

## **Minutes – Staff Graduate Consultative Committee Meeting – Wednesday, 3 December 2014 – North Room, Department of International Politics**

Present: Dr Inanna Hamati-Ataya, Chair and Director of Graduate Studies, Dr Ayla Gol, Deputy Director of Graduate Studies (PhD), Professor Himdemi Suganami, Masters Programme Officer, Professor Jenny Edkins, Postgraduate Officer, Lillian Stephenson, IS, Abigail Blyth (1st year PhD rep), Lydia Cole (2nd year PhD rep), Tom Marshall (4th year PhD rep), Adhemar Mercado (3rd year PhD rep in place of Florian Edelmann), Jonathan Aldridge (MA War Studies rep), Nathan Hazelhurst (MA International History rep), Nguyen Ngoc Le (Jenny) (MA Global Politics rep).

Apologies:

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair, Dr Inanna Hamati-Ataya, welcomed all to the meeting. She explained that due to reductions in support staff in the department, the postgraduate secretaries were no longer available to take minutes at SGCC. She asked for a volunteer from the PhD reps to do this task. None was forthcoming and Professor Jenny Edkins volunteered instead.

### **2. Apologies**

There were no apologies

### **3. Minutes of the last meeting**

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

### **4. Matters arising from minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes

### **5. Library Matters**

5.1 Lillian Stevenson (IS) wanted to raise awareness of e-books, and in particular ebrary. She will send information to Alastair Finlan, Interpol Library rep, to circulate

**ACTION: LS/AF**

5.2 LS also wanted to raise awareness of the More Books Campaign, which has now been extended to all students, and explained that it was possible for postgraduates to recommend books to the library. Items under £50 would be purchased automatically; any over that price would go to LS for confirmation. AF was aware of the procedure.

**ACTION: LS/AF**

5.3 Finally LS asked whether there were any problems with loan periods. Difficulties with three-day loans were discussed. These are limited to four renewals, following previous student requests, but people felt that this was too short. LS asked students to send examples and Lydia Cole (2nd year PhD rep), mentioned a book by Todorova called *Imagining the Balkans*, which she currently had on loan.

**ACTION: Student reps**

5.4 Nguyen Ngoc Le (Jenny) (MA Global Politics rep) reported problems with the RT software. This had been reported to Jan Davies and the IT desk. SPSS was expiring in 29 days. LS will look into this.

**ACTION: LS**

## **6. Items from the Chair—Dr Inanna Hamati-Ataya, Director of Graduate Studies**

6.1 The Department had been successful in obtaining two ESRC studentships for 2015-: one Type 1 and one Type 2, the latter for work with Elin Royles. Budget restrictions meant that we had only been able to apply for one Type 2 this year, and several good applications prepared by members of the graduate team had not been able to be put forward.

6.2 The DDGS (PhDs) Ayla Gol reported that the doctoral workshops had begun and were going well, with engaging and lively debates in both, though attendance at the second was a little low perhaps because of marking. The first addressed issues of interest to first year PhDs and the second, presentations to the department. Tom Marshall (4th year PhD rep) reported on ongoing discussion within IGHP about getting careers advice for PhDs hoping to enter non-academic careers, to be organized at Institute level. The possibility of doing this in the context of the doctoral workshop was discussed. Jenny Edkins, Postgraduate Officer, noted that the Postgraduate Secretaries kept a list of people who had graduated with PhDs from the department and their current posts; this included people in non-academic positions. She suggested that Dr Babu Rahman, who is now a senior person in the Foreign Office, might be a suitable person to invite. The MA students were also keen to be involved, and the DGS suggested that TM could include them in any further discussions.

**ACTION: AG/TM**

6.3 The DGS reported that at the external masters exam board last week it had been recommended that the department move to moderation at MA level, instead of second marking, except for dissertations. External Examiners' advice had supported this move, which would bring the department into line with practice elsewhere in the sector. This change will be approved at MT and the details of how it will be organized discussed so that it can be brought in immediately. She will report back on our initial experience next time.

**ACTION: IH-A**

## **7. Masters matters**

7.1 Jonathan Aldridge (MA War Studies rep) reported that he had received comments from several students concerned at the lack of a Masters workroom. The DGS explained that it had been necessary to reserve this space for new PhD students expected to start in January. TM pointed out that there were four or five empty desks in the existing PhD offices that could be used. JE noted that previously the Masters workroom had not been much used by students, in part because of lack of Internet access, but students reported that this problem had now been solved. JA stressed the importance to MA students of a space in the building that they could use between seminars: as Interpol students, a room in Interpol was important, as opposed to the space in Llandinam, which was perceived as a Geography space. The DGS said that she would look into the possibilities of reinstating the Masters workroom.

**ACTION: IH-A**

7.2 Nathan Hazelhurst (MA International History rep) raised several concerns about Research training.

7.2.1 In response to feedback last year, delivery of qualitative RT had changed to a compressed period (4 days from 9am to 5pm) and was held in Llanbadarn, in a room with no temperature control. Feedback was requested after each 2-hr session, yet no response to feedback was provided and no action seemed to be taken as a result. The sessions were not working physically (it was not possible to sustain the required level of attention over such a period) or intellectually (they were generally disorganized with lectures on different topics by different people following each other in no logical sequence. There was little recognition that there were MA students present, as well as PhDs. In contrast to these sessions, HS was complimented for the quality of his teaching.

7.2.2 MA students wanted the same choice as PhDs had; however, the PhDs were not sure how much choice they had in fact, or whether they were required to follow a pattern of choices dictated by ESRC requirements. Whether these requirements still applied was not clear, nor was it clear who made any final decision as to what choice an individual student could have. The Research Student's Handbook might have answers to some of these questions, but clarity would be useful. HS as MPO would follow up on this matter with the Graduate School.

**ACTION: HS**

7.3 Jonathan Aldridge (MA War Studies rep) asked for clarification as to the impact of the marking boycott and when students could expect to receive their marks back. Marks for an assignment submitted on 17 November had not yet been received, and were not likely to be received within the three week deadline for returning marks.

7.4 Hidemi Suganami, as convenor of the MA dissertation module, reported that attendance at the lecture series organized as part of the module had

been exemplary. MA students present noted that the lectures were very interesting and having different speakers, each talking about their own research, was good. The workshop format with group work and peer feedback was also good.

## **8. PhD matters**

8.1 Abigail Blyth (1st year PhD rep) reported that she had been asked to raise the matter of the fridge in the PhD kitchen, which appeared not to be working well. The DGS noted that this was not a matter for this committee and suggested that AB approach the support staff and/or the porters for help in sorting this out.

**ACTION: AB/Other PhDs**

8.2 Adhemar Mercado (3rd year PhD rep in place of Florian Edelmann) read out a statement on behalf of the third year PhD students asking for a review of the DCDS system to be conducted. This statement has also been sent to Dr Jenny Mathers, Head of Department, with the request that she take it to the departmental board. The appropriate route for raising this matter was discussed at length; it has been raised in multiple ways to ensure that the request didn't slip through the cracks. It was agreed that the best way forward would be for the SGCC to recommend to the departmental board that such a review should take place.

**ACTION: IH-A**

8.3 AM also raised the question of PTRS hours. While the hours expected of PTTS were well-established, the PTRS system had been advertised and widely operated this year for the first time, and there was lack of clarity about the number of hours that it was expected PTRS would work. The DGS noted that this was a matter that should be raised firstly with Lucy Taylor, PTTS/PTRS Officer, and was something that came under the remit of the undergraduate team, and not this committee. If no satisfactory response was received from LT, the learning and teaching committee would be an appropriate forum to discuss the matter further.

**ACTION: AM**

## **9. Any other business**

Hidemi Suganami noted that Dyfan Powel had requested that first year PhDs be invited to join other PhDs at the pub after IPRS. TM noted that staff were very welcome too. HS agreed to make announcements of this invitation and the venue each week at IPRS.

**ACTION: HS**