

Meeting 3/09

13 October 2009

For general publication

- Present:** Prof Mary Garson, Miss Katelin Haynes, Ms Kekini Kuppan, Mr Alexander Metcalf (in the chair), Mr Mark Starkey (minutes).
- Apologies:** Prof Ross Barnard, Mr Daniel De Voss, Prof Alastair McEwan, Assoc Prof Joe Rothnagel, Mr Vinay Kakamani Sundar Raju, Dr Simon Worrall.
- Absent:** Miss Ashleigh Croucher, Mr Adrian English, Miss Elizabeth Garrard, Mr David Mogg.
- Chair:** (As chairperson Miss Croucher was not present, members agreed that Mr Metcalf should chair the meeting.)
- Welcome:** Members noted that all students enrolled in the MBiotech program had been emailed 28 August an invitation to nominate to fill the postgraduate biotechnology representative vacancy. Mark Starkey reported that two nominations had been received with accompanying statements. In accordance with the School's practice for filling such vacancies, Joe Rothnagel, Ross Barnard and Mark Starkey had chosen a nominee.
- Ms Kekini Kappan had been successful and was welcomed to the Committee.
- Minutes:** Minutes of the meeting held 25 August 2009, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

Business arising out of the minutes:

Assessment Practices

In relation to the suggestion made at the 25 August meeting that the School look at common course combinations with a view to coordinating the spread of assessment in those combinations, Mark reported that Joe Rothnagel had advised that the School's Assessment Sub-committee would look at the School's offerings in 2010 for both semesters and consult with course coordinators on reducing assessment tasks and where possible limiting the amount of assessment due in the last 2 weeks of semester. Additionally, Joe had established that it was possible (though tedious) to look at the due dates of assessment items for several courses simultaneously using the electronic course profile site.

Joe, Mark

Prior to the meeting, second year Chemistry representative, David Mogg, had reported significant word-of-mouth praise by students for the use of progressive examinations, such as in CHEM2050/2/6. David said that students appeared to appreciate the assessment structure for the discipline it encourages in students to study earlier in the semester, assisting their understanding of the course content. Students seemed to get a better idea of their progress and be less reliant on performance in the final exam, reported David. Alex Metcalf, who was taking CHEM2052 this semester, agreed with this sentiment. Mark Starkey undertook to advise the course coordinators.

Mark

Development of a stronger cohort experience for students taking the BSc

At the 25 August meeting, Katelin had suggested that if dedicated spaces beyond the Chemistry Podium and Science Learning Centre could not be provided, the next best thing would be discipline- or major-specific events (such as BBQs) which the School could facilitate but students could contribute to the cost of. Staff members observed that the student societies SUSS and Dead Chemists Society had arranged such events in the past but were no longer active. Mary Garson had said that the School would be willing to supply BBQ equipment if students organised the events.

Alex said that he would like to revisit the issue, and members considered a brief plan prepared by Alex to facilitate discussion:

- BBQ – Mark Starkey advised that the School could arrange for students to use the BBQ in the 'secret garden' adjacent to the Molecular Biosciences Building and a portable BBQ owned by the Faculty of Science. If students were willing to 'swap and go' the gas bottles, the School would reimburse the cost of the gas.

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Business arising out of the minutes: (cont'd)

Development of a stronger cohort experience for students taking the BSc (cont'd)

- Food and drinks – Mark reiterated that the School was not permitted to use University funds to pay for hospitality of a purely social nature – the hospitality needed to be incidental to an event at which School business was conducted. He mentioned that he had spoken to the manager of a sibling School in the Faculty of Science (GPEM) which he knew had provided some assistance to its student societies. That School had made small contributions to the cost of food for student BBQs, but moreso for RHD students who were expected in return to participate in the running of the School (eg, volunteering as student ambassadors).

It was agreed that student organisers would need to fund the cost of food and drinks, by charging a fee to students (and to staff if invited – perhaps a higher fee, suggested Mark and Mary) and/or by seeking sponsorship. Katelin asked if the School could provide start-up money to purchase food and drinks for an initial event. Mark felt that this would be reasonable as a one-off, and defensible on this basis that the School was seeking to encourage a cohort experience as a teaching and learning objective, but he did not think that this argument was sustainable on an ongoing basis.

Alex,
 Katelin,
 Mark

- Advertising – Mark confirmed that the School would be willing to advertise student BBQs to which staff were invited via the weekly email staff bulletin. The School would also pay for reasonable in-house printing of posters designed and put up by students. Students would need to approach individual course coordinators to see if the coordinators were willing to put messages on Blackboard and/or on slides in lectures.

Alex,
 Mark

- Sponsorship – Mark mentioned that the School's RHD students had held one or two events over the last year at which they had collected donations from students and raffled prizes to raise further funds, to allow them to run BBQs, etc. The RHD students had invited trade suppliers, such as John Morris Scientific, to at least one event, to help with catering. Mark suggested that Alex and Katelin speak to RHD student Peter Vella.

Alex,
 Katelin

- Timing and next steps – it was agreed that the early part of the semester was the preferred time to run an event. Alex, Katelin and other interested students would continue their planning and approach Mark regarding matters the School could assist with, identified above.

Alex,
 Katelin

Identification of career paths for BSc students

Further to the idea discussed at the School's Industry Advisory Board of granting credit for project courses undertaken in industry, Joe Rothnagel had thought that SCIE3044, *Vacation Project*, offered over the summer semester, might be made flexible enough to allow industry projects (with a UQ supervisor) additional to in-house research projects. Joe had reported to Mark prior to the meeting that the Faculty of Science Teaching & Learning Committee had not met since mid-year, but he (Joe) would be discussing the idea with the Associate Dean (Academic) this week, with a view to getting the matter on to the agenda of the next meeting of the Faculty TLC.

Joe

Student Company Programs

Ross Barnard had reported to Mark prior to the meeting that he has been investigating the Young Achiever Australia Biotechnology Entrepreneur Program and has scheduled a meeting with a representative to investigate the feasibility of SCMB participating in the program, such as providing academic staff mentors.

Ross

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Business arising out of the minutes: (cont'd)

Student Company Programs (cont'd)

On Ross's behalf, a CD was tabled for student members of the Committee which contained the results of a survey of 65 companies carried out by Ross as part of a Federal Government initiative and published in 2003. A follow-up report had included similar findings based on focus groups. Companies had been asked what graduate attributes they sought in Biotechnology graduates. The overwhelming requirement was for technical knowledge and skills in chemistry, protein chemistry and molecular biology and immunology. In terms of generic skills sought, there was a heavy emphasis on problem solving ability.

In relation to further investigating student experiences and knowledge of Kelly Scientific placements, Mary reported that due to the economic downturn, local companies were not currently placing students and Kelly had effectively suspended its program. The School would keep a watch on the situation, in the hope that Kelly returned to organising the placements.

1. Internet Download Quota for Postgraduate Coursework Students:

MBiotech representative, Kekini Kuppan, reported that an issue raised by students in her constituency is the internet download quota of 400MB per month per student. Some MBiotech students have suggested 300MB per day instead.

Mark Starkey reported that standard student quota for all UQ students had been increased from 100MB per month to 400MB per month in mid-2008. Provision existed for increases to this limit to be granted to individual students (or cohorts of students) if a School was willing to pay UQ Information Technology Services (additional 350MB for \$4.95 per month; 1GB for \$10.00 per month).

Historically:

- Quota for Honours students had been increased in the former BACS Faculty to 300MB per day, paid for by the Faculty. There was a suggestion that this cost might be passed on to Schools in the future, which was being investigated.
- At one point in BACS, all Honours and RHD students had been given unlimited download quota at the discretion of the Executive Dean, but this had not been available to new students in recent semesters.
- There was anecdotal evidence that some individual students had had their quota increased by Faculty IT support staff on the endorsement of academic staff supervisors or possibly on the basis of petitions by the students themselves.

Mark said that a report of those SCMB students who have additional quota had been requested, and was awaited (the dataset being difficult to mine). Science IT Support had been advised that additional quota was not to be granted to a student without authorisation by School administration.

The Directors of the postgraduate Biotechnology and Molecular Biology programs had communicated to Mark that there was generally no need for any postgraduate coursework student to have more than 400MB per month to fulfil program requirements. Where a student could make a case that a larger quota was required (eg, student doing a research project in the Bioinformatics area), their individual circumstances would be considered.

Kekini felt herself that 400MB was reasonable and that higher quota was probably being sought for applications not related to coursework, such as Facebook. Other members were aware that some students downloaded music and movie files. Mary indicated that download is able to be monitored by the University for an individual student and any breach of the University's conditions of use of the internet could lead to disciplinary action.

Alex Metcalf added that UQConnect offered some good deals for students who wished to purchase download capacity for personal use – their prices were cheaper than many internet service providers.

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2. Summer Internship Opportunities:

Kekini said that there appeared to be no opportunities for postgraduate coursework students to apply for internships over the summer break.

Mark reported that Ross Barnard had advised prior to the meeting about opportunities for BSc and BBiotech students (SCIE3004 and BIOT3007), including how he could help with introductions for BIOT3007 students who had sourced industry projects off-campus. Alex said that information made available to students about SCIE3004 internships in on-campus labs was good. Katelin Haynes noted that undergraduate and Honours students could also apply for a summer undergraduate scholarship.

Mary suggested that postgraduate coursework students could approach academic staff in their area of interest who might have funds to employ a research assistant over the summer vacation. Students should look at staff research profiles and email the staff concerned. Not all staff would be in a position to offer work. Mary added that the list of SCIE3004 projects on the web would be an indicator of those staff who might have such work available.

3. Next Meeting and Membership:

As this was likely to be the final meeting of the Committee in 2009, some members would be graduating before the Committee reconvened in 2010. They were thanked for their contributions.

Mark indicated that once 2010 enrolments were recorded, he would check the eligibility of current members and contact those continuing their studies to ask if they would like to serve in the relevant constituency. Vacancies would be dealt with in the usual way.

Mark

Katelin indicated that she was changing program from BBiotech to BSc and that both she and Alex would be eligible for the BSc Year 3 (MBS majors) role. Mark and Mary indicated that they hoped there was a way in which both these active members could serve.

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