

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

School of Social Sciences

Minutes of the GTA Coordinator Committee – 14 May 2019 SoSS Boardroom, ALB at 10am

Present – Adrienne Roberts (School TA Coordinator), Ian Bruff (Politics TA Coordinator), Owen Abbott (Sociology TA Coordinator), David Liggins (Philosophy), Vic Jotham (Economics TA Coordinator), Eduardo Fe (Social Statistics TA Coordinator), Michelle Kelly (School Resources Officer), Jana Fey (Politics TA Rep), Alexander Squires (Economics), Francesco Montagnani (Social Anthropology TA Rep), Simon Walgenbach (Philosophy TA Rep – in place of Penny Orr), Jaime Garcia Iglesias (School TA Rep)

1. Apologies – Soumhya Venkatesan

2. Matters arising from meeting on 04.03.19

2.1 Update on Negotiations

This was also on the agenda for the Faculty TA review Group meeting due to take place next week so a further update on this would be provided to the committee by email once the meeting had taken place.

Action: Adrienne to update committee following the Faculty meeting.

2.2 Deadlines for Marking (Item 3)

Despite the significant pressures around marking time, it had not been feasible for Exam Boards to be moved back. Staff just needed to be quicker to inform when the deadlines/marketing timetables were released.

2.3 References for LEAP (Item 4)

The processes to follow for LEAP had been unfolding. Ian Fairweather was producing a template for references. Other templates were available on the LEAP website. Reference needed to speak to the relevant portfolio and would take time to write, even with a template. TAs would only need to obtain one reference, with Faculty providing the second one. Quite a few applications had been submitted to LEAP for the last round. The next round would be in August. Referees did not have to be HEA accredited themselves in order to provide a reference. School and Departmental training should easily map to LEAP.

3. Departmental Updates

Sociology

Nothing to report.

Social Statistics

Some difficulties experienced by TAs at the start of the semester had now been ironed out. Nothing further to report.

Social Anthropology

Course outlines were being reviewed and everything was running smoothly.

Philosophy

TAs had asked if it was possible to have more flexibility with office hours, rather than being obliged to hold one every week. This was because in the first week, very few students, if any, turn up. However, toward the end of the semester lots of students want help/advice. TAs requested to hold an office hour every two weeks instead at the start of the semester, however the Department decided against this, as students needed to have someone available to them each week if needed. As the policy just states that TAs will hold 10 hrs as office hours, it is up to Departments to decide how these are organised.

In Economics, TAs were encouraged to talk with course convenors regarding the provision of office hours and in quieter periods, TAs provided feedback via discussion boards.

Whilst there was concern from a TA Rep that Departments should work consistently in their provision of office hours, it was pointed out that flexibility in the use of these hours was important and that each Department needed to be able to provide these as appropriate.

Some TAs had been asked to write references. They had been advised to tell students that they needed to approach their course convenors for references. The TA Handbook states that TAs should not be providing references for students.

Action: Michelle to check if the same advice regarding TAs not providing references was in the Staff Handbook and if not, to request that this be added.

Economics

Interviews had taken place for x3 Teaching Associates. It was a competitive field and appointments had been made.

The TA allocation process was now beginning.

Action: Michelle to check PGR training dates with Bernie and arrange School training dates with Adrienne.

Politics

Interviews had now taken place for the x6 0.5FTE Teaching Associate posts and appointments were in progress.

Peer Review forms had now been made more explicit to encourage feedback that was more constructive.

IB was still receiving enquiries about the Teaching Fellow role and how it would be used in UG teaching – a teaching area largely defined by GTA and TA teaching provision. The Teaching Fellow Role was not something that had come up at T&L Committee, though Economics was looking at such a role for small group tutorial teaching and was in conversations at School level regarding this. HoD for Politics would therefore need to investigate this further in respect of the Politics Department.

Action: Adrienne to enquire on views on Teaching Fellows at T&L Committee.

4. AOB

A few years ago, the School set up *'The Pedagogy Lab'* that had since fallen by the wayside, as the TAs who led this had since graduated. The idea was put to the committee to revive this. There was a general feeling that this was a good idea and that it should be School run with as broad an interpretation of *'pedagogy'* as possible, so that issues such as student mental health could be encompassed. The initiative could be tied to LEAP by picking out areas of the framework to link into, with perhaps a couple of events per year held. TA involvement would be voluntary and separate to Departmental training. It was also suggested that a recently organised and very successful event, *'Decolonising the Curriculum'*, which was also TA led and organised by the SoSS TA Committee, could be used as a model for future *Pedagogy Lab* events.

Action: Adrienne to find out if any School funding would be available to revive *'The Pedagogy Lab'*.

Summary of Actions

Action	By Whom
Adrienne to update the committee on UCU negotiations following the Faculty meeting.	Adrienne
Michelle to check if advice regarding TAs not providing references was in the Staff Handbook and if not, to request that this be added.	Michelle
(1) Michelle to check PGR training dates with Bernie (2) Michelle to arrange School training dates with Adrienne.	Michelle / Adrienne
Adrienne to enquire on views on Teaching Fellows at T&L Committee.	Adrienne
Adrienne to find out if any School funding would be available to revive <i>'The Pedagogy Lab'</i> .	Adrienne