SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES
8 March 2017

Present: Dr Julie Lloyd (Chair), Dr Gareth Jones, Dr Phil Reeves,
Dr Tom Cameron, Maxine Hendy (1st year BS), Georgia Peacock (1st year
Genetics), Ana-Maria Bichir (1st year MB), Sara Barreto (2nd year Genetics),
Jade Seguin (2nd year MB), Charlotte Neath (3rd year BS), Igor Pupko (3rd year
Genetics), Jessica Wright (3rd year MB)

Apologies: Dr Louise Beard, Emily Urban (2nd year BCH)

Absent: Andrew Spencer (1st year BCH), Mantile Tauraite (1st year BCH), Evelina Muliuolyte
(1st year BMS), Sarah-Louise Dudley (2nd year BS), Bhagyashree Thakore (2nd year
BS), Jane Baston (2nd year Genetics), Fudzi Mawufemor (2nd year BMS), Dilshara
Peries (2nd year BMS), Clementina Olaniyi (3rd year BCH), Jessica To (3rd year BMS)

In attendance: Miss Angela Chan, Ms Mel Wiltshire

Minutes
18/17 The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 March were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

6/16 It was agreed that teaching statistics in course groups would greatly improve BS141 and replacing
the powerpoint presentation style teaching with labs where students could work with the data would
be welcomed. It was also confirmed that the statistics teaching would be delivered earlier in the
module next year. When asked for feedback on resources, students praised the practice
spreadsheets they could work through in their own time and whilst some felt the maths video clips
were basic and repetitive, students still agreed overall that they were useful. For those who felt the
material was a repetition of ‘A’ level maths content, it was explained that many students did not have
an ‘A’ level in maths and it was therefore necessary to cover the basics. Tom Cameron reassured
those with more advanced maths knowledge that 2nd Year practicals would provide more challenging
opportunities to use their skills and offered to put up extra materials in the meantime for those that
requested it. He also requested feedback from reps and encouraged students to send any comments
by email if they were uncomfortable discussing them at the meeting.

15/16 Reminders by Module Supervisors had been actioned.

3/17 Julie Lloyd continued to invite suggestions from students on ways to adapt the curriculum and
encouraged reps to email her with their opinions and the opinions of their peers.

6/17 The results from the Student Assessment of Modules had not yet been sent out. This would be
addressed at the next meeting.

Action: JCL

10/17 BS141 Group Poster submissions had been clarified.

11/17 Format of BS222 lab sessions would be reviewed in preparation for 17/18.
12/17 Format of BS222 Moodle resources had been addressed. Students were advised to report any gaps in provision to the Module Supervisor and to refer the matter to Julie Lloyd if it was not resolved.

Library Facilities and Resources

19/17 Students were invited to comment on the library service. Plans for support from library staff to provide refresher skills training in lectures was currently being discussed with the School. Free access to other journals and papers was also discussed. Students were advised to ensure they were accessing journals by first logging in via the library homepage to ensure free access to journal subscriptions. This was especially important when accessing materials from home. Students were also reminded to check whether the library held a hardcopy of the journal, especially for papers published before 2000. Final year students looking for specific papers for their project were advised to ask their supervisors or contact the author of the papers (via ResearchGate or directly by email) if they were having difficulty obtaining them. Students were encouraged to use mainstream journals with peer-reviewed papers. If access was problematic, students were advised to check that the paper was from a reputable journal. It was also possible for the School to bid for new journals or change the current subscriptions if they felt the ones currently available were out dated.

Curriculum Review

20/17 Julie Lloyd drew the Committee’s attention to the Year structures and reminded 2nd Year Biomolecular students that there were module choice meetings scheduled for next week where staff would also be present to talk about their modules. The meetings for Ecology and Marine students and a final year project choice session were currently being arranged. 1st Year module choice meetings would be scheduled after the revision sessions and 1st year Marine students would have a module choice discussion during the Plymouth field trip. Julie Lloyd reminded students that there were opportunities to take modules outside their course structure as a special syllabus request and invited students to email her with any feedback regarding module options.

21/17 Jessica Wright (Final Year Marine Biology) suggested it would be beneficial to offer an introductory fisheries module in Year 2 as there was currently a lot of information covered in BS354. It was also felt that it would be useful to expand the fisheries content of BS307, although it was noted that this development would be dependent on having more staff.

22/17 Julie Lloyd reported that there would be a change in the Year 1 BMS structure next year. A new 15-credit Anatomy and Physiology module (BS161) would be introduced and students would now also take BS104 Microbiology to ensure that Year 2 modules would not need to include introductory content in this area.

First Year Business

23/17 Marine Biology students reported that they had not had any microscopy experience in preparation for the BS112 plankton practical unlike other students taking BS104 Microbiology. The group felt that an extra introductory session before the practical was necessary. Julie Lloyd reassured reps that the Module Supervisor was aware and that the incident had been noted.

24/17 BS104 students felt that the lectures were rushed and did not make use of the full 2 hour timetabled slot. Students also felt that lecture slides were not delivered in an organised way making it difficult to follow, take notes and digest the content. Julie Lloyd agreed to take this up with the Module Supervisor.

Action: JCL
Concerns were raised regarding the consistency of marking styles between GLAs. Tom Cameron acknowledged that GLA feedback could be variable but explained that this was an area that was already closely monitored and would continue to be looked into. He did however, take the opportunity to reassure students that GLAs were required to follow a marking scheme and that all marks were moderated by the Module Supervisor before the work was returned.

Students asked if past exam papers could be made available for practice. Julie Lloyd informed reps that there should be a sample paper available for every module on Moodle and asked them to inform the School if there were any that were not visible.

**Second Year Business**

Marine Biology students requested whether the late practical and last day of term deadline for BS241 could be moved earlier. Tom Cameron wondered whether the timing of this practical was determined by the time of year due to field work. He agreed to discuss it with the Module Supervisor.

**Action: TC**

Students gave some positive feedback on the new module BS231 Computational Data Analysis: R for Life Sciences. A request for extra practice exercises to be made available before the actual deadline was put forward. Julie Lloyd agreed to suggest this to the Module Supervisor.

**Action: JCL**

**Third Year Business**

Although instructions on how to complete the BS327 SPF had been provided, students felt they were not given any context to the assignment and found it difficult to complete the work. They also felt that the deadline for the SPF was set quite close to the final project deadline and worried that this was a highly weighted piece of work taking focus away from their projects. It was pointed out that this deadline had been extended from earlier in the term to accommodate students and that the change had been looked at closely to avoid clashes with other deadlines. However, the students' concerns were acknowledged and noted for future reference. A request to move the Issues Essay deadline from Week 18 to Week 17 was agreed however, when the work could be set depended on when teaching had finished.

**Action: JCL**

Complaints that FASER often crashed close to the deadline time were reported. The amount of usage around deadline times was most likely the cause and students were reminded not to leave uploading their work till the last minute. Problems with plagiarism alerts on previously uploaded versions of work was also raised. The School had not noticed this had been a problem and asked the 3rd Year Genetics rep to send details of instances where this had occurred.

**Action: IP**
31/17 Final Year Marine Biology project students were unhappy that it seemed that students doing fish projects had been allowed lab access during the Christmas vacation while those doing coral projects had not. After talking with the project supervisor, Tom Cameron clarified that the students allowed into the lab over the vacation were there just to feed the fish and gained no advantage from being in the lab. He also explained that that all coral projects were designed so that data collection should be finished before the vacation and that access to the lab should not have been necessary. The one instance of corals dying over the vacation would be investigated (for discussion at the next degree course team meeting) and would be taken into account in project marking.

**Action: TC**

32/17 Students reported that the PS489 lecturer claimed he was unaware there were students from the School taking the module and often referenced psychological theories that they were not familiar with, without expanding or providing background reading references. Also, despite having being asked regularly by the students, he had not made clear what was expected with regards to the exams. Julie Lloyd agreed to pass on this feedback and pursue these concerns with the Module Supervisor. In the meantime, she suggested students ask for and complete some examples of past exams papers or practice essays and ask the lecturer for feedback to provide insight into what was expected. Julie Lloyd also advised students to ensure their concerns were included in the SAMT for the module.

**Action: JCL**

**Next meeting**

33/17 Information regarding the date and time of a Summer term meeting would be confirmed in due course.