

Date: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Time: 15.00 - 16.30

Location: via Teams

## MINUTES

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### Present:

Ceire	Wincott (CW)	Chair (GSU Academic and Welfare Officer- Research)
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Co-Chair and Vice-Dean (Education)
Ryan	Barnett (RB)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Mathematics
Flavia	Bellotto Trigo	Life Sciences Student Rep
Marius	Bothe	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 2 Applied Maths Section
Aileen	Cooney	Chemistry Student Rep - First year PhD
Michaela	Flegrova	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Paul	French (PF)	Vice-Dean (Research) FoNS
Hui	Gong (HG)	Crick Institute Student Rep
Vanessa	Ho	Chemistry Student Rep - Third year PhD
Tom	Hodson (TH)	Physics Dept Rep - Condensed Matter Theory Physics Group
Danai	Irakleidi	Life Sciences Student Rep
Magdalena	Jara (MJ)	Head of Pedagogy and GTA Programme Leader, Graduate School
Kasia	Kmieckowiak	Administrative Assistant
Lintong	Li	GSU Vice President (Representation)
Eleanor	Marshall (EM)	Life Sciences Student Rep
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Haleema	Misal (HM)	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Alexandre	Pannier	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 3 Maths Finance Section
Michael	Ray (MR)	Research Student Manager
Kamilla	Rekvenyi (KR)	Mathematics Student Rep - Year 2, Pure Section
Bethany	Reyniers	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Marta	Rudzite	Life Sciences Lead DTP Student Rep Year 2
Ben	Sauer (BS)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Physics
Marine	Secchi (MS)	Life Sciences Student Rep
John	Seddon	Faculty Senior Tutor
Leonie	Stroemich (LS)	Chemistry Dept Rep and GSU White City Officer
Brian	Tam (BT)	Physics Dept Rep - Experimental Solid-State Physics Group
Zixiao	Wang	GSU President
Jem	Woods (JW)	Director of Postgraduate Studies - Centre for Environmental Policy
Wei	Wu	Physics Student Rep - PLAS

### Apologies:

Emma	Couves	Life Sciences - Student Rep
Florence	Drury	Life Sciences - Student Rep
Niki	Gounaris	DPS - Life Sciences
Laura	Harbach	Physics Student Rep - ASTR
Emma	Hibbett	CEP Student Rep - PhD Environmental Research
Nazia	Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer
Katie	Sharrocks	Life Sciences - Deputy DTP Student Rep Year 1

Kimeel	Sooknunan	Physics Student Rep - ASTR
James	Wilton-Ely	DPS - Chemistry
Yun	Xu	Director of the Graduate School

#### 1. Welcome and Apologies

CW welcomed all and apologies as above were accepted.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December.

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

The action tracker was reviewed and updated. The following pending actions 10 and 11 raised in August 2020 had been merged to one new action:

***ACTION 3: CW to identify seminar topics/online material that students would be interested in and with RM, discuss best ways of advertising these with the FoNS Digital Communications Team.***

#### 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 also queried the College's COVID testing capacity and implications for increasing operation time. In response to that, RT said that the College is constrained by the restrictions imposed by the government. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February, the exact changes to the current restrictions will be announced by the Prime Minister. 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.

RT added that the cohort model in Chemistry is not expected to be changed as social distancing will be in place for some time.

LS queried about the shortages of supplies, especially gloves. RT said, that to his knowledge this issue had been resolved. RM added that the plan to address this issue had been to bulk buy and hold much larger quantities than normal in the stores stock to support all departments.

PF asked LS if Chemistry students had been concerned about returning on campus from 8<sup>th</sup> March. LS said that most students want to return. However, less space in labs will be available once all the Masters students re-start lab work.

LS also raised the matter of platforms used in other departments for online learning and support and queried whether the Graduate School plans to collate these centrally. She added that there are great online platforms available for free to students, so it would be good to add them to the list of resources. In response to that, MJ said that she will look at what resources are available.

***ACTION 4: MJ to investigate what learning platforms are used in other departments for online learning and support.***

**4.2 CEP**

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

JW asked about practices used in other departments to streamline communications and improve staff-student relations:

- Physics – BS said that the Department of Physics has a very large number of students hence the interaction between staff and students is kept on the group level.
- Chemistry – LS said that the Department of Chemistry had arranged the following:
  - Teams channels as soon as the first lockdown had started and had slowly incorporated additional channels. However, only the student reps actively participate in discussions.
  - Q&A sessions - these are attended by the DPS.
  - Students and Admin Staff sessions.
  - Student Staff Committee meetings – these will increase their frequency from once a term to monthly.

MR added that he had arranged a number of Teams channels and he had found the Q&A sessions for students quite interactive.

- Mathematics – RB reported that similarly to the Department of Physics, individual groups organise their sessions to maintain student-staff interaction. There are also the Student Staff Committee meetings and the PGR Reps organise social events. KR reported that the Pure Mathematics cohort is very individual. Sometimes students work by themselves with their supervisor, therefore it is difficult to interact with them.
- Crick – HG reported that at the Crick the following had been arranged:
  - Twice a year there is a meeting to discuss specific subjects.
  - There are drop-in sessions taking place throughout the year.
  - Students Staff Committee meetings with administrative staff.
  - Slack Channel - it is relatively easy to communicate with staff using it.

PF commented that many staff members had been assigned to a large number of Teams channels and it is very difficult to engage with all of them. Therefore, he suggested that perhaps PhD students should run those. They could also set up their committees to discuss who they would like to invite to each Teams channel such as the DPS or other specific staff members. This could help facilitate discussions on more specific issues and eliminate the requirement for staff to attend every Teams channel meeting.

**4.3 Life Sciences**

MS and EM, Life Sciences Student reps reported the following matters:

- Students feel supported and safe in labs.
- Lab access for students varies between groups. In response to that, CW said that the lab space is allocated on the number of students in a group.

**4.4 Mathematics**

KR, Maths Student Rep, reported that students would like to know when they will be able to return to campus. In response to that, RT said that depending on government policy, it is hoped that Mathematics students will be allowed to participate in some on-campus activities from middle of summer term.

#### 4.5 Physics

The report document was noted by the committee and TH and BT, Physics Dept Reps, reported the key matters. They also highlighted the issue with poor communication regarding the number of hours the Physics GTAs are allowed to work. New guidelines which had been introduced late in the autumn term, had affected payment for any retrospective work. This meant that many students claimed for fewer hours than they had actually worked. It had been reported that course leaders expect more work to be done by the GTAs than the number of hours they can claim. Therefore, the Students Reps had drafted a Proposal to strengthen GTA regulations which include the changes they would like to introduce to the guideline in relation to communication of hours worked in advance and the administrative pay approval process.

MJ said that she will consult the proposal with her colleagues to ensure the changes are applicable.

***ACTION 5: MJ to consult the Proposal to strengthen GTA regulations with their colleagues and contact TH and BT with an outcome.***

#### 4.6 Crick

The report document was noted by the committee and HG, Crick Student Rep, reported the key matters. She also highlighted the following:

- Online Crick-Imperial Research Student Symposium will take place on 25th February 2021.
- Crick students continue to use a Wellbeing Institutional Slack Channel accessed by PhD students only where they can post any concerns anonymously. It seems that students are more open to discussing issues via this channel as staff are not present. 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

The committee noted minutes of PhD Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings from the following departments:

- 6.1 Life Sciences (19<sup>th</sup> November 2020)
- 6.2 Mathematics (13<sup>th</sup> November 2020)
- 6.3 Crick (4<sup>th</sup> June 2020)
- 6.4 Chemistry (2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021)

#### 7. Any other business

No issues were reported.

#### 8. Dates of Future Meetings

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