1. Welcome:

New members were welcomed to the committee and continuing members welcomed back.

2. Terms of reference and membership/introductions:

2.1. Terms of reference, membership and responsibilities

Members were referred to the terms of reference and mode of operation of the committee and its membership for 2016, as set out in the agenda papers (and viewable on the School’s website). Paul Young reiterated to students that the one of the key roles of the committee was to facilitate two-way communication between staff and students.

Stuart Kellie advised members that they would be tasked with the responsibility of organising the SCMB Research Students Symposium, which would be a major endeavour.

Paul advised that anyone in a leadership role (e.g. chair, deputy chair, social secretary, treasurer and project leaders) will be required to appoint tasks, set completion deadlines and follow up on outstanding tasks. In the event that the member cannot attend a committee meeting, members can nominate a representative to attend on their behalf and update the committee on the project.

2.2. Membership

Each member introduced themselves, with staff members explaining their role on the committee.

2.3. Election of office bearers and provision of secretarial support

It had been foreshadowed in the agenda papers, circulated ahead of the meeting, that the committee’s chairperson be elected from the student members. Following a call for nominations in the meeting, Thisun Piyasena nominated himself for Chair and Melinda Ashcroft nominated for Deputy Chair. Sonya Tadrowski elected to take on the role of secretary for the next meeting, which will be a rotating role amongst members. The nominees were elected unopposed by the student members of the committee.

Abigail Downie will provide overall secretarial support to the committee.

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held 13 November 2015:

The minutes, having been circulated, were taken as read and were confirmed by those who had been present at the meeting.

4. Business arising out of the minutes (note elsewhere listed):

All action items were dealt with in other agenda items, as set out below.

5. Honours and RHD applications and enrolments 2016:

At 15 March 2016 (prior to first semester census date) there were 60 BSc Honours students enrolled (14 Chemistry, 30 Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, 16 Microbiology & Parasitology). This includes students who commenced in second semester 2015.

This compares with 55 students at 31 March 2015 (23 CHEM, 19BMB, 13 MICR/PARA) and 72 students at 31 March 2014 (16 CHEM, 21 BMB, 35 MICR/PARA).
At 15 March 2016 there were 148 RHD students enrolled in SCMB, compared to 159 at the same date in 2015 and 151 in 2014. It was noted that the current RHD enrolment numbers reflected only those students actively enrolled, not those who had submitted their theses.

6. **RHD Forums:**

Stuart Kellie advised that the School is committed to providing research students with professional development and skills training fora. Past events have covered topics such as: how to write a paper; how to prepare a poster; public speaking; where to from here: speakers from industry, academia, government sectors; and how to get a post-doc overseas.

It was reported that there are plans to hold a panel-style careers forum. RHD staff will be arranging guest presenters and confirming a date shortly.

Melinda raised the idea of a grant writing workshop or course. Members agreed that this would be very beneficial. Paul Young agreed and noted that it could also be considered for incorporation into the Honours program. Stuart Kellie would take the idea to the SCMB T&L committee, before proceeding to the SEC.

Members discussed the idea of a School equipment/facilities training course. It was noted that a facilities overview had been held in February for newly commencing honours students, to which RHD students were invited.

Members were invited to think of additional careers forum ideas for the next meeting.

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

The suggested date for the 2016 symposium is Thursday 24th November, noting that the School’s examiner’s meeting will be held on Wednesday 23rd November. This date is equivalent to the same date in the academic calendar as symposia of recent years – i.e. after exam marking but before staff begin to depart for conferences and leave. Members were encouraged to finalise the date as soon as possible.

It was recommended that an organising committee be formed as soon as possible to commence planning for the event. In recent years, the student members of the RSAG had formed the core organising committee. They had been assisted by other RHD students and were able to call on staff members of the RSAG and Jill Sheridan, the School’s Research Administrative Coordinator, for advice.

It was suggested that members refer to the minutes of meetings of the RSAG in previous years for organising hints. Resources, in the form of documents from student organisers of previous years’ symposia, were available on a School file share directory, to which all members would be given access. Members were advised of existing preparations lists and Gantt charts that have been used by previous committees to overview planning.

Members were requested to review material from previous years as preparation for the next committee meeting. At said meeting, members would begin allocating tasks for the 2016 Research Students Symposium. Staff representatives advised members that they should finalise the date, location and plenary speaker for the symposium as soon as possible.

Continuing student committee members commented that action on securing sponsorships should be taken immediately, based on their experience organising the 2015 symposium.

David Poger advised members that sponsors were generally expecting to be approached by students. Paul suggested that members could start contacting sponsors at the end of the year in preparation for the following year’s symposium.

Both Paul and Stuart emphasised to the student representatives not to underestimate the amount of work involved. Imogen noted the importance of all organisers being in attendance on the day.
8. Social events for RHD students:

Imogen advised committee members that the 2015 RSAG had run a number of social activities for Honours and RHD students. The events had been held on the first and third Friday afternoon of each month (as appropriate). Committee members had used a small kitty of money to pre-purchase food and beverages and incidental expenses (e.g. hire of sporting fields). The costs had then been re-couped by charging students pre-set donations in exchange for drinks.

There had also been an inter-school/institute soccer competition and combined AIBN/IMB/SCMB Halloween function that had been well attended.

This year a social club would be formed as a sub-committee of the social committee, to run all research student social events. Imogen explained that the social club had been ratified by UQ clubs and societies and would receive $500 for events. Imogen would be the liaison member between the RSAG committee and the social club.

To establish the club, an initial meeting would be held on Friday 18th March at 4pm, to determine membership, elect representatives, and adopt a constitution. Imogen noted that there would need to be a minimum of 30 people in attendance at the meeting to make the club official.

Imogen questioned whether the RSAG funds currently in the bank account could be transferred to the social club account. Members discussed whether funds would be required for RSAG activities not related to social events. It was confirmed that Symposium-related expenses would be charged to the School up to a point, but it was expected that the majority of costs would be covered by sponsorship raised by the RSAG for the event.

Members agreed that it would be appropriate for the majority of the current funds to be transferred to the social club.

9. Other Business:

9.1 SCMB Student ambassadors

In previous years, a number of members of the RSAG had volunteered to become student ambassadors, becoming involved with engagement events such as:

- Requests from high schools to supply students for short presentations and/or to participate in Q&A panels. (The Head of School had confirmed that the volunteers could use either a School car or School-funded taxi to get to venues such as high schools and back.)
- Help answer questions from prospective students, teachers and parents at events such as the Open Day and Titration competition.
- Providing a statement of one’s experience as a student for promotional publication.

Student members were asked to consider volunteering to be SCMB Student Ambassadors. Names would be passed on to the School Manager, who would contact volunteers about upcoming events. Duin McDiarmid, Imogen Bermingham, Thisun Piyasena, Gabe Foley, Alex Baker, Raine Thomson and Kurt Harris advised that they would like to be considered.

9.2 Printing by honours students

Thisun raised the matter of honours and undergraduate students printing large amounts of documents for their course, and questioned if assessments could be submitted electronically. Paul advised that the matter had been raised with course coordinators.

It was noted that the MBS honours program had switched to electronic only, and the Chemistry honours program had reduced the number of hard copies required for submission.
9.3 Volunteers to review applications

Paul asked the RHD students for a representative to participate in the selection panel for the new biochemistry academic position. The role would involve reviewing and ranking applications, which would lead to interviews. Melinda Ashcroft, Raine Thomson and Thisun Piyasena put their names forward.

Paul would notify the students when a decision had been made on who would participate.

10. Next meeting:

It was agreed that meetings would be held on the third Wednesday of the month in 68-305 (pending availability). The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 20th April.

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