

DATE: Tuesday 01 March 2022

TIME: 12:30 – 14:00

LOCATION: via MS Teams

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present:

Manasa	Sanaga (MS)	Postgraduate Taught Academic & Welfare Officer, Chair
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education), Co-Chair
John	Seddon (JS)	Faculty Senior Tutor
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager, FoNS
Matt	Horsfield (MH)	Education Support Coordinator (Secretary), FoNS
Rob	Ewers (RE)	Head of Master's Teaching (Silwood Park), Life Sciences
Will	Pearse (WP)	PG Senior Tutor at Silwood Park, Life Sciences
Alex	Auyang (AA)	Silwood Park Union Chair
Badis	Khiari Millan (BKM)	Silwood MSc Rep
Eamonn	Murphy (EM)	Silwood MSc Rep
Lucia	Hudson (LH)	Silwood MRes Rep
Ed	Barry (EB)	Silwood MRes Rep
Lizzie	Bru (LB)	Silwood MRes Rep

Apologies:

Daniel	Lo	ICU Deputy President – Education
Michael	Mustri	Silwood MSc Rep
Chloe	Bentze	Silwood MRes Rep

2. Faculty of Natural Sciences Student Staff Committee - Terms of Reference and Membership 2021/22

The committee noted the terms of reference and membership for 2021/22.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 05 May 2020.

4. Matters arising from the minutes and review of action tracker

The action tracker was reviewed, and most actions were marked as closed with updated comments provided.

- RM explained that most of the actions were from the 2019/20 academic year and therefore were out of date. RM noted that there were some actions from the last meeting on the 05 May 2020 which were not included in the action tracker but should be marked as closed too.

5. Reports from Silwood Park Student Representatives:

5.1 MSc Matters

No detailed report document was received. The student reps presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the Department.

- BKM explained to the committee that since the Master's SSC, the washing machine had been fixed but students were worried that there was still a shortage of machines at Silwood Park. LB agreed that students were concerned and frustrated at the situation. RM explained to the committee that she had received a response from residential services at Silwood Park, they were aware of the issue and had noted that the number of machines at Silwood were greater than industry standard.
- BKM noted that students on the Ecological Applications (MSc 1YFT) course felt overlooked compared to other courses at Silwood Park which had larger cohorts. Students would appreciate the same level of support across all the courses. RE explained he will speak to the course directors to ensure more support can be provided.
- BKM noted that there was a concentration of assessment deadlines during March and April and students were feeling quite stressed. RE explained that in the shared modules at Silwood, there is a bunching of assessment deadlines which could be spread out better. RE noted he would speak to the course directors to plan for the academic assessment schedule for next academic year as the courses have been redesigned. WP noted that if students were feeling stressed, they should contact him if they want any further wellbeing support.
- EM explained that some students have raised their concerns about the upcoming exams and did not know when they would take place. RE confirmed the format of the timed remote assessments (TRAs) will be published in due course and he will confirm the date of the exam with the module lead.

5.2 MRes Matters

No detailed report document was received. The student reps presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the Department.

- EB explained to the committee that the MRes students were now all working on their research projects. He noted there was a big difference in the interactions between some supervisors and students, with some students being asked to complete work over the College closure period. RE explained this is often the case with supervisor interactions as each research group is different but if the students are concerned, they should refer to the student handbook. RE encouraged students to utilise the public holidays and College closure days to take a break from their research and studies.
- LB noted that some students have felt a bit isolated since they have started their research but the student reps were looking to organise regular lunch breaks so students could meet up. LH added that they have also organised tea and cake Fridays.
- LB explained that some laptops in the Department were faulty and had a poor battery life. LB queried if the Department would look at replacing these laptops as students are keen to use the laptops for their research projects. RE noted this was a good idea and would investigate if the money from the recent strikes could be used to fund any new laptops.
- LH queried if students could find out more information about their vivas for their first project. RE confirmed this should be on CelCat but students would be informed via email in due course.

5.3 PhD Matters

No detailed report document was received. AA presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the Department at Silwood Park.

- AA explained that students were starting to organise some social events now Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted. The committee discussed that there was a reduction in social events over lockdown and this has led to a reduction in the sense of community for PhD students. WP noted that he was aware of this, and the PG Research and Doctoral Training Programme Administrator was going to set up a MS Teams channel and organise some social events.
- AA queried if students at Silwood Park could attend PhD activities at South Kensington. Both RE and WP explained that students from both campuses were welcome to attend alternative events if they wished.
- AA also noted that he is not the PhD student rep in the Department but is the chair of the Silwood Park Union.

6. Chair's business

- MS and RT had nothing further to raise.

7. Any other business

- BKM queried if the TRAs can be completed anywhere or do they need to be done on campus. The committee confirmed students can complete their TRA anywhere.
- BKM explained that the election process earlier in the year was not very well organised and students weren't clear if they needed to nominate themselves via the Union website or with their course director. RM noted it was preferable if the students were elected via the Union but in some cases, this was not always possible. RE explained that as a course director he was not aware that the nominations had to go through the Union but would consider how best to introduce this for October 2022.
- EM noted that students would prefer more notice for these meetings. RM explained that normally only one student rep would attend the Faculty level SSC but the chair had requested the course reps to be invited to this meeting.
- RT asked the committee if they would prefer if this meeting was in person or on MS Teams. The committee agreed that it would be easier to have the meeting on MS Teams but would appreciate another meeting later in the year.

Action 1: MH to organise a second SSC meeting later in the year.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

Committee	Date	Time	Teams/ Room Details	Paper Deadline
FoNS – Silwood Masters Academic Student Staff Committee	Thurs 23/06/2022	15.00-16.30	MS Teams	16/06/2022