

Meeting 1/22

8 April 2022

For general publication

ACTION

Present: Ms Kusumitha Shrinivasan (Chair), Mr Zakaria Ahmed, Miss Faith McKay, Miss Rebecca Leonard, Mr Ben Smith (minutes), A/Prof Nick West, Dr Simon Worrall.

Apologies: Mr Vishaak Gangasandra, Ms Phuong Nguyen, Miss Madeline Thompson, Miss Brooke Thorpe, Miss Thu Vy Tran, Mr Jinyang Yang.

Absent: Nil.

1. Welcome and apologies:

Nick West welcomed members to the first CSAG meeting of the year and noted the apologies.

Nick preceded over agenda items 1 to 3 as the acting Chairperson and facilitated the nomination of the new Chairperson for 2022.

2. Recognition:

An Acknowledgment of Country was spoken by the Chairperson, in recognition of the traditional owners of the land on which the meeting was taking place.

3. Terms of Reference and Membership/Introductions:

Kusumitha Shrinivasan volunteered to chair the 2022 meetings, and was accepted by the other members.

Nick West receded from the Chair. The remainder of the meeting was presided by Kusumitha.

Kusumitha outlined the terms of reference and membership of the group.

Ben Smith stated that the Chemistry Club had been invited to send a representative to attend the meeting, but no correspondence had been received. It was noted that the Chemistry Club would be invited to send a representative to future meetings in 2022.

4. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held 15 October 2021:

The minutes of the meeting held 15 October 2021, 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.

5. Art of Science Competition:

Ben Smith confirmed that nine entries had been received for 2021. The winning entries were currently being finalised, and winners would be notified shortly.

Kusumitha Shrinivasan confirmed that the Art of Science Competition would be run in 2022, with entries closing 30 November.

Kusumitha suggested widespread advertising through Science clubs and societies to drive for higher engagement in 2022.

Ben clarified that 2022 materials were currently in production, and following the finalisation of these materials advertising could begin.

Meeting 1/22

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6. Other business/open discussion:

Kusumitha Shrinivasan expressed a general sentiment from Master of Biotechnology students that a greater emphasis and availability of courses with a lab component was desirable.

Simon Worall clarified that BIOC6017 Introduction to Molecular Biology Laboratory and BIOC7001 Advanced Molecular Biology Laboratory were open to Master of Biotechnology students. For 2022 these courses would only be available in semester 2, but commencing 2023 these courses would be available in both semesters as part of an overhaul of the School's postgraduate coursework programs. Simon also outlined courses run by other Schools available under the Master of Biotechnology program that contained a lab component.

Kusumitha clarified that including a practical component in core courses in the Master of Biotechnology would be beneficial to the cohort to maximise their lab based experience.

Nick West undertook to pass this feedback to the Director of Biotechnology.

Nick

Kusumitha shared the difficulties students have had understanding the information about course offerings presented on the program information page, and queried if there was any way to improve the presentation of this information.

Ben Smith noted that the presentation of course lists and offerings was largely governed by University wide systems and guidelines that impose restrictions on the way this information is displayed.

Zakaria Ahmed commented that the course information displayed for continuing students in his cohort was very different to the information given to commencing students, which is a direct example of the type of confusion the course and program websites can cause.

Zakaria agreed with Kusumitha's sentiment that a greater focus on lab content in the Master of Biotechnology program would be beneficial.

Nick asked the first year representatives how they had found the transition from high school to University.

Rebecca Leonard answered that the level of support offered by the University was higher than anticipated, but students need to be self directed in engaging with these services. One notable challenge many students had faced was moving from entirely in person examinations to online examinations. Students had found the recent mid-semester examinations challenging.

Nick explained that fully online assessment was primarily introduced by necessity when COVID forced the majority of coursework to be conducted online, but it was likely that future semesters would have a greater focus on campus based examinations. Nick continued that practice examinations had been set up before online examinations so students could become familiar with the format and expectations of the examination.

Rebecca clarified that a practice mid-semester examination was offered, but the practice examination contained substantially less questions than the main examination so time pressures around exam completion and uploading were not as apparent.

Faith McKay mentioned that in previous years there had been some scope for students outside of honours programs to take honours courses but this was no longer permitted. Faith questioned if this is a School/Faculty level decision, or University wide.

Simon clarified that this was likely a University wide policy based on the introduction of new program framework policies, but this was less of an issue in the School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences courses where Honours courses were already restricted to Honours students.

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Zakaria shared that his first year experience commencing in 2020 was very different to how things are now. Before the pandemic almost everything was on campus, and the transition to online coursework came in very quickly. This was particularly difficult for external students.

Kusumitha shared that she also commenced studies in 2020, and that the avenues for sharing feedback had improved greatly since then.

Nick reiterated that the University was moving back to primarily on campus study with the majority of courses in semester 2, 2022 only being offered internally.

Rebecca noted that most academic integrity resources available were focussed on assignments rather than examinations, so additional materials covering examination conduct would be useful.

7. Next meeting:

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 12 May at 1pm in Building 68, Room 306.

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