

Meeting of the CM of the English Department – Monday, March 2, 2020

All members present: Genoveva Puskas (GP), Erzsik Kukorelly (EK), Oran McKenzie (OM), Blerina Bajrami (BB), Tristan Clément (TC), Lorraine Devillard (LD), Megan Zeitz (MZ).

The president opens the meeting at 16:07

Feedback on points addressed in the last CM-meeting

Journée des collégiens:

- EK, MZ and BB found that it went well. GP finds problematic that there are only small spaces, where people are not really invited to wait in line. There should be more room, or another set up that invites more sharing. GP will bring the matter up to the décanat.
- EK found that this year's whole organization went well. The presence of the AELLA was welcome, and the flyers and games were appropriate. We received positive feedback during the day.
- Short observation from students: it would be good to have CER and assistant fluent in French. This is difficult to do as there are not enough assistants, but the students present can help well. It also remains a nice experience for the newly arrived assistants and represents an opportunity of opening the dialogue between assistants and students.
- LD suggests putting some short students accounts of their studies on the website, as was suggested a few years ago in the working team that had re-organized the Department's flyer. The AELLA will take care of the concern.

Filmclub:

- The time has changed to 6pm (the screening starting at 6:30pm).
- No real demand for changing the day emerged this year.
- In case there is a real demand of changing the weekday, it has to be decided by mid-March (of any year), as it requires a change of slot at the level of the faculty.

News from student's side:

The AELLA has led a survey to evaluate the modules that had been addressed as problematic. About 20% of the students of the department answered it (from both bachelor and master levels). The results will be attached to these minutes.

Comments on BA5 lecture:

- The number of hours spent outside class corresponds to the requirements. This is also the case on the ADEVEN-survey led last year.
- Despite being a wish from students, recording the class is not a possibility for this course as it would impede on its pedagogical aims. EK reminded that being able to follow and understand a high-intensity English is part of the course's training. The two different timeslots allow everyone to attend the class (in case some students work or have other commitments alongside their studies).
The clause of "Liberté académique" implies that each professor is allowed to choose his/her aims and methods.

- The failure and success rates also tend to support the feasibility of the course: the exam is either highly succeeded with quite high grades or strongly failed. The issue seems therefore to be at the level of personal work. Here again, students are encouraged to communicate among each other and with the teachers if they are facing difficulties.

BA7-module:

GP will transfer the results and questions to Prof. Madsen. She will also add the question addressed in the last CM-meeting about what happens if a student fails three times the seminar (given that no other seminar is offered).

MA3-module:

The question on the difference between “travail écrit noté” and “interrogation écrite notée” (on the plan d’études) was pointed out. It seems to be that of a graded paper or an in-class test. At the MA-level, most teachers rather ask for a graded paper. (We don’t know if any offers the possibility of an in-class test.)

Essay writing

The concern about the different expectations for essay writing between the different teachers has been raised again. Some students would like to have a clear list of guidelines.

Several aspects were discussed:

- Students who did not do the formal writing class can be oriented towards the book made available by Alexandre Fachard: *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers, MacMillan.
- The question of a list of prescriptions was raised. It is not an ideal solution, for different respects:
 - Some comments emerge afterwards (given the wide range of elements that come into the evaluation, it is complicated to anticipate all the different cases). Moreover, if these “prohibited” elements are well done, they can also be accepted.
 - Such a list might also not lead to the intended effect, as it can block the flow for some students. Proscribing something sometimes also tends to lead people to do exactly this.
 - Having only one way of doing things would represent a loss in all the potentialities of writing.
 - Trying to read the writing process through a real grid might not ease the process for students (as there are many aspects taken into account into the evaluation).

It was generally observed that:

- Guidelines cannot be given as a generality. Each student has different needs and so the advice needs be adapted. A discussion with the teaching staff is more relevant and fruitful. There is a real richness in having individual guidance through communication with the teaching staff.
- Even if different tastes or schools of essay writing, teaching staff recognizes a good essay, and agrees on it. If ideas are good and communicated in a way that they can

be understood, the essay usually passes. If this should not be the case, students are even more encouraged to communicate about it.

- The following elements form a common ground on the evaluation:
 - Clarity of prose, organization of ideas, quality of ideas, grounding in textual analysis
 - Having a correction and a spell-check
 - Fitting the formal aspects of the Style Sheet

Some students were concerned about the treatment of their opinions when they are unsupported by critical literature.

- EK and OM reminds that as long as there is textual grounding, there are no reasons for them to be discarded. This originality is even appropriate and welcome.
- Maybe part of the learning is to find the balance, where the freedom of writing is. There are some constraints: having a bibliography, analyzing texts, ..., but there is freedom in the choice of texts.
- There is a difference between ideas and opinions. To OM, opinions do not need to be in essays. Learning about the difference between them is precisely part of the skills to be learnt when studying literature.
- Within the classroom, teachers have to ensure that the opinions which are raised will not hurt others. Or at least said in a way that will not hurt. There is a responsibility towards the framework in class. This is not to say that opinions are not welcome, they should just be expressed in a respectful way.

Other general comments:

- The Powerpoint presentations are no obligation. It is a tool put into place by the teachers if they find it necessary, but there are no requirements on it.
- Having an MA brochure could be interesting, as there is nothing for MA-students, where BA-students have it. This point will be addressed at the AGM.
- Linguistics class: it is impossible to add classes at the moment (given the number of posts and the plans d'études).
- BA: the *complement d'études* is regulated on a case to case basis. The point being to answer to each student's needs. BA1 seems to be an entry-point.
- One section on writing and pedagogical matters could be added on the website. The idea will be presented at the AGM in order to see who would be ready to set it up.

The AELLA-committee was thanked for the work done. These questions are important and the teaching staff cares for them (the answer that they give might simply not be the one that students are expecting or have thought of).

News from staff's side:

The teaching staff has a planned meeting to discuss close-reading. The idea being to also think about the evaluation. The point is not to set a list of prescriptive rules, but to ensure a place of sharing around each teacher's practice.

What is to be presented at the AGM

This point was addressed and will appear in the AGM-minutes.

The president closes the meeting at 17:37.

LD/ gp / ek / om / bb / tc / mz.