

Meeting 2/12

18 May 2012

For general publication

- Present:** Mr Patrick Fortuna (in the chair), Mr Akash Boda, Prof Melissa Brown, Ms Noor Dashti, Miss Paige Erpf, Miss Sophie Hudson, Mr Christopher Read, Assoc Prof Joe Rothnagel, Miss Nicole Silajew, Mr Mark Starkey (minutes), Miss Rose Trappes, Ms Flor Del Milagro Vasquez Sotomayor.
- Apology:** Nil.
- Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held 30 March 2012, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

ACTION

Business arising out of the minutes:

Promotion of *Careers That Started in Science* booklet to current students

Members noted that the Faculty of Science Engagement Manager had reported that her unit was working on posters and slides for display boards around the University to promote the booklet *Careers That Started in Science* to current students. The Faculty was also considering other careers days/information sessions at which the booklet could be promoted. The online version of the booklet now was read with page-turning software rather than by scrolling. In addition, a major revamp of the Faculty's website was being undertaken, which would include a review of the current testimonials/careers areas to ensure information is presented in the most user-friendly way.

Student Cohort Experiences – BSc Year 3 Camp

Joe Rothnagel reported that the School's Teaching & Learning Committee had decided that the camp take place on the weekend before the start of first semester at the Moreton Bay Research Station on Stradbroke Island. A working party had been formed to develop a plan for the camp, drawing on the experience of the existing Biotechnology camp.

The Biotech camp activities typically consisted of a formal workshop, task and team based activities, a trivia quiz and an optional pub session or movie evening followed by beach cricket and swimming the next day.

Joe Rothnagel said that the working party would be meeting in the inter-semester break. He would check MBRS bookings.

Joe

CHEM2054 Assessment Feedback

Subsequent to Meeting 1-12, BSc Year 2 representative, Chris Read, had reported by email that concerns continued to exist amongst students in CHEM2054 about a perceived lack of clear guidelines for prac reports and the turnaround time in marking of reports before the next report was due.

SCMB T&L Chairperson, Joe Rothnagel, had made contact with the course coordinator about the concerns. The coordinator had said that he was somewhat surprised, as in his interactions with the class during lectures and lab sessions, no-one had mentioned to him that they had had trouble with writing reports. He had pointed out that he had presented a lecture in Week 2, most of which had been devoted to the correct format of a written report, and had mentioned a section of the laboratory book and other materials that gave instructions on the task.

Joe had asked if an exemplar report could be put on the *Blackboard* site. The coordinator had responded that this was problematic in that all of the experiments were unique, hence the guidelines must be somewhat general. It needed to be remembered, he had said, that the course is about training students to conduct experiments and write reports – a skill that needed to be learned in second year.

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

CHEM2054 Assessment Feedback (cont'd)

The 2011 coordinator had been invited to comment and had added that he had encouraged students to go over the marked pracs with either him or the tutors and that the tutors were happy to do this. If the tutors had marked something unreasonable, the coordinator had moderated the mark. He went on to say that he felt that the discontent came from a wish that each experiment should be similar. This was not that case in that there was a mixture of organic, inorganic and physical experiments.

In relation to the timing of feedback, the 2012 coordinator had said that students had been given at least a week to submit their first reports, which had been marked and returned a week later. While it was true that the second report needed to be submitted by then, the coordinator could see no way to speed this up. This point had been explained in the second lecture. The coordinator had said that he could impose an earlier due date for the first report, but he doubted that would be popular.

Joe Rothnagel had responded to Chris's email with some of the above points and had added that the course coordinator, Ross McGeary, would be happy to talk about specific issues related to individual assessment items in the course. Chris had replied, acknowledging Joe's investigation with thanks and conceding that the coordinator had provided the class with the information cited regarding report writing. Some concerns remained about a lack of set marking criteria.

Chris told the meeting that feedback for the first report had taken a month (as opposed to SCMB's benchmark of three weeks), but turnaround times had improved since then. Students had completed more reports and were generally more comfortable.

Joe indicated that he would like to talk with Chris about the course at the end of semester.

Joe, Chris

Careers Advice for Students

At meeting 1-12, student members had felt that it would be useful to have information available online about which organisations employ graduates in particular disciplines, particularly if it could be linked from pages they access regularly, such as course *Blackboard* pages. Mark Starkey had undertaken to bring to the next meeting the outcome of Graduate Destination Survey and other data that identified employers of graduates in recent years.

Mark referred members to a report in the agenda papers of the latest available Graduate Destination Survey data for UQ graduates. The GDS is conducted annually by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia and asks recent graduates if they are working, seeking work or studying. For those working, information about job title and employer is collected.

By analysing the data by field of study (equivalent to major), employment destinations for the five years up to 2010 showed that the most common relevant (as opposed to retail, hospitality, etc) domestic employers of UQ graduates in the following fields were:

- Biochemistry & Cell Biology – DPI; QIMR; UQ and other unis
- Chemical Sciences – Alchemia; Alphapharm; ALS; DPI; Education Qld; mining companies; unis
- Genetics – CSIRO; Education Qld; QIMR; UQ
- Microbiology – Coridon (biotech company); CSIRO; DPI; 1MB; Med-e-Serv; Qld Govt depts, incl QHealth; Sullivan Nicolaides
- Food Science & Biotechnology (grouped together) – Alphapharm; Alchemia; Biochip Innovations; Boeing; Dept Primary Industries; Dept Natural Resources; Eppendorf; Inverness Medical; Progen, Sullivan Nicolaides; universities and research/medical institutes.

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

Careers Advice for Students (cont'd)

Mark went on to report that the Careers Advisor Unit at UQ Student Services had confirmed that the GDS is the only statistical source of destinations. However, in mid-2011, the Unit had analysed the online jobs board *UQ CareerHub* for roles offered to 'biological and chemical sciences' graduates in recent years. From their data, the jobs that looked directly relevant to SCMB disciplines were offered by the following local employers: Alphapharm; BP Australia; CSIRO; DPI; QIMR; UQ.

Members also noted information supplied to staff who answer prospective student questions at events such as TSXPO and Open Day. The information mentioned that examples of graduate outcomes are published in the annual Science undergraduate prospectus and in the *Careers That Started in Science* booklet. The information also quoted the Graduate Careers Council of Australia as stating that science graduates are nearly as likely to pursue non-scientific professional roles as they are research or industrial roles in the scientific industries. Surveys showed that 40% of Science graduates use the skills and processes they learnt while studying science (rather than their knowledge of science) to undertake roles in a wide range of areas. The GCCA had said that growth areas are:

- biotechnology;
- chemical/pharmaceutical/food processing industries;
- environmental protection and resource management.

The first two of these directly involved jobs as chemists, biochemists, geneticists, molecular biologists and microbiologists. Staff at UQ were also aware that demand for bioinformatics graduates is rising due to the increasing demand for computational and visualisation skills in science, due to developments such as the genome sequencing project.

The GCCA also stated that doing an Honours year would refine and develop student skills and make them more attractive to an employer. Employers had told the School that Honours graduates tended to be more independent, better time managers and have better perseverance.

Members also noted that to see some actual job advertisements in real time, students could access online employment websites like seek.com.au and CareerOne.com.au and search for Science, Chemistry, etc jobs. One could subscribe to some of these sites (eg, JobMail on Seek) and be emailed job ads based on specific keywords one entered.

To help narrow personal career options, UQ's student admissions webpages recommended www.myfuture.edu.au, an interactive site that asks users questions and suggests careers.

Following discussion, it was resolved –

that the information above be written

- (a) for a web page to be hosted by the School and made available to course coordinators to link from course *Blackboard* and *Facebook* pages; and
- (b) for inclusion in course practical manuals.

Blackboard communities for the BSc majors and BBiotech

At Meeting 1-12 Joe Rothenagel had suggested that Bb communities be established for the BSc majors and the BBiotech, in the way they had been set up for the School's postgraduate coursework programs and Honours program. It had been agreed to refer the idea to the School's Teaching & Learning Committee. Joe reported that the T&L Committee had met 15 May but had not gotten to this item. He would carry it over to the next meeting.

Mark

Joe

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

***Blackboard Communities* (cont'd)**

Related to the topic of *Blackboard* communities, Patrick Fortuna had been approached by a number of postgraduate Biotechnology students in mid-April who did not have access to the Bb community for their cohort and had been unable to submit their assignments via *Turnitin*. It had been discovered that a number of students in three courses had not made it on to the Bb enrolment list. It was believed that maintenance work by UQ ITS on Bb at the time could have caused the problem. The problem had been resolved soon afterwards. In the meantime, the students had been able to submit their assignments to the course coordinator to submit to *Turnitin* on their behalf, so no student had been disadvantaged.

1. Science or SCMB badged apparel:

Having canvassed student members of the BIOC2000 *Facebook* page, BSc second year MBS majors representative, Rose Trappes, reported interest amongst students for Science Faculty or SCMB T-shirts or jumpers carrying an amusing Science-related motif.

Mark Starkey had suggested that a competition could be held amongst students to come up with a design to be custom-printed to the shirts. The competition could be Faculty-wide (perhaps judged by the SUSS Executive) or SCMB-specific (judged by the CSCC). Akash Boda said that SUSS had commissioned T-shirts in the past. He suggested that the motif could include a meme similar to those that had been handed out by the Faculty on stickers at orientation.

Some preliminary internet research had indicated that custom-print T-shirts could be obtained for about \$12 (single-colour logo on imported shirts) or \$20-\$24 (Australian-made shirts with single or multi-colour logo). Minimum orders were typically 30, remembering that a range of sizes and presumably a separate male and female fit would be required. It was further suggested that major-specific motifs might be attractive.

The Faculty Engagement Unit had advised that the ASPinS students had organised T-shirts or hoodies for themselves in recent years by placing orders in advance. The Faculty had bulk-purchased the apparel and students had paid the University Cashier, bringing their receipts to the Faculty office to collect their shirt.

Following discussion, it was resolved –

- (a) that lower-cost T-shirts be offered to SCMB students, carrying a motif (or motifs) relevant to the School's majors;
- (b) that a competition be held amongst SCMB students to design the motif/s (or motif elements whereby a graphic designer would adapt them), with entries to be judged by the CSCC at its next meeting;
- (c) that the competition, specifying the design elements and entrant eligibility, be advertised to students by email and on the School's *Facebook* page;
- (d) that the School underwrite the cost of production of the T-shirts, with costs to be recovered via sales to students.

Mark

2. BIOC2000 learning and teaching methods, including the use of *Facebook*:

BSc second year MBS majors representative, Rose Trappes, had put a call out via the BIOC2000 *Facebook* page for suggestions and comments about the course. BIOC2000 had 564 enrolments and 534 *Facebook* members (at 6 May).

Rose reported that students said they really liked the social networking going on in the course. The *Facebook* pages were very active, and course coordinator, Susan Rowland and some tutors were members, which was regarded by students as a big help. Susan had reported that her email workload had dropped since she had started answering questions via the *Facebook* page.

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2. BIOC2000 learning and teaching methods, including the use of *Facebook*: (cont'd)

Rose reported that there is a general consensus that Susan and the tutors are excellent, and she believed that there is a great appreciation for having a teaching-focussed academic running the course.

Patrick Fortuna suggested that the BIOC2000 *Facebook* model might usefully be adopted by other courses. Akash Boda reported that the Biotechnology *Facebook* page worked well. Mark Starkey reported that a page was operating for CHEM1010, although the course coordinator had had to intervene when online quiz answers had been posted and the student administering the page had not moderated the content. Chris Read noted that it was not unusual for there to be several pages for any given course, as anybody could start up a page. It would be useful if students knew which was the 'official' page.

Joe Rothnagel responded that the School's Teaching & Learning Committee had discussed the phenomenon and reported that the School's preference was not to establish official *Facebook* pages for courses, given that the course coordinator would be responsible for moderating content at all times, additional to maintaining a *Blackboard* site. The preference was that students create and administer their own page and invite the course teaching staff to become members, as had been the case in BIOC2000.

Mark Starkey suggested that the BIOC2000 example be related to other SCMB course coordinators, perhaps via one of the School's regular staff meetings.

Mark,
Melissa

3. Second year studies in magnetism in the Chemistry major:

BSc second year Chemistry majors representative, Nicole Silajew, reported that she is enrolled in CHEM3010 this semester and had just completed a module on magnetism. One of her peers had remarked that it was a shame that magnetism had not been studied since first semester of first year, and had suggested that a second year course on magnetism (particularly the Lanthanides) be introduced to the Chemistry major.

Prior to the meeting, Chemistry Major Convenor, Dr Ross McGeary had advised that the content of courses is always being reviewed, and that it was very helpful to receive constructive suggestions such as this one. He had gone on to suggest that the students involved let the lecturer know of their enjoyment of CHEM3010 directly, or by commenting in the course evaluation.

Melissa Brown added that two new Chemistry academic staff had just been recruited and that they taught in the area covering magnetism.

4. Credit for CHEM2056 towards the Materials and Nanotechnology stream of the Chemical Sciences dual major:

Chris Read said that a friend had consulted with academic advisor, Gwen Lawrie, who had told him that CHEM2056 no longer counted towards the Materials and Nanotechnology stream of the dual Chemical Sciences major, despite being listed in a study plan he had referred to when enrolling in the major. Chris was concerned that students be notified of such a change. Joe Rothnagel undertook to investigate. Mark Starkey advised that transitional arrangements normally applied to rule changes, such that students were not disadvantaged. (Subsequent to the meeting, a check of the study plans listed on the UQ Courses and Programs site showed that CHEM2056 is a listed course for students who commenced the stream in 2011 or earlier, but not for students who commenced in 2012).

Joe

5. Clarity of communication by a lecturer:

First year BSc representative, Paige Erpf, reported that attendances at a particular stream of a first year chemistry course had dropped off because students had experienced difficulty understanding what the lecturer for a particular module was saying. Other members who had experienced the lecturer in earlier years agreed. Melissa Brown thanked members for the feedback, and undertook to seek to improve the situation.

Melissa

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6. Publicity of existence and role of consultative committee:

Members discussed various techniques for improving the visibility of the consultative committee amongst students of the School. It was agreed that an effective approach was for members to ask lecturers for a minute of time before or at the end of the class to address students about the committee and its representatives.

All members

It was also suggested that emails to students about the committee's minutes include a catchy subject title and a bullet point summary of what had been discussed. The emails already provided a link to the SCC page where members' names, photographs and email addresses were listed.

Mark

7. Tuition fees for postgraduate coursework courses:

Postgraduate molecular biology representative, Flor Sotomayor, reported that she had been contacted by masters students concerned that the fees for courses without a lab component were as expensive as for those with a lab component. The students had also made some suggestions for how the content of some courses could be altered to include a lab component. Concern had also been expressed that the content of MICR6008 was very similar to its undergraduate equivalent. Flor asked if the way in which tuition fees were spent might be made transparent to students.

Melissa Brown responded that most of the fee income went towards paying staff salaries – for course development, teaching and assessment, and the research that underpinned some of the course content. This included tutor salaries. She observed that the student-to-staff ratio for most of the postgraduate courses was low, particularly in the research project courses. The School received less than half of the tuition fees collected by the University, because the fees were used to pay for University infrastructure, such as libraries, computing, buildings, electricity, etc. Other costs incurred by the School included laboratory equipment and consumables used by the masters students, and professional staff to support the teaching effort. In response to an observation by one of the students who had contacted Flor that postgraduate coursework students were not funded to attend national conferences, Melissa explained that the funds to achieve this simply did not exist. Mark Starkey added that the fee charge per unit was uniform across a program to keep things simple. To introduce different fees for different courses in the same program would not result in the total program cost changing and would add an administrative burden that itself would incur a cost.

Melissa agreed that more practical class content was needed in the School's advanced courses. She had arranged for researchers in the University Institutes to contribute to practical development, and a pilot was underway for one particular course at present.

In relation to MICR6008, Joe Rothnagel undertook to talk to the MMolBiol program director about the course content and assessment, relative to the undergraduate course equivalent.

Joe

8. Next meeting:

Members agreed that the next meeting should be held in the first week or two of second semester. Mark would canvass members regarding their availability for second semester meetings and advise of a date, time and venue.

Mark

(Subsequent to the meeting, Akash Boda noted that his membership was due to expire at the end of first semester, as he would be moving into Honours and Adrian English would be taking over as second/third year BBiotech representative. Akash requested that he attend the next meeting in a transitional role and then retire from the Committee.)

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