

Meeting 1/14

29 April 2014

For general publication

Present: Prof Paul Young (in the chair), Dr Denise Adams (minutes), Ms Farah Azme, Prof Ross Barnard (by invitation), Mr Alex Booy, Ms Paige Erpf, Ms Tammie Fair, Ms Anna Kretowicz, Ms Mariska Marnane, Mr Ashish Moraes, Ms Maany Ramanan, Dr Susan Rowland, Miss Rose Trappes, Mr Alan Zhang.

ACTION

Apology: Nil.

Welcome: New members were welcomed to the committee and continuing members were welcomed back. Ross Barnard was welcomed to this particular meeting. Each member introduced themselves.

Minutes: Minutes of the meeting 8 October 2013, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

1. Terms of Reference:

Members were referred to the terms of reference and mode of operation of the committee and its membership for 2014, as set out in the agenda papers (and viewable on the School's website).

Susan Rowland noted that evaluation instruments, such as SECaTs would often highlight issues that students had with courses.

Rose Trappes reported that student concerns were often posted on Facebook and that these matters could be brought to the committee.

2. Election of Chairperson and Provision of Secretarial Support:

It had been foreshadowed in the agenda papers, circulated ahead of the meeting, that the advisory group's chairperson be elected from the student members. Following a call for nominations in the meeting, two candidates, Rose Trappes and Paige Erpf nominated themselves. A vote was held and Rose was elected as the chairperson and Paige as the deputy chair.

Members noted that Denise Adams would provide secretarial support to the committee.

3. Business Arising out of the minutes:

3.1 Molecular Design contest

Members noted that a molecular design contest had been held in 2013, run jointly by the CSAG (formerly Coursework Students Consultative Committee, CSCC) and the Molecular Biotechnology Students Association.

Members noted that students enrolled in BIOC2000/3000/6007/7004 had been invited to make their designs with a caption, with entries to be voted on by staff structural biologists.

Members noted that despite promotion, only one entry was received. The prize sponsors had agreed that the entry was good and had awarded the prize. The entry had been publicised as a poster, slide on School video screens and a story on the School web news page.

Members were invited to consider whether the competition should be re-run.

Rose Trappes reported that last year had been the first time that the competition had been run and noted that the email was sent out to students quite late into the semester. Rose recommended that the email be sent at the beginning of May and that the deadline for submission be at the end of May. Students from BIOC2000, BIOC3000, BIOC6007 and BIOC7004 should be emailed. Rose suggested that the competition should be promoted via the Science Undergraduate Student Society Facebook page.

Denise

Paige Erpf suggested that the prize should be upgraded to a Gold Class Movie ticket to attract students' attention. Rose suggested that the email to students should include the fact that participation in the competition or winning the competition could be added to a student's CV.

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3. Business Arising out of the minutes: (continued)

3.2 Undergraduate discipline mixer events

Members noted that the inaugural events had been held in Week 12 in second semester 2013. This had been later than desired due to the suggestion to hold the events only arising mid-year, together with the lead time to organise the events and the need to fit them around other School activities. Notwithstanding, attendances were moderately good.

A review by the Teaching & Learning Committee had suggested that besides holding the events earlier in second semester, more current Honours and RHD students who had completed their undergraduate BSc at UQ-SCMB be invited to participate.

Members agreed with a proposal to hold these events in about week 2 of second semester.

Alex Booy reported that he had attended the 2013 events.

3.3 NMR and mass spectrometry training for biochemistry students

Members noted that the Teaching and Learning Committee meeting of 25 March 2014 had discussed how biochemistry students were introduced to NMR and mass spectrometry techniques.

Rose Trappes reported concerns in the CSAG meeting of 4/13 that learning the techniques only in third year was not ideal, when the focus should be on the understanding the biology, including by applying the techniques.

Susan Rowland reported that CHEM2054 contained NMR practical skills, CHEM2050 contained NMR theory and CHEM1200 introduced the idea of NMR.

Paul Young advised that the BSc review would examine course content. Paul added that there had been an expansion of student offerings over the years. Susan suggested that there needed to be more compulsory courses in the BSc majors. Rose noted that she expected the rules to make important courses mandatory, and Susan noted that many courses were offered due to a wide range of student interests.

Ross Barnard reported that the Australian University Teaching Committee had surveyed industry and industry wanted chemistry skills to be retained, especially the analytical and numerical skills of chemistry.

Paige Erpf reported that the BIOC3000 included a practical designed to help students understand NMR. Paige had felt under-prepared having not done the core chemistry courses.

Alan Zhang reported that he had been introduced to spectroscopic methods while studying the core chemistry courses.

3.4 BIOT2002/6006 Plasmid assignment

At meeting 4/13, members had discussed the plasmid assignment which required deconstruction of the intellectual property (patents) in a plasmid. Students had felt they lacked the background to successfully complete this assignment.

Ross Barnard, as course coordinator, reported that the course did not assume any prior knowledge or require prior legal knowledge. Students received four introductory lectures in the first two weeks of the course (in the fourth lecture, assignment guidelines were explained, while basic concepts were still fresh), then there were two, more advanced level lectures. This was followed by a library workshop in week 4 (which reiterated the basic principles of lectures in weeks 1 and 2 and students were shown how to use relevant databases). There was an online sBLI (developed with assistance of TEDI), to support the assignment.

Ross noted that the course had a high proportion of grades of 6 and above in the patent assignment, so the students had appeared to manage reasonably well, despite their initial apprehension.

Tammie

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3. Business Arising out of the minutes: (continued)

3.4 BIOT2002/6006 Plasmid assignment (continued)

Ross reported that tutorials and SBLi sessions had previously been run for postgraduate students, but now undergraduate students enrolled in BIOT2002 would be invited to attend these sessions.

4. Science Undergraduate Student Society:

Members were asked to consider if they would like a member of the SUSS Executive to come along to a meeting and talk about SUSS's role and activities. Members agreed that this was a good idea.

5. Master of Biotechnology Project:

Maany Ramanan reported that a few students from Master of Biotechnology program had raised questions regarding their ongoing projects at various institutes affiliated with UQ.

They had felt that regular contact between the non-SCMB supervisor and the academic supervisor was important. The students felt that regular contact was essential for the supervisor to understand the assessment requirements of the students as well as their other commitments.

Maany went on to say that students doing a 4 unit project were also required to complete their course assessments on time and hence were usually incapable of staying in the lab all week. However the supervisors in most cases were not aware of this and expected the students to come to lab regularly. This had put pressure on most students, especially in recent weeks.

Maany suggested that a regular rapport between the academic and non-SCMB supervisors regarding how much wet-lab work was feasible in the given span of time would assist. The communication could either be independent, without involving the student, or vice versa depending on their agreement. Working intensively on the project was a good practice, but most of the students involved felt that this may hinder their scores in the other courses.

Ross Barnard responded that the program administrator sent supervisors an email outlining the project requirements. Ross recommended that in addition to this, the electronic course profile (ECP) should be printed and handed to the project supervisor at the start of the semester. Ross noted that the projects were well defined but that project supervisors were not aware of this (n.b. 2 units = 2 days/week, 4 units = 4 days/week). Ross undertook to formalise the requirements by modifying the ECP and ensuring that students met with their supervisors and discussed the requirements.

6. BIOC3000 Practicals:

Paige Erpf reported that some students had raised questions about the BIOC3000 practicals. She reported that the first practical this semester had finished 30 minutes later than scheduled. The practical had involved students rotating through the different activities and a slower group had meant that there were hold ups. Paige suggested that the rotations could be timed to prevent this from happening.

Paige reported that important worksheets were distributed during the practical. She thought it would be better for students to be given these in advance so that they could revise the information and equations on the worksheet.

Susan Rowland reported that she planned to run focus groups at the end of the semester to see where BIOC3000 practicals could be improved. Paige reported that the course lectures and lectorial were excellent.

Denise

Ross
Tammie

Susan

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7. Assignment Submission Times:

Rose Trappes asked if assignment submission times could be changed. She suggested that the hard copy should be submitted by 3 pm and the online version deadline should be midnight. Susan Rowland undertook to investigate this and report back.

Susan

8. Next meeting:

The next meeting was scheduled for 1.00pm, Tuesday 3 June (Week 13), 2014.

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