

Minutes OLC meeting 24 April 2018

Attendees:

Crystal Ennis, Marat Markert, Hannah De Mulder, Victor Blichfeldt, Anna Karisto, Anna Pott, Jin Seong, Florentina Tudose.

Minutes by: Laura Stoop

Agenda:

1. Comments/vote on: OER/OSO
2. Discussion on: abolishing the mid-term exams
3. Discussion: new methods course (as proposed by working group): Cultural studies approaches are missing (Ksenia)
4. Proposal by programme board to split Cultural Interaction into two courses (soc-ling/cultural studies), allowing students to choose one or the other (see email attached)
5. Information on: Cultural Interaction/Global History follow-up with lecturers (AnnaL/Jin/Ksenia/Marat)
6. Information on: uSis enrollment idea (Anna/Viktor/Immogen)
7. Information on: how the purpose of the electives is communicated (Florentina/Marat)
8. Any other business that came up in the meantime and you want to address

1. Comments/vote on: OER/OSO

OSO approved, but comments/suggestions for elaboration/clarification would be send to the programme board

2. Discussion on: abolishing the mid-term exams

The OLC discussed the proposal by the programme board to abolish the midterms.

The student members opposed the proposal for the following reasons:

- midterms help students to assess their study performance/understanding of the material halfway through the course;
- midterms are especially suitable for courses that are divided into two parts (e.g. Culture by Area which has a cultural and linguistic component)
- it was not clear from the Programme Board proposal why these two courses were chosen for the pilot.

Staff members see the advantages of abolishing the midterms (reduced work-load; giving greater responsibility to students over organizing their study time)

At the same time, staff members raised the concern that lecturers will lose the ability to track the study progress of students.

OLC agreed to recommend to the programme board the following:

- Keep the midterm for first year/first semester courses;
- For the pilot: a course in the first year/second semester that is not a bloc course;
- Reweight overall grading: 40% tutorial grade + 60% exam grade

The OLC strongly advises to choose other courses for a pilot (not courses that are organized in blocs) It would be better to choose a block course in the 1st year, 2nd semester, and the 2nd year, 1st semester.

Staff members see the advantages of abolishing the mid-terms, or a middle way. Less work and giving the students more responsibilities are a pro. But by abolishing the mid-terms the tutors and lecturers will have less ability to keep track of the progress of their students.

Student members agree that 40% of the grade coming from tutorials and 60% from the exam, as is usual in Leiden, would be best in BAIS as well, in case the mid-terms are abolished. For the pilot this is not possible, considering the tutorial structure.

An idea for a compromise: For large 1st year introductory courses, courses: keep the mid-term in the 1st year, 1st semester. Abolish it in the 2nd semester, because there is more time to study.

3. Discussion: new methods course (as proposed by working group)

The OLC discussed the new research methods course is to begin in the 1st semester of next year (2018/2019), based on the report of the relevant working group.

The following points should be kept in mind (especially with regard to the OSO):

The tutorials that go with the course are given by tutors with knowledge of methods that are relevant to their specific academic background. So, for students it is vital to enrol in the “right” tutorial group. How will this be organized? Student members suggest a common content for all tutorials.

Idea for another textbook on social science and humanities methods: Alan Bryman, Social Research Methods.

4. proposal by programme board to split Cultural Interaction into two courses (socio-ling/cultural studies), allowing students to choose one or the other

N.B. The split will not be next year, but only the year after. Our advice for the programme board about the proposal for splitting up Cultural Interaction: there is consensus in this meeting that splitting it up into a (socio)linguistics course and a cultural studies course would be a good idea and that students should be able to choose one or the other. We expect that there will be interest from students in both topics.

The OLC argues against replacing Culture by Area by “Culture, Language (this should be Linguistics!) and Religion by Area”. The OLC agrees that extra content on religion might be a good idea, but does not endorse adding this as a separate third course in the first semester of the second year (as proposed by the programme board). Instead, more attention could be given to religion in the electives and/or in the individual Culture and Linguistics by Area courses, but that should be up to the instructors of the different Culture by Area courses.

The OLC also notes that the relatively prominent role of (socio)linguistics in the programme as a whole is not made clear from the outset. This entails that Culture by Area students are astonished as they find out that the course is also about linguistics and that Cultural Interaction students do not expect linguistics to play such a prominent role in that course. The OLC suggests making it clearer in the programme description that (socio)linguistics is a separate component of the programme and renaming Culture by Area to “Culture and Linguistics by Area”.

5. Course Evaluations: follow-up on Cultural Interaction/Global History (Anna/Jin/Ksenia/Marat); general course evaluations

Follow-up

The OLC discussed the outcomes of the follow-up meeting with the lecturers of Cultural Interaction and Global History.

In the meeting with the instructors of Cultural Interaction, the lecturers confirmed that coherence between the cultural studies and linguistics part of the course remains a challenge. Likewise, the issue of overlap between Cultural Interaction and other courses (Cultural Studies and Sociolinguistics) was recognized. The lecturers explained that the linguistics part deals with pragmatics, but that this was not understood by students at the beginning of the course. Finally, the issue of frequently changing lecturers was identified as an issue that potentially feeds into the problem of coherence and overlap. The idea to split the course in two courses (one cultural studies and one linguistics course) was articulated by the lecturers as a possible solution to address the issue of coherence (see point 4 above).

The lecturer of Global History send written reflections on the course evaluations, highlighting that students' preparation for the course lectures (readings) was insufficient and suggesting points for improvement for the upcoming semester (i.e. how to better preparation and participation of students).

Course Evaluations

Given the expectation of the faculty's relevant bodies responsible for the teaching quality that "not all courses have to be evaluated all the time", the OLC discussed the necessity of course evaluations. For the time being, it was agreed to evaluate all courses. Moreover, any system/rule on deciding which courses to evaluate must take into account a number of issues, e.g. data/documentation for performance interviews and the BKO.

It was also briefly discussed whether the OLC should delete nasty comments (insults, personal attacks etc.) in the written section of the course evaluation. Some programs do not give the evaluations verbatim, but transcriptions. However, given the size of the BAIS programme, this could be an issue of time/workload.

6. Information on: uSis enrollment idea (Anna/Viktor/Immogen)

The student members are working on their advice on improving the enrolment for groups / electives via uSis.

7. Information on: how the purpose of the electives is communicated (Florentina/Marat)

Across programme information "brochures" the part on the electives is in need of revision. Electives are "advertised" as having an influence on students' future work/study opportunities/trajectories. This promise by the programme is not fulfilled (especially with the removal of electives in the third year), as the programme cannot promise that an elective gets you into a certain master's programme.