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SEMESTER ONE REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

This report is to detail the actions of the French Convenor over the first semester of the 2020/2021 academic year and plans for Semester 2. Covid-19 has made this a different and challenging year for everyone in St Andrews, but I hope that in working with the French Department, other language convenors and the Modern Languages President, we have been able to adapt and continue to put student concerns at the forefront.

COMMUNITY BUILDING

Freshers Event

Since Freshers week was going to look very different this year, I organised a Freshers 'pub quiz' on Teams and Moodle – which went well despite some technical difficulties!

Meet and Greet Scheme

To combat student loneliness, I set up a scheme to pair up different students from the French department so they could get to know someone new in these strange times at university. This had over 60 students participating and gathered great feedback – so much so that it was emulated by other Convenors. I am considering running a similar scheme in Semester 2, alongside the university-wide study buddy scheme if there is sufficient student interest.

Keeping in Contact

I set up a Students of French Facebook page where any events in the school are posted, and students can engage with others.

I also sent out details of events, services, and surveys in my weekly emails, so students could keep up with what is happening in the department and allow their voices to be heard.

School Events

I have worked closely with one of our lecturers, Chelsea, to help advertise the (virtual) French debating club, which I am hoping will attract more students next semester.

I am also working with staff to advertise the Choix Goncourt reading group initiative to boost staff-student engagement outside of the classroom.

GOVERNANCE

SSCC

This year Modern Languages began a new system of using QR codes to get student feedback. We got very high numbers of feedback thanks to the hard work of our Class Reps at each level. Staff responded well to Feedback and several changes were made thanks to this (some of which will come into effect in the same modules next year, such as weightings of oral assignments). We also trialed a new way of presenting SSCC minutes in Sway format to see if this would improve student engagement

Convenor Meetings

Working with other convenors and the Modern Languages President (although virtually) has been very productive. We have contributed to Modern Languages-wide careers events and have troubleshooted various ideas like the Meet and Greet schemes and intend further collaboration next semester.

Class Representatives

We were lucky to have elected 4 great class representatives this year to represent each level. They were invaluable in engaging students for SSCC feedback, advertising events and getting responses in our Modern Languages-wide surveys. I tried to make class representatives more visible by sharing their St Andrews contact details and photos, so students would feel more comfortable contacting them directly.

Staff Meetings

Meeting regularly with staff in the French department was a great opportunity to represent the student voice, especially in complicated issues, such as in the Staff meeting about Dual Delivery concerns. Dual delivery has been a challenge but collating a document with all student feedback on this issue meant that staff could clearly see student concerns, making changes such as switching to online-only classes where appropriate.

CAREERS

This has been a difficult year to engage students in events. Appetite for French-specific events was not terribly high in the careers survey, so I resolved to work with other convenors in language-wide events, with some French-specific elements. The Modern Languages department has managed to put on several successful careers events, including a Year abroad work opportunities panel with French, Spanish, Italian and German which I was involved in.

In Semester 2, we are planning a series of careers events targeted at Modern Languages students, including French-specific events on skills for applying for jobs in French. This will involve our new language-specific Careers Centre contact.

VISIBILITY

One of my goals for this year was to make the French convenor more accessible and visible for students to raise their concerns. One of my plans, to have a drop-in office hour, sadly needed to be dropped due to Covid, but I have tried to make students aware of support available to them. In view of this, I have attended several events and introduced myself – Modern Languages welcome event, ‘Meet the School Presidents’ event, and several academic fayres. The Facebook page and having an open-inbox email policy has also helped with this. I also wanted to work on visibility of Class Reps, sharing their photos and emails in a student-wide email, and making them a key point of contact for student concerns.

I have also tried to improve visibility of convenors in representing language-specific viewpoints and experiences in Education Committee, alongside my fellow convenors and the Modern Languages President.

PLANS FOR SEMESTER 2

Community Building

With new restrictions, community-building is more important than ever. With feedback that there is not an awful lot of interest in virtual social events, I will continue the French meet and greet scheme for students to meet virtually and emphasise the study buddy scheme so that students have a chance to meet others in the department. I will also continue my work to advertise and highlight chances to engage with the department through extra-curriculars, such as the Choix Goncourt reading group and debating club.

Governance

In meetings with staff, convenors and other academic representatives, my goal this semester will be to represent the varied experiences and interests of French students, especially in the challenges of studying online. SSCC feedback will be especially valuable this semester, and I will work with my team of class representatives using the new online QR-code system to gain as much feedback as possible.

Careers

I intend to put on a virtual French-specific Careers event, focusing on CV, LinkedIn and cover letter writing in French featuring help from native speakers. This will be part of a wider Modern Languages careers series, with events specific to other languages, and with a general Modern Languages event, working with the careers centre.

I am also working on collaboration with Playfair to present remote working translation opportunities to students during the academic year, and into the Summer break.

Visibility

I intend to keep open lines of communications with students in email and social media, providing regular updates on teaching, support, and student events. I will also try to implement virtual office hours where students can highlight any concerns to me in a more ‘face to face’ manner.