

STUDENT-STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Meeting #4, 2022

3 November 2022

For general publication

Present: Rhian Powell (Chair), Phiet Le (Secretary), Prof. Daniel Zizzo, Prof. KK Tang, A/Prof. Heiko Gerlach, Mr. Joe Symons, Smriti Girish Nair, Tian Behenna, Michael Carroll, Benjamin Stephens, William Splatt, Austin Smidt, Sophia Psaros (UQES), Olivia Uy, Samuel Weir.

1. Apologies: A/Prof. Marco Faravelli, Adele Greedy-Vogel, Jarrod Richards, Arita Puriso, Guangyu Lyu, Téa Van Den Brenk (UQ PPES), Eliza Madden (UQ WIES).

2. Confirmation of the minutes from the previous meeting:

Yes

3. Business arising from the previous meeting:

From the last meeting (before this one), Prof. KK Tang was unable to provide any updates on the feedback that the SSLC received about ECON3510 (due to the Course Coordinator was on leave of absence). As such, Prof. KK Tang provided the members with some updates in this meeting (discussed below).

4. Business arising from this meeting:

- i) The SSLC welcomed:
 - SSLC Chair for 2023 – Olivia Uy
 - SSLC Secretary for 2023 – Samuel Weir
 - UQES President for 2023 – Sophia Psaros
 - UQ PPES President for 2023 – Téa Van Den Brenk
 - UQ WIES President for 2023 – Eliza Madden
- ii) Rhian provided the Committee with some updates about the recruitment process for the roles of Chair and Secretary.
 - The SSLC received 14 applications overall – around 43% of them were female, 50% of them were from a cultural and/or linguistic diverse background, 1 applicant was the first person in his/her family to attend university, and 1 applicant had a disability or chronic illness.
 - Shortlisted down to 7 candidates for an interview, and ultimately came down 2 candidates who successfully got the roles.
- iii) Updates on ECON3510:
 - About no consultation hours being posted on BB, Prof. KK Tang said that the Course Coordinator had informed students throughout the semester that they could organise a consultation session with him by sending him an email.
 - About the comment that the tutorial solutions were not detailed enough, the Course Coordinator came back saying

that the solutions showed sufficient steps for students to understand. He expected that students should be able to figure out the problems by themselves with the steps being given in each week's tutorial solutions.

- Regarding to the comment that there were only 4 assessments in a semester, and that each assessment only had a couple of questions (this would cause the students unable to achieve a high mark in an assessment if they got one question wrong, and if they did not do well in one assessment, it would be quite difficult for them to get the grade that they would hope for at the end of the semester), the Course Coordinator said that he would look to add more questions in future assessments in order to reduce the weight of each question.
- Prof. Daniel Zizzo commented that there will be a new lecturer/course coordinator for ECON3510 next semester. Whenever there is a new lecturer/course coordinator for a course, the standard procedure is that the new lecturer/course coordinator will check the ECP and see if the assessments look reasonable or not. If the assessments being used in the course previously do not look reasonable, then he/she will make some adjustments.

iv) Updates about the School Review:

- Prof. KK Tang said that this is the second time that the School of Economics did the School Review with the SSLC. This time, as UQ wants to embrace the 'Indigenisation of Curriculum', the School of Economics wants to focus on this area so that it can align its goals with UQ's goals.
- By expanding and diversifying the ways that courses/programs being delivered/offered, it will create more flexibility for students to choose. In the past (i.e., pre COVID-19), the School of Economics only offered in person classes. However, starting from Semester 2, 2022, the School of Economics has begun to start offering parallel teaching mode so that students who are interstate or internationally based can still attend classes.
- The School of Economics is also looking to offer shorter programs (e.g., professional certificates and/or micro-credential courses) to accommodate the needs of people who are working full time and wanting to upgrade their skills in order to perform well on their jobs. There has been a suggestion to create/offer a new program between the School of Economics and the School of Behavioural Science and Psychology. This is still at the initial phase; nothing has been confirmed about this yet.
- To give an overview of why the School of Economics has to do the School Review, Prof. Daniel Zizzo said that every faculties/schools within UQ have to do a formal review every 7 years to plan out for the next 7 years. This can be considered

as a “higher picture” overview (meaning, it is on top of the course review that is being conducted every 5 years). The members who will be sitting on the panel to judge the effectiveness of the School Review will consist of a lot of high-level, external academic staff (i.e., staff not from UQ like Academic Provost from UC Berkeley). As such, it is extremely important to involve the SSLC members next year to provide students’ perspectives (as there will be a lot of areas under review that need students’ opinions). Olivia and Samuel as the new Chair and Secretary for 2023 will be given more information by the School of Economics on which areas they want to the SSLC to be involved in the School Review closer to the date.

v) Rhian raised the point about incorporating basic/introductory writing courses either at the UG or PG level.

- As Rhian is a tutor for one of the PG Economics courses, she has received a lot of questions from her students on how to write an essay/assignment (e.g., what to write for in the introduction/conclusion paragraph of an essay?). She was surprised by these types of questions as she would have expected that students at the PG level should have been taught (or should have had a lot of experience) in how to write an academic essay/assignment. A lot of her consultation sessions she had to coach students on how to paraphrase sentences. And when Rhian marked the essays/assignments, some of the essays/assignments that the students produced were not up to the writing standards being expected at the PG level. As such, she is wondering if there are any basic/introductory writing courses being introduced/implemented either at the UG or PG level so that students can take to improve their writing skills.
- To add onto this point, Samuel commented that a lot of his courses from his PPE degree put a lot of focus on quantitative (but not so much on qualitative) stuff. As such, he agreed with Rhian that the School of Economics can do something a little bit more at the UG level to train students on how to write and do referencing properly.
- Prof. KK Tang commented that UQ library has a lot of resources/services that teach students on how to write an essay/assignment at the academic level. However, most students do not use these resources/services at all (or if they do, it is probably too late as deadlines for essays/assignments are approaching near).
- About this comment, William said that the only course that he had to write a lot in his economics degree was ECON2030 (where a lot of the assessments were essays). He was surprised that for ECON2040 did not have much writing

assessments in it (in other words, it had a lot of maths/quantitative stuff for a policy course).

- Austin further commented that for the Bachelor of Advanced Finance and Economics (Honours) degree, the courses that he had to write a lot were ECON2011, ECON2030 and ECON3440. He said that ECON3020 now has more writing assessments, and so do ECON3350 and ECON6300 (but ECON6300 is for Honours students only). Austin further said that first year courses can incorporate more writing assessments (like ECON1010 and ECON1020).
- To comment on Austin's point, Prof. KK Tang said that at the UG level, ECON1010 and ECON1020 now has a lot of writing assessments (e.g., 70% of the assessments in ECON1020 are writing assessments). Furthermore, he said that the University is trying to allocate funds to faculties/schools to launch new courses. The School of Economics has put in a proposal, and hopefully, the proposal will be accepted so that it can introduce and offer a new course to students.
- Prof. Daniel Zizzo said that there will be a review next year on how to incorporate assessments to existing courses to students on how to write. Mr. John Raiti will oversee this, and as such, the SSLC members are encouraged to give any feedback that they receive regarding this topic to him.
- Olivia was part of the Peer Writing Mentor Program last semester. She was mentor, and she was being paired with a couple of students to coach/help them with how to write an essay/assignment. She commented that not many students were aware of this program (and as such, not many came to those sessions). Therefore, it would be great if the faculties, schools, and student societies could advertise this program more so that students know about it and take advantage of it.

vi) Both Phiet and Rhiain noticed that there weren't that many incentives to encourage students to submit feedback through the form on the SSLC website. As such, they suggested that whenever a student submits feedback, they will have the opportunity to enter a draw for a \$50 gift card.

- Prof. Daniel Zizzo said that the School of Economics is happy to give out to the winning student a \$50 gift card so that the SSLC can collect more feedback through its website. However, he suggested that the committee should have/set out some guidelines (i.e., terms and conditions) on how students will win that gift card. This can be an incentive for Olivia and Samuel to work on in 2023 as the Chair and Secretary of the SSLC.

vii) Olivia received feedback from her friend about ECON2030 on how the assignments are being marked. According to her friend, assessments should let students to explore, do research and find relevant data.

However, they instead regurgitated things being given to them in lecture notes so that they can meet what the lecturer wanted (meaning, the model answers being given for assessments in this course were quite narrow, and students were expected to follow closely to earn high marks. Furthermore, students were not being given a marking criterion for each of their assessments, and hence, they just had to assume what the lecturer (i.e., Ian MacKenzie) wanted. Overall, students were “left in dark”, according to Olivia’s friend.

- To back up this point, Samuel also faced a similar problem to Olivia’s friend when he took the course. He said that the answers to the questions were both rigid and vague. Even though the course was good, and the lecturer and tutors were helpful, it was that the expectations of the assessments should be clearer. In his opinion, the first assessment was for students to figure out how to answer the questions the way the lecturer wanted. From the second assessment onwards, then students would have already grasped the idea of what the lecturer is looking for in students’ work.
- William tutored ECON2030 at King’s College (a residential college within UQ), and he agreed the expectations/standards for each of the assessments were not clear. However, he said that the course is meant to equip students with critical thinking skills. Therefore, by giving a marking criterion, then students might not think critically and just do the bare minimum to meet the expectations to get the grades they want.
- Prof. Daniel Zizzo said that ECON2030 can be incorporated in the course review next year, and as such, he encouraged the SSLC members to engage their peers to collect feedback/suggestions to provide to the staff during the course review.

viii) As Olivia and Samuel have been appointed to become Chair and Secretary of the SSLC in 2023, Prof. Daniel Zizzo raised the point that the School of Economics is interested in increasing the engagement between domestic and international students. However, it has been proven to be quite difficult (with the COVID-19 pandemic has made the task becoming more challenging for the School of Economics to achieve this goal). As such, it would be great if everyone in the SSLC next year can look for ways on how students can engage with each other and have a deep/positive experience while they are on the St Lucia campus.

ix) Prof. KK Tang provided an update that starting in January 2023, A/Prof. Ian MacKenzie will be replacing him as the Director of Teaching & Learning. As such, he will be attending all of the SSLC meetings next year. It is suggested that the new Chair and Secretary should think on how to raise the comment that they received about

ECON2030 to A/Prof. Ian MacKenzie (as he is also the lecturer of that course).

- x) Both Rhian and Phiet gave their final words as the current Chair and Secretary of the SSLC. It has been their pleasure to work with everyone (both staff and student members), lead and serve this committee for the past 2 years (through the COVID time). They wished Olivia and Samuel all the best of luck in leading and serving the SSLC next year.

5. Action to do before the next meeting:

None

6. Next meeting:

Semester 1, 2023 (TBA by the new Chair and Secretary)