

Commission mixte meeting minutes (8.03.2021)

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Minutes taken by Genoveva Puskas

1. Due to students completing their studies or pursuing them in another department, the CM will be short of two MA students and two BA students. Since the members are elected during the GM (held in March) it is important to anticipate recruiting new members. A member of the CER, Oran McKenzie, will also be leaving at the end of the academic year.

2. The AELLA conducted a survey before the February exam session and after it. Responses have been collected, anonymized and synthesized. The main points are:

I. before exams (approx. 25 answers)

(i) evaluation modalities

Students are not all happy with the communication of evaluation modalities. Complaints concern last minute changes in the modalities, which caused additional stress in the preparation of the exams.

(ii) discussing modalities

Most students were satisfied, but again, some students expressed their concern about the deadlines for attestations and graded papers, which were changed shortly before the end of the semester.

The members of the CM agree that the issue of the deadlines must be discussed. The teaching staff must also be reminded that changes (especially last minute changes) are really detrimental to the students.

(iii) concerns about the exam session

The concerns were mainly about the potential problems during oral exams; time allotted for exams and deadlines; psychological distress due to zoom exams and the feeling that teachers do not always take the students' situation into account; fear that the exceptional situation be gradually considered as 'normal'.

Related to stress, a student specifically mentioned the requirement to deposit hard copies within the deadline. The members of the CM note that producing hard copies appears to be no longer adequate, as everything is on-line, and students were not even allowed to come to the university buildings. Regarding the 'normalization', it is pointed out that teachers also suffer from the situation and are as eager as the students to go back to an in-person situation. Teachers also fear that they are not able to provide enough training for the students.

(iv) additional points

Included again remarks about deadlines and last-minute change in the modalities, but also a few positive comments about the teachers' supportive attitude.

II. after exams (approx. 9 answers)

(i) compliance with the modalities announced

Most students were satisfied with this.

(ii) adequate amount of flexibility

Answers are mixed. Some students feel that there was a lack of fairness, and complain about the lack of availability of teachers. Some had the impression that teachers were less ready to adapt their expectations and evaluation (fear of normalizing of the situation). An issue about withdrawal also arose. Other students found they had a satisfying degree of flexibility.

It is suggested that students get in touch with their teachers about withdrawals. However, as teachers don't get to see the on-line exam sign ups, they might be less aware of the students' requests and of the procedures. Since Susan Mesa is anyway collecting data about student sign ups, she can be the contact person for withdrawals as well, and students will be informed of this.

(iii) feeling after a third online session

Students who responded were rather unsatisfied. One issue concerned the fact that pre-recorded classes were too long (sometimes exceeding by 30 mn the regular 90 mn!). The question of isolation and stress have not been solved. But some positive comments include the appreciation that teachers have been accommodating and understanding.

Regarding the long recordings, it is again suggested that students communicate with their teachers.

(iv) additional points

Mention mainly general tiredness, demotivation, and a request for more flexibility.

It is decided that a summary of these points will also be brought to the teaching staff, with a list of reminders including

- deadlines (and especially an adaptation to more realistic deadlines) and coordination of possible extensions within modules; the CM members agree that it would be important to push for an extra week for attestations and graded paper deadlines.
- clear explanations of modalities, avoiding last minute changes
- taking even more into account potential problems during the exams
- making teachers aware of the difficulties for students to follow lectures, especially pre-recorded classes, which should really be kept to their regular length.

3. Discussion around a sensitive case of an MA student and his/her mémoire experience

The CM received a letter from a previous student complaining about the circumstances around the supervision of his/her MA mémoire. S/he underlines the fact that his/her supervisor did not provide enough guidance and feedback despite his/her repeated requests, and that it is at the defense that s/he discovered that his/her mémoire was deemed unsatisfactory. S/he then had to rewrite the mémoire completely before being able

to defend it successfully during the following session. In addition to being frustrating, the delay which resulted from the situation also made him/her lose a year in his/her future studies at the IUFE and occasioned financial as well as personal distress.

The teaching members of the CM recognize that there was indeed a problem of supervision, while the evaluation of the quality was adequate. It is decided that the instructor will write a letter of apology to the student, and that the head of the department will do so too, to express the student the fact that the problem is recognized by the department and that his/her case is being taken seriously.

4. Miscellaneous:

(i) feedback about "the function of student intermediary between the AELLA and the staff". The head of the department recognizes that there has been no headway on this front. The question will first be taken up during the next senior teaching staff meeting, and will then be discussed during the department meeting in September.

(ii) Format and differences in the department's 2020 Style Sheet version

It is now not quite clear what the students are expected to use. The Handbook has one (the latest) version of MLA, while the brochure has a previous one. As the stylesheet has to be consistent, the staff need to be consulted on the question. The issue will be raised first at the next senior teaching staff meeting, and will then be checked with the teachers and the teacher(s) responsible for the stylesheet.

(iii) Students are worried because for the last renewals, they seem not to have been informed that they were to send in a report. The head of the department notes that this is required only for the first renewal. However, the chain of information about these procedures needs to be updated. She will check with Susan Mesa.