**Present:** Mr Nabil Alikhan (in the chair), Mr Jed Burns, Ms Lena Daumann, Mrs Chandhi Goonasekera, Assoc Prof Lisbeth Grondahl (till part way through item 1), Mr Hamish Kelly, Ms Rhiannon Monдав, Ms Katie Nichols, Miss Talia Pettigrew, Ms Sohinee Sarkar, Ms Jill Sheridan (minutes).

**Apologies:** Prof Melissa Brown, Mr Mark Starkey, Mr Mohammed Alaidarous. Miss Kylie Agnew-Francis, Ms Talia Pettigrew.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the meeting held 26 October 2012, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed.

## Business arising out of the minutes:

### RHD Forums

A survey of workshop attendees is in progress. Results will be reported at the next meeting.

### Making Turnitin available to RHD and Honours students – creation of RHD student community in Blackboard

Lisbeth Grondahl confirmed that use of *Turnitin* was not compulsory for thesis submission but that students could choose to use it for their thesis drafts if they wished.

At present, *Turnitin* was compulsory only for confirmation reports. The School did not monitor these reports, but it was a condition of passing confirmation that the principal advisor had done so. The idea was to use it as a teaching tool so that students could understand how to avoid unintended plagiarism.

Nabil Alikhan felt that *Turnitin* was useful to check for accidental plagiarism and that there should be a stronger emphasis on using it for thesis submission. Members generally agreed.

Lisbeth noted that students had to be re-enrolled in Blackboard at the start of each year to access *Turnitin*. She would send out an email to RHD students in the new year to remind them that *Turnitin* was available for them to use.

### Social event for Science RHD students:

Members agreed that a social event would be a good idea, but would prefer to hold it in the new year. A visit to the *Pizza Caffe* and a movie was suggested. Lena Daumann would check how much money was left over from the Symposium and a decision would be made in the new year.

1. **Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium:**

Members reflected on the symposium – what worked, what didn’t and what should be recorded for future organisers. The symposium task list discussed at Meeting 7-12 was provided to facilitate the discussion, along with analysis of feedback from the Symposium and from Peter O’Donoghue’s workshop on public speaking.

### POD Workshop for Presenters

Nabil Alikhan tabled the feedback from Peter O’Donoghue’s pre-Symposium workshop which had comprised one session on oral presentation and one on poster presentations. Each session had attracted around 50 attendees, mostly PhD students. Feedback had been very positive, with no criticisms at all.

Prof O’Donoghue’s workshop was one of several that he had been asked to give in the latter part of the year. Although all had been popular and well received, their planning had been somewhat *ad hoc* and it was felt that more thought should go into coordination and timing of such events for next year.
1. **Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium**: (cont’d)

   **POD Workshop for Presenters** (cont’d)

   One suggestion was to organise a short series of events on the lead-up to the Symposium. For example, a weekly workshop could be held in October on different topics relevant to the Symposium. Nabil noted that one respondent had suggested an RHD boot camp for basic information: ‘Stuff I wish people told me from the start’. Katie Nichols reminded members that the Graduate School ran various workshops and professional development sessions during its annual Graduate Student Week. However members felt that Graduate Student events were too generic to be of much use.

   **Sponsorship**

   Sohinee Sarkar reported that sponsors had been impressed by the organisation of the Symposium and by the information and help they had been given, even down to advice to get their lunch early before the rush. Having access to the Engineering Learning Centre had been useful as this had provided a cool place to sit and have lunch.

   Members recommended that next year’s committee start early in contacting sponsors, particularly professional societies, who tended to be less well organised than industry sponsors. Accommodating late sponsorships had caused some problems. Rhiannon Mondav reminded members that society conferences provided a good forum for seeking sponsorships. Nabil pointed out that the Committee had done a great job with this year’s sponsors and that they all wanted to come back next year.

   **Floor plan**

   Attendees had enjoyed the venue. Fitting in the poster boards had been a little tight, but it was suggested that if the same venue is booked next year more wraparound could be accessed on the right hand side.

   **Plenary speaker**

   Feedback on Hugh Possingham’s talk had been very positive; attendees enjoyed the talk.

   **Registrations**

   Rhiannon reported there had been 20 no-shows and estimated attendance at just under 220.

   **Catering**

   Attendees had enjoyed the food and had particularly enjoyed sitting down to eat lunch. Katie Nichols suggested posters could be set up in the lunch room to encourage lunchtime viewing. Nabil suggested allocating a shorter time for the lunch break and perhaps ringing a bell to let people at lunch know the poster session had begun.

   Lena Daumann reported an issue with parking for the caterers. Although it had been confirmed beforehand that there was adequate parking space in the loading bay, the loading bay was filled on the day, so Lena had a last-minute hunt to find somewhere for the caterers to park and unload. She advised next year’s committee to have a fall-back option.

   **Promotion**

   Nabil had charted registrations for the Symposium and for Prof O’Donoghue’s workshop and observed that targeted emails had proved to be the most effective promotional tool, eliciting an immediate response as shown by a spike in enrolments. Posters and a listing in *The Week Ahead* had been less effective, though it was noted that a mention in *The Week Ahead* was free and worth doing as an additional reminder.
Judging

Rhiannon Mondav reported that the judges had been happy with the organisation of the event and the comprehensive information they had been given. However, there had been some issues with consistency in marking and the committee felt this could be improved upon for next year.

Peter O’Donoghue had made some suggestions to normalise the marking. One suggestion was to have a small team of ‘super judges’ who would mark all the posters. However it would not be easy to find staff to take on this task.

The ‘super judges’ could mark a large number of posters if presentations were limited to, say, two minutes per poster. However, members felt that introducing a third style of presentation was not necessarily a good idea, that and two-minute presentations did not reflect what happened at outside conferences.

Another suggestion was to provide a clear guide for judges so they understood the level they were expected to mark to. For example, in a marking scale of 1-to-5, they would be guided to take 3 as the starting point and mark up or down from there. Benchmark examples would be provided to make it clear what was expected of a poster marked 3 out of 5.

The design of the mark sheet had meant judges took up to 10 minutes to mark a poster. This did not leave them much time to confer. A simple mark sheet with more time for communication would be preferable.

Lisbeth Grondahl pointed out that the rankings in different sessions had been fairly consistent, even though the marks were not, and suggested using ranking rather than scores.

Judges had provided written feedback for presenters and members agreed this had been beneficial.

For the future, it was suggested that:
- judges be given a set time to hand in their marks.
- a comment should be added to the mark sheet asking judges to provide early notice if they felt unable to mark particular entries for whatever reason (eg if outside their area)
- a person be assigned to look after the judges on the day.

Presentations

Feedback on the poster presentation had been positive. Respondents said they wanted to see more protein silencing, more chemistry and more medicinal chemistry. Chemists said they wanted more chemistry talks. However, not enough chemists had submitted abstracts. Jed Burns felt this was partly due to normal turnover and that variation from year to year was inevitable. He also noted that a number of chemistry students were bound by commercial in confidence concerns that prevented them from giving presentations on their work.

Ideally, more abstracts would be submitted to give more to choose from. One way to fill the shortfall would be to ask applicants with strong poster submissions to do a talk.

The committee considered whether one extra talk per session could be fitted in if talks were shorter. It was agreed that this could work well, given that the Symposium was meant to be cross-disciplinary and aimed at an intelligent generalist audience. Presenters only need tell one story, the equivalent of one thesis chapter, and not try to cover their whole PhD in one talk.

For next year the website could include quick tips, do’s and don’ts, and a checklist. Speaker packs should emphasise that talks needed to be pitched at an intelligent non-specialist audience and should not be as specialised as ‘conference-level’. Members agreed that learning to communicate to different audiences was a valuable career skill.
1. **Annual SCMB Research Students Symposium:** (cont’d)

   **Presentations** (cont’d)

   Lisbeth confirmed that the Committee was not obliged to give students a spot just because they were due to give a final seminar. It was not appropriate for supervisors to intervene or try and influence the selection process. Selection should be based on merit and should represent a cross-section of the School’s best work.

   The obvious exodus of one lab group in the middle of a session after their colleague had given their talk had caused concern among other attendees who had felt the walkout to be bad form and unfair on the following speaker. Lisbeth pointed out that the chair could set a behavioural expectation at the start of a session.

   The possibility of running split sessions was discussed. However, this was not felt to be in the spirit of the Symposium, since one of its main functions was to bring together the School’s young researchers and represent the mix of disciplines.

   Disparity in the level of help, training and support provided by supervisors became apparent during discussion. Various options were considered. Members agreed that a student self-help group was a great idea.

   Only students enrolled in SCMB could give oral presentations.

   **Prize presentations**

   Opinion was divided on whether it was fair for the same people to get more than one prize.

   **Photographs**

   Lucas Goh would provide Mark Starkey with the photos he had taken at the Symposium.

   **Abstracts**

   Rhiannon Mondav reported that the abstract submission process had been somewhat problematic and editing the booklet had taken longer than expected. Standards had varied considerably and formats not been adhered to, despite the template provided. It was felt that online submission would eliminate a lot of problems. Online submission had been discussed at the start of the year, but had not been followed up. This should be a priority for next year’s team to look into.

   Printing the booklet had been delayed by problems with the abstracts and by late-responding sponsor. Jed Burns suggested that next year’s committee should get quotes for outsourcing the printing.

   Nabil informed members that he had updated the shared drive with the latest documents. He thanked members for their hard work during the year and commended everyone for forming a harmonious and effective team.

2. **Membership:**

   Student members were asked to indicate whether they would like to continue their membership of the Committee for 2013.

   Katie Nichols was willing to continue. Jed Burns would decide in the new year.

   Nabil Alikhan, Lena Daumann, Chandhi Goonasekera, Rhiannon Mondav and Sohinee Sarkar would not be able to continue because of their PhD commitments. Lena and Nabil were willing to help in the early part of the year if needed but would not be available for the Symposium. Hamish Kelly would not be available as he was leaving SCMB.

   Talia Pettigrew and Kylie Agnew-Francis were not at the meeting.
3. Next Meeting:

The date of the first meeting for 2013 is to be advised.

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Mark