

Commission Mixte (CM) Minutes, April 28 2025

Present: Prof. Simon Swift, Dr. Erzsi Kukorelly, Maria Peters, Holly Lavergne, Miranda Althaus, Vanessa Ordolli

Minutes taken by Holly Lavergne

1. Responses to Points from the Previous Meeting

The lack of medieval seminars at the MA level was relayed to the other professors, and the answer is that “Film Analysis” is so popular (with around twenty-five students per class) that it makes sense to prioritize these classes.

The lack of a TP in the BA3 module was also relayed. This problem has also been observed by the professors and is related to a lack of staff. Depending on student numbers moving forward, it might be possible to reduce the number of TPs in BA2 and compensate by adding TPs in BA3.

2. Feedback on the Long Night Against Procrastination

The event had a good ambiance and there were nice new and old activities. The Zotero workshop, in particular, was very informative. The AELLA felt that students came to mingle more than to work – this is not bad, but it is not the purpose of the event. There was the feeling that last year, more people came to the event for help with their questions, but this year, it was more of a social event. Few questions were asked to the teachers and writing lab monitors who were present, and it seemed like there were more English staff present than staff from other departments. The AELLA will contact the library to provide this feedback.

After discussing this feedback, one idea that arose is that this is a symptom of a larger need for social spaces at the faculty and university level. It is beneficial to have social events in university spaces where students can have these interactions.

3. Support for Staff and Students with Menstrual Pain

Menstrual pain can lead to pressure for staff and students to teach or attend class while in pain. In some countries, and in some institutions, this is recognised by official adjustments to employment practices. The document on this topic has now been drafted and is going to be sent out soon to the head of the Equality and Diversity Service of the University.

4. Teacher-Guided *Mémoire* Group

Last year, there was talk of setting up a teacher-guided *mémoire* group. In other faculties, there is a “*mémoire* research” class that is mandatory. The only equivalent for the English MA is the “Literary Research Methodologies” seminar, but it is not mandatory so many people do not get sufficient guidance for the *mémoire*.

The *Commission Mixte* decided that the English Department will book a room every two weeks, from 6-8pm, and put it in the Department Bulletin as a *Mémoire* Co-Working Group. This will be a time for MA students to work on their *mémoires* and discuss their struggles around the *mémoire* in a peer-mentoring space. During the first meeting of the semester, a staff member from both literature and linguistics will come and help respond to questions to begin the discussion space for students, who can continue to come as needed throughout the year to connect with fellow MA students.

It would also be beneficial to organize a day for students to present their *mémoire* topics and workshop them, giving MA students conference experience.

At the University of Lausanne, they have a compulsory “Critical Approaches” seminar for all MA students, where they learn about theoretical models in English Literature. It would be worth thinking about creating a similarly compulsory component for the MA in Geneva. It could be co-taught so that it would not require a full teaching load from any one person. It could be something doctoral assistants would be interested in doing since it puts MA-level teaching on their CV. It could, for example, be taught partially by professors and partially by non-professorial staff. It could be taught every two weeks across the year like the doctoral workshop, so that there would be approximately ten over the course of the year. Over the year, students would learn about five to eight critical approaches. It would need to be for credit and would require some sort of assessment. This would not be able to be put together immediately, but this idea could be developed over the next couple years. This would also require a change in the *plan d'études*.

#### 5. MA *Rentrée* Information Session

Our department lacks an MA *rentrée* information session. Many MA students feel lost because of the lack of a Welcome Session. The current Welcome Session primarily focuses on BA students.

It was agreed that it would be useful to have an MA information session at the start of the year, both for MA students who are new to the university and for MA students who have already studied at the university. At this meeting, information specific to the MA could be provided to help eliminate confusion among MA students beginning their degree.

#### 6. Peer Group for Students' Mental Well-Being

Last year, the first meeting about students' mental well-being took place after the end of teaching. It would be good to meet again this year after teaching has finished.

To create a Peer Support Group, a room will be booked – this will be the same room as for the *Mémoire* Co-Working Group (the room will be booked all semester). The meetings will take place two or three times per semester from 6-8pm. The day of the week will be chosen by the students in the *Commission Mixte*. This initiative will be organized by the English Department and not by the AELLA, although it would be useful to have an AELLA member come to each meeting to help facilitate discussions. This will be a space where students can learn from and help each other.

In future, it could also be useful to have a speaker from the *pôle santé* come speak to students.

#### 7. “Students Help Students” Web Page

The *Mémoire* Co-Working Group and the Peer Support Group can be added to this web page in the upcoming academic year.

#### 8. Lack of Career and Networking Events

Due to the decline in numbers in the faculty, there is going to be a concerted faculty-wide effort to promote our faculty and show students and their parents that a degree in the humanities is worthwhile. This may involve having alumni come back to the university to talk about what they have done with their degrees. It is important to encourage students to choose *lettres*, as well as to show students who have chosen *lettres* that there is somewhere to go afterwards.

Maria Peters pointed out that it is important to have career planning while students are still studying. Students need to think about their options for the future and take action while they are studying, such as by doing internships or reaching out to specific people. This is particularly important for students in *lettres* who want to pursue careers other than teaching.

This is well above the capacities of the English Department and should be implemented at the faculty level or even at the university level. The *pôle emploi* runs many useful workshops, so it is also important to promote these types of events within the department.

Prof. Simon Swift is going to talk to the dean, so he will also bring up these topics.

#### 9. English Department Podcast

In order for this podcast to work, it needs to be a conversation between staff and students – ideally two members of staff and two students. The next step is to send out an email to the BA and MA mailing lists. When this semester is over, Prof. Simon Swift and Dr. Erzsébet Kukorelly can draft an email to send to students, encouraging those that are interested to join the group. This podcast will include information that is useful for BA and MA students.

#### 10. Garden Party

The English Department's Garden Party will take place on June 13th. People will be needed to help prepare and set up the event, as well as to clean up afterwards. The AELLA can be reminded to see if there are any students who would like to help.