SOAS - FLSS
Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee
Thursday 10th December, 2009 - 11.00 in Room 4421
MINUTES

Members:
Dr N Poole Chair
Dr R. Bajpai Politics
Dr P. Dos Santos Economics
Dr M. Jennings Development Studies*
Mr P. Kohler The School of Law
Dr. D. Tobin Defims

In Attendance:
Mr N. Page Head of Registry
Ms S. Spells Deputy Teaching and Research Support
Mrs W. Muoria-Sal Committee Secretary

* = apologies

24. Minutes:
The minutes of the last meeting held 29th October 2009 were APPROVED.

25. Matters Arising:
25.1 FLTC members NOTED the Action points from the 29th October minutes. It was NOTED that item 4.3.7 regarding Learning Outcome guidelines, still needed to be followed up.

25.2 Report back from Departments on the paper circulated by The School's Registrar on 'Work Falling Over Agreed Word Limit':

25.2.1 It was NOTED that the overall reaction in the Economics Department was a positive one but that there must be room for academic discretion. The Politics Department recognised the problems that this paper was trying to address but did not want to lose academic discretion. The Defims wanted to remove the point h) about unintentional overruns, which would lead to confusion; and there might be difficulties in counting words. They suggested a pro-rata reduction in marks. NP (Head of Registry) clarified that the reduction was % points. Overall there needed to be greater clarity about the penalty, more precision in general.

On the whole Development Studies agreed that it was good to have a policy. There was some concern over the proposed penalties. It was also pointed out that the Department had already agreed that there was an absolute word limit of 3000 words for essays; staff needed to apply this consistently so that all students were treated fairly.

25.2.2 Comments from The School of Law were not available as the Department had not yet had their meeting where a range of views were expected. Therefore, comments would be NOTED at the next FLTC in January.

Subsequently, the School of Law met later in December and no comments were put forward, with regards to the word limit paper. The FLTC Law representative felt that the School of Law were happy with the current proposal.
25.2.3 The ADLT pointed out that the School recognised the difficulty in applying the word limit rule to certain courses such as quantitative subjects, music etc., also with the nature of extensive Law footnotes. Although the principle was endorsed it was however recommended that a proviso to defend academic judgement should be added.

25.2.4 **ACTION:** AD to report Departmental feedback to LTQC.

25.3 ‘Revising assessment guidelines and marking rules’:

25.3.1 With regards to revision of assessment guidelines paper - it was generally felt that 75% was good as a top end. The issues raised were that, depending on other Departments guidelines, there could be confusion when marking across other Faculties. It was also **NOTED** that it was important that the marks given over the course of the year reflected on the degree classification. Paper presented by Development Studies **NOTED** on the whole that they were in agreement of making better use of the full grades. However, it was felt that the criteria for marking needed to remain based in the Department, in order to maintain external coherence with the discipline. It was not felt that giving marks in the 90s was necessary, just because they were there – and there was a question as to why it was needed to have 30 points to distinguish between different levels of distinction, with other classes/grades which only needed 10?

25.3.1 Was this fair?

In order to maintain internal and external coherence, it was felt that the Development Studies exam board was the place to consider what qualified as 70s, 80s.

26. **Marking Rules:**

26.1 Marking Rules paper prepared by Faculty Administrator Mrs Carolyn Heath was **CONSIDERED** and **NOTED** as very useful codification of existing procedures.

26.2 **ACTION:** FLTC **AGREED** that this paper would be circulated to FLSS staff.

27. **UG Programme Reviews for 2008-09**

27.1 FLTC **CONSIDERED** the Undergraduate Annual Reviews:

27.2 • **BA Development Studies and another subject:**

27.2.1 It was **NOTED** that the overview was well written. However, points raised by the Head of Registry on section 3.1 which stated that action had been taken to eliminate overlap in course content between the core courses. This action was welcome, but the Committee noted that two of the core courses (Introduction to economic analysis and Comparative growth in Asia and Africa) were Economics courses, not Development Studies courses. Their content therefore lay outside the direct control of the Department of Development Studies. The Committee recorded its opinion that this was an undesirable feature in terms of syllabus design, and asked that this view be communicated to the Head of Department of Development Studies, and that he be invited to respond.’

27.2.2 **ACTION:** It was also **NOTED** that the second paragraph in section 5.1 was not clear. Therefore APR to be returned for clarification.

27.2.3 FLTC members agreed that the Student Evaluation of Course form should not
include questions regarding the Faculty Office. The questions were not specific enough.

27.2.4 Subsequently, LTU have revised the Faculty Office question on the SEC form and this would be reviewed again.

27.3 - BSc Economics/Development Economics /BA Economics and …..

27.3.1 It was NOTED that there was a lot of teething problems at the start of the restructuring of the undergraduate degree; however the performance of the students who had undergone the new structure and are now second year students had improved considerably.

27.3.2 The commendation from the Visiting Examiner with regards to the administration of the Economics Exam Board was NOTED and conveyed to the administrator.

27.3.3 It was NOTED that Economics Department now have a dedicated Library support. The Economics representative also reported that the Department would be appointing an academic member responsible for liaising with the Economics Library Teaching Support.

27.3.4 ACTION: Section 3.1 second paragraph for both BA Economics and another subject and BSc Economics/Development Economics with regards to IFCELS was incorrect – the Head of Registry reported that IFCELS do not admit onto the UG degree and that grades were not revised accordingly. Therefore the APR paper would be returned for correction.

27.4 - Graduate Diploma (Economics)

27.4.1 The timetabling issues were NOTED.

27.4.2 ACTION: It was NOTED that section 5.1 of the Graduate Diploma also needed further Clarification and would therefore be returned.

27.5 - Politics

27.5.1 The increase of student numbers was NOTED – this has caused overcrowding in classes and was an issue of Health and Safety concerns.

27.5.2 ACTION: AD to NOTE on his report to the LTQC.

27.6 - LLB and BA Law

27.6.1 FLTC members commended the Visiting Examiner’s comments in section 5.1 and suggestions were made that this could be good for marketing purposes.

27.6.2 In section 5.2 – the Visiting Examiner requested that the procedure of sending all the scripts to the Visiting Examiner without course work should be addressed. The Head of Registry explained that the School procedure was not to send all the scripts, but to send samples from each classification eg first class, all border-lines and all fails with sample course work.

27.6.3 ACTION: WM to convey School procedures to the Chair of The School of Law Exam Board.
27.6.4 **ACTION:** It was also **NOTED** that a report would be prepared by the AD on all the APR’s for LTQC.

28. **New Undergraduate Course Proposals:**
28.1 The following new undergraduate course proposals were **CONSIDERED**.

**Development Studies:**

28.2
- Violence, Conflict and Development:
  28.2.1 **ACTION:** FLTC were happy to **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** to Faculty Board.

28.3
- Governance and Development:
  28.3.1 FLTC were alerted of the possible disciplinary overlap with some of the Politics postgraduate courses.
  28.3.2 **ACTION:** FLTC were happy to **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** to Faculty Board in principle awaiting comments from the Politics Department regarding whether the overlap was substantial or not.

Subsequently, confirmations from Politics Department was received that there was no concern of overlapping. Therefore FLTC to recommend Faculty Board to Approve.

28.4
- Land, Natural Resources, Development and Environmental Change
  28.4.1 **ACTION:** FLTC were happy to **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** to Faculty Board.
  28.4.2 FLTC also **NOTED** comment from the Deputy Teaching and Research Support that "...it would be helpful when preparing Reading lists for new courses that the essential items for multiple copies were clearly identified, otherwise, only single copies would be ordered."
  28.4.3 **ACTION:** Email to be circulated by wm to all staff in FLSS.

29. **Amendments to Defims Course Proposals:**
29.1 FLTC **CONSIDERED** Appendix J, K, L and N, O, P, Q section (b) examining methods essay word length which was amended to 4,000 in order to standardise PG essay word length across the Department.

29.1.1 Defims - Banking and Capital Markets - 15PFMC056
29.1.2 Defims - Finance in the Global Markets – 15PFMC057
29.1.3 Defims - Financial Law - 15PFMC058
29.1.4 Defims - Legal Aspects of Corporate Finance - 15PFMC059
29.1.5 Defims - Legal Aspects of International Finance – 15PFMC060
29.1.6 Defims - Regulation of International Capital Markets – 15PFMC061
29.1.7 Defims - Research Methods in Management – 15PFMC062

29.1.8 Appendix M - Undergraduate Defims - International Marketing 1: The Environment 15103 0010 – amendment to the exam length from 3hours to 2hours was **NOTED**.

29.1.9 **Change of Course Title:**
FLTC **NOTED** (Appendix R) the change of Defims course title Management in Japan I (B) to Management in Japan I, as it was no longer being taught at Birkbeck.
29.1.10 **ACTION:** FLTC Recommend Faculty Board to NOTE.

30. **MA Specialisms:**

30.1 FLTC CONSIDERED Appendix S – where additional course units were listed which should have been included in the MA Specialisms list. However, FLTC noted that one of the courses 15PLAH019 International Law and Global Orders was a half unit course and queried whether there was another half unit course available to make it whole.

**ACTION:** Subject to The School of Law providing this information - FLTC happy to RECOMMEND APPROVAL to Faculty Board.

Subsequently this information was supplied whereby it was noted that there were other half unit courses available to support 15PLAH019 International Law and Global Orders which made it a whole.

31. **MSc Regulations compiled by External System:**

31.1 FLTC CONSIDERED the MSc regulations compiled by External Systems. (Appendix T, U and V).

31.2 It was NOTED that some of the regulations lacked a degree of transparency eg 3.3, 4, 5 and 9 there was no indication on what grounds this maybe exercised.

31.3 **ACTION:** Observations to be conveyed to Greg Wood in Defims.

32. **Any Other Business**

32.1 The Head of Registry raised the issue of Master students receiving feedback on their dissertation after the marks had been awarded.

32.2 He explained that over the years numerous students had requested or appealed to receive feedback for various reasons such as wishing to go on to further studies.

32.3 FLTC NOTED that Arts and Humanities already do this for their Master students and that FLSS should consider what indications this would mean within Departments.

32.4 **ACTION:** The members were sympathetic to the principle and agreed that this should be considered at Departmental level and reported back to the next FLTC in January. Also the committee secretary to get copy of the Arts and Humanities feedback form to circulate.

33. Next FLTC was scheduled for Thursday 28th January, 2010 in room 116 at 9am.