

# PGSSLC Minutes

## Summer Term, Meeting 1

Thursday 25th May 2023

**Chair:** Grace Rhyne

**Minutes:** Ruth Walbank

**In attendance:** Ross Forman (Director of Graduate Studies), Michael Meeuwis (Convenor MA in English Literature), Dan Katz (Convenor MA in Critical and Cultural Theory), Sarah Akhtaruzzaman (Subject Librarian), Charlotte Pearce (Widening Participation Officer), Paulo de Medeiros (Convenor MA in World Literature), Tess Grant (Convenor MA in English and Drama), Kimberley Richardson (World Literature Student Rep), Chris Foley (English MA Student Rep), Nate Cope (English and Drama Student Rep), and Kishan Katira (Critical and Cultural Theory Student Rep), Grace Rhyne (PGR Rep), Ruth Walbank (PGR Rep)

### 1. Minutes from previous meeting

Outstanding action points from the previous meeting were raised:

#### a. Online feedback form

It was agreed at the previous meeting that GR and TG would meet to set up an online feedback form for students to submit ideas/concerns on the PGSSLC webpage. Due to workload in the previous term, this has been delayed.

*Action point: GR & TG to set up a meeting to finalise the online feedback form before the end of Term 3*

#### b. Meeting between student reps and subject librarian

It was agreed at the previous meeting that RW would set up a meeting with SA and the other student reps. However, email communications have taken place of this meeting instead.

### 2. PG Symposium debrief

CF & RW gave a debrief on the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual postgraduate symposium, held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 2023. The organisers noted general success in using the hybrid format to reach a wider audience and the implementation of a virtual Q&A platform (Sli.do). Accessibility accommodations of content warnings, using BSL jazz hands instead of clapping, and pronoun stickers were welcome and received positive feedback. Opening registration to groups outside of Warwick also increased the event reach, with 164 registered attendees.

Suggestions for future symposia included needing at least three organisers to facilitate the hybrid format, asking for some additional catering equipment for a larger event, and encouraging the chairs to flag the accessibility adaptations at the start and end of the panel to encourage audience engagement (e.g., a reminder about the BSL jazz hands before the audience begins clapping).

*Action points:*

- *Send out an email to panellists with the Sli.do questions that were archived (RW)*
- *Write to the department administrators office to flag the catering equipment issues for future events (RW)*
- *Circulate the PG symposium report to the next Research Committee and Department meetings (RW & CF)*

### **3. MA essays**

#### **a. Essay deadlines**

TG's paper raised that MA students are struggling with essay deadlines from term 1 modules, many deadlines falling on the same day early in term 2. The result is causing late submissions and excessive stress for students. One idea was that the core module essay deadlines were to be handed in earlier over the Autumn term break. This proposal came from the previous TALC meeting to gain student feedback.

MA reps (KK, CF, NC, & KR) all considered that the staggering of essay deadlines was a good idea, with the question of how best to stagger the deadlines being a debated point.

RF highlighted that not every MA course has a core module, and this would need to be taken into consideration. Concerns were also raised that pushing essay deadlines further back into term 2 would affect seminar attendance.

*Action point: TG to meet with PGT reps (KK, CF, NC, & KR) to collate feedback ahead of the next TALC meeting (GR to facilitate)*

#### **b. Essay feedback**

KK raised student concerns about not receiving essay feedback from term 2 submissions.

TG and RF communicated that because of the strike action, late essay submissions from term one causing a backlog, second markers also being delayed due to strike action, and it being difficult to mark essays without having the full batch, the essay feedback has been delayed.

They also highlighted that there is a forthcoming discussion in TALC about the first and second marker system in the hopes of speeding up this process.

*Action point: PGT reps (KK, CF, NC, & KR) to feedback this information to wider student body.*

#### **4. Feedback from recent meetings**

RW has represented the PGSSLC in several other committees and raised some key points from each meeting.

##### **a. Board of Graduate Studies**

There will be upcoming guidance on academic integrity and AI in the near future, with a particular focus on taught courses. The board is also developing a strategy for the next ten years of PGR research, and if there is anything our PGSSLC would like to feedback, please send it to RW. There was also a report on unconscious bias in PGR submissions that is being taken to the EDI working group. The next board meeting is in a few weeks, so please forward any feedback/points to RW.

##### **b. TALC**

Papers were raised about the relationship between essay word counts and time spent on essays, alongside wider concerns about workloads for MA students. This topic is being taken to the next departmental meeting, and we can forward any opportunities for student feedback via PGSSLC. There were also questions raised about reasonable adjustments for exams and alternative modes of assessment. However, as there is presently only one MA module that has an exam, the issue was tabled to a course convenor level rather than department policy.

RF raised a need for general discussion on modes of assessment, not just the length of essays. GR suggested that this be part of the discussion on MA essay deadlines (Action point 3a).

##### **c. Department meeting: Decolonising the Curriculum**

The extraordinary department meeting was met with support for decolonising the curriculum, with a desire to balance diversity in the curriculum with academic debate. The group suggested moving towards creating a statement of intent and some kind of online co-creation space for staff/students to facilitate these discussions.

##### **d. ITLR**

RW and CF attending the internal teaching and learning review panel and recounted some of the core issues raised by students ahead of the report. The central concerns were around a lacking sense of PG community and communication between students/the department. Examples given included the lack of a dedicated workspace for PGTs and a minimal sense of introduction to the department through the induction process. These issues are galvanised for international students who often miss welcome week while traveling to the UK and must adjust to a new education system alongside the institution and course. Suggested strategies included a work-in progress group for PGRs, coffee morning for all PG students, a yearlong research methods module for PGTs.

RF asked for some of these suggestions to be submitted to TALC and noted that some of the community issues are linked to the assessment pressures foregrounded in agenda item 3a.

DK highlighted that these issues extend to UG and staff groups, and that the pressures of staff workload are adding to this.

*Action point: Send a list of suggested actions for building PG community first to PGSSLC and then to TALC (RW).*

The following agenda items are moved to the next PGSSLC meeting:

5. Support for International Students (Grace Rhyne)
  - a. Induction
  - b. Additional Seminar
  
6. Student Engagement (Grace Rhyne)
  - a. Cultural Holidays
  - b. Lunchtime Socials
  - c. Other Events
  
7. Any other business