

Date: 1 November 2017

Time: 13.00-14.30

Location: Boardroom, Silwood Park

Present:

Samraat Pawar (SP)	Chair and Silwood Park Masters Coordinator
Emma McCoy (EM)	Vice-Dean (Education) FoNS
Luke McCrone (LM)	GSU President
Nick Burstow (NB)	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Niki Gounaris (NG)	DSP Life Sciences
Abigail Baines (AB)	CMEE MRes Representative
Lorcan Pigott-Dix (LP)	CMEE MSc Representative
John Coppock (JC)	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Rachelle Todd (RT)	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Emma Muench (EM)	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Alexandros Kellaris (AK)	EEC MSc Representative
Beth Smith (BS)	EEC MRes Representative
Steven Allain	EEC MRes Representative
Wenjia Cai (WC)	eeChange MRes Representative
Alasdair Robertson (AR)	Tropical Forest Ecology MRes Representative
Hannah Vigus (HV)	Tropical Forest Ecology MRes Representative
Rebecca Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Amanda Ellis (AJE)	Postgraduate Administrator (Silwood Park)

1. Welcome and Apologies

SP welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined the purpose of the committee. There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2017

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising

Reports from student representatives/Action 1

SP to liaise with Course Directors to ensure that the process of applying for and receiving funding for projects is made clear to students at the start of the academic year.

The process is outlined in the Silwood Students Guidebook. Action complete.

Reports from student representatives/Action 2

SP to liaise with Stefan Hoyle, FoNS Head of Health & Safety, to ensure that information on overseas travel restrictions is clearly communicated to students and that regular updates are provided

Ongoing

Reports from student representatives/Action 3

SP to liaise with Course Directors to ensure that communications around the release of provisional results are clear and consistent and to ensure that all students receive their results in the same format.

An online marking system has been developed for projects which ensures consistency across all courses. Course Directors are regularly reminded of the College's requirement for feedback to be given within 2 weeks of submission. Action complete.

4. Reports from Student Representatives

The following issues were raised:

Conservation Science

Overall there was a feeling of disconnection from South Kensington and students felt they were missing out on many activities, talks and seminars, particularly on Wednesday afternoons. However, they had enjoyed the emphasis on getting to know students from other Silwood courses during the induction week.

There was disappointment with the level of communication prior to arrival, with delays in interviews and replies to emails and phone calls. Students also felt that there was a very short time frame regarding accommodation offers, and it would have been useful to have room allocations sooner, particularly if students were unsuccessful and needed to find accommodation off campus. A clarification on the 12 week accommodation exemption would have been useful.

The course guidebook was updated shortly before the course started, (e.g. a change in modules), so the students felt unclear as to what they had signed up for.

SP commented that the aim for next academic year was to have the guidebooks and timetables agreed and published at least a month before the start of term.

Dr Knight had set up a weekly feedback session and had been good at dealing with any issues raised. However, there had been a lack of timely information about dates for trips to Jersey and ZSL and about transport arrangements. Students also felt they had missed out on the Field course in the second week of term.

Tropical Forest Ecology:

Students felt that more lectures specific to Tropical ecology would be useful at the start of the course.

Expectations regarding assignments had not been made clear, but Prof Ewers was able to address all the concerns raised.

There was also a discrepancy in the timetable as a topic had shifted by one week. However, there were no major issues and any concerns raised were dealt with effectively.

EEC

A number of students commented on delays with the application process, specifically the MRes, and SP commented that a review was under way to enable a faster turnaround for applications.

There were inconsistencies with information provided in the course guidebook and that given by Course Director's in their introduction talks, such as the marking criteria.

ACTION: SP to liaise with course directors to address the inconsistencies with information provided in the course guidebook and that given by Course Director's in their introduction talks.

There had been a couple of issues with the published timetable, as there had been day level changes to the field course, and lectures had been cancelled but students not notified.

The R and GIS weeks have not been well received, with a feeling that smaller groups would have been more beneficial, and perhaps split into levels of familiarity. Specifically for GIS, there was very little instruction given, with students left to work on their own. More direction as to what was required should have been given.

There were also issues in the computer room as with such a large group, it was difficult to hear lecturers. This was also a problem when using the Haldane and Fisher lecture rooms jointly.

ACTION: RM to discuss AV issues in computer room and Haldane/ Fisher with ICT and the FoNS AV Support team with a view to finding a workable solution.

Dr Gill, the MRes course director had been away on a field course for the first few weeks of term, although he did hold a meeting as soon as he returned. However it was noted that future proofing his absence would be useful for any new intake of MRes students.

It was also noted that updates of course material to Blackboard were often late.

CMEE

Overall the students were happy with the course until the shared teaching weeks. It was felt that GIS was not particularly relevant to CMEE students and some more complex statistics would have been useful.

eeChange

The students were mostly happy with the course. The only issue was the lack of information given regarding assignments, as nothing had been detailed in the guidebook.

5. Chair's business-

None

6. Any other business

None

7. Dates of Future Meetings

To be agreed.

The meeting closed at 14.30.