**Semester 1 Report – Italian Convenor, Helen Clinton**

Introduction

As Italian Convenor this semester, I’ve worked hard to represent my fellow students of Italian and to offer help and support in this especially difficult semester. This report will detail what I have done this semester: my responsibilities as Convenor, the events and projects I have completed and intend to complete by the end of the year, and what I found to be my biggest successes and challenges.

Before I start, however, I’d like to say a big thank you to the Class Reps and the members of the staff in the Italian department that have helped me in my role as Convenor and to all the Italian students who have engaged with what I have organised this semester. I hope that next semester we can keep building on what we’ve all achieved despite the difficulties of this pandemic.

My responsibilities as Italian Convenor

Each week I attended the virtual Education Committee meetings with the Director of Education, the Faculty Presidents and the other School Presidents and Convenors.

I also attended the fortnightly Modern Languages Convenor meetings that Lucy, the Modern Languages President, chairs, in which I raised any concerns, queries and comments from staff, students and Class Representatives of Italian.

As Convenor, I am responsible for the organising and facilitating of the Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings which in Italian happen once a semester. This semester, I made the decision to hold the meeting in Week 5 in order to allow for any issues to be raised and addressed promptly and in time to positively impact the teaching of the second half of the semester. In preparation for this meeting, I held meetings with my Class Reps from each year group to gather student opinion and discuss the best way to communicate our ideas to staff. I found these meetings prior to the SSCC particularly useful because the Class Reps offered invaluable feedback about the way we ought to collect student comments and feedback, how they think the Italian department is doing especially given the different circumstances of the pandemic, and how we (as Convenor and Class Reps) can best work together during the year. After the SSCC it is my job to circulate the minutes of the meeting to staff and students, which this semester Modern Languages decided to do using the Microsoft Sway format. Thus, I formatted the minutes of the SSCC and circulated the Sway document to the department. For next semester, I am looking into different and new ways of communicating the results of the SSCC meeting to students which are more direct and easily accessible.

There were, of course, overarching themes and issues discussed in all these meetings: many relating to improving the student experience within the constraints of the pandemic, including ideas for virtual events for students run within the department; ideas about equality and diversity, including diversifying and decolonialising the curriculum; the best ways to communicate with students, especially about feedback from SSCCs.

In order to gather feedback from students on a range of topics from careers to in-person teaching, I have conducted, with the invaluable help of the Class Reps, several student opinion surveys, which have had promising response rates, especially my Italian student opinion survey of in-person teaching which served to guide the Italian department’s decisions about which classes returned to in-person teaching, how and when.

Events

I’ve run a few social events within the Italian department this semester in order to offer more opportunities for students to get together outside of their class hours when COVID has made it so difficult. At the beginning of the semester I ran an Italian Pub Quiz on Teams, during reading week I held an Italian Virtual Aperitivo and at the end of the semester I organised the “Christmas Chiacchierata” event in the Can Do Marquee, where we had a festive catch up after a short pub quiz.

On the more academic side of events, I helped Giuseppe Episcopo to organise the Italian Year Abroad Liaison Meeting for 2nd Year students looking to do a year abroad. I enlisted the help of 3 other 4th Year students who had each done different types of Year Abroads (studying, teaching with the British Council, and working on an independent placement) and the event went well. We were able to answer questions from the 2nd Years, offer advice and I was also able to encourage many of them to sign up to Lucy’s Year Abroad Buddy Scheme.

I also attended various Visiting Day events throughout the semester as the student representative for Italian, speaking to prospective students and answering their questions about what studying Italian at St Andrews is like. I also attended events for current students, such as the Academic Fayre and the Modern Languages Freshers Q&A (organised by the Modern Languages President).

Future Plans

The focus for next semester will be on two things: careers and social events.

The Modern Languages President, the other Convenors and I are putting together a series of events which focus on career opportunities for students and graduates of Modern Languages. There will be advice from alumni, advice about CV and interview skills, and ideas about careers beyond teaching and translation(!).

I’m also planning more social events for students of Italian: more aperitivos and coffee dates, icebreaker events and quizzes.

My Biggest Successes and Challenges

I’m really pleased with how the Italian social events have gone this semester, and I’m looking forward to more in Semester 2! I think the SSCC proved a productive meeting, with many of the points raised by students addressed throughout the second half of the semester. The engagement with the various surveys and feedback requests has been really encouraging this semester: it’s been good to see so any students making their voice heard.

Perhaps some of the biggest challenges have come from adapting to the circumstances that the pandemic has forced us into, especially being constrained to online activities, in terms of both social events and academic matters. But I hope that next semester I can continue to offer opportunities to socialise with other Italian students albeit still on Teams and that the virtual events, especially those related to careers, that we have coming up will be engaging and useful!