

Faculty of Natural Sciences Research Student Staff Committee Meeting

Date: 20th November 2017, 12.30-14.00

Venue: Meeting Room: Huxley 342

MINUTES

Present:

Luke McCrone (LMc)	Co-Chair GSU Representative
Emma McCoy	Co-Chair Vice dean (Education)
Paul French (PF)	Vice Dean (Research)
Nicholas Burstow	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Matthew Fuchter	Director of Postgraduate Studies- Chemistry
Niki Gounaris (NG)	Director of PG Studies-Life Sciences
Henrik Jensen (HJ)	Director of Postgraduate Studies- Mathematics
Stefan Maier (SM)	Director of Postgraduate Studies- Physics
Laura Lane (LL)	Manager of the Graduate School
Daniel Hdidouan	PhD Rep
Sebastian Hoof	Astrophysics Group Rep
Emma Coakley	Third Year Research Rep
Luke Delmas	Second Year Research Rep
Ashley Reaney	LS Silwood Research Rep
Sonia Rebollo Ramirez	LS SK Research Rep
Sabrina Slater	LS SK Research Rep
Michael Thomson	LS SK Research Rep
Marina Amado-Ferreira	Applied Rep
Chiara Taranto	Pure Rep
Alexander Adler	AWO-FoNS
Deniz Pirincci Ercan	Crick-Imperial Representative

Apologies:

Bursa Rose	Crick – Imperial Representative
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1. Welcome and Apologies

LMc welcomed members to the committee and apologise, as above, were noted.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15th November 2016 (Paper 1a)

Confirmed as an accurate record of the previous meeting

3. Review of Actions (Paper 1b) and matters arising from the previous meeting

The Action Tracker was updated

4. Staff Student Committee Guidelines (Paper 2)

The committee noted the SSC Guidelines.

5. Reports from Research Student Representatives:

5.1 Chemistry

Functioning well – broader issues not finishing PhD in the period, not hardship fund qualification but paying London rent etc.

Do they know they will be writing up unfunded? After three years writing up thesis – writing without funding. Should write up fall within funded period. What's best practice?

Chemistry reps reported queries over the timeframe for writing up thesis, and whether this should fall within the funded period.

PF – it should, allow 6 months to write up, which is the last six months of funded period.

There is a review, changing introductory/ welcome letter – explicitly added in the timeline of funding and highlight that write ups need to be funded in this program. Difficult because programmes are of different length. Not necessary in the same position of your colleagues. Clarification for your own dates. Supervisors need to be aware of the funding date.

Another item of discussion post consultation – conflict of interest at the end – stay in the lab and publish papers and writing up in time. Should write up in time. May need more results. Difficult thing to call. Mentors – who are not their supervisor, this is important that six months you should have a discussion with someone who isn't your supervisor to make an educated choice.

Clear communication from supervisor – some have resources to pay extension when they run out of write up time.

Is there any support for these students who run over time? Who don't qualify for the Hardship? NO- Hardship is done case by case basis - Maths – also a year three progression report, monitor progression and funding requirements – between student and supervisor
 Could this be made mandatory? PF this role would be filled by the mentor, who meets regularly. Need to talk to your supervisor. Lack of openness with supervisors,
 Something to stimulate discussions between supervisor and students. Research outcomes are variable, but certain milestones / vague timeline

PF – in early / late stage reviews. Personalised journey?

Maths - they have the process after three months - review

There is a system for monitoring supervisors should be done in the department, Anderson

The role of the academic mentor isn't well understood –PF agrees

Department should be checking these reviews are happening

PGTS developments, students are supposed to sign to say they have completed the training
 NG – can't make a plan early on in your PhD - you have to keep on talking to your supervisor.
 Each project is varied, some have available funds to offer students and other don't. You need to talk to supervisor.

LS meet in March before the three years. Advised to speak to supervisors, to check on data quality, quantity and timing.

Anderson – it is the responsibility to guide the supervisor, attend meetings with bullet points.
 Need to take charge.

Template timeline interesting to explore, personalised to the student. Helps guide student and supervisor, stimulating the discussion. Essential is encapsulated in the early/ late stage reviews

Sue – Looking at statistics for completion dates, arbitrary 4 years. You need to plan from day one.

Emphasis on dialogue of partnership between student and their supervisor

Set funding based on the time needed, not the arbitrary years

ACTION: REPS take to the department,

LUKE: Continue to explore the timeline

LAURA: will have data following survey

5.2 Life Sciences

Getting to know their students, finding how they would like to be helped, Life Sciences PhD students are spread out across the department. Less focus on activities, tried a coffee meet and greet – unsuccessful

- Not informed on the grad school – profession development courses etc.
- LAURA: will come and give the department a talk.
- Event for Alumni to speak to PhD students about careers – once a term – could tie into the seminar – could be suitable for cross faculty

5.3 Mathematics

Handover of student Reps – meetings help engagement

Noted a budget of roughly £10K to run events throughout the year, weekly seminar series, even external post grad / social events. Noted that engagement is challenging as students are spread out across the department.

3.4 Physics

Rep continued from last year, but will be organising a replacement
Handed over some group reps to new reps, others continued.

Reported a number of social events, each of the four sections have held and even this term with a further event planned for the whole department (Kew Garden Lights) There are all student led activities with funding from department and sections

Noted challenges with resourcing/space – Reps to raise this concern in the department meeting.

3.5 CEP

Student Representative reported that:

Working hard to improve

Moving building, to Rics hall

Next press hoping to improve, lots of work improving.

Attendance very low, hoping the new building which change the culture

New social committee a good step forward.

Noted concerns over the number of supervisors, and infrequent meetings – little interaction. Reps to look into this.

Work cross departments at faculty level.

3.6 Crick

Noted that Crick students would like to be a part of the events at Imperial, and engage with the opportunities that are available at Imperial.

6. Report from the Graduate School

1. Research community fund available to apply for funding for food/ alcohol for seminars
2. 11th December grad school, new member of staff joining GTA programme leader department wide. Approaching students and staff to look at examining the teacher training courses

7. PRES Report

Noted points to improve on in each department

ACTION: NB and LMc meeting to determine an action plan for putting recommendations into action – will be on the next agenda – GSU will be chair

RM to circulate emails from everyone. PF copied

8. AOB

- 9.1 FoNS Research Seminar
RM: forward details of Reps
Committee specific reps for this –
Member of ICU?

CEP – Don't print

8. Dates of Future Meeting:

21/02/2018 12.30-14.00

09/05/2018 12.30-14.00