SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE
11 March 2015
DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Prof Ian Colbeck (Chair), Dr Terry McGinity, Dr Michael Steinke, Dr Ralf Zwacka, Narmin Abbasova (MSc Molecular Medicine), Neha Chaudhary (MSc Biotechnology), George Johnson (MSc Molecular Medicine), Claire Rumsey (MSc Tropical Marine Biology), Lee Stansfield (MSc Molecular Medicine)

In attendance: Miss Nicola Andrews

Apologies: Dr Gavin Sandercock, Mrs Olivia Pink, Simona Asan (MSc Molecular Medicine), Oluwaseun Awonusi (MSc Biotechnology), Veronika Tsizin (MSc Environment and Resource Management), Amanda White (MSc Cardiac Rehabilitation)

MINUTES

26/14 The minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2014 were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

02/14 Annual Review of Courses (ARC) 2013/14

Miss Andrews confirmed that the Annual Review of Courses (ARC) for 2013/14 had been circulated to the Student Course Representatives and External Examiners for information.

08/14 Listen Again Facility in the PC Labs

Dr Steinke advised that he had spoken to Learning, Teaching and Technology (LTT) who confirmed that they were aware that the Listen Again Facility was not available in the PC Labs. LTT explained that they would address the issue, however it was problematic as the noise levels from the computers and staff moving around the PC Labs would affect the Listen Again facility.

10/14 MSc Tropical Marine Biology Facebook Page

Prof Colbeck advised that he had not pursued the issue of MSc Course Facebook pages as the Pro-Vice Chancellor was not keen for students to use Facebook. Dr Steinke reported that he had asked two students from the MSc Tropical Marine Biology current cohort to log onto the MSc Tropical Marine Biology Facebook page in order that the applicants could talk to them and ask any questions.

27/14 Postgraduate Mentor Scheme

It was planned to introduce a Postgraduate Mentor Scheme (for both PGT and PGR) which would enable students to ask questions about all Postgraduate Courses within the University.

11/14 Contact with students’ prior to the start of MSc Courses

Prof Colbeck had raised the issue of Academic Staff holding Skype conversations with applicants prior to their course; however it was not something that the University were keen to pursue.
BS934 Coursework Deadlines

Dr McGenity advised that no immediate action would be taken for the BS934 module; however the students’ comments would be built into the planning process for next academic year.

**Action:** TMcG

Minor Review Sheets for MSc Tropical Marine Biology Students

Dr Steinke confirmed that the deadlines would be spread more efficiently next academic year in order that students’ received feedback earlier in the autumn term.

**Action:** MS

BS707 Physiology Practical

Dr Steinke acknowledged that there had been a poor link between the BS707 (Methods in Tropical Marine Biology) physiology practical and the teaching associated to the practical. He advised that he would address the issue and revise it for next academic year.

**Action:** MS

Pre-Practical Tests for BS707 (Methods in Tropical Marine Biology) Practical

Pre-practical tests would be introduced for Dr Steinke’s BS707 (Methods in Tropical Marine Biology) practical session next academic year. Dr Steinke advised that he would ask other academic staff to do the same.

**Action:** MS

EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS

The External Examiner reports for MSc Biotechnology/Molecular Medicine, Cardiac Rehabilitation and Masters in Environmental Governance/MSc Environmental Resource Management were noted. The External Examiner for the MSc Biotechnology/Molecular Medicine courses commented that they would like more exams to be included in the course structure. The Student Course Representatives confirmed that they preferred coursework particularly as small pieces of coursework could be spread across the year, however it was suggested that an exam could be included for the optional modules.

STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS 2013/14

The Student Satisfaction Survey results for 2013/14 were noted. The Student Course Representatives were advised to contact Dr Greg Brooke, the School Library Officer if they were experiencing problems accessing Athens and Journals/Papers and Clare French in Cataloguing for technical issues. The Student Course Representatives were reminded that Dr McGenity had circulated some guidance on accessing journals etc. which had been placed on Moodle.

**Action:** Student Course Representatives
30/14 Dr McGenity enquired whether a breakdown was available for each MSc course. Prof Colbeck agreed to check and provide him with a copy if available.  

**Action: IC**

**PARTICIPATION IN STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY FOR 2014**

31/14 The Student Course Representatives were asked to encourage participation from their peers to complete the survey. A variety of prizes could be won for those students that completed the survey. 

**Action: Student Course Representatives**

**ITEMS FROM STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

**MSc Biotechnology**

32/14 Dr McGenity confirmed that the frequency of the assignments and close deadlines for BS934 (Gene Technology and Synthetic Biology) would be taken into account for next academic year. 

**Action: TMcG**

33/14 Miss Chaudhary raised that the BS983 Protein Technology Practical session had been extremely disorganised. She advised that the Practical Handbook was not well constructed and the assessment deadlines were incorrect. The students did not receive a practical handout and there were no laboratory demonstrators in the practical session. Miss Chaudhary commented that the DAI and SPF assignments were based on the practical session and the students’ had not received any data for the SPF assignment which was due to be submitted on 10th April. Dr McGenity noted the comments and he and Dr Zwacka agreed to speak to the Module Supervisor. 

**Action: TMcG, RZ**

**MSc Molecular Medicine**

34/14 The Student Course Representatives raised that they had found the Bio-Pharmaceutical seminar in the BS936 (Professional Skills and the Business of Molecular Medicine) module confusing. They commented that the guest speaker focused heavily on patenting and profit making and there was little information about the pharmaceutical industry. The students’ had also hoped that someone would facilitate a debate at the end of the seminar. Dr McGenity and Dr Zwacka noted the comments and agreed to address the issue for next academic year. 

**Action: TMcG, RZ**
MSc Tropical Marine Biology

35/14 Miss Rumsey commented that the MSc Tropical Marine Biology students had struggled with the way that R had been taught in BS708 (Professional Skills in Tropical Marine Biology). She explained that Dr Low-Decarie and Dr Dumbrell wanted the students to use different versions of R and had not spoken to each other about what they had already covered in the statistics lectures. Dr Steinke noted the comments and agreed to discuss the issue at the next Degree Course Team meeting.

Action: MS

36/14 The MSc Tropical Marine Biology students’ raised that the timetable did not take into account those students that commute to the campus and commented that the timetable often changed on a weekly basis. Dr Steinke explained that it was a full time course and staff did not have any influence on the timetable. He advised that students were expected to be reading, using the library and undertaking group work when lectures were not taking place.

37/14 Miss Rumsey advised that there was limited internet/wireless access on campus and very little space for group work. She explained that there was no space in the library for group work and the Lime house was often full. Dr Steinke reported that new space for Postgraduate students would be available within the Library in the future. In the meantime, he suggested that the students’ use empty teaching rooms and asked Miss Rumsey to produce a list of Seminar Rooms around the campus that students’ could use which could be circulated to all MSc students’ within the School.

Action: CR

38/14 Miss Rumsey advised that those students’ enrolled on the BS705 (Tropical Marine Resources) Indonesian Field Trip were unable to attend the seminar with the second year undergraduate students due to a practical session. As a result, they received a copy of the PowerPoint slides from the seminar and they were unable to ask any questions about the trip. Dr Steinke agreed to address the issue to ensure that it did not happen next academic year.

Action: MS

39/14 The MSc Tropical Marine Biology students’ raised that there was insufficient space on the M Drive to download files. It was suggested that the students’ temporarily place their downloaded files on the C Drive and delete the files afterwards. Dr Steinke agreed to liaise with Dr Antonio Marco who had specific instructions and would circulate them to the MSc Tropical Marine students’ for information.

Action: MS

40/14 Miss Rumsey advised that there was insufficient sea grass content in the lectures and the students’ would like to cover more seeds and sea grass. They also commented that there were no animal lectures in the course.
The MSc Tropical Marine Biology students were concerned about planning for the Research Project as they were receiving conflicting information which was confusing. Dr Steinke agreed to send an e-mail to the students to clarify the start date for the research work.

Action: MS

Miss Rumsey commented that the Coral Reef Lab was amazing and the MSc Tropical Marine Biology students would like to do more work in there. The students’ found the lecturers to be approachable and they liked the lectures as they were relevant in their field. The coursework deadlines had also improved in the Spring Term.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that a Summer Term meeting would take place in Week 33 providing the Student Course Representatives had items for discussion. The Student Course Representatives were asked to e-mail any items for discussion to the Postgraduate Taught Administrator by the end of Week 31.

Action: Student Course Representatives