

**Faculty Education Committee (FEC)**

Faculty of Natural Sciences

DATE: Wednesday 29 November 2017

TIME: 12:00 – 14:00

LOCATION: Council Room, 170 Queens Gate

**Confirmed Minutes**

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**1. Welcome and Apologies**

**Present**

Prof Emma McCoy	vice-Dean (Education) FoNS (Chair)
Dr Donald Craig	DUGS Chemistry
Dr Huw Williams	DUGS Life Sciences
Dr David Evans	DUGS Mathematics
Dr Robert Forsyth	DUGS Physics
Dr James Wilton-Ely	Chemistry PGT Representative
Dr Niki Gounaris	Life Sciences PGT Representative
Dr Mike Tennant	CEP Representative
Dr Ryan Barnett	Physics PGT Representative
Mr Abhijay Sood	RCSU Academic Affairs Officer
Mr Luke McCrone	GSU President
Mr Nicholas Burstow	Deputy President (Education), IC Student Union
Ms Moira Sarsfield	Senior Learning Technologist
Prof Jonathan Mestel	College Consul, Mathematics
Ms Kate Ippolito	Educational Development Unit (EDU) Representative
Dr Anita Hall	Faculty Senior Tutor
Mr Will Bennett	Information and Communication Technologies
Dr Felicitas Starr-Egger	CLCC representation
Mrs Rebecca Middleton	Faculty Education Manager
Mr Scott Tucker	Registry Representative

**Apologies**

Prof Lesley Cohen	College Consul, Physics
Ms Nazia Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer
Prof Stefan Maier	Physics PGT Representative

**In attendance:**

Ms Bethan Johnson	Administrative Assistant, FoNS
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**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Minutes from the FoNS Education Committee (NSEC) held on **27<sup>th</sup> September 2017** were agreed as an accurate record and the Action Tracker was updated.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

Actions 2-4 from the Action Tracker were noted as complete.

Action 1- RM reminded members to send through any comments on the proposed Examination Timetabling Policy.

## **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **4. Programme modifications**

**4.1.** The committee considered the proposal from the **Department of Physics** for a major modification to the **MSci Physics with a Year in Europe** programme, to transform the programme into a **Year Abroad**, in anticipation of the planned introduction of an exchange programme with MIT. It was noted that a change in degree title is a major modification.

Subject to Programmes Committee's approval, the committee supported the proposals.

RF to communicate with registry (Men-Yeut Wong) before moving forward to programmes committee.

Options for admissions were discussed and it was noted that it might be preferable for students to apply to the generic MSci Physics and to compete an internal transfer onto the Year Abroad programme, rather than to apply direct, as there will be limited places available for MIT exchange students and these cannot be guaranteed at the point of admission.

DE noted that the Department of Maths would like to complete a similar modification to the Department of Physics with their current Year in Europe programme.

KI recommended adding a reflective component to the project, which could be built into the word. HW noted that DoLS have an existing cultural report writing exercise incorporated, which provided a helpful perspective on the environment and helped students to settle in. This has received positive student feedback, and is completed midway through the year. RF to take this back to the Physics Teaching Committee, who may want to include a similar requirement, although possibly not as a formal assessment.

EMc noted that in terms of the MIT exchange, issues around health insurance for outgoing students and guaranteed halls accommodation places for incoming MIT students still needed to be addressed by the International Office.

RF noted the modified programme spec included in the paper.

### **5. Student exchange partnerships**

**5.1.** The committee considered proposals from the **Department of Mathematics** to renew exchange partnerships with:

- Institut Polytechnique de Grenoblen, Grenoble, France [**NSEC.2017.22**]
- Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany [**NSEC.2017.23**]
- Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain [**NSEC.2017.24**]

Subject to Programmes Committee's approval, the committee supported the proposals.

**5.2.** The committee considered proposals from the **Department of Chemistry** to renew exchange partnerships with:

- Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain [**NSEC.2017.25**]

- Ecole Supérieure de Physique et de Chimie Industrielles de Paris, Paris, France [NSEC.2017.26]
- Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Universität Hannover, Hannover, Germany [NSEC.2017.27]  
It was noted that, though some students had come to Imperial, no Imperial students have been to Hannover in a while. However it was decided to maintain the exchange as it could prove a useful link for future exchange.
- Universiteit Leiden, Leiden, The Netherlands [NSEC.2017.28]

Subject to Programmes Committee's approval, the committee supported the proposals.

## 6. PRES 2017 – Faculty Education Committee Report and Action Plan [NSEC.2017.29]

The committee noted the PRES report and Action plan as prepared by Nazia Hirjee.

RM requested that any comments on the document be sent to her by Weds 6<sup>th</sup> December, in time for the final document to be considered by the FoNS Management Committee to be held on 12 December.

***ACTION: All to send any comments on the PRES Report to RM by 6/12/17***

It was noted that some adjustments had been made to Faculty Research SSC membership. Both FoNS vice-Deans will attend these meetings from now on. It was also noted that the Graduate School are represented at the SSC, but that their focus was to provide training and professional development to students, they are not responsible for general student experience related matters.

## 7. Undergraduate Annual Monitoring Reports- [NSEC.2017.30]

The Chair asked each DUGS to briefly introduce their Annual Monitoring reports, and asked them to specifically focus on their NSS feedback and response, and External Examiner reports. The committee approved the Reports for Chemistry, Life Sciences and Mathematics. The Chair requested that the report for Physics be submitted by Monday 11 December.

### 7.1. Chemistry [NSEC.2017.31]-

DC noted that External Examiners had commented on the opacity of awarded marks, particularly in projects, and had identified that there were insufficient comments to underpin the marks awarded. It was also noted that with exam scripts, ticks and numerical values throughout the script did not always seem to correlate with the overall mark awarded.

Year 2 students in Chemistry clearly struggled to a greater extent than anticipated with the new-style 'synoptic' exams which took place in June 2017, and this led to a significant proportion of the cohort expressing their concerns through an unofficial survey carried out in July by a member of the year group.

One recurrent theme was the lack of preparation opportunities for the new format of exam assessment, and to address this going forwards a series of workshops will be held across the three Chemistry sub-disciplines during the first week of the spring term for all of the 2017-2018 year 2 group. The balance that teaching staff are seeking is that between drilling questions in preparation for the exams, and encouraging a broader and more holistic understanding of the subject. The students are being strongly encouraged to come to these sessions, and they're

being made aware that attendance at the workshops will be recorded. Attendance at small-group problems sessions held during the autumn term 2017–2018 has been variable and in some cases disappointing.

More data is hoped to be collected from the Wellbeing Rep Meeting [13.12.2017] to gain further insight into improving NSS scores.

External Examiners do not comment on NSS scores, but have noted that they would like to meet with a wider range of students.

## **7.2. Life Sciences [NSEC.2017.32]**

HW noted a marked increase in the number of First Class awards, from 29 -47%.

HW noted the ongoing discussion over the weighting of Y1, expressing concerns that having the first year count towards the degree classification may disadvantage some students. EMc noted that potential changes to year weightings are currently being discussed (Y1 weighting currently stands at 11% across FoNS). New regulations are currently being written, with Judith Webster from Registry consolidating the work done within the Task and Finish Groups, and will be circulated for wider consultation in January.

In terms of the NSS, HW noted a focus on the quality of feedback quality with an initiative on reflective feedback - building reflection into the course, and encouraging students to reflect on feedback from a piece of coursework before they submit the next piece.

An Assessment feedback workshop for academics had also been set up, with a focus on sharing good practice. This would be available via Panopto to all staff in the dept.

HW noted a positive correlation between electronic marking and the regularity of feedback, also noting there has been a significant increase in the amount of coursework that is being electronically marked.

HW reported that, within their space constraints, Life Sciences are proactively addressing concerns over the lack of community in the department. This has included encouraging staff and peer group interaction, and providing course convenors with a budget for social activities to enable interaction with students in an informal manner.

HW also noted DoLS are hoping to reintroduce Teaching Best Practice workshops, linked to teaching and feedback, which would be held of the same day as Staff Meetings to encourage attendance and would include Silwood-based staff.

## **7.3. Mathematics [NSEC.2017.33]**

DE noted that following the NSS results, feedback and turnaround time have been closely monitored this term, although the 'Traffic-Light' system had not been adopted.

Exam scripts are now available for all students to view. The Department is currently consulting with students to help address concerns over stress levels during second year exams, proposing to spread out their exams – rooms permitting.

DE noted that as part of the development of a sense of community in the department, a series of talks given by staff to students about their careers and research was being organised.

DE also noted that the Department had two undergraduate liaison officers.

#### **7.4. Physics [NSEC.2017.34] - (*Paper pending/ Verbal Update RF*)**

RF noted the number of First Class degrees awarded this year was significantly higher (51% compared to the lower half of 40%), due to graduate classes coming from two different cohorts, with grades being consistent with second year.

It was noted that more consistency on from markers and the scale of detail provided, with question setting and feedback from externals, and better care to be taken in the setting of level in the first instance, and the subject range.

Good practice: improving transparency in project marking – where markers disagree and feedback on reaching an agreement, Comprehensive papers, and more innovative elective courses which are not traditionally examined anymore - more alternative assessment forms.

RF reported a number of initiative in response to NSS feedback, including: recruitment of a student liaison officer; improving lab demonstrator training; and Year 4 UG students acting as demonstrators on 1<sup>st</sup> year lab course – which has been well received.

#### **8. Postgraduate Entry Requirements 2019-20 [NSEC.2017.35A/B]**

The list of Postgraduate Entry Requirements was considered and the highlighted changes noted.

#### **9. Short Course Annual Monitoring [NSEC.2017.36]**

The Short Course Annual Monitoring document was noted.

#### **10. Standing items**

##### **10.1. Safety – verbal update (SH)**

SH reported that the practical laser safety course had been running well with positive feedback.

Silwood- Offsite risk assessment sessions have been arranged for Masters courses at Silwood.

SH noted that at the beginning of term, lecture theatres for induction sessions were over occupied with individuals having to sit in stairwells. The maximum capacity should be adhered to, to ensure no issues in the event of a fire evacuation. Depts. need to consider this when planning for the start of term and consider specifying students to attend streaming in other locations where appropriate.

SH noted an incident in a Chemistry lecture where hot water from a flask brought into the LT was spilt on another student. There are 'no eating or drinking signs' in many LTs and computer rooms but they are not enforced. Depts. to consider what they are in place for, and if not needed to remove them.

NG reported that LS UG students are not able to access labs after 1700 and that the HoD was looking into this.

Finally, SH drew the committee's attention to the revised *Guidance on Health and Safety for Principal Investigators Supervising Undergraduate and Masters Student research projects*

[NSEC.2017.37], and encouraged members to forward the guidance to any relevant staff. Main changes relate to lone working in lab areas. For UGs no lone working (as previously). For Masters in some specific cases the flexibility for the Director of PG Studies to approve and permit working without staff supervision has been included.

#### **10.2. Education – verbal update (RM and EMc)**

RM noted that nominations for the *Prizes for Excellence* would open in the New Year, during the first week of term. Nominations will be made through a new Qualtrics survey and not via the College award system.

RM reported that the FoNS MAD Competition 2017 finished in October, the competition will commence again in January 2018.

In the recent Masters and Research Student Staff Committee Meetings, a feeling of lack of community was noted across the Departments, and students stated that they felt it difficult to find out about and access seminars, colloquia etc. offered across the Faculty. RM reported that as a result, a new webpage has been created that brings together links to Department and Graduate Schools events.

RM also noted that research students, with the support of LMc and the GSU, were forming a student led FoNS PG Social Committee, to coordinate their own events. Masters students will be included in this committee.

EMc noted the first pedagogy call for funding and noted that the college wide innovation scheme was due to launch shortly.

It was also noted that the TEF teaching intensity pilot would no longer be within Physics only, but is now planned to cover Engineering. The TEF subject-level pilot will still cover all subjects (*Post-meeting note: Maths will not be included due to lack of ethnicity data*). At this stage, information on metrics and full details of the subject report requirements are still pending.

#### **10.3. Learning Technology Matters – (MS)**

MS reported a new feature in Panopto, which enables students to create videos which can be uploaded to a protected drop box – students are not able to release videos to the wider world, it must be sent to a member of staff who can publish. This feature can be used to share videos with lecturers and by student societies.

MS also reported that video guides about new features in blackboard were made for DOLS students, and could be made available for other depts.

MS noted that a further teaching best practice presentation had been arranged in DoLS – presented different ways of online marking and quizzes for assessment – improve speed/ quality and accessibility of feedback for students. This could also be presented to any other department.

MS noted that work on the process for the 24hour c/w submission ‘grace period’ and how it is dealt with is ongoing.

#### **10.4. FOO – verbal update**

NH was not present, but RM reminded staff to send her any comments on the PRES Report and Action Plan.

#### **10.5. Registry - (ST)**

##### **Postgraduate Annual Monitoring**

The Quality Assurance Team will circulate report templates, guidance and supporting data to Directors of Postgraduate Study (or equivalent) in early January 2018. The FoNS deadline for submitting completed postgraduate annual monitoring reports is Monday 19 March 2018, for consideration at the NSEC to be held in April 2018.

##### **Higher Education and Research Act 2017 - Consultations**

Following the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the Department for Education has released a number of consultation papers, among these are the 'Office for Students: regulatory framework for higher education' and the 'Consultation on the review of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education' (led by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment). The College is drafting responses to the consultations for submission in December 2017.

#### **ITEMS TO NOTE**

##### **11. Minutes of the Previous Meetings of the NSEC Sub-Committees**

The committee noted the minutes from the Masters/ UG Sub-meeting [**NSEC.2017.38A/B**]

##### **12. \*Chair's Report**

The committee noted action taken by the Chair on behalf of the committee regarding:

- Chair's Action- Withdrawal of MSc Physics with Shock Physics [**NSEC.2017.39**]

##### **13. Minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee (PPDC)**

The committee noted the latest minutes from the Graduate School's Postgraduate Professional Development Committee: <\\icfs5g.cc.ic.ac.uk\Registry\10.Committees\PPDC>

##### **14. Minutes from QAEC, Senate and the other Faculties FECs**

The committee noted the latest minutes from the QAEC, Senate and the other Faculties FECs

- <\\icfs5g.cc.ic.ac.uk\Registry\10.Committees>
- <smb://icfs5g.cc.ic.ac.uk/registry/10.committees/> (for Mac users)

##### **15. Any other business**

There was no other business to note.

##### **16. Dates of Future Meetings**

Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018, 12.00-14.00, Council Room, 170 Queen's Gate

Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018, 12.00-14.00, Council Room, 170 Queen's Gate