Department of Economics
Student Focus Meeting
Wednesday 1st of March 2017 –UG Hub, Horton Building

Attendees:
Arnaud Chevalier (AC) - Head of Department (Chair)
Hui-Fai-Shing (HFS) - UG Academic Co-ordinator
Shareen Holmer (SH) - Department Manager
Andrea Ferrara (AF) - Minute taker

Student representatives:
James Ansorg – 1st year representative (SR)
Olaoluwa Olupona - 1st year representative (SR)
Antonio Almeida- 2nd Year representative (SR)
Shyam Mistry 2nd year representative (SR)
Adam Batchelor 3rd year representative (SR)
Allen George 3rd year representative (SR)
Emma Johannesson 3rd year representative (SR)
Fareeha Khan 3rd year representative (SR)
Rimshah Khan- 3rd year representative (SR)
Latif, Aneesah 3rd year representative (SR)

Purpose of the Meeting: Arnaud Chevalier
a) The experience at Royal Holloway
b) What you like
c) What you don’t like
d) Suggestions for improvement
Feedback from Year 1

(A C) Asked to the Year 1 students if they are happy about teaching: Topics of lectures, level of the lectures, the expectation, any kind of teaching related.

(S R) We really enjoyed some of them like: (EC1103) was fun and nice to work on different skills and research learned skills like: (Analysing data).

(HFS) With the EC1103, do you think we provide you with enough support on that?

(S R) We don't feel like that is a mountain of support especially when we make decisions and stuff. We think that whenever we have essays and then the seminars tend to try to make sure if there is any issues, like you don't know how to do this and stuff. We've had problems with answering the questions, just initially from face value we didn't know how to answer.

The department takes the essay from previous years and upload it, then we know exactly what they expect us to do. How it is going to be structured and how a university essay looks like it is quite different from what some people know from school.

Could be helpful that not only upload the essay but also the specific categories where it is outlined: What was good about this essay, where improvements can be made, so students know what exactly is expected from them because when you come as a 1st year you often don't know the essay and how to write.

EC1103 principles and EC1102 QM1 the principles is very theory based and I think in both courses the amount of knowledge people bring at the beginning of the 1st term is very different and for some students it might be boring and for some very challenging especially with QM1.

We think that the outlines on both ends double it in lectures because it is either too boring or so tricky they'd rather go through the books themselves. So give some more support with those who really struggle with QM1 could be good.

(A C) In terms of topic covered you're happy? You want to have more things covered? Or less?

It’s very good actually, you see number 1 is very interesting, QM1 is not very interesting and the lecturers and seminar leaders tell us it's good that we learn it because we will use it.

You have to, as you can imagine the change, the difference coming from Sixth Form College towards university sometimes students can be surprised that the level of independence you need to have and overcome. Whenever you are going through seminar questions it can be hard to go through every single question.

Feedback from Year 2
(A C) Second years!

(S R) Some of the lectures and I know the students have articulated particularly in life, I know one that had problems with listening to the lectures, if you could get the lecturers to speak allot more clearly that would make it allot more engaging and that would benefit on the students, I didn't have that problem but that is what I heard from other students, so it just makes it allot more engaging, it allows students to really enjoy Economics, that is one thing I can really touch up on.

(A C) Is there technical issues? Or the person speaks too low?

(S R) First thing: Whatever they say throughout the lectures is really confusing, they usually speak too low, they don't speak in a really clear voice, people at the front can hear them and also there is not a lot of space at the front, so if you could get the lecturers to speak more clearly it would be better because students would be able to keep on track with of what they are learning.

Second thing: Option models, term 1 between industrial growth and economic growth I didn't really like either of them if that makes sense, especially with industrial growth I was going to put economic but I thought that it would be quite a challenge. With industrial growth I think it's a bit outdated, if you could re-vamp the module or change it would be a lot more interesting. Financial markets, they are absolutely brilliant, It is a very applicable module to working well whereas industrial growth I admire the theory behind the economics but industrial growth in my opinion I don't see any applicable relevance in it. So if we could change or re-vamp the module or change it to something interesting, that will work well. We don't know if you do this but maybe could you do the modules in different departments? Is it possible?

(H F S) If you are doing EMC Economics on your second year in a different department.

(S R) So I could pick on the second year accountancy

(H F S) The third year you'd have you would have to pick the third year module but there might be issues.

(A C) It is always difficult to find a department that has space to take you. On paper it is possible but in practice it may be quite challenging.

(S R) The ability to choose modules in different departments that'll be good, I personally think more variety on modules in the second year or just to change the modules. Some students complain that there is not any, well for economic growth they don't publish the slides obviously you can write it down, but sometimes slides make it clearer for all lecturers to publish and would be very useful for students. I've got a friend who is struggling with the economic growth courses he attends all the lectures and writes it all down but he is struggling because there is no slides published, it is all written down on the board which is good but nowadays in this technology 21st century’s slides would be more useful.

(H F S) I think that is the exact opposite of what the lecturers view. It’s nice how you stand up for your verbal skills, taking note skills and writing skills etc. It’s when you go into job world that would prepare you.

(S R) Yes, I am just saying when something has to come it has to come. Also not talking about academics but about social life, I think it is the Economics Department thing that you do but the Economics Society I don't know if you guys support them or are they independent.

Feedback from Year 3
We are done with second years, third years. Well of course now you can comment on everything that is not covered with second years and first years.

We do like the fact that the lectures are recorded and are compulsory but sometimes especially with trains running late. Sometimes come late to a lecture or miss the first half, recordings are very helpful. Especially when you go back over before a mid-term. Something it is written on the slides and you have your notes, but sometimes you miss stuff that for e.g.: Dr Vinay may explain something in more depth but you may have not got down so recordings are very beneficial. The only one that doesn’t do it in my course is industrial. Financial does it and welfare does it.

With courses is there any modules you would like to add is there anything you wish to do but you didn't get the chance?

Maybe some more support in using Excel because I have heard economics has allot of especially in graduate jobs there is allot of emphasis having to use Excel and yes the college does have some help it's like a self-learning pack. So I would like some guidance.

So the U1103 has a bit more Excel in it is that correct?

That was like in one of our essay tasks so we had to go through a data shield. But we did not have to do that until our third year.

Regarding the number of hours, so do we have enough lectures, enough seminars? Do you want to have more or less? Or do we have it about right?

Right, just right.

They are short.

So we do not work you hard enough?

We just have 2 hours lectures and 1 hour seminars per week right? It is not a lot to be honest. Maybe they could do for e.g. financial like we had for QM2, QM1 like extra help hours once a week maybe that for a module to change.

Feedback from Year 1, 2 and 3

The last thing on my list is the environment of the department.
(S R) We have had an issue with the UG hub because it was not clear enough if this was a room for talking or being quiet. Personally I think this place should have computers just for some people who forget their laptops.

(S R) we like the fact that this room and building is on 24 /7 because in the midterms I am here 2/3 in the morning just me and a couple of friends it is just a really good space but they turn the heating off in the evening which is a bummer.

(S R) I didn't know this room was 24/7 because it says you can't stay in the building overnight. I don't know if you do it, other departments do it, do students sometimes get access to hot water or a microwave if you want to bring food in?

(S H) We can't really do it in a department because it comes under your health and safety issues so it's unfortunately not possible.

(S R) Sometimes people from other departments come in here and obviously you want to study, they don't really care about.

(S H) Come and tell us because they shouldn't have access which means someone from economics is letting them in because only the Economics students and teachers and workers only have access.

(S H) How do you find the administration office, do you find them welcoming, open?

(S R) All: Yes very welcome

(A C) So that is it, so if you have any suggestions drop them down on Shareen or me, goodbye.
AC thanked all for attending the focus group.
Meeting closed.