

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Meeting 1/20

8 April 2020

Present: Dakota Titmus (Chair), Navchaa Tumurbaatar (Secretary), Prof Daniel Zizzo, Prof KK Tang (on behalf of Mr Carl Sherwood), A/Prof Peter Earl, Ms Loise West (on behalf of Ms Megan Sandaver), Prof Alicia Rambaldi, Tooru Nishido, Vinh Vi Ly Hoai, Abigail Smith, Erin Allport, Patrick Duenow, Benjamin Scott, Arita Puriso, Ragini Chopra Ashok

1. **Apologies:** Nikhil Dugar, Grace Reinhold, Chelsea van der Merwe, Phiet Le, Connor Harvey, Phuong Linh Tran

2. **Confirmation of the Minutes from the previous meeting**
Confirmed

3. **Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest**
Nil

4. **Business Arising from the previous Minutes**

The School of Economics (SoE) received good feedback through a student survey on PA2 on the matter of choosing a major. 90 percent of the survey respondents, including student advisory and alumni, answered they want to have a choice rather than forcing to have a major.

5. **Standing items**

1. Welcoming new members

The Chair welcomed new members, Machel Tamani, the president of UQES, Nikhil Dugar, Phuong Linh Tran and Ragini Ashok Chopra

2. COVID-19 situation and its impact on students

a. Reduction of tuition fee

Prof Zizzo acknowledged that it is university wide issue. At this stage, UQ is not going to reduce tuition fee, however, there will be a provision of financial support for students in need. Also, UQ has been investing in care package as well as deploying staff resources for students who are in quarantine or in isolation. Eligibility and funding of the procedure is similar as UQ hardship fund and further information can be found at <https://my.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/student-support/financial-support/apply-financial-hardship-assistance>. Additionally, within the digital space – UQ virtual village has been launched to keep the community spirit.

Student member Vinh raised two matters:

A) a clear communication on this matter just like communication on grades

B) as University has now changed from traditional mode to survivor mode, a financial support is only available for eligible students. Could this financial support be a grant rather than loan, similar to measures taken by the University of Melbourne and UNSW?

ACTION: Prof Zizzo to provide further feedback in due course.

b. Personalised tutoring sessions

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Prof Zizzo informed that SoE put extra attention on this matter. SoE could have proceed with a single tutorial and single consultation per week option. However, SoE decided to provide tutorial and consultation sessions on different days and at different times so that every student has access to at least one tutorial class and consultation session. Furthermore, due to Covid-19, online mode of study could continue in Semester 2, 2020.

Student member Tooru expressed that he has been a tutor for over three year, and this is the best possible outcome given the current situation. The number of students in consultation session has increased from 3 to 11 in his class.

3. Student feedback

a. Serious cases (tutorial class, group work and deferred exam content)

The Chair informed the committee the following cases:

Case 1: a tutor was speaking in Chinese in a tutorial class, despite the fact there was non-Asian student in the class.

Case 2: due to group work assessment, students are not being assessed fairly due to differences in the team members

Case 3: a student was complaining that in Sem 2, 2019, a deferred exam questions were exactly the same as the final exam questions for a course despite these two exams were held three weeks apart and this is not fair to other students.

Prof KK Tang mentioned that there are dedicated staff checking the content of the exams and sometimes questions may differ by a word or two, however, the answers could change completely.

ACTION:

Case 1: Secretary to inform Marie Taylor about this case and request a reminder email to all tutors to speak in English during tutorial and consultation sessions

Case 3: Secretary to send an email to KK Tang and Carl Sherwood to investigate this matter.

b. Teaching quality

The Chair further provided feedbacks collected from students regarding teaching quality including a lecturer reading lecture slides page by page without adding any further comments, discontinuation of workshops which received good feedback.

Prof Zizzo informed that Navchaa was part of the recent recruitment process for lecturers and one of the questions asked was about delivering interactive and engaging learning environment for students. Member Tooru also informed that interactive learning environment requires two-way communication and encouraged students to take active part in their learning as well.

4. Student employability

a. "Stata" vs "R" software

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The Chair provided feedback on the use of statistical software as the courses are taught using Stata software whereas industry is moving towards “R” and hence some students are concerned about a technical skill mismatch from employability perspective.

Prof Rambaldi mentioned that many government agencies still use Stata and it is the main software for economists working in health sector. Depending on the course level, especially in advanced level of microeconomics, Stata is widely used, whereas at introductory level of courses, we are moving towards to use both Stata and “R”. In the past, a course on machine learning was taught on “R”. The school is open to explore further options, however, this will take time as lecturers and tutors are required to be trained in different software.

ACTION: Prof Rambaldi to bring this matter with colleague and provide feedback.

b. International student visa restrictions

The Secretary informed that some international students are concerned that they want to stay in Australia and work as an economist upon graduation, however, due to temporary visa status, the options are limited. This is not UQ only issue, rather Australia wide issue.

ACTION: Secretary to send an email to BELSET to explore opportunities.

5. The committee visibility

- a. SSLC webpage has been updated with new members
- b. SSLC had a stall at the BELfest event with support from the marketing team and collaborating with UQES. Regular Zoom meetings are being held with Sarah Briscetto and Ellie Price from the marketing to increase visibility of SSLC.
- c. New member Nikhil raised an idea on having meeting with UQ economics alumni. Prof Zizzo supports this idea and will connect the Chair and Secretary to relevant staff.

ACTION: The Chair and Secretary are to continue working with marketing team on SSLC visibility and involve UQES and PPE where applicable.

6. SSLC resource allocation

The Chair suggested it would be better if SSLC has a small fund available for organizing activities in the future, however, given the current Covid-19 situation, the Chair is aware this is not an urgent and priority. Prof Zizzo agreed with this idea and suggested to revisit this matter in 2021.

6. Items for information

The application deadline for Borderless competition has been extended to 13 April 2020 and students are encouraged to apply.

7. Policies due for review

Nil

8. Policies due for review: June/July 2020 - TBA

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