**School of Environment, Education and Development**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**SEED Programme Committee:** [PGT Geography]

**Date:** Wednesday 13th November 2024

**Time:** 12:00pm – 14:00pm

**Location:** University Place 5.211 and 5.207 and Teams Meeting [[**Join the meeting now**](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_NWM4ZTdlMDctM2YxZi00YzU1LThlNmUtNTgzMWZjODBiZjhk%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22c152cb07-614e-4abb-818a-f035cfa91a77%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%220a36ec32-319a-4db6-a50c-d2fa46b1e930%22%7d)]

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**Minutes**

**Staff Attendees:**

Mark Usher (PGT Director for Geography), Matthew Tomkins (Programme Lead for GIS),

**Staff Apologies:**

James Rothwell, Amy Matthews

**4 Reps in attendance:**

**MSc Climate Change**

No reps present.

**MSc EMMR**

Scarlet Smith

William Davies

**MSc Environmental Governance**

No reps present.

**MSc GIS**

Jacob Osito

Ethel Pondelani

**MSc Green Infrastructure**

No reps recruited.

1. **Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

MU welcomes all students reps and staff to the committee and thanks all students who have volunteered to be reps. MU emphasised that the programme committee meetings are extremely important, as students can be the student voice for their represented cohorts. MU also emphasised that constructive feedback was extremely important for staff to receive as it is important for the continuous improvement of programmes. MU noted that for instance, fieldwork was created based on student feedback on the course.

MU noted apologies for James Rothwell.

1. **Introductions**

MU thanked all in attendance once again and introductions were made around

the room.

1. **Minutes/Actions of the last meeting**

MU provided an update since the last meeting and noted he would make a number of comments across programmes. MU asked PDs to provide comments at any time during this.

Mark noted last year’s issues surrounding Welcome Week planning and communications, noting this year there had been a significant improvement in terms of welcome week planning and communications. MU noted that drop in sessions were arranged for students and the SEED Hubs presence was much more visible than last year.

MU noted in terms of the first two weeks of teaching there was improvements to lecture attendance and there were no issues with rooms being too small e.g. health and safety risk, students sitting on steps, floors etc, as students were encouraged to audit courses they were interested in virtually e.g. through access to blackboard, online videos etc.

MU noted previous student concerns about timetabling and 9am start time for teaching. MU reiterated that unfortunately staff are unable to change these start times as timetabling is dealt with centrally.

MU noted previous comments about students frustrations with lack of attendance monitoring from all students e.g. those not completing tier 4 visa checks. MU highlighted that the introduction of the new SEATs attendance monitoring system has addressed students concerns about their attendance not being monitored.

MU mentioned students previous comments about part time students and issues with staff contact and student support hours not being well publicised. MU emphasised that staff student support hours and contact hours are now well advertised and made clear to students who are part -time to use as needed.

MU noted that students also asked for more community building activities across cohorts, to build a sense of community e.g. group meals during field courses are implemented with an intention to enhance a sense of community. MU suggested to enhance students sense of community further student could also arrange to work outside of class in groups. MU noted this is already happening on the Environmental Governance programme.

MU mentioned that students had previously expressed concerns regarding vague feedback received on several programmes. MU noted that as a result of this, staff have responded via more improved guidelines in terms of marking and also rubrics have also been refined.

1. **Rep Consultation**

PGT Geography student representatives from all programmes were invited to share their comments.

MU noted that they would like students to provide any comments they had on the following topics: registration and welcome week, units taken so far (MU suggests that optionality in future might be reduced), unit choice and content, field courses, support from staff e.g. with Blackboard etc, SEATs attendance system, Student Reps training and settling in.

**MSc Climate Change**

MU noted that MSc Climate Change rep Fleur Ewing was absent from the meeting.

**MSc Environmental Governance**

MU noted that the Environmental Governance reps were absent from the meeting.

**MSc Environmental, Monitoring, Modelling and Reconstruction (EMMR)**

MU noted that both Scarlet Smith (SS) and William Davies (WD) were present to provide comment on the EMMR programme. SS and WD noted that students on EMMR expressed concerns about when the fieldtrip was scheduled e.g. the trip timings and how this timing can clash with the timings of an assignment submission in week 7. Anna Hughes (AH) provided comments regarding this, noting that the comments made would be taken into consideration, in terms of assignment planning going forward next year to avoid any protentional clashes.

EMMR reps noted that students provided suggestions regarding fieldwork noting that in terms of fieldwork preparation, only one online session was needed in comparison to multiple in person sessions – which is the current format. SS and WD noted that during the field course, students suggested that more discussion time could take place in a classroom setting rather than in the fieldwork setting as for some students they found this tiring. The EMMR reps also commented that some students have expressed concern about noting being as familiar with or as proficient with Excel in comparison to other students. Students suggested that more training could be provided to aid students and that this cone be done during the welcome week induction.

AH provided comment on the reps comments noting that when studying at MSc level students are expected to have some background familiarity with Excel software.

SS and WD noted that this years welcome week timetable was also published too late for students to access, meaning that students did not have enough time to arrange logistics e.g. attend activities etc.

**MSc Green Infrastructure**

No reps have been recruited for this academic year for 2024/25.

**MSc Geographical Information Systems (GIS)**

GIS reps Ethel Pondelani (EP) and Jacob Osito (JO) provided comments on the MSc GIS programme. EP and JO noted concerns from students about the intensity of fieldwork and the timings of some assessments. EP and JO also noted that some students had also expressed concerns about how it was expected of students to have a certain prior understanding and knowledge of some GIS software e.g. Understanding GIS, some students did have some understanding of software but others didn’t.

MT recorded a number of comments from the GIS student reps including:

Comments from GIS reps (JO, EP)

1. Reps raised concerns about the clash of the field course and reading week, especially with assessment deadlines scheduled for Week 7 and 8.

*Comment from MT*

*= This is an issue for all the programmes, particularly for the residential field courses (GIS, EMMR). This will be partially addressed in 2025-26, where the Cornwall field course is set to be delivered twice but for a shorter duration, splitting the cohort into two (G1: Sunday – Wednesday, G2: Wednesday – Saturday). This will provide students with more time to work on assessments and other tasks during the reading week.*

1. Reps also enquired whether assessment deadlines could be switched, to allow submission of Data Acquisition A1 earlier (W9 → W7 or W8), and moving Understanding GIS later (W7 → W8).

*Comment from MT*

*=This is something we could explore, although this would have consequences for returning feedback in time for subsequent assessments (e.g., Understanding GIS A2). Given the planned change in field course design, it is likely that assessment content / structure will be changing* *anyway*.

1. Reps were happy with the field course, although it was quite intense. The quality and quantity of food was good, although cultural expectations need to be managed. The cleanliness of facilities was poor by the end of the trip, due to student usage.

*Comment from MT*

*= The field course should be less intense for 2025-26 (shorter duration). Guidance was provided to students on cleanliness and use of facilities, but this can be emphasised in future. Food was of a high standard, catering to allergies and other requirements, but the type of food on offer can be communicated in advance to the students.*

1. Reps would like course forums to be anonymous to promote wider usage e.g., Understanding GIS

*MT confirmed - this was actioned after the meeting.*

1. Reps questioned whether the weighting for specific assignments could be changed e.g., for Understanding GIS, which is currently 40 : 60 (A1 : A2), could this be 30 : 70 or even 20 : 80?

*Comment from MT*

*= Unlikely to change this, as this would give increasing weight to an already challenging assessment. Performance on A1 for 2024-25 has been (on average) good to very good (Average = 66.4, Median = 68.0), so no clear reason to change weighting.*

1. Reps enquired about the availability of lecture and practical recordings for some units.

*Comment from MT*

*= All lectures should be recorded and available on the video portal. Practical recordings are not always recorded, depending on the equipment available in the room and the nature of the materials. Students are advised to speak to the course convenor if recordings are not available.*

1. **Any other business**

MU confirms written reports will be created. MU confirms they will investigate the lack of responses for reps. MU suggests this is not due to lack of communication. MU suggests if future committees should be online. MU also notes that in house rep recruitment may be necessary for those programmes who do not have representation.

1. **Date of next meeting**

TBC. Will take place in Semester 2 of teaching.

**Summary of Actions List**

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| **Action Number** | **Agenda Item** | **Action** | **Lead** | **Deadline** | **Status/Notes** |
| 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |  |  |
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