

Faculty of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Wellbeing Student Staff Committee

Date: Wednesday 9th June 2021

Time: 12.30 – 14.00

Location: via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Maria-Ileana	Borc (MIB)	Chair and RCSU Vice President (Welfare & Wellbeing)
John	Seddon (JS)	Co-chair and Faculty Senior Tutor
Matt	Horsfield (MH)	Secretary and Education Support Coordinator
Yasmin	Andrew (YA)	Student Liaison Officer, Physics
Steve	Connolly (SC)	UG Liaison Officer, Life Sciences
Amelia	Barron (AB)	Student Experience Officer, Chemistry
Inkeri	Hibbins	UG Liaison Officer, Mathematics
Sai	Yoghananthan	Student Experience Coordinator, Mathematics
Ella	Robson (ER)	Student Experience Coordinator, Mathematics
Nazia	Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education)
Stephen	Brickley	Professor of Systems Neuroscience, Life Sciences
Chris	Ford	Senior Tutor, Mathematics
Stuart	Haslam	Senior Tutor, Life Sciences
Ingo	Mueller-Wodarg (IMW)	Senior Tutor, Physics
Kauthar	Benriassa	Biological Sciences: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Nick	Bitterlich (NB)	Biochemistry: Wellbeing Department Rep
Paniz	Dogaheh (PD)	Biological Sciences: Year 3 Wellbeing Representative
Daniyar	Ghani	RCSU Vice President (Education)
Chinny	Lee (ChL)	Chemistry: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Desmond	Lin (DL)	Mathematics: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Anthea	MacIntosh-LaRocque (AML)	Physics: Wellbeing Department Rep
Jose	Narbona Valiente	Mathematics: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Pansy	Pan	Biochemistry: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Aparna	Pillai	RCSU President
Bahareh	Soltanian	Biological Sciences: Year Three Wellbeing Representative
Trinity	Stenhouse (TS)	Physics: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Francesca	Wittmann	Chemistry: Wellbeing Department Rep
Shervin	Sabeghi	ICU Deputy President (Welfare)

Apologies:

Hugo	Chu	Mathematics: Wellbeing Department Rep
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1. Welcome and Apologies

MIB welcomed all and apologies as above were accepted.
Confirmed that the meeting was being recorded on Teams.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2021.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 10th March 2021.

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

The action tracker was reviewed, and actions were marked as complete.

4. Reports from Department Student Representatives:

4.1 Chemistry

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and ChL presented the key matters arising from the report. ChL reported that both the academic and wellbeing representatives from the department were working on a yearbook for students who were expected to graduate this academic year and a virtual farewell dinner. ChL asked members of the committee if they had access to any up-to-date guidelines on organising any student events with the Student Union. TS explained that the Physics department had been working with the RCSU to organise an end of year event which was still ongoing. All key information can be found on the Union [website](#).

ChL added that they had organised informal discussions between the final year students and first year students in the department to discuss key subject matters, such as research projects, degree awards and exams. There had been very positive feedback from the students and ChL would circulate these practices with elected representatives for next academic year.

It was noted in the report document that under the NSS action plan, there was an action point regarding lab report feedback. ChL confirmed there had been no issues raised this year about feedback, but she would include any ideas in a handover document.

There have been concerns raised by students about the teaching plan for next academic year. RT confirmed that discussions were ongoing within the college and encouraged all student representatives to provide feedback to their department. AB confirmed the department are in contact with all continuing students to gather feedback and they plan to organise focus groups for each year group.

4.2 Life Sciences - Biological Sciences

No detailed report document was received. PD presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the department.

- PD reported that there were no major issues which had been reported but students were keen for some social events and would follow up with the Student Union to help organise a social event.
- PD explained they organised an online wellbeing session with the Head of Department but there was a low turnout from students. Previously they had run a pen pal or lockdown buddy scheme, and this was more successful.
- PD planned to organise a meeting with other department representatives to create an action plan for the department regarding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) for next academic year.

4.3 Life Sciences - Biochemistry

No detailed report document was received. NB presented a verbal report of the key matters arising in the department.

- NB reported there was positive feedback from 2nd year students about the new curriculum which was being introduced. They were looking also to expand their website with wellbeing and mental health blogs, and alumni stories.
- NB informed the committee they had been providing support to students to help them with planning their time and to keep on top of their summer workload.
- 2nd year students had raised concerns about their marks, and they wished to have a safety net to ensure that the pandemic has not negatively affected their studies. The department had advised students to apply for mitigating circumstances if needed and that all marks will be scrutinised at the exam board over the upcoming weeks.

- Other issues which had been reported to the department included, insufficient time to prepare for coursework and then scheduling of Q&A sessions around lectures.

4.4 Mathematics

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and DL presented the key matters arising from the report.

- Due to the ongoing restrictions, DL informed the committee that the upcoming town hall session had been postponed and was replaced by an informal coffee morning. Conversations which were discussed included re-recording some recorded lectures and the format of open book exams for next academic year.
- There were ongoing conversations about the President's Community Fund and where the money could be used. Some ideas included: lockers, laptop loans, re-furnishment of the Maths common room and new unisex toilets.
- DL queried if there were other communication channels the department or Faculty could use other than emails to contact with both staff and students.
- DL and other student representatives planned to send out a survey on personal tutoring.
- DL was organising a student panel for incoming students in Sept 2021, with a focus on pre-sessional courses.
- The Maths Society had organised a BBQ social event and they had received positive feedback from students.

4.5 Physics

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and AML presented the key matters arising from the report.

- AML explained that they have been working on virtual tutorials to be implemented for next academic year. SC queried about the process of virtual tutorials and how they run. JS explained to the committee the process of personal tutoring in Chemistry. AML reported that Physics will be extending virtual sessions for the next year.
- Tours had been organised for new students who arrived in London for the summer term of campus teaching. Tours were designed to help new students who moved to London and to familiarise them with how to get around London. TS explained that the Head of Department had subsidised student lunches with their personal tutor, which was appreciated by the students.
- TS reported positive feedback from students who had attended the Physics picnic and would forward the template risk assessment to the other departments.
- AML reported that they had organised online study groups for 2nd year students but with limited success due to poor online engagement.
- Following on from the previous UG Wellbeing SSC, AML reported that there was still a lot of concern from students about the online exams. YA explained that the department had collected lots of feedback from students and this would be considered in the upcoming exam board. IMW explained the process of external moderation to the committee and reassured the students that this would be discussed and considered at the exam board.
- AML thanked the department for helping to organise a staff and student forum to all allow students to ask questions to senior members of academic staff once the exams had been completed.

5. Chair's business

- JS had no matters to raise.

- RM introduced MH to the committee as the Education Support Coordinator in FoNS and future secretary to Student Staff Committee Meetings (SSCM).
- RM confirmed that the Faculty has recruited two Student Wellbeing Advisers, who will be in post in early July.
- RM reported that the Faculty was planning to introduce several EDI training sessions for new students. The sessions will cover, active bystander training, bullying, sexual consent etc. This will be introduced alongside the new Wellbeing Advisers.

6. Minutes of UG Departmental Student Staff Committee Meetings (to note)

No Minutes recorded.

RM reminded department staff to email minutes to MH as secretary.

7. Any other business

- RM congratulated MIB on her role as chair for her final committee.
- MIB queried if there was a survey which could be used to collect student feedback from continuing students. YA explained the Faculty had run a survey in the past but had a low feedback rate and was concerned too many surveys were being sent out.
- ER queried if members were aware if the College would be offering the Covid-19 vaccine to staff and students. RT confirmed the College was not offering the vaccine.

8. Dates of Future Meetings

Committee	Date	Time	Call for Papers	Paper Deadline
FoNS - UG Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	17/11/2021	12.30 – 14.00		
FoNS - UG Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	09/03/2022	12.30 – 14.00		
FoNS - UG Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	08/06/2022	12.30 – 14.00		