

Student-Staff Liaison Committee Minutes Meeting #4, 2024

Date 13 November 2024

Attendees

- Prof Daniel Zizzo
- Joe Symons
- John Raiti
- Jeffrey Kline
- Lachlan Armstrong
- Abbey Croughan
- Frederique Bracoud
- Francisco Garcia
- Serena Huang
- Varen Arya
- Daniel (PPE)
- Dominique Leong

Apologies

- Ian MacKenzie
- Margaret Hayes
- Ziqi Zhang
- Hannah Stevens
- Albert Kim
- Felipe Florit
- Trish Le
- Nikolas Stamatou
- Harsh Amit Mehta
- Lana Friesen
- Poorvi Malik
- William Duffy
- Sam Weir

Acknowledgement of Country

Yes.

Confirmation of Prior Meeting Minutes

Confirmed by: Varen

Business Arising from Prior Minutes/Meetings

4.1 PPES3101 Course Content and Delivery Update

- No further comments.

Items for Discussion

4.2 Recap of the Year

Lachlan: A recap of the year, there were significant connections with first-year students through first-year festivities, Market Day, tutor feedback, and course feedback. In the second semester, we engaged more with students through student-based drop-in sessions. We hope that Dom and Nishay can continue to develop this.

4.3 Recap of SSLC x UQES Post-Grad Panel using BEL Student Club and Society Grant

- The event was held on October 2nd, 2024, consisting of a panel discussion, Q&A session, and open networking.

- Approximately 35 students attended, including male and female students, domestic and international students, and a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students.
- The panel consisted of four individuals—three honours students and one PhD student.

Lachlan: The event was very successful. We had many student questions about pursuing a PhD and research opportunities. The panel went overtime, which was a good sign. Feedback indicated that even students not initially interested in research benefited from hearing from the PhD student with prior industry experience.

4.4 Overview of the Recruitment Process for Chair and Secretary Roles for 2025

- Applications were received from a diverse range of academic backgrounds and demographics.
- All candidates were shortlisted for an interview, leading to the selection of Dominique Leong as 2025 Chair and Nishay Bhikha as 2025 Secretary.

Lachlan: We received applications from various backgrounds, though only five applicants in total. While fewer than expected, the candidates were of high quality, which was the most important aspect.

4.5 Welcome New Chair and Secretary for 2025

Lachlan: Dominique Leong (Chair) and Nishay Bhikha (Secretary) were elected. Both were a part of the committee which we believe will be beneficial for them to hit the ground running with a smooth transition. They will oversee member recruitment over the holiday period and at the start of the next semester.

4.6 ECON3350 – Applied Econometrics for Macroeconomics and Finance

Course Content/Design

- Lectures for ECON2050 should focus more on applied econometrics rather than matrix algebra, as the current emphasis does not provide sufficient real-world application.
- 69% of students enrolled in ECON2050 come from a BAFE background, with limited exposure to matrix algebra, making lectures difficult to follow and leading to lower attendance.

Lachlan: Students are struggling with the course, particularly given the strong mathematical focus and minimal preparation from the required pre-requisites.

Francisco: I studied ECON3350 in 2022 and taught in 2023 and 2024. Tutorials and assignments focus on applied econometrics, however lectures are heavily focused on theoretical econometrics.

Francisco: Many BAFE third-year students have only completed ECON2050, which does not provide enough preparation. The course structure works well for maths students but not for BAFE students, who make up the majority.

Francisco: We need to add more examples, make it more applied so they can learn how to use and apply the models, have more applications in lectures and spend less time breaking down derivations.

Francisco: Real-world applications would help. For example, analyzing Apple stock data would be useful. I have raised this with Eric, who noted that applications are in tutorials.

Frederique: Would ECON1050 not cover this?

Francisco: ECON1050 provides some foundation, and more so in MATH1050, but not enough. ECON3350 is core for BAFE students, however ECON3330 which focuses more so on regression and matrix topics is not a part of the core BAFE course list.

Jeff: The course assumes students can handle the material, but it is still new. I started basic and gradually increased difficulty, but this may be overwhelming. About 80% of students adapt, but a portion struggle.

Frederique: Where does ECON3350 fit in the BAFE structure?

Francisco: Second-year students often take ECON3350 before ECON2050, meaning they lack background knowledge. In 2023, 66 out of 329 students in ECON3350 were second-year students with no prior macroeconomics courses. This is a problem.

Professor Zizzo: This needs to be reviewed with the course coordinator. Issues with course architecture require a broader discussion. SECATs suggest most students are managing, but improvements can still be made.

Joe: Study plans should enforce prerequisites to ensure students have the necessary background.

4.7 ECON6010 – Microeconomics A

Course Issues

- Pre-work and course materials were insufficient, leaving students unprepared for lectures.
- Lecturer struggled to solve all tutorial exercises without referring to solutions.

Francisco: The course is challenging but important for honours preparation, providing a good buildup. However, explanations during lectures were not always smooth. It felt as though time was spent trying to find the appropriate pathway with questions needing to be rerun once the solutions were viewed.

Jeff: One aspect is that there are different ways to solve questions, and some tutorial questions are quite advanced, accordingly a methodology change is sometimes required. I slowed things down to give students time to solve questions rather than following a specific method. Some students may also be struggling given the lack of experience from online learning.

Professor Zizzo: The honours program underwent review, with planned revisions for the course, and further course content revisions ahead. I am delighted to have Jeff in the role.

Jeff: My teaching style focuses on giving students the chance to problem solve in different ways, and I will continue to refine my approach to improve clarity while maintaining problem-solving flexibility.

4.8 BEcon – Economics of Strategy & Behaviour Major

Course List and Structure

- Students expressed concerns regarding the limited number of relevant courses available for this major.

Lachlan: A friend in the Engineering/Economics program noted that the strategy and behaviour major lacks suitable course options. Some courses do not align with the major's focus, feeling mismatched.

Jeff: It sounds like more elective options may help in addressing this.

Professor Zizzo: The major offers flexibility, but students may be selecting courses that do not strongly reflect the major's intent. We can review this with the program leader for 2025, though structural constraints may limit changes. It would be good to check the number of students enrolled in the major and those courses.

Joe: We could look into how many students complete both level 2 and level 3 courses within this major, however many students leave their major undeclared or change without updating records which impacts accuracy.

Frederique: Looking at ECON2060 may not be useful since it is offered in the summer semester and students often take the course to boost the number of subjects they have completed.

Joe: Many BEcon students are in dual-degree programs with limited electives. While this allows more students to study economics, it restricts their major course choices.

Lachlan: The fact that there is no economics major option for dual students may not be a big issue for some students however others may prefer a particular listed major.

Professor Zizzo: We could consider making a behavioural economics course compulsory in 2025.

Jeff: That would make sense given it is the strategy and behavioural economics major.

Professor Zizzo: Agreed, we could have 6 units rather than 4 as compulsory, though it is more a pedagogical matter of what is available to be done.

4.9 Any feedback or suggestions from members regarding the running of the committee?

Professor Zizzo: There is more progress that could be made in terms of broad engagement, as well as engagement with different constituents like master's vs undergrad, domestic vs international.

Meeting adjourned at 11:47am.