



## PGR Postgraduate Executive Forum Minutes

16th November 2017, 2pm

### Students' Association Committee Room

#### Present:

#### Member

#### Position

Lorna Milne	Proctor
Andy Murphy	Provost
Paul Hibbert	Dean of Arts
James Palmer	Pro-Dean PGR
Zachary Davis	Director of Education
Fanny Empacher	PG Academic Convenor (Chair)
Emily Feamster	Academic Policy Officer (Research)
Cameron Rice	PG Society Secretary

Clare Fisher	Art History
Remi Fritzen	Biology
Cameron Rice	Chemistry
No Representative	Classics
Xu Zhu	Computer Science
Paul Childs	Divinity
Jessica Crumpton-Banks	Earth Sciences & Geology
Parker Gordon	English
Ana Maria Sapountzi	Film Studies
Zongtian Guo	Geography & SD
Hailey Ogle	History
Erika Brady	IR
Steph Haywood	Management
Ashley Clayton	Mathematics & Statistics
Inés Nearchou	Medicine
Eleanor Crabtree	Modern Languages
Joe Slater	Philosophy
Kristin Lund	Physics & Astronomy
Giuseppe Troccoli	Social Anthropology
Jacob Francis	Psychology & Neuroscience

## **1. Apologies:**

Nayha Mansoor  
Ethan Landes

Economics & Finance  
Philosophy – Covered by Joe Slater

No PGR representative

Classics, ELT

## **2. Introductions:**

All attendees introduce themselves to the room.

### **3. Allocated time for Tutors (marking and preparation):**

A survey has been sent out to gather information on this topic, probing areas including time required, training and extra support offered and how this ultimately affects feedback.

Key results:

68 responses received from 12 schools.

Approximately 78% of responses think the paid marking time is insufficient, with students responding that an average of 0.75 extra marking hours are needed per allocated hour.

The majority of responses feel well supported in the help and training they get, however more training in marking and tutoring was the most requested item for improvement.

Tutor and lecturer group marking sessions/discussions were also requested.

The majority of students said that the allocated tutoring and marking time does affect the quality of feedback they give to students.

#### **a. Marking:**

Medicine: PhD students tutor Masters students, not undergraduates, meaning usually tutors find themselves tutoring on a subject outside of their area of specialism. The higher level of knowledge required to lead a Masters tutorial means that Medicine PhDs often spend extra time outside of their paid window learning and researching the tutorial topic.

Medicine tutors are able to specify which lectures they supervise, however this is not always the subject they end up being allocated.

Management: Currently only one PhD student marking in School of Management. When a large number of PhD students used to mark tutorials, the school held a workshop at the beginning of each year. This went through examples of student work as well as giving an overview of how to use the 20-point grade-point scale. This hasn't been implemented this year, so the one PhD student currently marking struggles to keep to the time limit.

Computer Science: Students mark tutorials and are free to submit as many hours as they took to complete the task as necessary. There is no guideline timeframe.

Geology: Students are provided with a guideline for how long scripts should take to mark. They find they regularly exceed this but do not declare it when they hand in their timesheets as they feel bad for going over the 'limit'.

IR: As an essay-heavy subject, 35 tutors are required to mark 400 students' essays in 1<sup>st</sup> year alone. Tutors are paid on a 4500 words/hour basis, meaning each essay is allocated half an hour of marking time. This is not enough, especially for 1<sup>st</sup> year essays where large amounts of feedback are needed. Tactics can be employed such as giving 'extra' feedback on a first essay in the hope that following submissions from the same student will be of higher quality and need less input.

Film studies: There are four tutors marking the first entry-level course in film studies. Tutors here are expected to mark 40 essays in 10 hours, providing feedback and constructive criticism. In practice, these 10 hours take around 30 hours.

The school claims that there isn't enough money to pay students for more marking time.

Philosophy: Tutors have been running a campaign to tell the school unless the marking time situation changes, we won't mark essays. As a result of this, the guideline has been lowered from 4500 words (three essays) to 3000 words (two essays) per hour.

Social Anthropology: The provided marking time is insufficient to provide in-depth comments and check the word count.

Tutors in Social anthropology found they also needed to do a large amount of pre-reading on a subject before they could mark.

A calculation found that the hourly rate of pay Social Anthropology tutors receive falls below minimum wage, when pre-reading, tutoring and marking are taken into account.

### **Response and Actions:**

Dean of Arts: Although it sounds like some academic schools aren't sticking to policy, this is a very difficult subject to police against University policy as different schools judge marking via different criteria; time, word counts, number of scripts, etc. Checking these criteria against a single University policy has challenges. Ideally, University policy should be revisited to better define what is expected and how this is applicable across academic schools.

Students should not be marking above school policy rate. If you are doing this, you can send details to the Provost (@provost) and they can assist in approaching your academic school.

Proctor: At the moment, schools are taking advantage of the university policy. The policy needs to be reworded so that there is room for schools to manoeuvre but not to the extent that they are completely out of line with each other.

Although the system in Computer Science sounds great, controlled generosity can be dangerous and some parties may gain an unfair advantage/be taken advantage of.

Ultimately, not all schools have the same budget and all budgets are finite – increasing budgets in one area will lead to a decrease in another.

We need to make sure we try and give everyone the opportunity to learn how to mark and learn how to succeed as a marker. In contrast to tutoring, there is no course currently widely available for students to learn how to mark.

The results of the survey highlight points, but more data will be needed to take this further.

Action Point: Academic Convenor to email survey results to Dean, Provost and Proctor for further consideration.

### **b. Preparation Time:**

Social Anthropology: One session offered by the department to train in teaching and tutoring. Students would also like to have more contact with lecturers to understand the course that they will be tutoring.

As a result of asking for more training and preparation, four more hours of tutor training were added this year.

There have been no occasions where tutors can feed back to lecturers and vice versa. A meeting where tutors and lecturers can discuss and contribute to course content/structure would be well received.

Dean of Arts: I would encourage tutors to see whether it is possible to organise an end of module review with your lecturers. This is something that will be useful for both tutors and academic staff and will lead to improvements in the course.

Management: Currently there is no training offered outside that of the CAPOD course. This was raised within the school recently and consequently a start of the semester meeting has been organised between tutors and lecturers to set out module expectations and explain content. A further two meetings at the mid and end-point of the semester are also scheduled to review progress and provide feedback on content delivery and tutoring. This process is to be implemented next semester.

Management tutors are currently allocated one hour to prepare per tutorial. While sometimes this is plenty, at other times it is not enough. Not all PhD students in the School of Management actually have a background in management. Required preparation times can vary from 30 minutes to three hours.

### **Response and Actions:**

Action Point: Academic Convenor to send an email to school Executive reps to see what they think is on offer for them in terms of tutoring and marking. Academic Convenor to then email the heads of school and see how the responses compare.

## **4. Improving Networking Opportunities:**

PhD students feel it is difficult to meet students outside of their immediate research group. Are there any ways that we can help to increase both inter and intra-school socialisation amongst the PGR community?

Environmental Sciences: As a small close-knit community, students and staff know each other well from working on field trips together. Outside of this, three events are put on each year. There is interest in putting on movie nights as well.

PhD students and staff members primarily attend these events, however PGT students who have started the new taught courses in the school have been able to integrate too.

IR: PG get-togethers are held twice per year. However, as one of the largest schools in the university, people tend to gravitate away from each other outside of these events.

The community tends to break up as large numbers of PG students spend time studying abroad during their PhD.

The school is looking to increase the number social events it hosts, possibly introducing a quiz.

Although the University Postgraduate Society is good for meeting students from other disciplines, the events are mainly attended by Masters students, not PhDs.

Art History: PhD Forums are held once a month within the school. This gives students the chance to present their research to each other. The discussions are informal and incorporate a slight social element.

Social Anthropology: Social Anthropology and Film Studies have no official events in their school, meaning there is limited to no opportunity for students in these disciplines to mix. A possible social event is being planned, though.

Proctor: What is the balance between student and school-led events? Do you feel comfortable organising and attending student-led events? For those of you who don't, are there ways in which the university can help to organise events for you?

Social Anthropology: A recently-submitted PhD student helped the class representative to organise a mini-conference at the start of the year. This gave students the opportunity to learn about the research in the department and meet new people.

Management: Class reps are provided with a £100 budget at the start of each semester. From this, they try to put on two events. The organisation of this is on an ad-hoc basis. A new student-led academic reading group has recently been set up. This is working well and allows academic and social networking in a typically informal environment.

English: The school has a balance of student and academic-led events. A high number of guest lectures are organised by the school but all social events outside of this are student-run.

Provost: St Leonards College host a lot of events through the year, particularly for individual communities the university, e.g. events for SRC-funded students.

All suggestions are welcome to ascertain how best St Leonards can cater for the student community.

At present the college is trying to figure out the right balance between academic and social events that students desire.

Some events, such as the formal dinners are limited in ticket number and do sell out quickly, but there are plenty of other less formal and more accessible events that can be or have been planned.

Academic Convenor: Would it be useful for class reps to meet with each other to pool ideas, for example, through a best practice forum?

### **Response and Actions:**

Class Reps: Unanimous response from class reps that a best practice forum would be a good idea for PGR reps.

Action Point: Academic Convenor and Director of Education to formulate a plan for a best practice forum and communicate this to class reps via email.

## **5. Induction and Orientation:**

Item moved to the second 2017/18 PGT Executive Forum, taking place in Semester 2.

## **6. AOCB:**

Tutorial Preparation Office Hours:

Management: Can you claim for the office hours spent improving the experience of the module and feeding back information to module convenors?

Relevant document from HR webpage provided to Proctor and PG Convenor.

Proctor: Document provided from the HR webpage acts as a guideline only. This matter will need to be discussed internally in your academic school.

Meeting adjourned.