

## STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting #1, 2021

25 March 2021

For general publication

**Present:** Rhiain Powell (Chair), Phiet Le (Secretary), Prof. Daniel Zizzo, Dr. Carl Sherwood, Prof. Alicia Rambaldi, Ms. Carol Bell, Lydia Ho, Jarrod Richards, Emma Grady and Phuong Linh Tran

**1. Apologies:** A/Prof. Marco Faravelli, Abigail Smith, Arita Puriso, Dakota Titmus, Erin Allport, Guangyu Lyu, Megha Thakkar, Nhu Tran, Nikhil Dugar, Jennifer Zhang, Brendan Fugate, Jennifer Min

**2. Confirmation of the minutes from the previous meeting:**

N/A

**3. Business arising from the previous meeting:**

N/A

**4. Business arising from this meeting:**

- i. The Chair and Secretary introduced themselves to the Committee.
- ii. The staff from the School of Economics who were at the meeting presented themselves to the Committee:
  - a. Prof. Daniel Zizzo – Academic Dean and Head of School
  - b. Dr. Carl Sherwood – Director of Education
  - c. Prof. Alicia Rambaldi – Employability Officer
  - d. Ms. Carol Bell – School Manager
    - Mr. Joe Symons – Manager, Student and Academic Administration – will attend future SSLC meetings instead of Ms. Carol Bell.
  - e. A/Prof. Marco Faravelli – HDR Coordinator
- iii. Before the meeting, Phiet sent out a document called *SSLC\_PG APR process FINAL* for everyone to have a look through before the meeting. The reasons to why the Committee discussed about this document are detailed below:
  - ◆ Dr. Carl Sherwood explained that it is a requirement from the University that the School needs to undertake an academic review of all postgraduate (PG) programs every 5 years. Such a review is required in 2021.
  - ◆ After undertaking the review, the School then needs to pitch to the University how its programs provide values to students by targeting the 6 key areas (below) that are being provided by the BEL Faculty as Terms of Reference:
    - Distinctiveness
    - Embedded Employability (Work Integrated Learning)
    - Future Focused

- Student Centred
  - High Quality
  - Best in World
- ◆ Dr. Carl Sherwood briefly went through the document. He then went to the questions page (at the bottom) of the document. During the meeting, he wanted to gather feedback from all the student members who were present at the meeting (including undergraduate students). The feedback was summarised below:
- For question 1, a lot of members expressed that they would like to have some choices (i.e., electives) in their degrees. The reasons to this were that: 1) by having choices, students will find their degrees (and their overall university experience) more enjoyable; and 2) electives can give them those extra skills and knowledge that can help boost their employability after graduating from UQ. Members were generally comfortable with the proposed 4:1 cap ratio between number of electives and number of courses to be chosen.
    - Some members (i.e., Phuong Linh Tran and Jarrod Richards) said that they would like to have a balance between compulsory and elective courses (as if the School lets the students to take whatever courses that they want to take throughout their whole program, it might harm the students' employability instead). By having some compulsory courses, they can give the students some clear guidelines of what the students need to study to graduate with the skills and knowledge that are currently needed in the current job market. In regard to this issue, Prof. Daniel Zizzo stated that before the beginning of every academic years, the School will review all of its course profiles to see which courses need to be made as compulsory courses, and which courses can be made as elective courses so that it can free up the students' options to study courses that they are really interested in, while still getting all the foundational/necessary knowledge.
    - Furthermore, Phiet Le raised the issue that some double degree students find that they have very limited electives to choose from. Dr. Carl Sherwood and Prof. Daniel Zizzo commented that they totally understood about this issue. However, the School has already tried to cut down all the unnecessary courses so that double degree students will graduate in a much less time than those students who are taking two degrees separately. The School will constantly look on how they can offer students who are taking BEcon with another undergraduate degree more flexibility/choices.
  - For question 2, Dr. Carl Sherwood wants to find out from the student members (especially postgraduate student members) if they believe *Cost Benefit Analysis* and *Project Evaluation* would provide any values to the students or not (as they will be introduced as core courses in all 5 PG Econ programs).

- Rhian Powell spoke on behalf of Abigail Smith that Abigail found the Cost Benefit Analysis course was the most useful/practical course that she has taken throughout her whole degree. Abigail could see how the course could be used in real life.
    - Lydia Ho commented that the most useful thing that she found from taking Cost Benefit Analysis was that it taught her Excel skills (which she could use it in her workplace).
    - Rhian Powell asked if the Cost Benefit Analysis course would be different among different PG Econ degrees (meaning, will Cost Benefit Analysis for Master of Economics be different to Cost Benefit Analysis for Master of Health Economics?). For this question, Dr. Carl Sherwood answered that one course code of Cost Benefit Analysis will be used for all PG Econ degrees (it will only be a different course code of Cost Benefit Analysis between PG and UG Econ degrees).
  - For question 3, the viewpoint of the whole Committee after looking through the survey during the meeting is:
    - More than 1000 students were studying a PG degree in Econ at the time the School conducted the survey, but only 57 students responded back to it (which were not a lot). Although it can be understood that the survey was conducted in quite a short period of time (from the 5th – 19th of March 2021). Therefore, students might not have enough time to answer it. So, out of the 57 students, around 71.9% of them were international students, and 28.1% were domestic students.
    - On average, most of the feedback/comments were either satisfied/prepared or very satisfied/very prepared of their programs (and how their programs equipped them with the knowledge and skills that are necessary to navigate the current job market). Only 1 – 2 students expressed that they were unsatisfied with their programs, and that the programs did not prepare them for future employability.
    - After having a more careful look into the responses, the Committee identified that the comments came mostly from the international students (who could not come to UQ because of the pandemic, and this has affected their overall university experience). The School will look further into this issue, and will think of a way how to better engage with international students who are back in their home countries this year.
  - ◆ Lastly, the School is looking to discontinue the Master of Development Economics next year due to all the reasons being listed in the document.
- iv. Rhian and Phiet gave a quick overview of the activities that the SSLC did during the O-Week (to be more specific, during the BELfest Day). It was a successful day in which the Committee had been able to hand out a lot of its merchandise and flyers, and raise its visibility to all the attendees who were there. Thank you to Abigail Smith, Jarrod Richards, Lydia Ho, Phuong Linh Tran and Jennifer Min for volunteering their time to help the SSLC out at its

stall on the BELfest Day. Also, a special thanks to Ellie Price and Sarah Brischetto from the BEL Marketing Team for helping the SSLC to plan out everything, and promoting all the Committee's activities before and during the day.

- v. Touch on the issue of raising visibility, Emma Grady – President of UQPPES – offers to spread the words about the SSLC within her own society. She said that if the Committee has any surveys that it needs to gather feedback, she will be more than happy to send them to UQPPES members to answer.
- vi. Emma asked final year/capstone project for Bachelor of PPE students. For this question, Ms. Carol Bell will ask A/Prof. Marco Faravelli (who was not present at the meeting), and will get back to Emma on this.
- vii. Phuong Linh Tran asked whether returning/continuing students have to do the Academic Integrity Modules from UQ. Prof. Daniel Zizzo and Dr. Carl Sherwood commented that even though it is recommended (not compulsory) that returning/continuing students should re-do them if they have already completed them before. However, it is compulsory for new students to do those modules.

#### **5. Actions to do before the next meeting**

Prof. Daniel Zizzo wants everyone to have a think of how the SSLC can increase the engagement between domestic and international students before the next meeting.

#### **6. Next meeting**

Semester 1, 2021 (the exact date is TBA)