

## Faculty of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Wellbeing Student Staff Committee

Date: Wednesday 13 December 2017

Time: 12.30-14.00

Location: FLOW G47b

## MINUTES

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### Present:

Shervin Sabeghi (SS) - Chair	RCSU Welfare Officer
Anita Hall (AH)- Co-Chair	Faculty Senior Tutor
Tiah Cudjoe-Cole (TCC)	Dept Wellbeing Rep- Biochemistry
Natasha Boyd (NB)	Dept Wellbeing Rep- Biology
Seoyeon Lee (SL)	Y1 Wellbeing Rep- Biology
Sophie Belton (SB)	Y2 Wellbeing Rep- Biology
Chenyu Lin (CL)	Dept Wellbeing Rep- Maths
Peter Hull (PH)	Y2 Wellbeing Rep- Maths
Rebecca Jones (RJ)	Y3 Wellbeing Rep- Chemistry
Jing Zhang (JZ)	Senior Tutor- Physics
Pietro Spanu (PS)	Senior Tutor- Biology
Stuart Haslam (SH)	Senior Tutor- Biochemistry
Chris Ford (CF)	Senior Tutor- Maths
Yasmin Andrew (YA)	Physics Student Liaison Officer
Amelia Barron (AB)	Chemistry Student Experience Officer
Anne-Marie Hilder (AMH)	Maths Undergraduate Liaison Officer
Stephen Connolly (SC)	Life Sciences Undergraduate Liaison Officer
Abhijay Sood (AS)	RCSU Academic Affairs Officer
Michael Edwards (ME)	RCSU President
Becky Neil (BN)	RCSU vice-President Operations
Rebecca Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager

### Apologies:

Fintan O'Connor	ICU Deputy President (Welfare)
Blanca Astarloa De Castro	Maths Y1 Wellbeing Representative

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

SS welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies, as above, were noted.

### 2. Terms of reference and Membership (Paper 1)

The terms of reference and membership were noted.

### 3. Staff Student Committee good practice guidelines (Paper 2)

The guidelines were noted.

### 4. Reports from Department Wellbeing Representatives:

#### 4.1 Chemistry

The Chemistry Department Wellbeing Representative, was not present, but had submitted a report (Paper 3a).

It was noted that the Chemistry Y1 Wellbeing Rep had stood down and that an internal election would take place to replace them.

A survey of all Chemistry students was in the process of being developed, with the agreement of the Department. Key staff involved in pastoral support had been consulted about the survey questions. It is expected that the survey will be sent out to students before the end of term.

Issues had been raised with communication- with students finding it difficult to approach staff over wellbeing matters. This will be a focus for the Wellbeing Reps within the Department.

#### **4.2 Biochemistry**

The Biochemistry Department Wellbeing Representative (TCC) had submitted a report prior to the meeting (Paper 3b).

The Y2 Rep had noted that the ICU's anti-stress campaign had been helpful.

TCC raised a specific issue with projects which she was advised to raise direct with Derek Huntley from the Department, and to report to the Biochemistry Academic Student Rep to raise at the appropriate Department forum.

#### **4.3 Biology**

The Biology Department Representative (NB), had submitted a report prior to the meeting (Paper 3c).

NB noted that generally it was felt that the new Wellbeing Representation system had got off to a good start. There is currently no Y3 Wellbeing Rep, but NB will cover this role.

The Wellbeing Reps had organised some drop-in events two on sign-posting support and another Mums and Dads event- more are planned for next term.

NB noted that when students in the Department were surveyed, two key areas came up as areas for concern:

- Students being unsure how to access support services, both within College and externally
- Students being unsure of how to best protect their personal safety when travelling around London

NB plans to discuss both of the above with the ICU.

#### **4.4 Maths**

The Maths Department Representative (CL), had submitted a report prior to the meeting (Paper 3d).

CL noted that she and the other Wellbeing Reps had met with the Undergraduate Liaison Officer, AMH.

CL and PH noted the proposal to develop a 'Scientists of Imperial' Campaign. PH agreed to send more information on this proposal for dissemination to the committee.

***ACTION: PH to send details of the proposed 'Scientists of Imperial' Campaign to RM for dissemination to the committee.***

CL noted that 2 drop-in sessions for students had been held with the aim of introducing the Wellbeing Reps and enabling students to have their voice heard. Further sessions will be held on a weekly basis.

CL and AMH noted that they were investigating the possibility of diagnostic screening for neurodivergent conditions for students within the Department. Any diagnosis or data would remain confidential to the student. Screening would be run with a small group of volunteers in the spring term, as a pilot, with the hope that this could be made available to a wider cohort of Y1 students in future.

#### **4.5 Physics**

JZ, the Physics Senior Tutor, reported that the Department had so far only recruited one Wellbeing Representative, who was unable to attend the meeting. The aim is to fill the vacant roles early in the New Year.

### **5. Standing Items**

#### **5.1 Personal Tutoring**

The Faculty Senior Tutor, AH, noted that a College-wide review of personal tutoring had been completed in the previous year.

AH also noted that she was working on refresher training for all personal tutors and planned to deliver a one hour, online course, which would be compulsory. She also noted that she wished to offer sessions on the theme of mental health awareness.

Attendance at meetings with personal tutors was discussed with some departments noting that attendance was poor, despite students being told that the sessions were compulsory. AH asked the Wellbeing Reps to encourage attendance.

AS noted that students could feel it daunting to go to a staff member's office to see them. The committee discussed whether having sessions that appeared as events in the students' timetables might help to resolve this issue- although AH noted that this was already the case in some departments, such as Biochemistry, but attendance was still an issue.

YA noted that in Physics sessions for Y1 and 2 were timetabled, but in Y3 and 4, the onus was on the student to contact their tutor to arrange.

RN noted that there may be an issue with a lack of understanding, on the part of both tutors and tutees, as to the purpose of the personal tutor role. AH noted that the College had produced a role and responsibilities document for tutors that it would be useful to disseminate to students and staff. JZ noted that they planned to hold a session for staff in Physics to update and remind them of tutor roles and responsibilities before the end of term.

***ACTION: RM to send the College documentation of personal tutor roles and responsibilities to members, for dissemination within departments.***

PS noted that receiving exam feedback was used as a 'catalyst' for personal tutor meetings in Life Sciences, although NB countered that this might then lead to students feeling that that was all the sessions were for. SH noted that *all* meetings between tutor and tutee should commence with the tutor asking the question, 'how are you doing?' regardless of whether the purpose of the meeting was to receive exam feedback, or to discuss any other specific matter.

The committee discussed how best to gather feedback from students on personal tutors, and the mechanisms for raising issues with personal tutoring where things were not working well. The Tutorial Online Evaluation System (TOLE) was discussed, but it was felt that this would not allow students to feel comfortable in giving feedback about someone they might ultimately

need to act as a referee. RM and AH agreed to discuss this matter further with the vice Dean (Education).

***ACTION: AH and RM to discuss with the vice-Dean (Education) the issue of gathering feedback on personal tutors from students.***

***ACTION: Where this is not current practice, Senior Tutors to consider sending termly reminder emails to students to attend personal tutor meetings and to reinforce the purpose and importance of the personal tutor/ tutee relationship.***

## **6. Chair's Business**

### **6.1 Measuring the effectiveness of the Wellbeing Rep Network**

The Chair requested that, in the absence of the ICU Deputy President (Welfare), item 6.1 be carried forward to the next meeting.

***ACTION: RM to add item 6.1 'Measuring the effectiveness of the Wellbeing Rep Network' to the agenda of the meeting on 14 March 2018***

## **7. AOB**

AMH noted that students in Maths had requested that the Department look into provision of a 'sleep' room for students. YA noted that in Physics a room was made available for students with health conditions to rest in if required.

It was agreed that there were space constraints to providing such a room and that perhaps common room and social space should be prioritised.

## **8. Dates of Future Meetings:**

- Weds 14 March 2018, 12.30-14.00
- Weds 13 June 2018, 12.30-14.00