

Meeting 3/12

13 August 2012

For general publication

**Present:** Mr Patrick Fortuna (in the chair), Prof Melissa Brown, Miss Paige Erpf, Ms Mariska Marnane, Assoc Prof Joe Rothnagel, Miss Nicole Silajew, Mr Mark Starkey (minutes), Miss Rose Trappes, Mr Christopher Weir, Dr Simon Worrall (by invitation up to and including Item 2).

**Apologies:** Ms Noor Dashti, Mr Christopher Read.

**Absent:** Mr Adrian English.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the meeting held 18 May 2012, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

**ACTION**

### 1. Membership:

Members were advised that BBiotech Year 1 representative Sophie Hudson is interrupting her studies in second semester 2012, so had resigned from the Committee. When nominations had been called for at the start of the year, two other students had nominated for the BBiotech Year 1 position. Mariska Marnane had been the next choice of the selectors and had agreed to replace Sophie. Mariska was welcomed to her first meeting.

MMolBiol representative, Flor Sotomayor, had graduated at the end of first semester. She had been a member for three semesters and had said in a recent email to Mark Starkey that she was grateful for the experience and glad to know that a little difference in the academic life of current and future students had been made. She had written, "Please extend my gratitude and best wishes to all the professors and students who made the meetings fun and useful." Flor's contribution on a number of topics was duly noted.

Mark Starkey explained that enrolments in the MMolBiol program were not large at the moment. The School this year had introduced a new Master of Bioinformatics program and the number of enrolments was small at this stage. It had therefore been decided, with the approval of the Head of School, to find a representative for the MMolBiol and MBioinf programs combined.

Nominations had been sought once the due date for international second semester enrolments was reached (20 July), given that most of the enrolments in the programs are international.

Two nominations had been received and a selection panel of Melissa Brown, Joe Rothnagel and Simon Worrall had chosen Christopher Weir, who was welcomed to his first meeting.

### 2. Research project supervisors:

The normal order of business was suspended to enable this matter to be dealt with in the presence of Dr Simon Worrall, Director of the postgraduate Molecular Biology program.

Chris Weir reported that a number of students experienced difficulty in finding a supervisor for their research projects in the MMolBiol program. Chris said that he was aware that this matter had been discussed by the CSCC before, and although he was not personally affected, was aware that some students still found it a problem and was keen to brainstorm ideas.

Members noted an extract of the minutes of the 20 March 2012 meeting, when the matter had been raised. Amongst suggestions made then was that a booklet of projects, similar to that available to Biotechnology students, be produced.

Simon Worrall said that he had always emphasised that finding a supervisor is part of the training students receive, i.e. later on they will have to find, and apply for, jobs or training positions. They are given advice on the best way to proceed, down to the best style of email to send, and help when they cannot find a supervisor. Most students have a definite idea of the projects they wish to do so it would be difficult to have "off-the-shelf" projects to suit all students. In his tenure as director of the MolBiol programs only one student out of around 300 had failed to find a supervisor.

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## 2. Research project supervisors: (cont'd)

Simon continued that students are told to, and shown how to, use the UQ researchers database which covers the whole university. This gives a broad coverage using a single site. Students were advised to select up to 10 researchers and to check the library for publications by these researchers, to help narrow the field and in order to address potential supervisors with some knowledge and appreciation of their work – expression of which in the enquiry email is usually well-received. Joe Rothnagel added that doing a literature review was good preparation for approaching a supervisor and good groundwork for the project itself. Simon added that he is trying to assemble a database of people who have been supervisors.

Simon said that keeping a list or book of projects up-to-date can be difficult and that such a list tends not to be all-inclusive, as some projects arise from ad hoc discussion between a student and a potential supervisor.

Ultimately, success in securing a supervisor correlated with the time allocated to the task – those who left it to the last minute tended to experience more difficulty. Simon advises students in lectures when they should be commencing their search.

Members were of the view that the advice and support given to MMolBiol students in terms of seeking a project and supervisor was adequate.

Arising from the discussion, Patrick Fortuna said that, in his experience, MBIotech students did not get the sort of advice given to MMolBiol students and that even the existence of a booklet of project topics and supervisors had not been widely promoted to students. He suggested that all postgraduate coursework students get similar advice. It was agreed that this suggestion be conveyed to the Directors of the Biotechnology and Bioinformatics postgraduate coursework programs.

Mark

## 3. Business arising out of the minutes:

### **Print quota for postgraduate coursework students**

Patrick Fortuna reported that he had approached Mark Starkey in June regarding a suggestion from a MBIotech student that SCMB make available for purchase print quota additional to the 200 pages per semester provided free.

Mark reported that, in response to the request, the School now offers its postgraduate coursework students additional blocks of print/copy quota in a package of 100 B&W prints plus 10 colour prints for \$15. This is based on prices charged by the UQ Library, but adapted to SCMB's system.

Details of the system are set out in the latest editions of the handbooks for the School's postgraduate coursework programs.

### **Student Cohort Experiences – BSc Year 3 Camp**

Members noted that Dr Susan Rowland is forming a working party to look at what time of the year is best to hold the camp, which students should be invited (entering Year 3, entering Year 2, or part-way through Year 2), and what activities should be held on the camp. She had indicated that she would seek guidance from the student members of the Committee. Mark Starkey had forwarded email addresses to Susan at her request.

### **Careers advice for students**

As resolved at Meeting 2-12, a web page had been published at <http://www.scmb.uq.edu.au/employment-careers-advice>. Course Coordinators had been emailed in the first week of second semester inviting them to provide a link to the page from their course *Blackboard* and/or *Facebook* pages. The web page content had been reproduced as a flyer for UQ Open Day.

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

**Blackboard communities for the BSc majors and BBiotech**

Members noted that this matter had been considered at the School's Teaching & Learning Committee meeting of 16 July where it had been noted that problems had been experienced with the stability of enrolments in SCMB postgraduate coursework communities on Blackboard for some time. Concern also had been expressed that the communities would be set up but content not provided or maintained. There would be an administrative overhead in enrolling students to the communities each semester. It also had been noted that *Facebook* pages for core courses of particular majors (eg, BIOC2000) would probably be more popular than Bb community pages. The T&L Committee had agreed that the idea be put on hold until it was clearer that the initiative would be worth the effort.

Mark Starkey suggested that a *Facebook* page for the proposed majors camp be established, that might live on beyond the camp (or even break into pages for particular majors at that stage). It was agreed that this was a good idea and that it be put to Susan Rowland.

Mark

**Credit for CHEM2056 towards the Materials and Nanotechnology stream of the Chemical Sciences dual major**

Study plans listed on the UQ Courses and Programs site showed that CHEM2056 is a listed course for students who commenced the Chemical Sciences stream in 2011 or earlier, but not for students who commenced in 2012.

Advice had been received that for new students commencing in 2012 or later, CHEM2056 is restricted to Bachelor of Engineering students. Any student who commenced the BSc prior to 2012 could count it towards the Chemical Sciences major. Chemical Sciences students are now advised to enrol in CHEM2002 instead of CHEM2056. A pre-2012 student who had completed CHEM2002 and CHEM2056 prior to 2012 would receive credit for both in their major.

**Tuition fees for postgraduate courses – MICR6008 content**

At Meeting 2-12, during a discussion on fees for postgraduate courses, concern had been expressed that the content of MICR6008 was very similar to an undergraduate equivalent. Joe Rothnagel had undertaken to talk to the MMolBiol program director about this.

Subsequently, the MICR6008 course coordinator, Dr Graham Leggatt, had checked with all the lecturers in the course. MICR6008 consists of four modules involving basic immunology, viral immunology, bacterial immunology and parasite immunology. Each module has core lectures and in-class workshops with a variety of assessment tasks (two literature reviews, poster, in-class quiz) and the coordinator could not find a single equivalent undergraduate course.

While each module leader had acknowledged that some course materials (slides, etc) may have overlap with courses such as BIOM2011, MICR3001, PARA3002 and MICR3002, it was felt by the Graham that in MICR6008 the material was covered in more depth or in some cases discussed in workshop groups, which is not always possible in undergraduate courses.

Graham had indicated that he is always open to suggestions on how to improve the course and would appreciate feedback on where the largest overlaps are thought to exist.

Members recalled that when MICR6008 had been mentioned at the last meeting, concern had been expressed at the lack of practicals. Melissa Brown responded that the School was looking at introducing at least one prac from 2013. Availability of laboratory space might mean that the prac would be offered in intensive mode in the first instance. Extra generic teaching lab space would become available when Level 4 of the Chemistry Building was refurbished during 2013-14. Melissa added that the School had recently recruited new academic staff in the area of immunology and infectious diseases and had tasked them with developing new prac modules.

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#### 4. Scholarships for domestic postgraduate coursework students:

Chris Weir pointed out that there are no scholarships available from the University or external sponsors for Australian students enrolled in the School's postgraduate coursework programs. He noted that, by contrast, a number of scholarships exist for international students.

Mark Starkey advised that details of scholarship opportunities for postgraduate coursework students are viewable at the web page: <http://www.scmb.uq.edu.au/scholarships-prizes-pg>.

SCMB currently sponsored two 50% tuition fee waiver scholarships per year for students of India seeking to enrol in the MBiotech, MMolBiol and MBioinf. The purpose of the scholarships is to assist in the promotion of the programs in the India market, which declined in 2010 for a number of reasons, including negative publicity about the experience of Indian students in Australia (even though the problems experienced had not been in Brisbane).

The Faculty of Science sponsored a number of scholarships for undergraduate and postgraduate international students, ranging in value from \$5,000 to \$12,000, paid over two semesters. Again, the main reason for the introduction of the scholarships, also common in other faculties, is to attract international students in what is a competitive market. International students are an important source of income to the University. In SCMB, tuition fees account for 37% of the School's 2012 operating income.

Award of both the SCMB and FoS scholarships is on merit and all available scholarships are not necessarily awarded.

Recently, SCMB had introduced up to 10 scholarships per year, each of \$2,000, for incoming Honours students undertaking their project in SCMB with an SCMB supervisor. These were available to both domestic and international students. The purpose was to address a decline in Honours enrolments observed over the last year or two and to compete with other organisational units in the University which offered similar scholarships.

Chris acknowledged that FEE-HELP loans are available to Australian postgraduate coursework students, but said that coursework masters degrees in general do not qualify for student assistance payments from Centrelink.

Patrick Fortuna pointed out that international students pay tuition fees at a higher rate than domestic students.

Melissa Brown said the School wanted to make its programs attractive to domestic as well as international students, but that it is a balancing act for the School to invest its limited resources where it saw the greatest return. She suggested that the School investigate why its postgraduate coursework programs did not qualify for Centrelink payments. Chris suggested that even one scholarship to assist domestic students in the final semester of their program would provide some balance. Melissa agreed to take the suggestion to the School Executive Committee for consideration.

Mark

#### 5. SCMB T-Shirt:

Members noted an email that had been sent on 14 June to 3,950 students enrolled in courses in which SCMB has a share, inviting entries for the t-shirt design competition. A similar email had been sent to the School's RHD students. As only a couple of entries had been received by 9 July, a follow-up email had been sent at that date.

At the 20 July deadline, 11 entries from five students had been received.

The Committee was required to choose the three best designs or design concepts, which would be awarded a movie voucher. If one of the designs was deemed good enough to appear on a t-shirt, the Committee should choose the winning design. Alternatively, if members felt no design was suitable, a fall-back position is to select a commercially-available motif via a web search.

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**5. SCMB T-Shirt: (cont'd)**

Following discussion and noting that some members were absent, it was resolved –

- (a) that the designs be emailed to student members of the Committee, such that each member rank their top three selections and reply to Mark Starkey by 16 August;
- (b) that the results of the poll be advised to members; and
- (c) that the highest ranked design be printed on to t-shirts.

Mark

Members noted a report in the agenda papers of shirt producers and likely costs. Mark indicated that students would be notified of the winning design and approximate cost and be invited to respond (possibly via a Doodle poll) in order for demand to be gauged and production to get underway.

**6. CHEM1020 concerns:**

First year BSc representative, Paige Erpf spoke to the following concerns in relation to CHEM1020 this semester:

- (i) Students had the option of purchasing a course notes booklet, but had found that there was a lack of space to annotate the booklet with their own notes. For example, Powerpoint slides were printed six to the page instead of three to the page. Joe Rothagel undertook to speak to the course coordinator about this.
- (ii) Students had only been told on the Wednesday of the first week of classes that the introductory practical sessions commenced in that week. There was apparently no indication on *mySI-Net* nor on *Blackboard* until mid-week. Some students had missed the class to which they were scheduled and had had to complete a make-up session later. Joe would also investigate this.
- (iii) Students had not been advised of the dates during semester of online quizzes. Paige had received an email that day that advised that the quiz would close in three days' time. She felt that at least a week's notice should be given. It was alleged that the quiz dates were not listed in the course profile. [Subsequent to the meeting it was established that the profile states that quizzes would be released in Weeks 4, 8 and 13 and each be available for 48 hours. There had also been two announcements about the Week 4 quiz in Week 3 – one by email on the Monday to all students in the course and one on *Blackboard*. Students had been advised in the first lecture to monitor *Bb* for updates.]

Joe

Joe

**7. Student testimonials:**

Chris Weir suggested that testimonials from students enrolled in the School's postgraduate coursework programs be published. Patrick Fortuna responded that he was the subject of a testimonial on the Faculty of Science webpage.

Mark Starkey advised that testimonials were collected at the University, Faculty and School level for particular publications/webpages. Patrick's testimonial had been produced at the Faculty level, in relation to the recruitment of international students to the University. The School had published a number of testimonials for undergraduate, honours and PhD students and graduates and had been waiting for the production of a postgraduate coursework (PGCW) prospectus by the Faculty of Science, which was supposed to include student testimonials. However production was on hold. Mark agreed to follow up Chris's suggestion with the School's Engagement Coordinator. In response to Mark's approach, Chris said that he would be willing to provide a testimonial for the MMolBiol.

Mark

**8. Next meeting:**

Members did not discuss the timing of the next meeting, but at least one more meeting would be held before the end of semester.

Mark

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