

Minutes Staff Graduate Consultative Committee

Wednesday, 23 November 2016, 2pm – Steve Crichton Room, Department of International Politics

In attendance: Dr Ayla Gol (Chair, Director of Graduate Studies), Donia Richards (Academic Operations Officer), Dr Gillian McFadyen (Masters Programme Officer), Karijn van den Berg (1st year PhD representative), Quincy Cloet (2nd year PhD representative), Abigail Blyth (3rd year PhD representative), Lydia Cole (4th year PhD representative), Joy Cadwallader (IS/Library representative, standing in for Simon French), Leonor Charpentier-Podrez (Masters representative IR), Kristin Gulbrandsen (Masters representative Security Studies), Ian Crook (Masters representative Intelligence and Strategic Studies), Lucie Kattenbroek (Masters representative Critical IP),

1. Welcome

Dr Ayla Gol, Chair of the SGCC meeting, welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if Quincy Cloet would take minutes which he agreed to do. Round of introduction by the participants.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Tiina Pekkonen (Masters representative Politics, Media and Performance)

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th May 2016 were circulated beforehand and confirmed in the meeting.

4. Items from the Chair

No specific items raised by the Chair.

5. Masters Matters

5.1 Kristin Gulbrandsen (MA Security Studies) suggested better signposting where to find reference guidelines on Blackboard for MA students. They are available in the dissertation module but not on the general postgraduate information section. Gillian McFadyen says that the guidelines are also available on the departmental website. **Action point:** Donia Richards to add the guidelines to the postgraduate information section.

5.2 Leonor Charpentier-Podrez (MA International Relations) enquires about skills development, in particular presentation skills for post-graduate students to be included in the programme. Gillian McFadyen says this mostly depends on the module convenor whether time is dedicated to presentation skills in modules. There are sometimes also issues with group work and not everyone being involved. Gillian suggests to talk to the module convenor and suggest changes for next year.

Abigail Blyth adds there used to be necessary requirement to do presentation. Ayla Gol answers this has been dropped. Ayla also mentions the current change of degree schemes which make things in transition. Abigail says that it was good to have this requirement but there was a recurrent problem of not all people doing the necessary work. Gillian mentions problems of imbalance when having a (team presentation) forum for master students – of not everyone doing the necessary work. Ayla says that module convenors have flexibility to decide on this and it is not a team presentation at MA level, but perhaps it is worthwhile to recommend presentation skills as a good practice for learning outcomes.

5.3 Lucie Kattenbroek (Masters representative Critical IP) mentions a problem with switching classes, as most of them are full. Gillian McFadyen responds that this might be the result of higher uptake and the caps on programmes. A lot of students have also pre-registered over summer. This is good for the department but a challenge for students who wish to switch classes. Gillian recommends to talk to Elaine Lowe in case someone considers switching.

6. Library Matters

Joy Cadwallader (Information Services, standing in for Simon French) gave the following updates on library/Information Services related matters:

- Simon French's drop-in hour is on Tuesday 11.30-12.30 for library inquiries (in the foyer)
- IS User Survey is currently being sent out ([link to be added here](#)). Joy suggests to fill in the survey as IS bases its strategy on the results it receives from the survey
- There is Document Supply Service, a free service for post-graduate research students. Post-graduate taught students can make up to ten free requests. In case you need more, talk to IS. The library wants to avoid having students pay for document supply. Available through Primo (click on Document Supply).
- More Books available to all students, to request acquisition of any relevant monograph. Available through Primo (click on Purchase Request).

Abigail Blyth (3rd year PhD representative) mentions she had problem using the More Books website, due to some issue with eligibility as a PhD student. Joy checked with colleagues and the advice sent to Abigail is to take a screenshot if it happens again and to send it directly to Simon French (sif4@aber.ac.uk) as an attachment.

7. PhD Matters

7.1 Lydia Cole (4th year PhD representative) highlights the fact that contracts for PTTS were delayed again. There was no information about the rate of pay so PhD students started teaching without knowing how much they would be paid. Contracts only came through late October, start of November. Ayla Gol says HR was contacted to have a representative here but nobody was available for this meeting. If the problems continue HR will be asked to have a representative for the next SGCC meeting. Ayla adds that the Department has decided to have the allocation of PTTS done by June/July for both semesters (on the basis of provisional allocations) so HR will hopefully have enough time to prepare contracts in advance. Ayla says that Andrew Davenport (PTTS administrator) and or Sali Hopkins (HR/ Departmental assistant) can be contacted in case of problems. There will be room for flexibility with the provisional allocation for incoming PhD students. Lydia asks whether the allocation for 2nd semester has already been sent. **Action point:** Ayla will check with Andrew Davenport.

Abigail enquires whether PTTS will receive multiple contracts in case of teaching in several modules. Lydia asks whether we should fill in the suggested time-sheets sent around by Sali Hopkins. **Action point:** Ayla will check with Andrew D and confirm with Sali the procedure for the time-sheets.

7.2 Lydia Cole suggests that a summary of Departmental meetings (management team meeting and the lessons learned meeting) could be provided for post-graduate students. Ayla Gol provides summary of decisions to Quincy Cloet, for the minutes. The allocation of PTTS earlier by July was one of the action points from the lessons learned meeting. Also, Ayla highlights that Andrew Davenport (PTTS administrator) academic level and Sali Hopkins (HR/ Departmental assistant) at operational level are allocated to deal with these specific problems in a timely manner.

7.3 Lydia Cole states that several people have made comments about some members of staff behaving in an inappropriate manner during the IPRS. This refers to some members of staff laughing at the presenter during the seminar or when PhD students ask a question. Lydia enquires whether a note could be forwarded to staff that asks for more professional behaviour. Ayla Gol expresses regret to hear this and says she will raise the issue with the Head of Department and colleagues. Abigail adds that students often look up to certain members of staff and might perceive this behaviour as normal. Ayla stresses the importance of collegiality in the graduate community.

7.4 Lydia Cole wishes to know what exactly the departmental procedure is in case of sexual harassment. Ayla mentions there is a departmental procedure which is based on the university's policy of equality (see [here](#) all legislation relevant to AU) and guidelines for harassment (see <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/regulations/student-info/name-192019-en.html>). Quincy Cloet mentions there is a small section in the Research Students Handbook for the Department which suggests to talk to the Head of Department, Director of Graduate Studies or any preferred member of staff. **Action Point:** the Research Students and PTTs handbooks will be updated with current links on the AU guidelines for dealing with harassment or bullying.

7.5 Abigail Blyth (3rd year PhD representative) points out that the lift in the Department is often out of service, which makes the building inaccessible for students or staff with disabilities. Abigail mentions this has been a particular problem in the morning, when the lift is not functional. She asks whether the lift is operational during regular hours (e.g. when the porters are not present). **Action point:** Donia Richards to talk to porters and see whether the lift can be repaired or remain operational.

7.6 Quincy Cloet (2nd year PhD representative) refers to sorry state of some PhD offices, which haven't been adequately cleaned after students have submitted their dissertation. Gillian suggests to ask the porters to clean it up, or talk to Elaine Lowe so it's on the agenda for the next general cleaning. Abigail asks whether there is any equipment we can use ourselves. Ayla answers there might be a health and safety risk with some of the equipment. Lydia adds that there is a problem with old things being dumped in the post-graduate room (even marked essays). **Action point:** PhD students to send to Donia a list of rooms that need some thorough cleaning. Ayla adds that cleaning will depend on the availability of resources.

8. Any other business

Abigail Blyth asks who will take over from Ayla as Director of Graduate Studies for Semester two. Ayla responds that Dr Inanna Hamati-Ataya will take over as Director with Dr Charalampos Efstathopoulos as Deputy for PhDs, while Dr Gillian McFadyen continues as Masters Programme Officer.

Gillian McFadyen invites all post-graduate students to the annual Christmas party, which will take place on the 16th of December at the Aberystwyth Football Club. Invitation will be sent round.

Ayla concludes her last SGCC meeting as Director of Graduate Studies by thanking everyone for their contributions.

9. Date of next meeting

(tbc)