SCHOOL OF CHEMISTRY & MOLECULAR BIOSCIENCES
RESEARCH STUDENTS CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Meeting 1/11 15 April 2011 For general publication

Present: Mr Nathan Bachmann, Ros Boulton (by invitation for Item 8), Prof Melissa Brown, Mr Simon Chen, Mr Lucas Goh, Dr Lisbeth Grondahl, Mr Russel Lee, Ms Carly Lim, Mr James Ross, Mr Mark Starkey (in the chair until Item 4), Ms Pegah Varamini, Miss Lucy Weaver (in the chair from 5), Miss Ania Wronski.

Apologies: Nil.

Welcome: Mark Starkey and Melissa Brown welcomed members to the first meeting of the Committee for 2011. Four of the student members were continuing from 2010, so that there was a good mix of continuing and new members.

1. Terms of reference and membership composition:
   Members noted the terms of reference, mode of operation, and membership composition of the Committee, viewable on the School’s public website.
   In terms of the operation of the Committee, it was anticipated that discussions would be open and relatively informal.

2. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2010:
   Those who had been present at the meeting agreed that the minutes were a true reflection of the business conducted, and so the minutes were confirmed.

3. Business arising out of the minutes (not elsewhere listed in the agenda):
   RHD information session
   Members noted that an information session for new RHD students had been held 31 March.
   [At the December 2010 meeting it had been suggested that, besides an information session for prospective RHD students in August or September, a preliminary information session be held in March or April for current Honours students in terms of what they would need to accomplish to be competitive for a RHD scholarship. Due to RHD Administrator, Jill Sheridan’s, absence on long service leave, this had not been followed up. It is suggested that Lisbeth and Jill consider whether such a session could still be held in 2011.]

   Honours and RHD applications for 2011
   Members were reminded that, at the December meeting, figures for commencing Honours and RHD students in the School had been considered. At the time, it was reported that 39 new students had enrolled for the February 2011 Honours intake in the disciplines of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences. Mark Starkey reported that the updated figure at early April, now including Biotechnology, was 84, made up of 12 Chemistry, 36 Molecular Biosciences and 36 Biotechnology.
   Noting that RHD enrolments were increasingly international, but somewhat dependent on scholarship support, Melissa Brown had asked Jill Sheridan to find out what support, if any, other Schools offer for co-funded scholarships. Mark reported that Jill had found from a quick survey of Schools comparable to SCMB that supervisors are expected to cover the cost of the School’s component of a living stipend from sources available to them, but that on occasion (and at the Head of School’s discretion), the School budget may cover some or all of that component.
   Mark added that, at the School Executive Committee meeting of 8 April, it had been resolved that SCMB would make provision in its budget for up to four co-contributions, with supervisors, towards living stipends for international students awarded a UQ International (UQI) scholarship, per year, along with a to-be-determined number of ‘near-miss’ living stipend scholarships for domestic and/or international students who were assessed to be high quality, but had just missed out on an Australian Postgraduate Award, IPRS or UQI scholarship. In the case of international students, award of the stipend would be conditional on award of a fee waiver, or other fee support.

Lisbeth, Jill
3. **Business arising out of the minutes (not elsewhere listed in the agenda):** (cont’d)

**Honours and RHD applications for 2011** (cont’d)

Melissa Brown said that the School was keen to increase the number of Honours and RHD students it enrolled, and she asked members how Honours could be made a more attractive option to undergraduates.

Chemistry Honours representative, Carly Lim, said that she had chosen Honours to enhance her employment options. She felt that the three year bachelor’s degree alone had not provided her with sufficient skills to work professionally as a scientist.

Molecular Biosciences Honours representative, James Ross, had come to UQ from Griffith University, following his supervisor. He felt that UQ’s structured coursework component of the Honours year was superior in that it gave continuous feedback.

Carly said that the Honours Information Week for prospective students had been useful for her, along with lecturers speaking about their research in lectures and offering tours of their labs. James endorsed the value of lab tours for undergraduates.

Melissa invited Carly and James to speak at the 2011 SCMB Honours Information Week later in the year.

Ania Wronski suggested that it was important not to wait until third year to get undergraduates thinking about Honours. The undergraduate research courses and programs in Science could be better promoted. Students on the graduate medical program path could benefit from learning about the alternative path of scientific research. Members acknowledged that there is a fine balance to be struck in using lecture time for what some might regard as providing options information, while others saw as marketing ‘spin’. Additionally, the information was better coming from students talking about their own experience, than from staff.

It was agreed that different information formats might be provided to first and second years respectively. First year students could be provided with general information, while second year students could be given more-specific information about particular research groups, including lab tours. Melissa suggested a series of lunchtime events on the Chemistry Podium at which students could meet members of a particular research group over refreshments and then undertake a lab tour.

It was also agreed that tutors, who were usually RHD students of the School, could talk about their projects at the appropriate time in classes. Many students were unaware that their tutors were undertaking interesting research. (The School might consider this as part of its tutor training.)

4. **Election of Chairperson and appointment of Secretary:**

Mark Starkey advised that the School would prefer that the Committee be chaired by a student member.

Following a call for nominations, Lucy Weaver was elected chairperson and James Ross deputy chairperson.

It was agreed that Mark provide secretarial support to the Committee.

5. **Honours assessment submission arrangements for students based on other UQ campuses:**

James Ross reported that he had received a request from an Honours student based at the UQ Centre for Clinical Research (UQCCR) on the Herston campus that assignments be permitted to be received and date-stamped at the UQCCR reception, for on-forwarding to SCMB. The UQCCR date-stamp would serve as the received date for due-date purposes. This would save students based at UQCCR a special trip to St Lucia. It was understood that School of Biomedical Science students were allowed to lodge at UQCCR by the due date.
5. Honours assessment submission arrangements for students based on other UQ campuses:
(cont’d)

Mark Starkey had spoken to SBMS administration, which had confirmed the arrangement and had advised that submissions were usually received in the School the next working day.

Mark went on to report that he had spoken with the SCMB’s student administration manager, who had suggested that the only problem could be the time taken for submissions to reach St Lucia where there was a tight turnaround time for the processing of the submissions. For example, there may be only one week between ‘Research Proposal’ submission and ‘Research Seminar’ presentations. It was expected that the examiners would have at least read the proposal prior to the seminars.

Lisbeth Grondahl noted that submissions were required to be made electronically via Turnitin. As the electronic version would be received in SCMB by the due date, any delay in the hard copy version reaching the School could be overcome by accessing the electronic version.

It was resolved –
that SCMB Honours students based at UQCCR be permitted to lodge assessment submissions at a designated receipt point at UQCCR by the due date, as if lodgement had occurred at SCMB, provided electronic submission via Turnitin also occurred by the due date.

Lisbeth asked whether the Committee felt that students located off-campus participated sufficiently in the School’s Honours program. Melissa Brown said that most students would have access to seminars at their off-campus location and were required to attend St Lucia for the induction session and proposal and special topics seminars. Accordingly, the requirements of the program would be satisfied.

6. Variations in Honours assessment timing across SCMB disciplines:

Melissa Brown recalled to the meeting that, in 2010, some students had expressed concern that the Honours research proposal for Chemistry students was due substantially later than for Molecular Biosciences students.

Members felt that it was not a concern. Lucas Goh said that he had completed Honours in Biotechnology, which had been different again from Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences in terms of the timing of assessment, yet was administered by the same School. Student members of the Committee agreed that Honours in the different disciplines could be seen as different programs with different requirements. Provided those requirements were clearly set out to students in advance, there was not a problem.

7. Annual SCMB Research Students’ Symposium:

Members noted that the date proposed by the School for the 2011 symposium was Thursday 24 November. The date had been chosen in consideration of second semester exam processing schedules. There were no objections from members of the Committee to the proposed date.

Mark Starkey recommended that an organising committee be formed as soon as possible to commence planning for the event. In 2010, the student members of the RSCC had formed the core organising committee. They had been assisted by other RHD students and had been able to call on staff members of the RSCC and Jill Sheridan for advice.

It was suggested that the 2011 organisers refer to the minutes of meetings of the RSCC in 2010 for organising hints. Resources, in the form of documents from student organisers of previous years symposia, were also available from Jill Sheridan, the School’s Research & Research Training Administrative Coordinator.
7. Annual SCMB Research Students’ Symposium: (cont’d)

Members of the 2010 Committee were reminded that they had undertaken at the December meeting to write notes summarising their role on the organising committee, with hints and tips for future organisers. Chairperson of the 2010 Committee, Daniel Westlake had agreed to collate the information for Jill to keep on file. Mark reported that he had contacted Daniel in March and April to ask if the collated information was available, but had not heard back. Lucas Goh undertook to follow up with Daniel.

Following further discussion, it was resolved –
(a) that members think about who would make a suitable guest speaker;
(b) that members think about venue and event format; and
(c) that Mark and Lucy prepare a list of tasks related to planning the symposium, for the next RSCC meeting.

8. ‘Class’ photographs

SCMB’s Engagement Coordinator, Ros Boulton, was welcomed to the meeting. She suggested that group and/or individual photographs taken at the start of each year might improve the social interaction within student cohorts. They would also be a useful record for the School in managing its alumni relations into the future. She had obtained a quote from a photograph supplier of $10 per print.

Mark Starkey reported that the Coursework Students Consultative Committee (CSCC) had felt that the idea might appeal to postgraduate coursework students who were in relatively small and tight-knit cohorts, as opposed to undergraduates. The representatives of the postgraduate coursework students were canvassing fellow students regarding interest in print photos. Generally however, CSCC members had felt that free electronic availability of group photos would be more popular.

Mark added that he suspected that Honours and RHD students would feel more affiliation for a particular laboratory than to the group of Honours or RHD students of the School for a given year. Members agreed and the Head of School expressed strong support for lab group photos. Ania Wronski further suggested that lab group photos, together with some words about the research themes of each group, could be posted on the walls outside undergraduate teaching laboratories as a way to generate interest in further studies.

It was resolved –
that members check with their lab colleagues on the level of interest in lab group photos, including the print-for-sale option.

9. Next Meeting:

It was agreed that the next meeting be held in mid-May.