

Minutes: Student Staff Liaison Committee

English Language Education



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Centre for Open Learning

4th December 2018

G32, Paterson's Land

Present:

Camilla Green (CG)

Rowan Murray (RM)

Tom Pritchard (TP)

Agnes Young (AY)

Fernanda da Rosa Nogueira (FDRN)

Yishu Hu (YH)

Jingxin Luo (JL)

Benjamin McNab (BM)

Chair

Director of Quality

Course Organiser, English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)

Course Director, Academic English for Visiting Students (AEVS)

Programme Rep, Academic English for Visiting Students (AEVS)

Programme Rep, English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)

Programme Rep, English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)

Teaching Office

Start Time: 16:00

End Time: 17:13

1	Welcome / Agenda	CG
	<p>CG welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief explanation of the remit and conduct of the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC).</p> <p>CG invited those present to introduce themselves to the other members of the Committee.</p>	
2	English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)	TP
	<p>YH asked her classmates to provide written feedback.</p> <p>YH informed the Committee that most students in EGAP 1+2 wish to continue with their studies next term. TP was happy to hear that students wanted continue on to term 2. TP confirmed that other students are set to join EGAP in term 2, so it was likely that an extra EGAP class will be scheduled to accommodate all students. TP confirmed to the Committee that new students will be classed according to ability.</p> <p>YH noted that students wanted to have a microwave installed in Paterson's Land for their use. TP noted that the decision to install a microwave would be a matter for the COL Facilities Manager and agreed to refer this matter to him for consideration. RM noted that although the installation of such facilities for students was part of a wider discussion across the University, students should not expect progress in the short term. RM did confirm to the Committee that the Paterson's Land cold water fountains will be replaced in the near future. Installation of hot water faucets on campus is also being considered by the COL Facilities Team.</p> <p>YH informed the Committee that students no longer wished to use the IELTS Express course book. TP confirmed that this course book will not be used in Term 2 or Term 3. TP will shortly be discussing the ordering of new IELTS materials with the head of English Language Education (ELE).</p>	<p>TP</p> <p>TP</p> <p>TP</p>

	<p>YH noted that following the split of groups after week six of Term 1, IELTS1 students were finding it difficult to follow the IELTS teacher and other students. TP suggested to the Committee that students on IELTS1 who expect to move on postgraduate programmes next year should be able to participate at this stage, when the course is relatively simple. TP stressed that there comes a point when academic pressure on students has to be applied, otherwise students will not achieve their goals for the academic year. TP noted that some IELTS students are quieter than others: he will be speaking to these students in the New Year.</p>	TP
	<p>YH noted that students would like more opportunities to practice their speaking in their morning class. TP agreed to arrange for more speaking opportunities with the teachers.</p>	TP
	<p>YH also expressed concern that one teacher was not patient with students. YH reflected that this was perhaps students are struggling with the demanding nature of the class. TP noted that he was happy to discuss this situation with the teacher but reiterated that there had to be an element of pressure on the students in order for them to succeed.</p>	TP
	<p>RM intervened to ask the Student Representatives to encourage the use of mid-course feedback postcards, so that teachers can respond quickly to any issues raised.</p>	
	<p>YH concluded her report by informing the Committee that students would prefer to keep the same teachers next term. TP noted that in previous years, students had become bored of the same teacher from Term 1. TP stressed that it was vital for students to experience new teachers with new approaches and new accents. Though he understood that students took comfort in familiarity and continuity, TP stressed that a variety of teachers and teaching methods would more beneficial to students. TP also noted it would not be possible for teachers to continue in to Term 2 due to timetabling constraints.</p>	
	<p>JL confirmed that she collected feedback from classmates via email. JL also informed the Committee that students enjoyed the computer class led by Peter. Students also found the discussion forum helpful and overall felt that the course helped them to develop their essay and reading skills.</p>	
	<p>JL noted to the Committee that students would like to be based in one classroom, as they regularly get lost on campus. TP replied that he was in discussions with the COL Teaching Office to ensure that students were in the same class each day. TP provided a brief explanation of the University timetabling process to the student reps.</p>	
	<p>JL noted that students would like teachers to set a more formal test on a monthly basis, so they can receive on how they have improved. TP noted that the student course books did contain progress tests but noted that the tests were presented to students as an in-class task, rather than a formal test. JL noted that students wanted more formal testing to ensure that they were progressing. TP agreed to discuss this further with course teachers.</p>	TP
	<p>JL noted that the majority of EGAP3 and EGAP4 students are required to meet the IELTS requirements, so would like to sit practice IELTS examinations under examination conditions as part of the afternoon classes. TP agreed that part of the class would be set aside for testing under exam conditions. CG opined that it would such testing to be standardised across all IELTS teachers.</p>	TP
	<p>JL noted that two thirds of the students had already reached the requirements for the listening, reading and speaking IELTS components. Students would like to carry on the pre-session course. TP suggested that students would see the benefit of testing their writing skills under exam conditions. JL noted that one teacher had already attempted such testing but the students did not see improvement in their results. TP noted that the most important factor affecting student results is time and confirmed that teachers would need to be stricter in this</p>	

	<p>respect. TP also confirmed that an IELTS writing course would be offered in the first half of Term 2.</p> <p>JL informed the Committee that some students would prefer to enrol on one of the COL Short Courses (e.g. Japanese, Spanish or other cultural course). TP confirmed that it would not be possible to mix and match courses but that other English Language Education courses would be available, such as Seminar Skills. CG informed the student reps that EGAP students were free to enrol on the COL Short Courses / Language Courses in their own time and at their own expense. Students would be entitled to a discount should they wish to book on to COL courses.</p> <p>JL expressed a wish from the students to have a Social Programme. TP explained the role of EUSA in the provision of societies, where students would be able to socialise with other students while practicing their speaking skills with native speakers. CG confirmed that EUSA provided over 400 societies for students to choose from. TP recommended the EUSA Tandem Language Programme to the student reps and suggested that EGAP students review the societies listings on the EUSA website. JL expressed a desire from EGAP students to be part of the wider University.</p> <p>JL noted that one of the vocab tests was not related to the IELTS tests. TP expressed surprise at the student’s negative view of the tests but confirmed that he would discuss this further with the teacher and arrange for the tests to be discontinued. Although TP agreed that while some of the vocabulary in the tests could appear random to students, such vocabulary was transferrable to any situation. JL noted that student attendance decreases when the vocab tests are scheduled.</p> <p>TP confirmed to the Committee that students are not allowed to enter the pre-sessional programme if they have not met the entry requirements. CG reiterated that students who were struggling with their studies should consider enrolling on the new IELTS writing course, scheduled for launch in the first half of Term 2. TP confirmed that progression decisions were made with the student’s welfare in mind and stressed that it would be unfair to allow someone to progress to a postgraduate programme who was not able to meet the language entry requirements, as they would be spending a lot of money and likely not be successful [in their studies].</p> <p>RM asked student reps to advise students who were struggling to discuss their situation with TP directly.</p> <p>RM summed up the discussion by saying that feedback from student reps should be distributed by TP to teachers, with an agreed rollout of policy as best practice in ELE team meetings.</p>	<p>TP</p> <p>TP</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Academic English for Visiting Students (AEVS)</p>	
	<p>FDRN presented her feedback to the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback was mostly positive • Good to have three session per week with same class – allows students to build up friendships. • Students were not nervous to address concerns to teachers. • Assignments were sometimes unclear – e.g. what homework was required for next class. • Course was well organised but scheduled too early in the day (9am). • Teachers motivated students to learn from their mistakes. • Feedback was obtained informally in person and by Facebook Messenger. No feedback was received by email. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback regarding the non-assessed writing and presentations (formative assessments). • Positive feedback about the flexibility of content that students were able to study. • Re: AY – allowed students to express their opinions freely. <p>AY thanked FDRN for her positive feedback and for her attempts to contact the students. AY confirmed that there was a friendly, supportive atmosphere during AEVS classes.</p> <p>AY confirmed that teachers would be clearer in what homework was required of students.</p> <p>Regarding the timing of classes, AY noted that AEVS classes had been scheduled at 9am for several years. AY stressed that students may not be able to enrol on AEVS if classes were scheduled for later in the day.</p>	AY
4	Discussion of Reps Experiences	
	<p>CG asked how keen students had been to provide feedback to students reps. All the reps agreed that students were happy to provide feedback. FDRN noted that some students said they would send feedback to her but still have not done so.</p> <p>CG asked the student reps what they considered to be the best means of obtaining feedback. FDRN noted that obtaining feedback by email did not work for her. FDRN had issues using the mailing lists, so talked to students in person to obtain their feedback.</p> <p>CG asked the student reps if they would prefer meeting rooms to be available for student reps to have meetings with students. FDRN noted that this would be difficult due to student timetables.</p> <p>CG asked YH if EGAP students preferred to provide their feedback in writing. YH confirmed that she spoke to students, then asked students to provide their feedback in writing. JL confirmed that she emailed students to request their feedback, then spoke to students in person.</p> <p>CG asked if the student reps had received any student feedback postcards. The student reps all confirmed they had not received any feedback postcards. TP asked the Committee if it would be easier for feedback postcards to be given to student reps to distribute and to agree a mutually convenient way for students to return postcards to the reps. CG replied that this was a model to consider for next term.</p> <p>CG asked the student reps if there was anything else that they wished to comment upon. JL noted that her classmates found the course helpful and helped them to be more outgoing.</p> <p>CG asked if the students were enjoying being a student rep. JL replied that she had enjoyed the EUSA training session, as it was a further opportunity to meet the other student reps.</p> <p>CG asked the YH and JL to consider if they wanted to continue being EGAP student reps. CG noted that she would contact YH and JL the following week to discuss this matter further.</p> <p>As FDRN was due to return to her home institution at the end of the term, CG thanked her for her work as AEVS student rep.</p>	CG CG
5	Any Other Business	
	<p>No other business was presented to the Committee.</p>	

	<p>CG thanked everyone for their attendance.</p> <p>The Committee was adjourned at 17:13.</p>	
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