

OLC meeting 21.09.2015: minutes

Present: Helene Rudd, Michelle Carmody, Florian Voltz, Ksenia Robbe.

Apologies: Jeff Fynn-Paul, Crystal Ennis, Dana Polackova

1: Responses to our minutes:

- Appointment of new student member to the program board
 - o **We advise to appoint a new member, not re-appoint the same person** → ability to come in with new ideas and viewpoints
 - o We suggest it should be an election in the same way as with the DC to ensure the student representative is someone appointed by the students
 - o We call for a more transparent selection process
 - o Maybe appoint a second or first year that is more attached/closer to the student body
 - o **Selection guidelines** → we would like the PB to tell us what are the guidelines and process for the selection/appointment of the student member of the Board.
 - o **We advise that guidelines are created if they do not exist, and students are able to apply and are elected/selected based on these guidelines. We strongly advise against it being a closed/internal process.**
- Practicing International Studies: We wish the PB had addressed the core issues
 - o Main issue: Start tutorials earlier → easy to be solved

Responses accepted.

2: Evaluations from last semester:

- The language courses do not develop critical thought, but that is probably not a requirement at this level
 - o Pace of the language courses: Some students claim it to be going too quickly; languages have to be prioritized over other subjects → students work much more with their language than what equals 10 credits
 - o It was discussed that because the language takes up so much attention, other courses do sometimes not get enough attention → worse grades
 - o It was discussed that it is possible that the languages are somehow holding the students back academically → not necessarily directly but also indirectly because languages take up too much time. Is there any data on whether languages are the cause of study delay?
 - o **We request a better allocation of study resources: language-lab (in the new building we are getting); each language have their dedicated time**
 - If languages takes up such a big share of the study, better resources for learning a language should be provided
 - o Put more focus on teaching the languages better, also outside the class room → equally focus on how the students can practice their language of choice outside the classroom and how to most efficiently study a language

- Better guiding on how to efficiently study a language
- Appendix to these minutes: summaries of evaluations
- Examination: multiple choice do not fit the second year critical courses; do not reveal the actual knowledge among the students → The second year courses are meant to learn how to develop an argument, should be reflected in the examination
 - We suggest multiple choice exams in the first year; tutors do not need to grade these
 - Tutors can rather focus on grading the second year open essay exams
 - **Thus, we would like to hear from the Examination Committee what their recommendations are re: examination types and their appropriateness at different levels of the course, and how this fits in with building academic skills**
- Practicing IS: mostly structural issues
 - The organisation of the course is not good enough → confusing and the workload way too much
 - We expect the PB to sort out these structural issues first and then we wait until next year to see if there are any content-related issues
 - According to the students, the groups should be smaller
 - Clear allocation of tasks from the instructor/tutor, not the group leader him/herself
 - Start tutorials earlier → easy issue to be solved
- OCTB
 - There is no coordination of how to approach and find a supervisor → that needs to be fixed! At the moment both students and lecturers are confused and frustrated of the system
 - There is no clear division/explanation of what is academic and what is practical. Students are very confused of what is expected of them
 - **We recommend clearer advice to students on the nature of this option for the discretionary space, highlighting the difference between an academic internship, and a work experience internship.**
 - Double workload – working full-time as intern (practical), has to add the academic stuff on side
 - Needs to be clear to the students that it is an academic internship: it is marketing wrong. Students believe it is good work experience, but in fact it is more about learning about organisations
 - Need to be better thought how to do a research paper. Here again we are back to the issue of making sure of what the various elements are meant for and whether they feed into the academic or practical aspect
 - Need to coordinate what is the purpose of the research paper → what is the point? In current situation, both students and supervisors are confused
 - **We recommend serious attention be paid to explaining to students what the purpose of the research paper is, that students are trained within the course on how to conduct this research (and/or limits to this research are established), and that a better system for supervision is established.**

- **In general, we ask the PB to inform us for our next meeting of plans to change the course – this is a flagship component and we believe it is currently the weakest aspect of the degree thus needs attention.**
 - It shall be thought how to combine the research and the internship: interlink these aspects
- Temporary employment: we do not think this system lead to the necessarily stability

3: Thesis seminars

- The overall results seem to be good from past year
- With the new guidelines without any formalisation, how is it planned to be monitored?
 - Students will compare and complain → it will have some throughout basic structure
- Is it intended that thesis writing will be addressed in the seminars? Maybe formalize that?
- Will it be enough facilities to run seminars for current students and repeats?
 - Space, tutors etc.
- We think the practicalities must be addressed in more details in order to avoid that we miscalculate resources and facilities when students, included the repeats, ate writing their theses next semester

4: Other businesses:

- We will from now on call ourselves the Education Committee in English, as this is a better translation of Opleidingscommissie and gives a better indication of our mandate. want to call ourselves education committee rather than degree committee
- We will continue to work towards developing a comprehensive academic skills program throughout the whole course.
- We have been asked to address whether Mediterranean can become a region to study. In our opinion it is not advised → Can focus on that region in electives and discretionary space.

Student Evaluations of Subjects
Semester 2, 2014-15

Core courses

Cultural Studies

Complaints regarding course materials (textbook) and the clarity of lectures

Compliments to tutorial discussions

Lectures: repetitive (repeating the book), poorly structured; more explanation of difficult terms and theoretical approaches needed

Tutorials: Texts for tutorials were well chosen, discussions well organized

Suggestions: More discussion of difficult terms and concepts in tutorials; more connection between lectures and tutorials

Choosing sections from the book and making clear what students have to read

Making clear which material is relevant generally and for the exam

Economics

Lectures: repetition of the book content

Tutorials: no clear instructions, no feedback on the assignments

Exams: mid-term too easy, final too difficult

Suggestions: more/ new examples and case studies; additional tutorials for students with no background in economics? Doing more exercises in class, rather than presentations and essays

Philosophy of Science

Lectures: very clear and well-structured

Tutorials: slow grading (too many assignments? what kind of assignments?), the scope of essays seems to be restricted to the content of the lectures, confusing explanations, presentations repeating the content of the lectures

Suggestions: more stimulating readings, tutorial assignments should be better planned

International Economics

Lectures: interesting, but quick pace

Complaints about the difficulty of the book

Tutorials: disconnected from the lectures, more time for discussing the readings, lack of clarity in the essay assignment, more guidance for writing reviews

International Politics

Possibly the workload is too high (readings: 4/ week, materials for the exams)

The course generally privileges Eurocentric perspectives

Good choice of readings for tutorials

Tutorials: Criticisms of web-posts, but not clear what the issue was; less presentations, more discussion of concepts and readings; slow grading

Exams: too much focused on details, questions are too much fact-based (MC) - essay questions would better suit the course

Practicing IS

Goals and expectations are unclear

Lack of coherent structure (connection between lectures and tutorials)

Workload is too heavy, especially for the last semester

Course materials were not well-chosen

Tutorials should start at the beginning of the course

Groups too big (12 students)

Not fitting within the study programme (not related to other courses, students did not have background in business)

Organizational theory

Almost all points below 3

High dropout rate

Most of the content seems to be unhelpful for students intending to do an internship

Lacking proper academic content, not helping in practical matters such as finding internship opportunities

On the other hand: too much focus on concepts rather than practical matters of working in a company

Focused entirely on business administration

Exam: aims at memorizing rather than analyzing material

Languages

Hindi 3

- Evaluation very good, not many negative points

Indonesian 3

- The course material was not so good (2.6/5)
- Did not really encourage critical thinking (but I guess this is normal for languages) (2.1/5)
- Overall a rather poor evaluation
- Some say this was a bit too difficult and most of them say their vocab is still bad so they want less focus on grammar

Spanish 3 Advanced

- Overall a really good evaluation
- But in comments students say that the textbook should be changed, there is little grammar, and there should be more discussions / presentations

German 3

- Really great evaluation
- Apparently an amazing teacher!

French 3 Advanced

- Did not really encourage critical thought (2.6/5)
- Almost everyone saying that the jump from B2 to C1 was really drastic and super hard
- Lack of structure, coordination

Russian 3

- Great evaluation overall
- Almost every student mentions how amazing the tutor is

French 3

- Many students say that the midterm was way too difficult
- Some think that the course in general is also rather challenging

Portuguese 3

- Overall positive course evaluation
- Many comments about great tutoring; tutor received score of 4.8/5

Spanish 3 (n=57)

- Overall O.K. evaluation however the course demanded little critical thinking in comparison to other language courses (2.8/5)
- Mixed reviews of teaching, ranging from 1 to 5; other tutors received good evaluations (4.4 –4.8)
- Many students say they feel like the complaints about pre-intermediate (mostly that it was too difficult) were taken into account: students felt they were much better able to follow the course
- Some students were unhappy there were only 2 classes now, instead of 3

Arabic 3 (n=40)

- Overall positive course evaluation
- Blackboard offered little support (2.4/5)
- Teacher received almost only great comments and good overall score (4.5/5)

Electives (2nd and 3rd year)

In general, all electives report very high satisfaction rates. No issues at all in a structural sense.

Some subjects have very few respondents – does this mean that some subjects have small enrolments? i.e. between Cosmos and Polis has 4 respondents.

BA International Studies History by Area

Africa

- Very positive scores and comments on material, lecturer, and tutors.

East Asia

- Overall: fair
- Some teachers have good scores and reviews, while other has an average of two.
- Concerns: Internal coherence of the course. Shared teaching and perceived difference in teaching quality seems to have led to much confusion and disappointment with one of the lecturers.

Europe

- Very good scores and comments on material, lecturer, and tutor. Extremely positive score for tutor.

Latin America

- Very positive scores and comments on material, lecturer, and tutors.

Middle East

- Positive reviews of course, and very strong scores and positive comments for lecturer.
- Score for tutor was good, but comments less positive. Students concerned about communication / coherence between tutor and lecturer, and the knowledge and interest of the tutor in the material and in the students' performance.
- Overall, I would say nothing major to worry about given the scores.

North America

- Positive scores and comments on material, lecturer, and tutor. Very strong scores for lecturer.

South and South East Asia

- Very positive scores and comments for professors.
- Good scores for tutors.

Politics by Area

Virtually nothing for us to concern ourselves with;

Russia course is highly appreciated!

And most are going well; indeed, the worst thing to note is that one lecturer received a 2,8