SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT STAFF LIAISON COMMITTEE
DRAFT MINUTES
20 November 2013

Present: Dr Julie Lloyd (Chair), Dr Gareth Jones, Dr Jo Barton, Prof Chris Reynolds, Dr Leanne Hepburn, Dr Matt Taylor, Ms Clare Birch, Liam Knapp-Bates (1st year BS), Liban Ahmed (1st year BCH), Shannon Kelly (1st year BMS), Abi Baty (2nd year BCH), Jimmy Read (2nd year GEN), Archit Kapil (2nd year BMS), Antonia Nathanail (2nd year Eco), Lubica Janovicova (3rd year BS), Alex Lathbridge (3rd year BCH), Maddison Pilcher (BMS), Rameez Subhan (3rd year Eco), Natalie James (3rd Year MFB)

Apologies: Dr David Suggett

In attendance: Mrs Olivia Pink, Miss Angela Chan

Minutes

01/13 The minutes of the last meeting held on 20 March were approved as a correct record.

Matters Arising

14/12 Julie Lloyd reported that a Moodle archive had been set up over the summer which would allow students to view resources from their previous years of study.

25/12 Julie Lloyd explained that the Biomedical Science degree had been restructured and the problems had been dealt with.

26/12 The suggestion of a study area was one that unfortunately the School would not have the resources to provide however the idea that forums and discussions could still be held virtually was put forward. The Marine Conservation Society was mentioned as a good example of a student-led initiative that could be replicated for other courses. Julie Lloyd was pleased to see that students were interested in setting up societies and encouraged them to contact her with their ideas.

27/12 Coursework distribution and deadlines had been carefully and continually monitored however it was inevitable there would be the occasional problem. Students felt that the deadlines were fine but that the timing of returned work meant they were unable to process the feedback before the next deadline. It was suggested that having draft submissions and holding smaller, more frequent, demonstrator run optional workshops would not only alleviate staff workload but also allow students to make the most of the feedback. Increased feed forward was also requested to clarify expectations for each piece of work (i.e. marks breakdowns per section, etc.) and highlight common mistakes, as guidance varied from module to module. Students were advised to inform Module Supervisors where they felt clarification was needed. Julie Lloyd agreed to look into these issues but pointed out the difficulties with timetabling and getting students to attend sessions that did not appear on their personal online timetables.

Action: JCL

29/12 The reference section in the UG handbook had been modified.

Annual Review of Courses

02/13 A brief overview and explanation of the draft Annual Review of Courses report was given. Student representatives were invited to look through the report and email Julie Lloyd with any comments.
External Examiner’s Responses

03/13 Student representatives were invited to look through the External Examiners’ responses in the attached reports submitted to the School following the Exam Board, for their information.

National Student and Student Satisfaction Survey

04/13 Overall results for the NSS and SSS were presented to the Committee which were slightly improved from last year. Unfortunately the figures were not all broken down by degree course. It was noted that “Assessment and Feedback” was the School’s lowest scoring category. Any observations or suggestions on ways to improve this were welcomed.

Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching

05/13 Julie Lloyd gave a brief explanation of the SAMT process and directed the Committee’s attention to the attached SAMT responses for their information.

Student Business

06/13 Students raised a number of issues regarding library resources, in particular relevant texts for Biomedical Sciences, a lack of quiet study areas and desk space, and a shortage of available computers and electrical sockets for laptops. General requests for better access to online publications (including subscriptions further back in time) was made and also for a section with advice on how to access online journals and request library articles to be included in the UG Handbook. For publications unavailable in the library, Julie Lloyd suggested that students try contacting their supervisors who might have back copies or could suggest alternative articles. She asked that students inform the School of any specific core texts not available in the library. Julie Lloyd agreed to follow up modifying the School literature and pass all comments to the School’s Library Co-ordinator.

Action: JCL

07/13 Students from various degree courses raised concerns regarding the background level of maths and chemistry expected for BS141 arguing that these subjects were not specified as entry requirements for their chosen degree courses. Many students felt that voluntary workshops covering basic maths and chemistry interspersed between lectures should be offered as a necessity and that Module Supervisors should provide a ‘Progress Checklist’ so that students could self-assess their level of understanding. Dr Jones explained that extra workshops had been run in previous years however the attendance was poor and the sessions were discontinued. He agreed to look into restarting them with the hope of targeting the relevant students better and possibly operating a ‘RSVP’ system in order to monitor the attendance numbers.

Action: GDJ

08/13 Students would be sent information regarding timetables as soon as the School received it from the Exams Office. MCQs for first year students were scheduled in weeks 15 and 30. The week 15 MCQ timetable would be released in week 10. Summer exam timetables would be released at the end of the Spring term.

09/13 The request for more frequent interactive sessions and better engagement during lectures was noted. Students suggested things that lecturers could do to focus their attention during lectures, such as asking more questions to encourage feedback or walking around the room. Julie Lloyd agreed to highlight this to teaching staff. 2nd Year Biomedical Science students also felt that 2 hour lecture slots were too long however students from other degree courses had the opposite opinion. It was acknowledged that variation in lecture content and teaching style across courses significantly contributed to this. Julie Lloyd agreed to look into scheduling more 1 hour lectures in...
the future although pointed out that frequency of sessions, group size and session length were dependent on timetabling restraints and room availability.

**Action: JCL**

**Second Year Business**

10/13 The request for a science specific careers fair was taken forward however the number of companies available to take part was insufficient to host a separate event. Students were encouraged to keep an open mind and approach other companies at the University's main careers fair that might offer alternative opportunities for science graduates.

11/13 Changes to the NHS had led to a significant reorganization of the Biomedical Science degree. The School hoped that this would resolve most, if not all of the issues raised previously. Julie Lloyd agreed to arrange a meeting for the Biomedical Science representative to discuss this term’s agenda items with the teaching staff.

**Action: JCL, AK**

**Third Year Business**

12/13 3rd Year students were unhappy with the teaching on BS330 and BS351 following a change of teaching staff. Julie Lloyd and Leanne Hepburn agreed to discuss this with the 3rd Year Marine Biology representative after the meeting.

**Action: JCL, LJH**

**Other Business**

13/13 An idea to increase the importance of Mentors by allowing them to advise on matters within a specialist area and liaise with academic staff on behalf of their Mentees was suggested. Students felt this would not only be useful for those looking to benefit from the experience of the year above but also time saving for staff. Students also felt that advice regarding careers in their chosen field given at the end of the 2nd year and advice on PhD/MSc applications for 3rd years given in the Spring term was too late. Julie Lloyd agreed to take these matters further and prioritise scheduling a PhD/MSc application session for 3rd Years before Christmas.

**Action: JCL**

**Next meeting**

14/13 The date and time of the next meeting would be confirmed in due course.