

**DATE:** Wednesday 16 November 2022

**TIME:** 12:30 – 14:00

**LOCATION:** Huxley 341, Huxley Building

## MINUTES

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### 1. Welcome and Apologies

#### Present:

Anthea	MacIntosh-LaRocque (AML)	RCSU Vice President - Welfare & Wellbeing (Chair)
Runtian	Wu (RW)	RCSU Vice President- Education (Chair)
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Head of Education and Student Experience (Co-Chair), FoNS
Amelia	Barron (AB)	Head of Pastoral Care and the Student Experience, Chemistry
Stephen	Brickley (SB)	Senior Tutor (Biological Sciences), Life Sciences
Stuart	Haslam (SH)	Senior Tutor (Biochemistry), Life Sciences
Chris	Ford (CF)	Senior Tutor, Mathematics
Ingo	Mueller-Wodarg (IMW)	Senior Tutor, Physics
John	Seddon (JS)	Faculty Senior Tutor
Mike	Tennant (MT)	Vice-Dean (Education)
Chris	Hallsworth (CH)	Director of UG Studies, Mathematics
Carl	Paterson (CP)	Director of UG Studies, Physics
Don	Craig (DC)	Director of UG Studies, Chemistry
Huw	Williams (HW)	Director of UG Studies, Life Sciences
Anna	Goodwin (AG)	Student Wellbeing Adviser, FoNS
Jason	Zheng (JZ)	ICU Deputy President - Education
Nathalie	Podder (NP)	ICU Deputy President - Welfare
ChaeLin	Lee (CLL)	Department Academic Rep, Biochemistry
Gregory	Colwell-Hector (GCH)	Department Academic Rep, Biological Sciences
Xinran	Li (XL)	Department Academic Rep, Chemistry
Xialu	Zheng (XZ)	Department Academic Rep, Mathematics
Aneesha	Iqbal (AI)	Year Four Academic Representative, Mathematics
Shi Wei	Yuan (SWY)	Department Academic Rep, Physics
Ruchipat	Kumpusiri (RK)	Department Wellbeing Rep, Biochemistry
Yiran	Shi (YS)	Department Wellbeing Rep, Biological Sciences)
Chinny	Lee (CL)	Department Wellbeing Rep, Chemistry
Christine	Zhang (CZ)	Department Wellbeing Rep, Mathematics
Amir	Rahman (AR)	Year Four Wellbeing Representative, Mathematics
Laura	Hollister (LH)	Department Wellbeing Rep, Physics

#### Apologies:

Matt	Horsfield	Education Support Coordinator (Secretary), FoNS
Ella	Robson	Student Wellbeing Adviser, FoNS

## 2. Terms of reference and membership

- The committee noted the terms of reference and membership for 2022/23.
- Following consultation with the RCSU VPs/ Chairs, the UG Wellbeing SSC and UG Academic SSC has been combined into one committee this academic year. As a result of this, the number of staff members had been restricted to 2 per Department to ensure that there were not a disproportionate number of staff to students. RM confirmed that Departments were welcome to substitute staff members if they wished to.

## 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the UG Wellbeing SSC and UG Academic SSC were approved as an accurate record of the previous meetings held on 08 June 2022 and 15 June 2022 respectively.

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

- The UG Wellbeing SSC action tracker was reviewed, and actions were marked as complete.
- The UG Academic SSC action tracker was reviewed, and actions were marked as complete with updated comments:
  - Action 6 - RM had raised with the QA Department about when the MEQ results would be published for Spring and the Autumn free text comments. These had been eventually published, but quite late. RM will follow this up with QA Department to ensure the subsequent MEQ results are published within reasonable deadlines.

## 5. Reports from Department Academic/ Wellbeing Student Representatives:

### 5.1 Chemistry

- **Academic** – XL provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - Working with Department to hold internal election to fill rep positions that are currently unfilled.
  - Communications from the Department to students about in-person exams, including all the measures that Department had taken to assist students on preparing exams (this will take place in next year group meetings).
  - More interactive in-person sessions had been successfully introduced especially for year three students.
  - Positive feedback had been received on lab organisation, in-person sessions from year one and year two, and on module selections from year three.
  - Concerns on in-person exams from all years had been raised. The Department had agreed to communicate and reiterate measures the Department is taking to assist with in-person exams this year in the upcoming year group meetings and also through other approaches (e.g., email/personal tutorials).
- **Wellbeing** – CL provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - More in-person teaching events for year three students had been added.
  - Good feedback had been received for flexibility of mixed mode learning.

### 5.2 Life Sciences – Biochemistry

- **Academic** – CLL provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - Mid-term surveys have been sent to all year three students.
  - Year one and two had requested more problem classes (peer feedback, Q&A classes).
  - Year Reps election had been completed too late. It would have been better if Year Reps were elected earlier to work with Dept Reps in the beginning of the term. In response, RM said that she had fed that back to the ICU, and this had been discussed with the ICU members. The delay with appointing Year Reps, had also caused issues with scheduling the SSC meetings.

- **Wellbeing** - RK provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - Biochemistry wellbeing website had been designed. Once approved, it will go live.
  - Event ideas for the future include: Dog therapy during exam reading week, Lunch with Lecturers, Feedback drop-in (every end of term) so students can just come talk to the reps in person; Town Hall for pressing issues/ concerns (regarding exams, etc.)
  - Survey results regarding the first month of Autumn term included a few concerns such as Q&A timing, minimal coursework feedback, inapproachable lecturers.
  - The email address of RK as a Student Rep is still incorrectly titled as Departmental Academic Rep and the email address displays as “bcedrep”.

### 5.3 Life Sciences – Biological Sciences

- **Academic** – GCH provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - Chairs in SAF seminar rooms are missing foldable tables and he had received many complaints from students about this. The chairs are also uncomfortable and there are no chairs with tables orientated for left-handed students. Gregory Colwell-Hector added that some social events had been taking place in SAF 120-122 as well and the chairs might have been broken by the event attendees. HW said that such issues should always be raised with him as soon as possible and he will make sure they are addressed. HW also noted that the Department had made the decision to order new furniture for the rooms in question.
  - Many students had received only one or two sentences of feedback for the tutored Dissertation with no in-text comments. Therefore, GCH asked if there is any guidance on what the minimum expected feedback quality is for coursework.
  - The Department uses a system to ensure that students and staff are kept up to date with return dates for course works. This helps with effective communication between staff and students if course work is handed back late. HW noted that the ‘traffic light’ system of colour coding this list and making it available via digital display screens would be up and running again soon.  
**Action 1: GCH to share with the committee a screenshot of how the traffic light system platform looks like.**
  - JZ also shared the following link to recommended guidance from the College on the ‘traffic light’ [system](#).
- **Wellbeing** – YS provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - There is currently confusion in terms of access to the common room. The Y2 students had been unsuccessful to enter the room using student ID. In response, AML said that this should be raised with the Department.
  - Personal Tutoring – students across the Department receive different levels of support from Personal Tutors. Some students feel intimidated to reach out to Personal Tutors and ask about feedback, for example. YS queried whether there are any minimum standards of support that Personal Tutors have to comply with.  
**POST MEETING NOTE:** See the Personal Tutoring Expectations [webpage](#).
  - Committee discussed the best way of collating feedback about Personal Tutors. Many students do not feel comfortable with raising any issues via the UG Student Reps. The academic staff present at the meeting, stated that there might be approximately 5% of Personal Tutors who need to improve their personal tutoring skills. HW said that the Life Science students should contact Steve Connelly (Undergraduate Liaison Officer) as his role is to liaise with Personal Tutors. In some cases, Personal Tutors might be off sick hence they do not reply to students’ emails. HW added that slides with Department contact details are shown at the Department SSC meetings and students should use these contacts.

- IMW reported that the Department of Physics, has similar issues. However, he normally contacts Personal Tutors, and the issues are resolved in most cases. It was agreed that all Dept Student Reps should discuss with relevant Senior Tutors all issues raised by students to ensure all are fed back and actioned.

#### 5.4 Mathematics

- **Academic** – XZ provided a detailed report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - XZ noted that in-person exams had been reintroduced and positive feedback had been received.
- **Wellbeing** - No detailed report document was received, but CZ noted the following points at the meeting:
  - CZ noted that a few drop-in sessions had been arranged to ensure that students interact with other students and Students Reps.

#### 5.5 Physics

- **Academic & Wellbeing** - LH and SWY provided a detailed, combined report document and highlighted the following matters:
  - Academic and Wellbeing Reps had been elected for all year groups.
  - Response to NSS results – recommendations had been laid out and will be discussed at the SSC on 17th November 2022.
  - Student WhatsApp Group had been set up to share useful information for easy access; each year has its own group, so the information reaches only relevant students.
  - QR code system is a very popular way among students to provide feedback about the lectures.

### 6. Standing Items

#### 6.1 Curriculum Review (CR) - update from DUGS and Dept. Reps

- **Chemistry** – no update.
- **Life Sciences** – no update.
- **Mathematics** – CH noted that some approaches taken towards the assessments had been successful. However, the aspect of keeping workload balance i.e. deadlines etc. needs improvement. Maths has numerous small assessments taking place and these need to be evaluated. A few in Maths are taking part in an evaluation of the impact of Curriculum review.
- **Physics** – CP noted that the workload implications for students and staff are an issue and this needs to be reviewed.
- MT added that the workload issues are being actively reviewed at the College level. It would be useful for the purpose of evaluation if students provided more detailed information on overassessment.

**Action 2: Student Reps to collate feedback for all courses regarding workload issues as a result of the curriculum review.**

#### 6.2 Feedback on Assessment - summary of minutes from Departmental SSCs

- Nothing RM reported that the NSS survey includes questions on assessment and feedback. Students often express dissatisfactory comments about the feedback they receive. RM had reviewed the available Departmental SSC minutes from 2021/22 and compiled a summary of the issues raised. A number of comments had been raised regarding the lateness of feedback, but fewer comments on feedback quality had been raised. The Department representatives and student reps provided the following responses:
  - **Chemistry:** in the previous year, the consistency of feedback had been an issue. AB said that the Department put updates about the feedback on Chem Central. This issue had

been discussed in year group meetings and SSC meetings. Tutors communicate to students any lateness of the feedback.

- **Life Sciences:** GCH commented that students are more dissatisfied with not knowing when the feedback would be delivered rather than with lateness of the feedback. He had received a large number of messages from students regarding this issue and many had indicated that this also had affected their wellbeing. It would be very useful if students were kept informed about late return of feedback. However, the tracking system referenced above works really well in Life Sciences.
- **Mathematics:** CH reported that the Department does not have a process of monitoring the lateness of feedback. However, staff closely monitor the feedback delivery and follow up directly with tutors if there are any delays. XZ said that usually the Maths tutors notify students if the feedback is going to be late.
- **Physics:** CP said that the Department encourages the assessors to inform students if the feedback is going to be provided late. They do not use a traffic light system. LH noted that such a system would be very beneficial for Physics students.

### 6.3 NSS Action Plans

The following comments were made:

- **Chemistry:** AB noted that the Action Plans had been compiled and she will liaise with the Department and student reps to ensure the issues raised are addressed.
- **Life Sciences:** LS Student Reps said that they had not received any comments and they had been unsure how the survey was designed. RM explained that once the report on Action Plans is produced this should be shared with Student Reps. Life Science Student Reps were advised to contact Steve Connelly and Hugh Williams regarding the Action Plans.
- **Mathematics:** CH noted that the annual report will contain the Action Plan and students will be involved in that. It had not been sent to students yet.
- **Physics:** SWY had met with Yasmin Andrew (Physics Student Liaison Officer) and had reviewed the comments and created overarching themes. The main points noted included: students felt like the survey feedback had not been reaching the correct staff members; not connecting to any decision making. Carl Paterson added that the staff had met with students four times since September and the work on Action Plans is progressing.

**POST MEETING NOTE:** Details of the NSS 2022 questions can be found on the OfS [webpage](#).

## 7. Chair's business

### 7.1 RCSU VP Education Update

- SSC meetings are clashing with examinations hence it had been difficult to set the exam dates. In response, RM said that in the future the Faculty will make every effort to publish the Faculty-level SSC dates earlier. It was also noted that the timing of the ICU Autumn elections had had an effect on timing of SSCs.
- The remainder of the RCSU VPE's verbal report is summarised [here](#).

### 7.2 RCSU VP Welfare Update and FoNS Mitigating Circumstances Survey and Report

- Review of mitigating circumstances (MCs) - there had been no system for students to feedback about the MC process. Therefore, a survey had been created and sent to students who provided vital comments. The results of the survey are in the written report. AML had presented the outcomes at the UG FMOP Committee meeting and on 28<sup>th</sup> November she will present them at the Faculty Education Committee meeting.
- One of AMLs goals is to set FONS Mental Health Strategy Proposal
- Welfare Week – week of events in February

**8. Minutes of Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings (to note)**

- Minutes noted.

**9. Any other business**

- RM reported that the [FoNS MAD Competition 2022](#) took place in October. The new round will start in January 2023. The top teams will be given funding, space and a bursary to work on their project for 8 weeks over the summer. They will then present their findings to an expert panel of VIP Judges and will compete for prizes of up to £7000.

**10. Dates of Future Meetings**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
FoNS - UG Academic & Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	Wed 15/03/2023	12.30-14.30
FoNS - UG Academic & Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	Wed 21/06/2023	12.30-14.30