

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Time: 12.30 - 14.00

Location: via Teams

## MINUTES

---

### Present:

Emma	Hibbett (EH)	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Bethany	Reyniers	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Tamzin Bond	Bond	Chemistry Student Rep - Fourth year PhD
Aileen	Cooney	Chemistry Student Rep - First year PhD
Vanessa	Ho	Chemistry Student Rep - Third year PhD
Tony	Yang (TY)	Chemistry Student Rep - Second year PhD
Hui	Gong (HG)	Crick Institute Student Rep
Ben	Sauer (BS)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Physics
Paul	French (PF)	Vice-Dean (Research) FoNS
Kasia	Kmieckowiak KK)	Administrative Assistant
Laura	Lane (LL)	Head of Strategy and Operations
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
John	Seddon (JS)	Faculty Senior Tutor
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education)
James	Wilton-Ely (JWE)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Chemistry
Jem	Woods	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Centre for Environmental Policy
Ceire	Wincott (CW)	Chair (GSU Academic and Welfare Officer- Research), Year 2
Michaela	Flegrova	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Andrew	Connell	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 1 Statistics Section
Alexandre	Pannier	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 3 Maths Finance Section
Kamilla	Rekvenyi (KR)	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 2, Pure Section
Wim	Geberbauer	Physics Student Rep - PHOT
Laura	Harbach	Physics Student Rep - ASTR
Tom	Hodson (TH)	Physics Dep Rep - Condensed Matter Theory Physics Group
Brian	Tam (BT)	Physics Dep Rep - Experimental Solid-State Physics Group
Thomas	Woolley	Physics Student Rep - SPAT

### Apologies:

Niki	Gounaris	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Life Sciences
Nazia	Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer
Anne	Neumann	Crick Institute Student Rep
Leonie	Stroemich	Chemistry Dept Rep and GSU White City Officer

### 1. Welcome and Apologies

Ceire Wincott (CW), the Chair and GSU Academic and Welfare Officer (Research), welcomed all and apologies as above were accepted.

### 2. Terms of reference and [Staff Student Committee Guidelines](#)

CW drew committee's attention to the 'Terms of Reference' document. The committee also noted the [Staff Student Committee Guidelines](#).

CW explained that the purpose of Faculty SSC meetings is:

- To provide a forum to discuss academic and non-academic matters that are relevant to students in more than one Department within the Faculty (including e.g. welfare and accommodation) and for which a perspective broader than that possible in a Departmental Staff-Student Committee would be valuable.
- To share good practice across the Faculty's Departments.
- To allow Student Representatives to interact constructively with Faculty staff to explore ways to improve the Educational experience in the College.

### 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 4th August.

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

The action tracker was reviewed and updated. Some of the pending actions changed the 'owner':

**Action 8** – It was agreed that KK would ask LJ to share the student wellbeing impact monthly reports template with the committee.

**Action 7** – It was agreed that the DPSs would clarify with their students the guidelines related to late stage reviews (LSRs), ESAs and exams, taking into account different situations depending on supervision arrangements with some students impacted due to lab closures.

**Action 5** JWE reported that the extensions related to White City move will be combined with extensions related to the campus shutdown due to the pandemic. There are currently only 4-5 students in this position who are still eligible as the rest had graduated. Y1 students affected by the move to White City, had told that both Covid-19 and White City related extensions will be combined and paid at the same time.

VH asked how the extension would be calculated, as Chemistry students work in a cohort model so only 2 weeks per month in the lab. JWE said that in the current circumstances it would count as 2 weeks in a lab and 2 weeks of data analysis or writing up.

### 5. Reports from Student Representatives:

**5.1 CEP** – Emma Hibbett (EH), the CEP Student Rep, reported that the CEP had transitioned to a less formal relationship between PhD students and Head of Department which is very helpful. At the recent departmental meeting the following matters had been discussed:

- Engaging supervisors more in research meetings and perhaps setting up more informal catch-ups between supervisors and PhD students.
- Building a broader PhD representation on committees in the department.
- Creating one page executive summaries of committee meetings that could be sent out to PhDs instead of sending large streams of minutes.

### 5.2 Chemistry

The report document was noted by the committee and Tony Yang (TY), Chemistry Student Rep, reported the key matters. He added that various online events had been organised using platform called '*gather.town*' which is highly recommended.

Tamzin Bond (TB), the Chemistry Student Rep., had reported that there is a shortage of supplies, especially gloves and pipette tips which are necessary for students to work in labs. Individual groups try to order the gloves from any possible supplier, but the unit price is much higher as these are not bulk orders. She queried whether the College could arrange bulk orders of gloves and other items.

In response to that, BS reported that there is a Faculty level procurement process underway trying to obtain some bulk orders.

***ACTION 1: RM to follow up with the Faculty Operations Officer the issue of procurement and shortages of glove and other consumables.***

**POST MEETING NOTE**, from the Faculty Operations Officer:

It's an international issue and the College's Procurement team are working on it. They have worked to ensure that buyers are being provided with alternative suppliers, where possible – and, in the first instance, I would refer colleagues to their Department Operations Manager to see whether there are departmental cross-group measures in place to even out supply and demand; however, many producers around the world have faced factory closures due to COVID. This is what John Whitlow, Director of Financial Services, has advised: "The situation is not likely to improve worldwide for at least the next 6-12 months. My plan to address this is to bulk buy and hold much larger quantities than normal in our stores stock to support all departments. I'm also contemplating advance buying even larger quantities on behalf of the College and organising for one of our suppliers to hold extra reserve stock of these items just in case we encounter any further disruption in the coming months."

However, to manage expectations, many buyers globally are probably trying to do the same thing. I hope that we can alleviate the struggle on this soon and it is an issue being worked on actively.

JWE made the following comments related to the Chemistry report:

- Results of a survey carried out among PhD Chemistry students had been discussed at the PG departmental committee. The outcomes had shown interesting information which he will discuss further with the Head of Department.
- He agreed that mental health issues affect everyone. Obviously, those students who are expected to do experimental work and are not able to come to the lab every day may feel stressed and frustrated. He is currently in the process of drafting a document outlining all that students can access should they need mental health support. This will also include names of staff who had completed the Mental Health First Aid Training.
- Cohort model is not ideal, but at least allows conducting lab work. The department is limited by restrictions imposed by the local authorities which will not allow to go beyond 40% capacity. The department also wants to keep both students and staff safe and prevent any Covid-19 transmission within the MSRH building. To date, there had been no positive cases reported at the MSRH which means that the cohort model works. There are no other departments that can go back on campus without any restrictions.
- The department organises regular webinars for each cohort to ensure that every student has an opportunity to ask a question.

### **5.3 Life Sciences – CW reported that:**

- There had been concerns regarding communication at the start of the year due to the pandemic, but this had since improved considerably.
- The department uses a booking system called PPMS. Each DoLS building has a certain capacity level and students are not allowed to stay in the building if they have not booked a slot. The capacity is still quite restricted.

**5.4 Mathematics** – Kamilla Rekvenyi (KR), the Maths Student Rep, reported the following matters:

- The department also uses PPMS booking system.
- Students are organising a virtual Christmas party.

**5.5 Physics** – Tom Hodson (TH), Physics Dep Rep. raised an issue with a poor communication regarding the number of hours the Physics GTAs are allowed to work. New guidelines about the exact number of hours that students are allowed to claim had been issued late in the term. Consequently, some students had been asked to annotate their claims with the number of scripts marked and to give justification from the course leader if they were above the new guidance hours. This meant that many students claimed for fewer hours than they had actually worked.

RM advised TH to raise this issue at the departmental level and report back the outcome at the next meeting. BS reported that he had not been aware of this issue and he will investigate it further to ensure it is addressed.

**ACTION 2: BS to investigate the issue related to number of hours to be claimed by Physics GTAs.**

LL said that the College guidelines state the following:

*‘On average, GTAs should teach less than six hours per week and teaching should not exceed 10 hours in any given week during term time. For doctoral students, term time spans the whole academic year, except days taken as part of the annual leave entitlement. The College recognises, however, that GTAs may sometimes be involved in teaching which only lasts for a short period of time, but which exceeds the 10-hour weekly limit, such as fieldwork, lab weeks, etc. Separate guidance is available for such cases’*

More details can be found in the College's *GTA Roles and Responsibilities* document: [GTA-Roles-&-Responsibilities\\_FINAL.pdf \(imperial.ac.uk\)](#)

Brain Tam (BT), the Physics Dep Rep., reported the following matters:

- Every week various online activities are being organised using the Discord channel.
- Christmas pub quiz will be organised as well.
- Physics PhD students collaborate with Physics Student Society which organises various social events such as PG talks for UG students to discuss various topics related to Physics.
- Physics PhD students had also started a mentoring programme. To date, there are 120 participants. They will be sent follow up emails every couple of months to keep in touch and to gain feedback on their progress.

**5.6 Crick** – Hui Gong (HG), the Crick Student Rep, reported the following matters:

- Online Crick-Imperial Research Student Symposium will be organised in February 2021. This event will give a chance for networking between Imperial-based students and Imperial Students based at the Crick and to share experiences and showcase the research conducted at both institutions. It might be also useful for students to help them feel less isolated. Anyone interested in assisting with the organisation of the symposium, can contact HG at: [h.gong18@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:h.gong18@imperial.ac.uk)  
PF added that if HG needs any help with organising the seminar, she can contact him or Sophie Armstrong-Brown [s.armstrong-brown@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:s.armstrong-brown@imperial.ac.uk)
- Mental health – Crick students are using ‘*Together All*’ which is an online platform providing access to people with anxiety, depression and other common mental health issues. Students can share their concerns anonymously, but these are moderated by

trained professionals. Crick students also use a Wellbeing Institutional Slack Channel accessed by PhD students only and they are able to post any concerns anonymously. It seems that students are more open now in terms of discussing any mental health issues. She added that, perhaps the College could provide similar support for the PhD cohort.

- There is an ongoing project focusing on improving students and supervisors relationship as well as Supervisors Leadership Training.

**6. Chair's business**

No issues were reported.

**7. Minutes of PhD Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings (to note):**

The committee noted the Chemistry PhD Departmental Student Staff Committee Meeting minutes.

**8. Any other business**

No issues were raised.

**9. Dates of Future Meetings**

Committee	Date	Time	Call for Papers	Paper Deadline
Research Student Staff Committee	Weds 17/02/2021	12.30-14.00	03/02/2021	10/02/2021
Research Student Staff Committee	Weds 05/05/2021	12.30-14.00	21/04/2021	28/04/2021