PGSSLC Meeting: Wednesday 13th November 2013

Chair: Christina Britzolakis (CBr)

Present: Catherine Bates (CB), Teresa Grant (TG), Katherine Smith (KS), Giacomo Belloli (GB), John Gilmore (JG), Ian Sansom (IS), Michael Watkinson (WM), Thomasin Bailey (TB), Andrew Thompson (AT).

Apologies: Avrina Joslin Thambi

New appointments:

Chair: Katherine Smith

Secretary: Thomasin Bailey

1. The minutes of the previous session were discussed. One item of interest was the request for specific skills sessions for English PG students. **CB** reported that these sessions had gone ahead under the direction of Emma Francis, and that it would be a good idea to repeat similar sessions this year. **TB** and **AT** added that a humanities specific program is now being developed by Emma Smith and the RSSP, and that ideas for specific training requirements should also be shared with her.
2. **MW** raised the issue that there was disquiet among the MA in Writing cohort regarding the Research Methods module. MW reported that many students felt that the content of these sessions is not relevant to them, and that they felt their time could be better employed on a creative writing module. **CB** replied that this issue had been raised in previous years and that Rochelle Sibley had designed modules tailored for creative writing students. MW confirmed that this ‘Reflective Writing’ session, aimed specifically at MA in Writing students, had indeed taken place and had been considered beneficial amongst the students. However, MW stated that dissatisfaction was still prevalent. **CBr** explained that a Research Methods module (or another similar course which could be designated as ‘training’) was a requirement that went beyond the department and university. CBr stated that all postgraduate courses were obliged to provide some element of training. **IS** stated that it was the opinion of many that a creative writing student could not improve without the skills covered in in the Research Methods module. He suggested that next year he should offer an introduction to MA in Writing students to explain to them how the module was relevant to their studies. In the meantime IS will address the current cohort to explain the relevance of the module. IS and MW will arrange a meeting with Rochelle Sibley to discuss this matter further.

**Action: IS to address the creative writing cohort to explain the benefits of the research methods module in the near future and at the beginning of the next academic year. MW and IS to meet with Rochelle Sibley to explore the matter further.**

1. **MW** reported that there was a general feeling amongst students on his course that initial communication to PGTs had been poor. MW stated that times and dates appearing in the handbook and on the website over the summer had changed closer to the start of term. This had caused confusion and inconvenience especially for part-time students. **CB** stressed the need for all students to read their Warwick emails. MW allowed that failure to read emails was part of the problem, but it by no means covered the whole issue. **IS** and **TG** explained that times and timetables were altered after students had indicated their module choices and that timetables could not be finalised until September for this reason. TG suggested that changes, and the fact that there would be changes, should be flagged up more clearly on the site and in email communications. *(At this point CB left for another meeting)* IS will request that Cheryl Cave add the caveat THIS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE to the handbooks regarding timetables and schedules. TG added that if part-time students with work commitments made Cheryl aware of these, she would make every effort to ensure that their timetable remained unchanged. **TB** and **GB** added to this discussion, that the PGTs and PGRs of their acquaintance had all reported an excellent level of communication and assistance from the English Department and Cheryl Cave throughout the application process and the early part of term.

**Action: IS to request that Cheryl Cave add a warning that timetables and schedules are subject to change until module choices are fixed, and a notice to invite part-time students to let her know of any fixed work commitments.**

1. **AOB – Dates for subsequent meetings**. **KS** suggested that there should be an additional meeting after the PG Symposium for reflection on the year. **TG** suggested that one of the four meetings be moved to a date after the symposium rather than adding another, unless there were sufficient items raised on the agenda to necessitate a fifth meeting. JG agreed that a reflective meeting would be beneficial. CBr agreed that unless an excess of business was raised there would be four meetings and that one would be held after the PG Symposium. All present agreed that the next meeting would be on 19.02.14 at 15.15. Other dates would be fixed later, but 30th April and 4th June were suggested as provisional dates.

**The PG Symposium**. **KS** suggested that this should be organised as early as possible to create the most successful event possible. **CBr** suggested that KS put out a call for the organising committee. However CBr stated that the organising committee must be made aware that no fixed plans can be made until finances are agreed upon. At this stage it is unclear as to whether the department can provide the same level of funding that was provided last year.

**The Website**. **KS** noted that the new MA students aren’t yet listed on the website. Also, that PhD students need to be notified as to how they should create their profiles for the site. **CBr** to communicate with Cheryl Cave on this point.

**Action: CBr will communicate with Cheryl Cave about updates to the website. KS to put out a call for a PG Symposium organising committee with the limitation that no decisions can be made until financial considerations are fixed.**

CBr thanked everyone for their attendance.