

Minutes – Staff Graduate Consultative Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 25th November 2015 – Steve Crichton Room, Department of International Politics

In attendance: Dr Berit Bliesemann De Guevara (Chair, Deputy Director of Graduate Studies for PhDs), Dr Ayla Gol (Director of Graduate Studies), Dr James Vaughan (Masters Programme Officer), Lydia Cole (3rd Year PhD representative), Abigail Blyth (2nd Year PhD representative), Jana Wattenberg (1st Year representative), Adrianna Kapek (Masters representative), Alex Williams (Masters representative), Nia Ellis (IS/Library representative).

1. Welcome

The chair, Dr Berit Bliesemann De Guevara, welcomed all to the meeting. She asked for volunteers to take minutes; Lydia Cole agreed to do so.

2. Apologies

No apologies were received.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting were circulated beforehand and were confirmed at the meeting.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

- 4.1 Mental Health workshops (item 8). The idea to weave into the Doctoral Workshop programme. This has now been actioned and there are two dates in the programme for this academic year. Desiree Poets will lead these workshops.
- 4.2 Student printer credit (item 9.2). Elaine has confirmed that PhD student will receive 2000 copies per academic year. Credit used on top of this will be charged.

5. Library Matters

- 5.1 Document Supply. The decision has been taken to offer PG research students and staff up to 10 items free of charge. This will also be offered on a case-by-case basis for masters students – if the service is needed then speak to the library about this. Abigail Blyth asked about turnaround time for document supply – Nia Ellis stated that it is dependent on the availability but should be relatively fast.
- 5.2 Noise text alert. There is a mobile phone number which is advertised around the building to be used if there is noise in the library. Library staff will be called to patrol the area.
- 5.3 Thomas Parry Library. IS have been asked by the exec to open on a 24hr basis. Hopefully this will be in place by January. Ayla Gol raised the issue of safety of students coming and going at night (e.g. public transport, lighting). Nia Ellis stated

that this had been raised with the exec and was a concern for both staff and students.

- 5.4 Adrianna Kapek asked about the electronic availability of texts through the library relating particularly to the 'Theory and Concepts' course. James Vaughan stated that it was important to make staff aware of the issue of book availability when setting reading lists. Berit re-emphasised this point. The issue will be brought up at the Departmental board later this year. Nia Ellis further noted that there would be a change of system in the next academic year – staff will have to tick a box to request for items to be digitised.
- 5.5 Computer/IS issues. Some PhD offices still do not have Wi-Fi access due to router black spots. Individual PhD students have been in touch with IS on this issue, particularly from offices 17 and 18. Abigail to send an email to PhD students on this issue.

6. Items from the Chair

- 6.1 Reorganisation of ESRC Pathway System and Doctoral Training Centres. Politics and International Relations becoming Studies and there is to be more collaboration with other Welsh Universities. This involves more interdisciplinary work, particularly on issues such as research training. This comes into operation in September 2017 and will not affect current ESRC students.
- 6.2 Christmas Party. Takes place on the 10th December after IPRS at Libertine Cocktail Bar in town. The party is open to Masters, PhD, Post-Docs, and Staff - representatives, especially Masters representatives, to extend the invitation to cohort.

7. Masters Issues

- 7.1 Proposals for Dissertation Module. There was a particular concern about the format of the dissertation module and supervision issues. JV – Feedback is largely given through the supervision format. There will be a session in both semester 1 and 2 to set out the expectations for the proposal. Further, there will be some changes to supervisor in semester 2. This is due to staff research leave etc., as well as dissertation project changes. BB directs to the handbook for further information on the structure of feedback. It was emphasised that students were encouraged to use the opportunity to speak with their supervisor for feedback but that they were unable to read more than 5000 words. An email will be sent round to clarify what is expected.
- 7.2 Supervisors. Students were unsure of the procedure for contacting their supervisors. Though this will be clarified the meeting next week, JV emphasised that it is better if the student initiates this process. Masters reps to make sure students know about this meeting.

- 7.3 Timing of modules. This is especially with regard to modules with seminars organised later in the evening. There is not much that can be done about this due to the difficulty of timetabling and staff availability. JV said that it may be possible to make the timetable available earlier so that students have an opportunity to work around work commitments.
- 7.4 Announcement on Exam Boards affecting dissertation mark release date. JV stated that this year dissertation marks were released after first-marking already, due to the Turnitin system. Though it was emphasised that this was a provisional mark, which could change after second-marking, this was not an ideal procedure. This year the department will revert to past system when marks will only be released after the exam board, when marks have been confirmed.

8. PhD Matters

- 8.1 IPRS seating arrangement. The question has been raised as to whether students and guest professors are able to select the main hall seating arrangements – either lecture- or board-style. Starting next semester this will be possible. There is however, a need to let support staff know at the beginning of the semester. AG to send out an email regarding seating arrangements to those presenting in semester two.
- 8.2 Supervision and Staff Departures. Currently students have been told different things with regard to the arrangements and as such there is a need for some clarification. AG said that each case is different dependent on year of study, funding etc. It is usually not expected for staff to continue working with students in 1st and 2nd year when they leave the department. PhD students are accepted on the basis that there is a duty to supervise by the department rather than an individual supervisor. It was stated that no one in 1st or 2nd year will have supervisor who is based elsewhere. The general norm is to continue the supervision of students in their 3rd and/or 4th years if the concerned supervisor is willing to continue after leaving the Department. AG is still in discussions with colleagues, but should be able to contact all those affected in December and by mid-January students will know their supervisory arrangements.

9. Any other business

- 9.1 Staff leaving and Subject-area Specialities. Short-term arrangements and longer-term arrangements are being made to replace staff in the same areas of specialism: Security, Intelligence and Military History – covering the same area.

10. Next Meeting

- 10.1 Second Meeting: 24th Feb 2016, Third Meeting: 4th May 2016.