

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting #2, 2022

20 June 2022

For general publication

Present: Rhiain Powell (Chair), Phiet Le (Secretary), Prof. Daniel Zizzo, Prof. KK Tang, A/Prof. Heiko Gerlach, Mr. Joe Symons, Georgia Frawley (UQES), Hannah Lester (UQ PPES), Isobel Kayrooz (UQ WIES), Smriti Girish Nair, Albert Kitt Hermo

- 1. Apologies:** A/Prof. Marco Faravelli, Benjamin Stephens, Austin Smidt, William Splatt, Tian Behenna, Michael Carroll, Megha Thakkar, Adele-Greedy Vogel, Jarrod Richards, Arita Puriso, Guangyu Lyu

- 2. Confirmation of the minutes from the previous meeting:**

Yes

- 3. Business arising from the previous meeting:**

- Online program planner – this was raised by few members, along with the feedback that the SSLC received from one of its members, Michael Carroll (as he works at UQ Student Relations Network Call Centre), that his team has “anecdotally found that some students are unsure about which courses they are meant to take when commencing their degrees, which has resulted in some first-year students taking general elective courses or courses with pre-requisites in their first semester”. Responding to this feedback, Mr. Joe Symons has suggested the online program planner called ‘Starting at UQ’. Rhiain raised this point up again in this meeting, and she confirmed that the online program planner is definitely helpful for new students. She wished that UQ had something like that when she started her Master’s degree.
- Courses being delivered both modes (i.e., online and in person) simultaneously – in the meeting, Prof. Daniel Zizzo commented that from Semester 2 onwards, all courses at UQ will be delivered this way. The School of Economics is committed to this, and it will continue with this in Semester 1, 2023 (even if UQ discontinues to deliver courses in both modes simultaneously next year; this has not been confirmed by UQ yet as there currently is a process of appointing a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic).
 - If economics courses being delivered both modes simultaneously, there will be a tutor/teaching assistant (TA) attending the lecture online to answer any questions that students might have, and the lecturer will attend the lecture in person. However, this method is only applied to lectures that range from medium to large sizes; lectures that are small in sizes will delivered in person only. Furthermore, Prof. KK Tang commented that the decision of appointing a tutor/TA is up to the Course Coordinators. Some Course Coordinators might completely be comfortable of not having a tutor/TA to help them deliver the courses in both modes simultaneously.

- b. In addition to this, Prof. Daniel Zizzo, Prof. KK Tang and Mr. Joe Symons all confirmed that the Master of International Economics and Finance will have all its courses to be delivered in hybrid mode in the long-term.

4. Business arising from this meeting:

- i) Phiet and Rhiain received anonymous feedback from a student that commented about his/her experience in taking ECON3510 (International Trade Theory & Policy). He/she commented that “there are 2 tutors who struggle to explain concepts and tutorial solutions provided by the lecturer that are really ill-explained. For example, the tutorial solutions for a highly mathematical question only got 1-2 lines of answers (which do not show steps) and this makes it very difficult for students to follow. Furthermore, the lecturer has 0 consultation hours throughout the semester and has no interaction with students. In his lectures, he pretty much reads everything from the slides, and the content from the lectures do not match the content from the tutorials”. He/she hoped “something is done about this course because all students had to teach themselves throughout the semester, which is a hard task for a 3rd year course”.
 - a. Hannah has taken this course in the past, and she supported the feedback that Phiet and Rhiain received from an anonymous student. She had a similar experience to this student, and commented that there was no communication between the lecturer and the students. She checked on her Blackboard, and she confirmed that there was 0 consultation hours from the lecturer in the semester that she took this course. Furthermore, Hannah said that it was quite unfair for a lot of students (including herself) that “the difference in getting a GPA of 5 or a GPA of 7 for the course depends on 3 MCQs on the final exam paper”. She agreed that students had to do a lot of self-studies.
 - b. In hearing this feedback from the anonymous student and Hannah, Prof. Daniel Zizzo, Prof. KK Tang and Mr. Joe Symons are all shocked and in quite disbelief. Prof. Daniel Zizzo commented that "it is an expectation that any lecturer at the School of Economics to have at least 1 hour of consultation each week during the semester”. Therefore, by not having any consultation hours during the semester, this is a very serious issue, and he said that the School of Economics will look further into this issue (and will have an appropriate course of action to fix this problem so that it does not occur in the future anymore).
 - c. Mr. Joe Symons commented that there are the check-in surveys that students can do/provide feedback to the lecturer half-way through the semester. However, Prof. KK Tang said that he does not see those surveys anymore. He commented that the University might have forfeited them (due to those surveys are being monitored by an external party, and they were quite expensive to maintain).
- ii) Regarding Blackboard and ECP, Smriti said that two courses that she did, ECON7350 (Applied Econometrics for Macroeconomics and Finance) and

ECON7430 (Competition Policy and Regulation), she had to do a lot of self-studies (meaning, there were a lot of maths involved and not enough annotations to explain to students why the lecturers solved the problems/questions the way they did). As a postgraduate student, Smriti said it is quite a lot for her to self-study (as she has work and other commitments outside of university). She is hoping to have a clearer course/assessment guideline at the beginning of the semester, so she knows/understands better of what she needs to put in to get the grades she wants.

- a. Responding to this feedback from Smriti, Prof. Daniel Zizzo said that the School of Economics is working with all the Course Coordinators to have a much clearer/better ECP/Blackboard for all economics courses. He suggested to have access and edit the template of the ECP so that there is a sentence/section that says “submit feedback” (or “if you have any feedback, please send it to this email address”).
- b. Rhian supported this suggestion from Prof. Daniel Zizzo. Prof. KK Tang further commented that Blackboard is being monitored by the Course Coordinators themselves, and that students interacting more with Blackboard than ECP. Therefore, it will be much easier to do this on Blackboard than ECP.

iii) Support for Disabled Students:

- a. This item was raised by Prof. Daniel Zizzo when he had a conversation with A/Prof. Paul Harpur from UQ Law School; he leads a lot of initiatives for disabled students both at UQ and Australia wide.
- b. A/Prof. Paul Harpur had a couple of thoughts:
 - Depending on the budget and legal viewpoint (i.e., getting the approval from UQ), the School of Economics can allocate job/internship placements for disabled students. In responding to this, Mr. Joe Symons said that the School of Economics had done something like this for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students in the past. However, this has not been for quite a while now. If needed, the School of Economics will do this again (but for disabled students).
 - The University regularly has a call for submission of a new Student-Staff Partnership (SSP) projects to find ways to allow disabled students to have a voice at UQ. In responding to this, Prof. Daniel Zizzo was thinking if the SSLC can have more disabled students’ representation in the Committee. Phiet and Rhian supported this idea from Prof. Daniel Zizzo, and they said they will heavily push this in the next recruitment cycle when they are recruiting new members for next year.

iv) Drop-in sessions:

- a. Both Phiet and Rhian apologised that last semester they were quite busy with their schedules that they have not had a drop-in session yet. They are thinking of organizing one next semester (as the earliest time possible).
- b. Prof. Daniel Zizzo suggested that for the drop-in sessions, the SSLC should have a particular theme (e.g., support for disabled students,

support for international students, course improvement, internship/job placement, etc.). He thinks that by having a particular theme, the SSLC might encourage more students to come than just to have a general drop-in session where students do not know what to say (and therefore, they might be more hesitant to come).

- c. Both Phiet and Rhiain thought that this is a brilliant idea, and they have asked for help from lecturers/course coordinators and staff who attended the School of Economics Meeting at the end of Semester 1 on whether they have any particular in mind that they want the SSLC to pass on to students. They hoped that the SSLC will generate a lot of great themes/ideas for its drop-in sessions.
 - d. Hannah commented that UQ PPES has something similar to this called the 'Common Room' (where UQ PPES members can come and hangout/chat with the executive members about anything). She invited if the SSLC wants to utilize this, we are more than welcomed to do so. Rhiain took on this offer, and thanked Hannah.
 - e. Prof. KK Tang suggested to have students to come to campus for our drop-in sessions (in order to increase student engagement on campus). He wanted the SSLC to ask the students about their in-person experience during our drop-in sessions.
- v) Mixer events:
- a. Prof. Daniel Zizzo asked about the mixer events (as the SSLC did one in Semester 2, 2021). He was wondering if we are going to do one this year. Both Phiet and Rhiain apologized that due to their busy schedules, they were not able to have one in Semester 1, 2022. However, they will look into doing it again in Semester 2, 2022.
 - b. Prof. Daniel Zizzo suggested that for the next mixer event(s), it would be great if international students and domestic students could interact with each other. To this point, both Phiet and Rhiain hoped the same thing. However, from their past experience, the ones who usually attended the mixer events were international students that are new on campus. They said that the mixer events are opened to all students (both new and current students, and both domestic and international students). They will look further into this way, and will find ways on how to encourage more domestic students to come.
- vi) Both Phiet and Rhiain provided an update that the SSLC has been invited to host a shared Market Day Stall with the BEL Faculty during O-Week in Semester 2, 2022. From their past experience, by having a shared Market Day Stall, the SSLC will be able to increase awareness amongst students.
- vii) Rhiain asked the SSLC members if anyone has taken a course over the summer semester. Responding to Rhiain's question, Hannah said that she did ECON2200 over the summer. Overall, she thought the course run pretty well (i.e., no problems at all). The group assessment was a little bit difficult because the course was run over the summer, and many students were on vacations (and this caused communication between her and the group members a little bit harder). But this issue did not affect much of her experience in taking a summer semester course.