

Imperial College London

Faculty of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Student Staff Committee

Date: Wednesday 14 November 2018

Time: 12.30-14.00

Location: SAF 120

MINUTES

Present:	
Michaela Flegrova- Chair (MF)	RCSU Vice President (Education)
Emma McCoy- co-Chair (EMc)	FoNS vice-Dean Education
Shervin Sabeghi (SS)	RCSU Vice President (Welfare)
Abhijay Sood (AS)	Formerly RCSU Academic Affairs Officer
Danning Zhan	Maths Year 2 Student Representative
Isabelle Zhang	LS- Biochemistry Year 1 Student Representative
Junrui Wang	Maths Year 1 Student Representative
Alix Vermeulen	Maths Year 1 Student Representative
Mark Thomas	Physics Year 2 Student Representative
Mika Smith	Physics Year 2 Student Representative
Alexandra Mihailescu	Physics Year 3 Student Representative
Timothy Marley	Physics Departmental Student Representative
Leonard Logaric	Physics Year 2 Student Representative
Eugene Lin	LS- Biochemistry Year 2 Student Representative
Albert Muljono	LS-Biology Departmental Student Representative
Lorenz Hoffmann	Chemistry Departmental Student Representative
Laura-Yvonne Ghergina	LS- Biochemistry Year 1 Student Representative
Joze Gasperlin	Chemistry Year 1 Student Representative
Andrei Enica	LS- Biology Year 2 Student Representative
Isabel Esain	LS-Biochemistry Departmental Student Representative
Yuan Chen	Chemistry Year 1 Student Representative
Bob Forsyth (BF)	Physics Director of Undergraduate Studies
Huw Williams (HW)	DUGS Life Sciences
George Britovsek	Chemistry (representing the DUGS)
Richard Thompson (RT)	Faculty Senior Tutor
Nazia Hirjee (NH)	Faculty Operations Officer
Rebecca Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Apologies	
Maria Christou	Chemistry Year 2 Student Representative
Alejandro Luy	ICU Deputy President-Education
Emma McCoy	FoNS vice-Dean (Education)
Ankush Rajput	Maths Departmental Student Representative
Don Craig (DC)	Chemistry Acting Director of Undergraduate Studies

1. Welcome and Apologies

MF welcomed the attendees to the meeting and apologies, as above, were noted.

2. Terms of Reference and Membership 2018/19

The above were noted.

3. Staff Student Committee Guidelines

The above were noted.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2018

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

5. Review of Actions

The action tracker was reviewed and the following completed/ updated actions noted:

Actions 13 and **12** were noted as complete.

Action 11. As neither EMc nor NH were not present when this action was discussed, it will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Action 6. AS noted that this action had been completed. MF confirmed that a meeting had been arranged for 05 December to specifically discuss LS common room space.

6. Reports from Department Student Representatives:

6.1 Chemistry

The Dep Rep noted the following:

Current issues in the Chemistry Department have mostly to do with the move to WC and are all handled within the department. These issues include:

- 4th year Students with projects still based in South Kensington have less time in labs for their project.
- 3rd year Bsc students with projects based in White City have the same problem as their lectures are still at SK
- General welfare and study space issues are being handled and communicated to the students

LH also noted that an important issue for Chemistry is the time between results being released and resits for those students who fail. At the moment this is a very short period, about 2 weeks. The DUGS present noted that they generally have a longer period between results and resits- 5/6 weeks in Life Sciences, for example. It was also noted that the Chemistry resit exams take place earlier than other departments- in early August. It was noted that some of these issues should be resolved with the launch of the new academic calendar, which would set out the periods in which resit exams should take place.

As the Chemistry DUGS was not present at the meeting, RM agreed to raise this matter with him and to report back to the next meeting.

ACTION: RM to RM raise the matter of the time between results being released and resits for those students who fail with the Chemistry DUGS and to report back to the next meeting.

LH also raised an issue on behalf of a Chemistry student regarding access to Panopto recordings from previous years. LH agreed to forward the email he had received to RM, who would discuss with the Chemistry DUGS and the Learning Technology team.

ACTION: LH to forward the email he had received regarding Panopto access to RM. RM to discuss with the Chemistry DUGS and the Learning Technology team.

6.2 Life Sciences- Biochemistry

The Biochemistry Dep Rep, IE, also noted students' involvement in the CR process.

She also noted the recent Wellbeing Fair event that had been held within the Department. A wide range of services, societies etc. were in attendance. RM noted that she'd spoken to the organiser about her plans and had shared these with the other FoNS departments with a view to their organising similar events in future.

IE also raised the topic of Reading Weeks, which are currently not built in to the Biochemistry undergraduate timetable, although they do exist in Biological Sciences. She asked whether other departments provided reading weeks.

It was noted that this matter had been raised at the Maths Department SSC which took place on 7 November, as there is currently no reading week provision in the Maths UG timetable.

The representatives from Physics noted that this was being looked at through the curriculum review process. Chemistry noted that they had had reading weeks within the timetable for some time, but that these were not completely free of activity- the included labs, but no lectures.

There was some discussion as to whether reading weeks were always constructively used, particularly where students were given a whole week off with no teaching activities, labs etc. It was generally felt that a week with a lighter load of teaching and learning activities might be more appropriate.

This led on to a discussion about Week 1 teaching and whether there was any formal College policy on what teaching activity was permitted in the first week of term, particularly for 1st year students. RM agreed to check the existing College policy on this.

ACTION: RM to check the existing College policy on what teaching activity is permitted in the first week of term.

6.3 Life Sciences – Biological Sciences

The Dep Rep noted the following:

Curriculum Review (CR)

- Recently sent out survey to second and third year students regarding their experiences in the course
- First curriculum review meeting of this year on 7/11/2018
- Topics include (in first meeting):
 - Degree programs to offer within Life Sciences
 - Integration of common skills in Biology and Biochemistry
 - Final Year structure and organization

Common Room

- Life Science department working with the RCSU to obtain a common room for Life Sciences
- Current problem is finding the space
- Currently rallying support from the students

6.4 Mathematics

The Maths Dep Rep sent the following report:

Year 1:

- *Trying to implement short 10minute videos to help bridge the gaps for students coming to imperial college as opposed to long reading lists*
- *Need to improve on welcome talks to students, they are very intent on scaring students with the difficulty of the course as opposed to showing a more supportive environment*

MSc Pure:

- *Want to implement a clearer outline of prerequisites for certain courses and which modules are linked together – help students from other universities understand structure of courses better.*

- *Request for better guidance on what is available for MSc projects, e.g. a list of available projects instead of having to go around emailing for supervisor*

All years:

- *Reading week discussion: Might have to restructure term schedule for this, another suggestion is to keep the lectures in the week but removing problem sheets/lower work load so that people can have time to catch up.*
- *Make lectures more engaging, e.g. mentimeter, interactive discussions, etc. Biggest complaint is that the lectures aren't engaging enough - We are going to look at Sole data and try and see where some lecturers can improve and try and implement best practice across this department (and using information from other departments)*

Extra:

Roland and Ankush are going to get more involved in the curriculum review and attend town hall meetings. We are also going to try and implement greater transparency between what we are doing as reps to all maths students.'

6.5 Physics

The Physics Dep Rep reported the following:

- All academic rep positions in physics have been filled and the first departmental SSC took place Weds 31st at 12:00.
- The change of Senior Tutor has been well received by the students from the sample the Dep Rep has spoken to.
- NSS results were extremely poor, worse than they have ever been. Huge disparity between BSc and MSci.
- HoD Michele Dougherty has been very active on change within the department. She is working with the departmental society (Physoc) to build community and improve student happiness. - Impression from students is that the department is beginning to listen and take student voice more seriously.
- More student study spaces have been made available. Rooms such as Blackett 539 and 311 have been made quiet study rooms during spare hours.
- Pizza Vending machine is in the process of being sorted, attended a tasting on 1st November.
- Some tutorial rooms and toilets/showers in Blackett were refurbished over the summer. The contractors were inefficient and the work was not completed. The tutorial rooms were completed, but other places are still unfinished (gents toilets on level 3), showers on level 1. Year 3 labs were adjusted with some newer equipment. We're awaiting student feedback.
- Two experiments in year 2 lab were reworked. The equipment was not delivered in time meaning the first few sessions were quite chaotic.
- The department are currently in the process of allocating the money from unpaid wages during the industrial action. NH noted that not all Departments had saved money following the strike action, but that departments who had could choose how to spend it and were encouraged to discuss this with students. The money has to be spent within the 2018/19 year.

7. Life Sciences Common Room Space

MF confirmed that a meeting had been arranged for 05 December to specifically discuss LS common room space with the LS HoD, DUGS and DOM.

NH noted that space was an issue and that one approach might be to pursue the development of the ground floor of SAF, in a joint project with FoM. However, HW noted that there was a strong desire on the part of students, as illustrated by NSS feedback, to foster a sense of community within the Department, and this might not be achieved with a shared space.

MF noted that she was in the process of investigating the availability of dedicated common room space across College- she confirmed that both Bioengineering and Chemical Engineering do not have their own space at present. It was also noted that existing, department common room spaces varied in terms of their accessibility- the Mech Eng Common Room, for example requires ID card access, whilst the Physics common room does not and can therefore be used by non-

8. Update on Personal Tutoring

RT and SS noted that a survey had been sent to students as part of the ongoing review of personal tutoring across FoNS. SS noted that over 700 students had responded. Results would be collated into a report.

RT noted that he was in the process of planning and running refresher training for all FoNS personal tutors and that he would be meeting with HoDS to discuss making this training compulsory. The training would cover the expectations of the role, and would also cover signposting of College support services- the Counselling service and the ICU Advice Centre would be represented. The first session would take place in Physics on 22 November.

9. Standing Items

9.1 Curriculum Review (CR)

MF asked each Department in turn to report on the CR process

9.1.1 Chemistry

LH, the Chemistry Dep Rep noted that he was not a member of the Department's CR panel and was not sure how students were being represented.

9.1.2. Life Sciences

HW noted that there the 2 LS Dep Reps were on the CR panel and were very involved with CR discussions. He confirmed that the department would also be holding student focus groups.

9.1.3 Maths

DE noted that sub-groups had been set up to discuss details of modules. Students were not currently represented on the department's CR panel, although DE welcomed their involvement. DE also confirmed that he planned to hold a town-hall meeting at the end of term.

9.1.4 Physics

It was noted that the Physics Dep Rep and RCSU Vice President (Education) were both on the Physics CR panel. TM noted that the department were concentrating on foundational change such as reducing assessment and streamlining the Physics programmes, rather than on large-scale teaching redesign.

9.2 Feedback on Assessment

No matters were discussed

9.3 NSS Action Plans

The Chemistry Dep Rep confirmed that he had not yet had sight of the Chemistry NSS Action Plan. LS, Physics and Maths were in the process of drawing up their plans, with input from students.

10. Chair's Business

No matters were discussed

11. AOB

No matters were discussed

12. Dates of Future Meetings:

FoNS/ College	Committee	Date	Time	Room
FoNS	UG Academic Student Staff Committee	Weds 13/03/19	12.30- 14.00	HXLY 341
FoNS	UG Academic Student Staff Committee	Weds 19/06/19	12.30- 14.00	HXLY 341