

OLC meeting (18. February 2019)

Members present: Eveline Vos, Madhav Warawdekar, Alessandra Barrow, Emil Munte, Maurice Kirschbaum, Crystal Ennis, Hannah De Mulder, Marat Markert

10.00-10.30 (meeting with the program board)

Questions/issues raised with the program board :

- Thesis seminar variety: not all areas cover all disciplines for thesis seminars (e.g. SSEA), but also in general there is a shortage of economics focused thesis seminars; there are constraints on what students can write their thesis about (discipline). What can be done to about variety and constraints on disciplinary perspectives? Suggestion from the OLC: To allow students to be able to write their thesis from one the disciplinary perspectives they choose, it might be good to consider a reorganization of the thesis seminar along disciplinary lines. The program board argues that thesis seminar instructors should be able to supervise thesis from more than one disciplinary perspective. At the same time, it might be easier to have thesis seminar supervisors accept theses from different regional context. E.g. economics supervisors should be able to accept supervisees from different areas (it's the discipline that matters).
- Electives/thesis seminars: majority of electives/thesis seminars are taught by junior and quite a number by temporary staff; what, if anything, can be done about this to ensure greater balance but also more continuity for staff who teach these courses?
- Are there any updates on Community Building?
- Binding Study Advise requirements (passing R&W) should be enforced
- Updates from the PB

10.30-12.00

Thesis seminars:

- Thesis seminars in some area specialization do not cover all disciplines (Europe, SSEA). There is a shortage of history and economics themes in the thesis seminar in Europe and SSEA.

Course evaluations (All)

- Nearly all courses received positive evaluations;
- Courses that no longer had a midterm (Cultural Studies) did not experience a significantly higher amount of students failing the final exam; student members reiterated their reservation about the plans to abandon midterms tout court for all courses; the program board signaled that it wants to extend the pilots with abolishing midterms for another year – after that the PB and OLC will take stock of the results; at any rate, the OLC agreed that if midterms are abolished, the grade weighting (exams and tutorial grades) need to be reweighted (e.g. going from 30-70 to 40-60).
- Thematic Seminar Research Methods evaluations showed that students had a different expectation towards this seminar series (expected to address substantive topics, rather than the research methods); instructors signaled to the OLC that the expectation for this course are too high (e.g. not possible in all seminars to address mixed-methods approach); Marat will be in contact with the seminar coordinator to inquire about instructors experiences and

what the plans are for coming year to address the issues raised in the course evaluations and issues raised by instructors. In particular, it would be good to inquire if the common lectures were actually useful to all students.

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Scheduling meetings (Jeff)

- Jeff proposed to change the way OLC meetings are scheduled, suggested to agree on a fixed days at the beginning of the year at which the OLC will meet; with 10 members (staff and students from different institutes and different years) it will be challenging to find one specific date/time during day time that suits all, but Marat promised to take the staff members availability stronger into consideration when organizing meetings.

Setting up a Mental Health/Physical Health Program by the OLC (students)

- Students members (Alessandra, Madhav) informed the OLC about their plans to set up a mental health/physical health program (inquiry into how many students face difficulties due to mental health problems, and how these can be addressed)

Update on Travel Reimbursement (Maurice)

- Maurice informed the OLC on progress about travel reimbursement for students

Any other issues