

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021  
Time: 12.30 - 14.00  
Location: via Teams

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## MINUTES

### Present:

Ceire	Wincott (CW)	Chair (GSU Academic and Welfare Officer- Research), Year 2
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education)
Ryan	Barnett	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Mathematics
Tamzin	Bond	Chemistry Student Rep - Fourth year PhD
Andrew	Connell	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 1 Statistics Section
Aileen	Cooney	Chemistry Student Rep - First year PhD
Michaela	Flegrova (MF)	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Paul	French (PF)	Vice-Dean (Research) FoNS
Hui	Gong (HG)	Crick Institute Student Rep
Niki	Gounaris (NG)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Life Sciences
Nazia	Hirjee (NH)	Faculty Operations Officer
Vanessa	Ho	Chemistry Student Rep - Third year PhD
Tom	Hodson (TH)	Physics Dep Rep - Condensed Matter Theory Physics Group
Magdalena	Jara (MJ)	Head of Pedagogy and GTA Programme Leader
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Kamilla	Rekvenyi (KR)	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 2, Pure Section
Bethany	Reyniers (BR)	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Tatiana	Rizou (TR)	Crick Institute Student Rep
Marta	Rudzite	Life Sciences Lead DTP Student Rep Year 2
Ben	Sauer	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Physics
Katie	Sharrocks	Life Sciences Deputy DTP Student Rep Year 1
Leonie	Stroemich (LS)	Chemistry Dept Rep and GSU White City Officer
Brian	Tam (BT)	Physics Dep Rep - Experimental Solid-State Physics Group
James	Wilton-Ely (JWE)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Chemistry
Jem	Woods (JWE)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Centre for Environmental Policy
Tony	Yang	Chemistry Student Rep - Second year PhD

### Apologies:

Florence	Drury	Life Sciences Student Rep
Laura	Harbach	Physics Student Rep - ASTR
Eleanor	Marshall	Life Sciences Student Rep
Haleema	Misal	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Anne	Neumann	Crick Institute Student Rep
John	Seddon	Faculty Senior Tutor
Ceri	Webster	Life Sciences Student Rep

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

CW welcomed all and apologies as above were accepted.

### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> February, with a couple of amendments under Chemistry item which should read:

*It is known that as of the date of this meeting, the government plans the following:*

- *Only final year UG and **all** PG students in practical subjects will be allowed to return to campus from 8th March.*
- *Other years of practical **UG** programmes after Easter.*
- *The rest of **UG** programmes in the middle of May.*

### **3. Matters arising from the minutes and Review of Action Tracker**

The action tracker was reviewed and updated.

### **4. Reports from Student Representatives:**

#### **4.1 Chemistry**

The report document was noted by the committee and LS, Chemistry Dept Rep, reported the key matters. She added that:

- Health and Safety logistics are working well with an opportunity to do Covid-19 tests on White City campus.
- Spaces had been secured in the iHub for a hot-desk system, arranged in a safe layout and students had started using that space.

#### **4.2 CEP**

The report document was noted by the committee and BR, CEP Student Rep, reported the key matters.

#### **4.3 Life Sciences**

CW, Life Sciences Student reps reported the following matters:

- UG students had started working in labs, which reduced the capacity for PG students.
- The Departmental SSC meeting had not taken place yet hence more updates will be provided at the next meeting.

#### **4.4 Mathematics**

KR, Maths Student Rep, reported the following matters:

- The career event had been attended by alumni who had completed a PhD in Maths and shared their experiences with the students.
- Other events are planned, such as the summer party and summer symposium.

KR queried whether other departments pay their GTAs for preparation time. The following comments were made:

- MJ said that this is decided by the department.
- JW reported that there are two payrates: a lower and a higher level. The higher level is available when a department shows the requirement for preparation and consequently additional time needed by a GTA.

KR also asked if there is any current College-wide policy on meeting PhD Supervisors in-person from 17<sup>th</sup> May. The following comments were made:

- NH reported that all of the rules stay the same until at least 21<sup>st</sup> June. The only difference will be to allow students to access more practical sessions. The College may loosen the restrictions after 21<sup>st</sup> June, in line with the government road map. However, details like keeping 1m+ distance had not been decided yet.
- RT added that the in-person meetings with supervisors are likely to start from October.

- PF strongly advised all PhD students to meet their PhD Supervisors regularly via Teams. Students should not wait until in-person meetings are allowed as it is very important to update supervisors of students' progress.

#### 4.5 Physics

TH, Physics Dept Rep, reported the following key matters:

- PhD students are awaiting the outcomes of the proposal to strengthen GTA regulations (to introduce changes to the guidelines in relation to communication of hours worked in advance and the administrative pay approval process).
- Planning of the departmental symposium is underway.

BT, Physics Dept Rep, queried the CEP plans to allow students to work in office space, as Physics students had not been given that option yet. The following comments were made:

- NH commented that this depends on government's announcement on 17<sup>th</sup> May and also what space students and staff can use safely at the College as this might limit the options as well.
- JW clarified that the CEP is currently working on access to the department, but students had to have a very valid reason (such as mental health issues), to enter the office and ensure they maintain all the restrictions.
- RT added that in the Department of Physics the office space access is under review as staff are aware that some students would like to use it.
- LS, Chemistry Student Rep, reported that due to current limited capacity of office space, Chemistry students have to use library instead which seems less safe. RT said that possibly the ventilation system in the Library allows a higher density of users. LS added that the iHub space can be used only by students in their 'on campus' week but not during the 'off' week as students are meant to be working from home which is not always easy. Therefore, the iHub is not a solution to the limited office space.
- PF encouraged all students to discuss with their Departmental PG Tutors any problems associated with working from home. Departments are reviewing such situations and provide students with desk space if they struggle working from home.

TH reported that he had recently received a 3-month extension to his PhD, but it seems that few other students had received any extension. Therefore, he asked about the percentage of students who had applied for these extensions. The summary of the subsequent discussion is as follows:

- MF reported that just over 100 students applied for the latest stipend extension which is not a substantial number and therefore should be reviewed.
- PF said that the extensions process is being overseen by the Research Office. The College or funders will grant an extension to all students who require it and who fall under the criteria listed in the guidance on extensions. Students should discuss any concerns with their supervisors.
- JWE reported that as part of the recent Safety Net wave, Chemistry students had been contacted individually and they had been strongly encouraged to apply for an extension. However, only 5 students had fitted the time frame within the Safety Net. A follow up email had been sent, asking students to contact the department if they felt they qualified for an extension.
- NG reported that the Department of Life Sciences, had received a large number of applications, some applied to the UKRI funders and to the College Scheme. Most DoLS students whose degrees required practical work that had been affected by the pandemic had applied for extensions. However, it should be clarified that both students who do practical and theoretical work can apply for an extension. In addition, some students had not wanted to apply for extensions or only applied for 4 weeks as 3 months would be too long.

- RT added that this issue could be resolved by improving the communication between supervisors who should be suggesting the extension possibility and students who should be discussing possible requirements for extensions.
- LS suggested that perhaps the administrative staff should contact the students and make them aware of what is available and what criteria apply.
- TH added that the guidance on extensions had been written in the best possible way, but some information is ambiguous hence it is interpreted differently by students. This seems like an issue across students from all FoNS departments and therefore needs to be addressed.

***ACTION 6: DPS to check the information sent to students regarding extensions and review the communication process to encourage students to apply for extensions where appropriate.***

#### **4.6 Crick**

HG, Crick Student Rep, reported the following key matters:

- Online Crick-Imperial Research Student Symposium took place on 25th February 2021 and it had gone very well. Students had presented their posters and had given talks. A few students had won prizes. The Gather Town platform had been used for the poster session which had worked very well- she recommended using it for similar events.

TR, Crick Student Rep, reported the following key matters:

- Crick PhD Students Symposium will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> July. It had not been decided yet if the event would be in-person or whether it will be virtual, or a hybrid.
- Crick students continue to use a Wellbeing Institutional Slack Channel accessed by PhD students only where they can post any concerns anonymously. Data on the issues discussed is being collated and it will be sent to staff.

#### **5. Chair's business**

No issues were reported.

#### **6. Minutes of PhD Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings**

No minutes of PhD Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings had been submitted.

#### **7. Any other business**

No issues were reported.

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

This was the last scheduled meeting for the 2020/21 academic year. Dates for 2021/22 are now being planned.