

GERMAN  
CONVENOR

*Martinmas  
Semester  
Report  
2020/21*

# GERMAN CONVENOR

This report is to detail the actions of the German Convenor over the Martinmas semester of the 2020/2021 academic year and future plans for the Candlemas Semester

## INTRODUCTION

This past semester has been a challenge for all at St Andrews in many different ways, but alongside the help of the Modern Languages President, Lucy Mathews, my fellow Modern Languages Convenors, and the Education Committee, I have been able to tackle student concerns and desires, including both academic and social experience in the German Department.



# GOVERNANCE

## SSCC

Our SSCC in the Martinmas semester was held in Week 5, my class representatives collected feedback via a QR code and a google survey, as part of a new paperless method in the Modern Languages Department. German historically has a high level of feedback responses for the SSCC. Thanks to the hard work of the Class Representatives this was again achieved this year. The SSCC was attended by all staff in the department and the Modern Languages President. Feedback was received well and follow up targets were met. We also trialed formatting our minutes from the SSCC in a 'You said, we did' format on Sway.

## CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

The department has been incredibly blessed to have 6 great class representatives this year. They have been engaging in their own classes, work on their own initiative and have made themselves visible for their peers to feed back to. Many events and ideas have been brought forward by them which I have assisted in setting up.

## CONVENOR MEETINGS

I have enjoyed meeting with the other language convenors fortnightly. It is a chance to share ideas, challenges and get advice from one another. As this semester has been such a difficult one, it was great to have the support of the Modern Languages convenors, and this was helped by sharing what events worked and which ones did not, so we could all improve. I am looking forward to our collaboration in Careers Events this coming semester.

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Education committee provided a space to talk about university wide problems and feedback. It was great to be able to have the German Department's voice heard through weekly reports and through participation in the weekly meeting.

## DEPARTMENT MEETINGS

As convenor I have attended two department meetings, both of which I took time to reiterate feedback, as well as explain any student initiatives that I had been working on. These forums created an open space for students voices to be heard.

# STUDENT EXPERIENCE, COMMUNITY AND LANGUAGE IMMERSION

## WELCOME EVENTS

The typical German Department Welcome Lunch which happens annually in Week 1 had to change appearance this year, instead I hosted an online quiz on Microsoft Teams, which was well received by all students and staff. I also organised a 'Netflix Party' German film night, exclusively for students to meet one another in a casual setting whilst staying safe online. We had a large group to watch '3 Türken und ein Baby' and was one of my highlights of the semester!

## KEEPING IN CONTACT

Alongside our Microsoft Team, I set up a Facebook group to share events and feedback forms on, which has really helped engagement with students who don't necessarily read my weekly email.

I also encouraged my Class Representatives to create messenger groups for each of their modules to make sure every student knows there is somewhere to reach out to for assistance.

My weekly emails included details of events, services, and surveys, so that there was always open communication.

I also encouraged students to come to me directly so they know their feedback would be heard.

## A GROOVY TEAM FOR GERMAN MEMES

An important part of my role as German Convenor was to create a solid community within the department. Alongside my class representatives we created a Microsoft Team for all German Students which has separate groups for sharing memes, podcasts, films, asking for help, a beginners network, and general discussion boards. This has been a unique project and has allowed students to meet one another online and know they have an informal place to reach out. A large part of this project was to combat student loneliness and to increase immersion in German outside of the classroom, I believe it has been well-received by all.

## DEPARTMENT SPOTIFY PLAYLIST

You can find the departments community spotify playlist here:

<https://spoti.fi/3otTlbe>

I was keen to encourage language immersion outside of the classroom, alongside the Groovy Team, this collaborative spotify playlist has been a hit!

# CAREERS AND BEGINNERS

## BEGINNERS AND EX-BEGINNERS

As an ex-beginner to the language myself, a large part of my goal as convenor is to provide more departmental support for beginners of the language. I was glad to know that this was also a goal of the department this year too, as there has been low uptake of ex-beginners into honours. I helped organise a 'Star Beginners' Alumni panel with Dr Cusack to highlight the success of beginner German alumni. I also set up the beginners network on our Microsoft Groovy Team to provide a space for beginners for no-judgement discussions and questions. I wanted to bring more awareness that being an ex-beginner does not put you at a disadvantage and I am hoping that the success of these events so far will be shown in a larger number of students carrying on into honours.

The Groovy Microsoft Team is also a part of this strategy, to make immersion into the language less of a huge undertaking, as this can seem very daunting.

## CAREERS

Careers have often been neglected in the German Department in the past, often not having a representative at Modern Language Department wide events. This year two students who have worked in Germany provided their expertise at the WIYA student panel. I also ran a Careers survey separately to the Modern Languages one as I felt that German needed more specific feedback. Students asked for help in CV writing and interview skills as well as WIYA opportunities.

I ran a workshop with Dr Cusack (HoD) and Frau Oeller (Lektorin) in interview skills and CV writing in the Can-Do Marquee - despite the horrendous weather and technical problems this was a success for both online and in-person attendees.

This coming semester there will also be the department-wide careers events that I will be contributing too to ensure careers in the German-language are visible and accessible for all.

# UPCOMING SEMESTER

This upcoming semester I am planning on continuing building upon the department community with our Microsoft Groovy Team.

I am hoping to add to the student experience of St Andrews by running an online soaking for all final year students after their final exam.

I am currently in talks with a care home in Germany to set up a pen-pal / online buddy with an elderly person isolated in a care home in Germany. This has been successfully achieved at other universities and I am keen to bring it to St Andrews. Students would be paired up with an older person and can communicate as frequently as they would like, this is to encourage immersion in the language, and to help both student loneliness and to help the wellbeing of the care home residents who cannot visit their families. This is in the preliminary stages but I am hoping to have it up and running by the end of Spring Break.

I will be continuing to contribute to the Modern languages Career events.

Our SSCC will be scheduled for around Week 6 of the semester, and will again hope to be successful and as motivating as the Martinmas semester.



I would like to thank the staff in the department and my class representatives for assisting in every possible way this semester and for all of their hardwork..