 3 study coordinators for 1200 students seems very low. Overall, it seems to reflect other problems already visible in the feedback moments.

6. Other business

a. How surveys are conducted

Exams seem the most feasible moment, as there seems to be no distinct difference between during tutorials and during exams. To increase student's participation and effort for the feedback, the OLC is going to communicate with the students about how it is received

b. Study areas

The degree committee considers it a problem that the study area for students has been steadily declining, whilst the number of users has been increasing. Especially with the third-years returning after exchange/internships, the closing down of yet another part is problematic.

c. Coherence between global and area specific

With the continuing problems regarding Academic writing, we felt it more productive to focus our efforts on this, and leave this project by the wayside for now.

Appendix:

I. Summaries feedback by OLC

Evaluations Core courses

Teaching

- Globalization, language and culture: teaching very low and repeatedly commented on
 - Previous year: also very low; low scores for other teaches. This course has seen many changes, there has been a slight overall improvement
- Communicating Power teacher should be commended (2nd year in a row)
- Global History – teaching (3.2)
 - Previous year: less than 3.

Online components

- Globalization, language and culture – online quizzes didn't learn much
- Current Issues: Did not learn much from podcasts or toolbox on blackboard.
- CtW – podcasts below 3.
 - Previous year – also all online components less than 3.

All course with online components reported low satisfaction with these elements.

General comments:

- Globalization, language and culture: Too much linguistics in GLC, GCL doesn't differentiate itself from CS, Tutors late in providing grades (GLC)
 - Previous year: low overall score
- Configuring the World: Course material less than 3
 - Previous year also less than 3.
- Global History: Course material 3, internal coherence 3,
 - Previous year: course material 3

Current issues: massive issues – scored around 3 or less on several indicators.

- Goals unclear from beginning around 3;
- course was interesting scored less than 3,
- encourage capacity for critical thought less than 3,
- encouraged independent active effort less than 3,
- course material was good less than 2,
- type of classes around 2,
- internal coherence less than 2,
- blackboard effectively supported this course around 3,
- fits well in program of study around 3 (should be MUCH higher).
- Some teachers with around 3, others less than 3
- Did not learn much from podcasts or toolbox on blackboard.
- Numerous people wrote that there are no strong points at all in the course (in the comments).
- Quality of the book commented on repeatedly.

Previous years evaluations were also low – around 3. There has been a general decline since last year.

Economics by area (2014/15): evaluations

Teaching

- Latin America:
teacher: quite low score (below 3); students had problems with following lectures (argumentation, structure), unclear ppt's
- Africa:
Problems with tutorials: lack of feedback on presentations in class and of organized discussion, late feedback on essays
- North America:
Complaints about writing on white board; considering the possibility of providing slides/hand-outs in addition?
- S & SE Asia:
One of the lecturers is not included in the questionnaire
- East Asia:
One of the lecturers is not included in the questionnaire; both lecturers have rather low scores (difficult and detailed information, lacking engagement with the class)

Organization

- Latin America:
Perhaps diversifying the subjects for essays
- Africa:
problems with making readings available, essay grade should perhaps count for more %; making syllabus available on time
- North America:
Links between lectures and tutorials need attention; amount and difficulty of readings
- South & SE Asia:
Difficulty of readings; tutorials need more structure
- East Asia:
Difficulty of course material/amount of readings

Culture by Area

* = Course requires attention

(others mentioned b/c blogs are rated very low).

Culture Russia Eurasia:

-Online blog is weakest part (feedback and participation: 3ish). Rest good.

*Culture Africa:

-Goals not clear (2.8)

-teacher gets 2.5; majority at 2; cited for incoherence, lack of clarity.

-Posting on weblog: 2.6; feedback weblog 2.2; giving feedback blog 2.3

-Focus on SA and language: too much: students want broader focus, different media, not just linguistics/language, and one country

*Culture East Asia:

-Course interesting; 3.4

-Goals clear: 2.5

-Easy: 2.5

-teaching: 3.0

-Blogs: 3.0.

-Students want broader focus: not just food.

Culture SSEA:

-Blog rating 2-3.

Culture Latin America:

-Blog rating 3

-Too much split between 1st and 2nd half of the semester; students like the first better than the 2nd (focus on cultural artefacts).

Culture North America:

-Blog feedback surprisingly good: 4.0. Only one above 3. Others, posting, below 3.

-Otherwise good.

*Culture Middle East:

-Interesting: 2.0.

-Goals clear: 2.0.

-Teaching poor

-Blog: sub-3.

-Very weak course; lecturers not well prepared; vague; lacking structure, lectures not interesting; anthropological approach terrible; just case studies; not knowledgeable.

*Culture Europe:

-one teacher: 3.1.

-other teacher: 2.3

-Blogs: 3.0.

-teacher disorganized; lacking internal coherence; too many subjects; slides chaotic.

-But some say favorite subject; tutorials stronger than lectures.

OLC Meeting: Evaluations Languages

French Upper- intermediate

- Almost half of the students think it is too much work (4)
- Satisfied with clear descriptions in the beginning
- Both teachers have good scores: above 4
- Asking for more interaction; but apparently too many in the class
- Want more everyday French than vocabulary and grammar

French pre-intermediate

- The difficulty and workload is good (both about 3) though comments say the workload is a bit too much
- Fairly satisfied with the teachers: all around 4 in average; little difference between them except one which scores 4,6 (much better than the rest)
- Asking for more oral interaction – too much exercises now
- Too big groups
- Really messy and confusing Blackboard

Arabic

- Fairly heavy and difficult course
- Going too quick – asking for better/more time to explanations and regular revision
- Want speaking practice
- teacher get very good feedback for being approachable, dedicated and knowledgeable within his field

Swahili

- Students overall happy with the course, but 75% find the workload a bit too heavy
- The teacher get good feedback (av:4,7)
- Too much focus on vocabulary

Spanish Upper-Intermediate

- Very good feedback
- No real concerns, save slight complaints about speed of grading papers, and different styles of teaching.

Spanish Pre-Intermediate

- Less enthusiastic than Upper, but still good
- Only score under 3: Critical thought (Not that surprising for a language course)
- Quite a lot of complaints about the tempo of the course, too fast/too hard often mentioned.

Russian

- Very good
- Teacher very high score (4.8)