

## **Sociology Staff-Student Liaison Meeting**

**27<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

### **Minutes**

#### **Present:**

Marie Larsson (yr 3)  
Charlotte Mohn (yr 4)  
Martin Lam (yr 4)

#### **Staff:**

Ross Bond (Chair)  
Roisin O'Fee (Minutes)

### **1. Introductions**

Ross welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Nicola Allison (yr 3) and Elizabeth Wait (yr 2). Introductions were made around the table and it was noted that there were no representatives from years 1 or 2, although it is not strictly necessary for year 2 students to attend the semester 2 meeting since at present there is no dedicated Sociology course in semester 2.

### **2. Matters arising from Semester 1 meeting and minutes**

- Further update on curriculum review and change (year 2):

The review continues and the Department is in the process of defining the new year 2 courses. Sociology 2B will take the place of the compulsory SPT/SPE courses. Sociology 2A is likely to focus on theory issues, and 2B on research. Fundamentals courses will be rolled out for year 2 students and will tie in closely to 2A and B.

- Further roll-out of take home exams:

Take Home Exams will take place in 2A and 2B, as well as 1A and 1B, in 14-15. Ross notes that as Registry do not allow us to schedule THEs within the main exam diet, we are restricted in setting deadlines.

- Other:

Ross notes that the Department has decided to move the Project deadline to December (rather than January). This will not affect the current year 3 students. The current year 2 students will be the first to have the new deadline, which will be in place from academic year 15-16.

### **3. Staff items**

- Sensitive topics in lectures:

There is now a Sociology policy for course handbooks to include a standard warning to alert students to the potential that Sociological teaching in lectures and tutorials

sometimes raises issues and topics that some students might find distressing. Lecturers have also been encouraged to flag any specific classes or materials in their courses which might be particularly likely to cause distress. Ross encourages students to read lecture plans and slides ahead of time so as to make themselves familiar with materials and alert them to any issues that they personally may find difficult.

- New degree in Sociology with Quantitative Methods + new lecturer

This comes as part of a UK-wide initiative to improve quantitative skills in the Social Sciences. The new lecturer, Alexander Janus, will arrive in August.

#### 4. Student items:

- Year 1

No matters raised (no year 1 rep present)

- Year 2 (if necessary)

No matters raised (no year 2 rep present)

- Year 3

- The issue of the distribution of compulsory courses over the year (there are more in Semester 1) was raised. Students are struggling to find suitable courses to select in Semester 2 as there is not as much choice.

*Ross notes that this is known issue and is being addressed by the Department in forward planning for teaching.*

- The optional courses are well liked.

- There are several issues with the compulsory Doing Survey Research course. Some students think it is fine, but most have found it difficult and confusing.

The labs have been a particular problem this year (though this is largely due to IT issues, which have been raised and addressed). One of the lecturers offered extra office hours to compensate for this, which did help. Students did find that the tutors took too long to work through the tasks and people were not able to get through everything. This meant that some stopped attending as it was easier to do the work at home.

There has also been a problem with one of the lecturers, as their teaching style and language was felt to be insensitive and offensive. This issue has been raised with the course convenor and an apology was offered. Some students felt this did not solve the issue and the matter is ongoing.

- The Race and Ethnicity course tutorial times changed half-way through Semester, with the second tutorial time being cancelled, which meant some students were unable to attend properly due to established commitments (societies, sports, etc.). Though the change was within the advertised teaching time of 4pm-6pm, and was

voted on, it happened at short notice and people had already planned other activities for the second hour.

It was also felt that there was too little engagement and discussion time in the class. A large amount of material was covered and some felt they just had to write everything down, and were often concerned they had missed things.

*Agreement that structure should be set at the start. Ross will raise this.*

- Year 4

- The content and style in Race and Ethnicity was well received by the year 4 students, but they also felt that the structure of the course was unclear.

- The schedule for the Project Presentation day came out very late (it was only received the day before and then only because the subject secretary had circulated it for general information). Until that point, the speakers did not know what timeslot they had. It would have been better to receive more notice of this.

*Ross will raise this for next year.*

- Students would like to see sample long essays, as they are allowed to do with the past Projects available on Alfresco, is this possible?

*With the permission of the student who write the essay, this should be possible. Ross will take this forward.*

- General issues

- Citrix is an ongoing problem for all students due to unpredictability and recurring running issues. As this is unfortunately an issue for everyone in the school, the staff can only sympathise. Ross encourages everyone to raise issues with IT as soon as they are encountered.

## **5. Any other business**

- Soc Soc is considering starting a journal, similar to the PIR Leviathan publication. The issue of reproducing essays was discussed with relation to any copyright or academic misconduct implications. It was agreed with Ross that only work which had been confirmed by the Board of Examiners should be considered. Therefore, no work from the current academic year should be published until after the Board of Examiners is held in June and final grades are released for all courses. It was noted that this should include 1st and 2nd year courses that ran in Semester 1. Any work reproduced by Soc Soc should be from the previous academic year, or earlier, and not be subject to any ongoing or future assessment.

Ross thanked all reps for their contributions this year.