

Meeting 2/20

8 May 2020

For general publication

ACTION

Present: Mr Zakaria Ahmed, Prof Joanne Blanchfield, Miss Julia Buczynski (in the chair), Mr Marley Chia, Mr Eugene Dragut, Ms Tammie Fair, Mr Edgar Goakes (observer), Ms Lucy Holyoak (minutes), Miss Susanna Huang, Miss Harsha Joshi (observer), Ms Varsha Kommajosyula, Miss Cassandra Koumouris, Miss Christina Lee, Mr Lucas Ngo Dee, Miss Khristine Valdellon, Mr Simon Worrall, Ms Xiwen Zhang.

Apologies: Nil.

Absent: Nil.

1. Welcome and apologies:

Joanne Blanchfield welcomed members to the second CSAG meeting of the year and noted there were no apologies. Joanne noted that she would commence the meeting proceedings and that a chair would be nominated to carry out this role for future meetings.

2.1 Terms of Reference:

Joanne referred members to the Terms of Reference.

Joanne explained that the main purpose of the group was for members to assist School staff in gaining opinions and suggestions to improve courses and the student experience.

Joanne noted that positive changes had come directly out of the group and that all suggestions and recommendations were referred directly to the School Teaching & Learning Committee and the Executive Committee which the Head of School attends.

2.2 Membership:

Joanne welcomed all new members to the group.

Joanne explained that members of the UQ Chemistry Club were invited to participate in the group each year as they had a large involvement with the School student cohort.

2.3 Election of Chairperson:

Joanne requested that members self-nominate if they were interested in the role of Chairperson for the meetings in 2020.

Lucas Ngo Dee advised that he was willing to act as Chairperson unless someone else was interested.

Julia Buczynski advised that she would like to nominate for the role of Chairperson.

It was resolved -

that Julia would hold the position of Chairperson for 2020.

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2.4 Election of Secretary:

Julia noted that members were welcome to nominate themselves for the position of Co-Secretary if they had experience in a similar role.

Harsha Joshi and Varsha Kommajosyula nominated themselves for the position of Co-Secretary.

Tammie Fair noted that the nominees should contact Lucy Holyoak for more information on the role of Co-Secretary.

It was resolved -
that Lucy Holyoak would contact Harsha and Varsha via email to provide them with more information on the role of Co-Secretary.

LUCY

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held 26 March 2020:

The minutes of the meeting held 26 March 2020, having been circulated to group members and published on the School website with SCMB constituent students notified via email that the minutes were available, were taken as read and were confirmed by those who had been present.

4. Business arising out of the minutes:

4.1 COVID-19 check-in / Student feedback

Semester two plan

Members confirmed that they had received the Blackboard announcement containing a message from Joanne and Professor James De Voss.

Joanne noted that it may be a good time to create another announcement that included information on the upcoming examinations.

Lucas noted that many postgraduate students had concerns about how research project courses would run in semester two.

Joanne noted that many postgraduate students enrolled in research project courses had been able to continue with their projects in semester one and that it had mostly been students enrolled in research projects with University Institutes who had been affected as many of the Institutes had removed research students from the laboratory. Joanne noted that a decision had been made to remove all undergraduate students from research laboratories for health and safety requirements.

Joanne reported that there had been some changes to how laboratories were operating to meet social distancing requirements (e.g. with a roster) but the University had never implemented a full campus shut down and that it seemed unlikely it would do so.

Simon Worrall noted that the School would be flexible to assist students whose research project had been impacted by COVID-19 and that these students may be offered an alternative assessment plan, such as to complete a mixture of research in conjunction with a literature review. Simon noted that these would be assessed on a case-by case basis.

Tammie noted that all students were encouraged to contact the School at enquiries@scmb.uq.edu.au if they were experiencing any issues.

Joanne explained that the School was currently planning the delivery of courses in semester two and that the School was planning on running courses as a mixture of online learning and on-campus laboratory classes for courses that have a laboratory component. Joanne noted that there was a lot to consider to organise this whilst abiding by social distancing rules.

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Joanne noted that the School was still looking into the possibility of running a laboratory 'boot-camp' over the inter-semester break and summer semester for students to catch up on practical skills.

Joanne noted that the focus was currently to create a plan to get students back on campus safely.

Lucas noted that he would pass this information onto the concerned students.

Online tests/ProctorU

Christina Lee reported that the BIOL1020 Blackboard exam would not allow students to add diagrams as part of their answers. Christina explained that some students find it helpful to use diagrams or drawings to explain and support their answers and are typically able to do so with written exams. Christina enquired whether it would be possible to allow students to add diagrams to their answers in a ProctorU exam.

Joanne encouraged Christina to contact the BIOL1020 Course Coordinator to seek guidance on whether this would be possible in the end of semester examination.

Joanne explained that ProctorU exams are run through the Blackboard quiz tool and are therefore restricted to the capabilities of what a Blackboard quiz will accept. Joanne asked group members to comment on how students felt about ProctorU.

Christina explained that many people had heard stories from students enrolled at other universities that have had problems with ProctorU, primarily interruptions to their exam and not being able to copy and paste diagrams. Christina noted that she did not believe that a ProctorU exam would provide students with the best opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.

Joanne noted that many of the privacy concerns raised by students had been addressed on the UQ ProctorU Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page on the UQ website, which is updated regularly.

Marley Chia noted that there were concerns about the legitimacy of the ProctorU company.

Joanne noted that she is unable to comment on that and encouraged students to refer to the ProctorU FAQ page.

Edgar Goakes noted that the MATH1051 Blackboard exam included a question which allowed students to scan and upload a file.

Joanne encouraged students to address course specific concerns directly with the Course Coordinator.

Student wellbeing

Eugene Dragut noted that some students were struggling with their mental health this semester which had affected their ability to study and complete assessment and had resulted in some students withdrawing from their studies.

Eugene suggested that the next Blackboard announcement message from Joanne and James could include information on the support options available to students.

Joanne agreed that it was a difficult time of the semester and many students did not know that there were support services available to them and that assessment extensions were being applied more generously in the current situation to provide extra support. Joanne noted that every student is in a unique situation and that they should be made aware that the University has services to support them and that withdrawing from their studies should only be done as an absolute last resort.

Tammie enquired whether students were interested in and aware of UQ services such as the UQ Health Clinic Telehealth appointments and UQ Facebooks sites.

Marley noted that this information should be included in the Blackboard announcement if it did not make it too lengthy.

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Marley enquired whether any group members had used these services and could comment on whether they had reasonable availability as UQ counselling services tend to be booked far in advance.

Simon noted that several postgraduate students would usually access these services each semester and seem to be able to book appointments.

Eugene agreed with Simon and explained that there were emergency appointments available if required urgently.

Simon noted that many School academic staff members had completed the Mental Health First Aid Training and could assist students to find support services, particularly in an emergency.

Marley requested that the list of services, academic contacts and options available to students be shared with group members so that it could be disseminated through the student community.

Julia noted that the previous two CHEM2050 online quizzes had been successful which had resulted in improved wellbeing within the cohort.

It was resolved -

that Joanne and James would draft another check-in Blackboard announcement to be published to course sites by Course Coordinators.

JOANNE

4.2 Undergraduate 'Discipline Mixer' event:

Edgar noted that the UQ Chemistry Club would be meeting later in the week to discuss event plans for 2020.

Joanne noted that the RACI QLD branch was running an online quiz night soon and encouraged the club to organise a team to participate in the quiz.

Harsha noted that they would add this to the list of items for discussion.

EDGAR &
HARSHA

Joanne noted that the Head of School was supportive of organising a face-to-face welcome back to campus event by the end of semester two, if possible.

4.3 Laboratory Manual Review:

Joanne noted that the chemistry Course Coordinators were confused by the feedback received regarding ChemWatch at the previous meeting.

Julia noted that the feedback was relevant to the course CHEM2054, not CHEM2050.

Joanne enquired whether students would benefit from a video on how to search for something specific in ChemWatch as the amount of information available can be overwhelming.

Julia noted that the amount of information available in search results can cause confusion as students do not know which information to reference.

Marley noted that a video on how to navigate through the search function of ChemWatch would be helpful.

Harsha noted that it would be useful to include information on how to check if the solution was correct for what the student was looking for as there are often several options to choose from.

It was resolved -

that Joanne and Lucy would contact the CHEM2054 Course Coordinator and Scientific Officer with this feedback.

JOANNE & LUCY

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5. Open discussion on ideas on how to engage with and collect feedback from student peers:

Marley noted that he uses the scheduled Zoom tutorials with the Course Coordinator as an opportunity to discuss student feedback and ask questions that are received via Facebook.

Lucas noted that it was more difficult to engage with student peers online than it was in person. Lucas encouraged group members to try to engage with student peers individually as each person has a unique perspective and experience.

Julia agreed that it was more challenging to connect online and suggested hosting a Zoom session as an opportunity for students to provide feedback.

Marley noted that he was planning on organising a Zoom session for student feedback.

Joanne noted that students would need to ask the Course Coordinator to create a Zoom meeting link, make the student the host and share the meeting link on the Blackboard site. Joanne noted that the Course Coordinator did not need to be present for the Zoom meeting.

Joanne requested that group members inform their student peers that academic staff were very concerned with the low attendance at online classes and had serious concerns that students would not perform well on the final exams if they did not engage with these sessions.

Marley noted that this may be due to students falling behind on lectures and course content and may not see the value of going to a tutorial if they were not familiar with the content yet. Marley noted that it is much more difficult to keep up with course content in the online learning environment and that recording tutorials may be helpful for students who are catching up.

Joanne noted that the main concern was that students were falling behind and that additional tutorials would be run during the extra teaching weeks at the end of semester.

Julia agreed with Marley and noted that Zoom tutorial attendance was very poor, especially for courses that did not have intermittent assessment or exams.

Harsha noted that the UQ Chemistry Club could assist with communicating this information to students.

Christina noted that the CHEM1100 Piazza platform has been useful in gaining feedback from academics, however, many students were not aware that it existed until an announcement was sent out recently.

Joanne noted that she will pass this feedback onto the CHEM1100 Course Coordinator.

JOANNE

Khristine Valdellon noted that it could be more challenging for academics to answer questions in Zoom tutorials without being able to draw diagrams and that this may be affecting student attendance.

Joanne noted that the School had been investigating whether academics could present lectures live on Zoom from lecture theatres so that they could use the visualiser to answer questions.

Julia noted that there could also be Zoom tutorial clashes where some courses were not sticking to their original timetable, which resulted in students having to choose which class to attend.

Christina noted that many students were trying to stick to their original class timetable for structure and may not attend a class if it had been moved to another day and time, especially if this caused clashes.

Joanne noted that this should not happen as all courses should be sticking to their original timetable. Joanne enquired whether students would feel uncomfortable asking questions during a Zoom tutorial if they knew it was being recorded.

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Members agreed that this was unlikely to prevent students from asking questions.

Simon noted that Veterinary Science courses had decided against recording tutorials as they believed it would impact on student participation.

Marley noted that not all courses are the same and it was a decision that should be made on a course-by-course bases.

Eugene noted that students had been taking the initiative to find alternative ways to learn and connect with peers via private chat groups which academics would not be aware of.

Joanne encouraged members to organise Zoom meetings to connect with their student peers to collect feedback.

6. Other business/open discussion:

Cassandra Koumouris enquired whether the group could look at ways to encourage student participation and increase morale.

Joanne noted that this was the role of the UQ clubs and societies, and that people tend to stay motivated by interacting with others, which was more difficult at the moment.

Harsha noted that many clubs were hosting 'study with me' and 'home workout' sessions to keep people motivated and energised.

Joanne encouraged members to spread the message that students would be able to study on-campus next semester if they were able to attend and so long as the government did not introduce any policies that would affect this.

Christina noted that there had been confusion amongst interstate students about whether they would need to return to Brisbane if the courses were being offered online.

Joanne reported that the majority of courses would be offered fully online for students who were studying remotely, however, some courses with core laboratory components may be restricted to students who could attend campus.

Marley suggested that this point be included in the Blackboard announcement.

Lucas enquired as to what approvals were required for organising student surveys.

Simon stated that there can be a lot of paperwork involved to gain ethics clearance, however, if it was a survey made by students for other students and the data was not for publication then it may be a simpler process. Simon recommended that Lucas Cc's Dr Justin Ridge into any emails regarding a student survey as Justin has experience with these.

Joanne noted that all students should have received an invitation to participate in a university-wide PULSE feedback survey from ITaLI and encouraged students to complete the survey.

7. Next meeting:

The next meeting will be held at 1pm on Thursday 27 August 2020. An update on how this meeting will run (online or in person) will be provided closer to this date.

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