**Student Voice Committee Minutes**

**SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, LANGUAGE & LINGUISTICS**

**Monday 16th November 2020**

**Time and location:** 3pm, via group Zoom call.

**Staff Attendees: James Procter (Head of School); Kate Errington (Facilitator); Adam Mearns (DELT); James Cummings (Stage 1 Senior Tutor); Heike Pichler (Language/ Linguistics Subject Head); Helen Freshwater (Literature Subject Head)**

**Student Attendees: Anna Howarth (Chair); Joseph Caddick (School Rep); Meghan Capper (Secretary); Liv Blackham (EngSoc); Amy Langdown (EDI Rep); Hattie Metcalfe (Student Blogger); Leanna Thomson (Student Blogger)**

**Student Course Reps: Sophie Wilson; Bethany Richardson; Lucy Rimmer; Grace Cook; Tom Moorcroft**

**Apologies: Martha Young-Scholten; Raine Thompson (Café Leader)**

**1. Matters Arising**

* No Matters Arising.

**2. Student Reports**

**2.1 Careers Blog and Social Media Update**

* Bloggers are currently conducting interviews with different members of the Career Service
* Student Bloggers collaborated on a blog post about the Find your Future Event.
* Planning a ‘pets of SELLL’ segment on SELLL Instagram, providing relief for students during lockdown by sharing photos of pets.
* Plan to share students’ creative writing on the SELLL Instagram.
* Created S3P tutorials for Canvas Enrichment Week which will be shared on Instagram.
* Bloggers want to encourage the peer mentoring service as a way of getting first year students to reach out for support.

**2.2 Café Update**

* Anna updated on regular Instagram features including Coffee Tuesday and Thursday Recommendations.
* The Café Leaders are planning a social quiz event for SELLL students on **Tuesday 19th November.**

**2.3 English Society Update**

* Lots of welfare social events being organised by the society’s Welfare Officer
* The first book club was hosted a couple of weeks ago and was very successful, the society have another lined up in the coming weeks.
* The team have socials planned for every week up until Christmas, however the Christmas social event is subject to changing COVID context.
* Planning collaborations with Royal Literary Fellows in preparation for mid-module assessments. Kate Errington offered School Office support with advertising.
* Society is applying for the ‘Earn your stars’ inclusivity bronze award this week. This will officially label the society as inclusive, rewarding them with the first in three tiers of awards.
* Joint socials being planned with film society for literary adaptations
* Suggestion that members of the committee could help with some of the activities planned by the society as they are taking on a big workload.

**2.4 EDI Update**

* James Harriman-Smith will be emailing asking for help preparing recruitment materials that promote the diversity among the student body.
* Discussion over recent news items regarding Durham misconduct, where local students reported bullying. Suggested that the EDI rep, in partnership with EDI committee and Athena Swan, investigate whether this is an issue for SELLL students.

**3. Staff Reports**

**3.1 Plans for enrichment week**

* Enrichment week materials are available in Canvas. There are 2 courses students should access - university wide and SELLL specific.
* Enrichment Week material is released every day and includes a mix of synchronous and asynchronous content.

**3.2 Managing module workload**

* Some students have reported feeling like the workload is heavier than usual, due to shorter semester and the move to online learning.
* Adam Mearns reassured that lecturers are not trying to condense 12 weeks of material into an 8-week period. However, university regulations state that every 20-credit module must continue to provide 200 hours of teaching/learning activity across the full semester – this covers scheduled classes, structured guided learning [including asynchronous material], directed research and reading, independent study, preparation/completion of assessments, etc.
* Contact hours have reduced due to COVID, and for many students this has meant a relative lack of structure compared with a normal semester. Adam advised that students consider scheduling their own study time over the week, around their academic timetable. **Reps have been asked to circulate this advice**.
* Reassurance that you do not have to understand everything in the seminar reading - the class is part of the process of understanding, hence students should be reassured they do not have to know everything by the deadline of the seminar.
* Leanna noted that online lectures can feel more draining than in person, and that this feeling can be increased where lecturers are providing additional online learning materials in order to compensate for the current lack of in-person teaching.
* Similarly, Bethany reported that the feeling of a heavier than normal workload is particularly apparent where modules have additional suggested/recommended reading or other work alongside, or as part of, seminar preparation.
* Grace reported that some students have felt the pressures more, as they are unable to work away from their bedrooms. The Library is very full and it is therefore difficult to book a space. Asked whether the Percy Building could be used: the Percy Building is open, and has available study space, however this is not available for booking. If this space becomes popular, the School Office will need to consider how to monitor number of students in the building. Full details of study spaces available across the campus (buildings, room capacities, opening hours, which spaces are bookable, etc) can be found here: <https://roomfinder.ncl.ac.uk/studyspaces.php>
* Multiple reports that students are feeling isolated and struggling to stay motivated in the independent research modules due to the relative lack of contact time compared with a taught module. Helen noted that a major element of these modules is the independence, and encouraged students to reach out to their supervisors.
* **Committee strongly advocated for the encouragement of research group workshops** to be organised by supervisors for their dissertation group - helps to motivate the students by holding themselves accountable for a set period of research time. It also will make them feel less alone in the process. Helen Freshwater is going to raise this at the Literature Subject Group staff meeting. Adam Mearns will highlight this to the Language/Linguistics Subject Group.
* Student Leaders to consider how they can contribute to these plans, suggesting a virtual study hall space, without supervisors. Or promoting timetabling tools or planners.
* Struggle to manage the different online programmes being used during this time. Because there are a lot of tutorials already out there (e.g. at <https://videoconferencing.ncl.ac.uk>), course reps encouraged to collate information on specific problems and contact School Office or Personal Tutors for signposting.

**3.3 Wi-Fi and remote learning**

* Adam highlighted the Library Loans and Student IT schemes (<https://enquire.ncl.ac.uk/student-it-support>).
* Can apply for small grants through the latter, but there are eligibility criteria.
* If anyone is having computer problems, even if off campus, they can seek support from the University IT Service Desk, as a first measure to help identify the precise nature of the problem: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/itservice/support/itservicedesk>
* In private accommodation, broadband/Wi-Fi problems cannot necessarily be solved by the university, however students are encouraged to find out what sort of problems they are having with broadband/Wi-Fi and remote learning and report back to staff.
* Grace raised concerns around students returning home for Christmas and how this might clash with timetabled PiP sessions. Adam reassured that this will be taken into account by lecturers when the government plans are released and finalised.
* Student reps offered possible solutions for improving seminar engagement including:
  + staff to save and distribute the comments from the Zoom chat
  + use google docs as an additional platform for engagement, to supplement scheduled Zoom classes
* This year PECS can be submitted in relation to computer problems. If a student is experiencing any significant IT issues that will detriment their submissions, please consider submitting a PEC. If on deadline day anyone is unable to submit due to an IT error please screenshot the issue and send it to [english@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:english@ncl.ac.uk) **before the deadline**.

**3.5 Using the NCL App for SVC**

* Student rep details are on the app so students can go through the app instead of finding their email addresses online.
* Suggestion that we should set up polls for students to help our discussions in the meetings
* Suggestion that reps should have access to setting up the polls, to be monitored by staff members to ensure appropriate tone

**4. Standing Agenda Items**

**4.1 Library Update**

* Encouraged to circulate [the link to most recent newsletter](https://sway.office.com/yWSgNnf3W4BbpEbD?ref=Link)

**4.2 Careers Update**

* No Updates

**4.3 NUIT Update**

* No Updates

**5. Any other Business**

* Thank you to all Student Reps for volunteering to sit on the Committee for 2020-21.

**The next SVC Meeting is scheduled for 7th December 2020 at 3pm-4pm**