

Faculty of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Wellbeing Student Staff Committee

Date: 10th March 2021

Time: 12.30 – 14.00

Location: via Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Maria-Ileana	Borc (MIB)	Chair and RCSU Vice President (Welfare & Wellbeing)
John	Seddon (JS)	Co-chair and Faculty Senior Tutor
Yasmin	Andrew (YA)	Physics - Student Liaison Officer
Amelia	Barron	Chemistry - Student Experience Officer
Kauthar	Benriassa	Biological Sciences: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Nick	Bitterlich (NB)	Biochemistry Wellbeing Dep Rep
Stephen	Brickley	Professor of Systems Neuroscience - Life Sciences
Hugo	Chu (HCh)	Maths Wellbeing Dep Rep
Steve	Connolly	Life Sciences UG Liaison Officer
Paniz	Dogaheh (PD)	Biological Sciences: Year 3 Wellbeing Representative
Chris	Ford	Maths Senior Tutor
Daniyar	Ghani	RCSU Vice President (Education)
Stuart	Haslam	Life Sciences Senior Tutor
Inkeri	Hibbins (IH)	Maths - Undergraduate Liaison Officer
Nazia	Hirjee	Faculty Operations Officer
Kasia	Kmieckowiak	FoNS Administrative Assistant
Chinny	Lee (ChL)	Chemistry: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Desmond	Lin	Mathematics: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Anthea	MacIntosh-LaRocque (AML)	Physics Wellbeing Dep Rep
Rebecca	Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Ingo	Mueller-Wodarg (IMW)	Physics Senior Tutor
Jose	Narbona Valiente	Mathematics: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Pansy	Pan	Biochemistry: Year Two Wellbeing Representative
Aparna	Pillai	RCSU President
Ella	Robson (ER)	Student Experience Coordinator, Maths
Bahareh	Soltanian	Biological Sciences: Year Three Wellbeing Representative
Trinity	Stenhouse (TS)	Physics: Year One Wellbeing Representative
Richard	Thompson (RT)	Vice-Dean (Education)

Apologies:

Francesca	Wittmann	Chemistry Wellbeing Dep Rep
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1. Welcome and Apologies

MIB welcomed all and apologies as above were accepted.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 18th November 2020

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting held on 18th November.

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

The action tracker was reviewed, and most 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 (Chemistry Wellbeing Dep Rep), reported the key matters. Additional comments were made regarding Vertical tutorials arranged by the department. JS explained that these had been organised in addition to the personal tutor meetings. The vertical tutorials take place once a term. They are led by a personal tutor and are attended by their tutees. JS added that they work really well although some students appear to be a bit shy when discussing issues in front of the group. ChL added that the feedback had been very positive. However, she will discuss with the students how to adapt the format of these sessions so students feel more comfortable when expressing their opinions/raising issues.

4.2 Life Sciences- Biochemistry

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and NB (Biochemistry Wellbeing Dep Rep), reported the key matters. He also highlighted the following matters:

- Mitigating circumstances – in order to make students more aware of mitigating circumstances, a flowchart had been created and added to Blackboard: <https://infogram.com/assessment-1hng410oyjwxk23?live>
- A wellbeing website with resources and survey links had been created. It is only accessible to Biochemistry students. Students had found Blackboard confusing with the large amount of links, therefore having a separate website seems more practical.

4.3 Life Sciences- Biological Sciences

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and PD (Biological Sciences Wellbeing Dep Rep), reported the key matters. She also highlighted the following:

- She had emailed the mitigating circumstances flowchart to her cohort.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion committee had been meeting up and one of the actions had been to add discussions specifically around EDI as an agenda item.
- Student reps plan to run a campaign in the summer related to equality, diversity and inclusion matters to amplify stories of students from different ethnic backgrounds as well as history of life science.
- Student reps plan to set up a blog for students to express any wellbeing issues and how they overcome them.
- Wellbeing survey will be organised before Easter.

4.4 Mathematics

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and HCh (Maths Wellbeing Dep Rep) reported the key matters.

Additional comments were made regarding:

- Equality Diversity Inclusion students' representation - IH reported that Ella Orme and HCh had attended the last EDI Departmental committee meeting to put forward a case for student representation on that committee. This had been accepted by the committee and in the future the Wellbeing Dep Rep will be invited to attend.
- Possibility of Halls Accommodation in the next academic year for current First Years:
 - RM reported that Y1 students have a guaranteed place in halls each year and it is not known what the demand from Y1 students will be from October 2021. Jane Neary, Director of Campus Services, had estimated that there might be 81 spare places available across the halls in the coming academic year. The College is also looking into possibility of buying places in private halls. Once RM has further updates, she will report them back to the committee.
 - JS added that [Lee Abbey](#) also offers student accommodation.

- ER reported that the [Introduction to Private Housing](#) event will take place on Wednesday 24th March at 3pm.

4.5 Physics

The detailed report document was noted by the committee and AML (Physics Wellbeing Dep Rep) reported the key matters. She also highlighted the following matters:

- Exams - Students had expressed their concerns about the level of difficulty and format of January exams and the associated impact on their wellbeing. In response to that, the following comments were made:
 - IMW said the department's intention is not to make the exam papers more difficult, but to adjust them to the open book format.
 - MIB added that Y1 students would benefit from having sessions on exam techniques and tips so they can prepare better for this type of exams. This will be discussed further at the Faculty UG Academic Student Staff Committee.
 - RT said that he discussed exam techniques with his students at tutorials.
 - YA added that Y1 Physics students had had an exam technique session before Christmas break. She offered to address this issue with Physics personal tutors. She also asked students to contact her directly as she can provide advice on exam technique.

JS reported that in the Department of Chemistry students are encouraged to inform their personal tutor if they wish to go through their previous exam scripts to discuss exam technique.

- Y1 Lab timetable – this had been revised at the last minute, leading to confusion amongst students. TS added that students had been paired in alphabetical order. Consequently, they are forced to work with a student who they do not know. Students would prefer to have the possibility of choosing their lab partner. RM asked TS to raise this issue with the Department.

5. Chair's business

Teaching staff recruitment process

MIB drew committee's attention to the document outlining *Student involvement in the teaching staff recruitment process* in the Department of Mathematics. HCh added that this initiative had been created as part of the Department of Mathematics NSS action plan. A number of students had expressed that staff seem distant from students and do not provide adequate pastoral support. ER added that involving students in the staff recruitment is very beneficial for both parties and it increases transparency. RM said that she will share the *Student involvement in the teaching staff recruitment process* paper with DUGS to find out if their departments would be interested in introducing a similar initiative.

Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)

MIB reported that number of non-UK students had expressed that they would feel more comfortable to discuss wellbeing issues with a MHFA using their mother tongue. MIB asked whether MHFAs could specify if they can speak any other language and whether that information could be made available to students. In response to that, RM said that this issue had been looked at centrally and that she will follow this up.

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

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

- 6.1 Physics Department SSC Meeting Minutes – 29/01/21
- 6.2 Mathematics Department SSC Meeting Minutes – 27/01/21

7. Any other business

Student Emergency Contact Consent Policy and Procedure

JS reported that the Student Emergency Contact Consent Policy and Procedure has now been implemented. This will be communicated to student and staff via FoNS Newsletter in March. The data will be collected via My Imperial. There is also an [infographic](#) that explains the process.

Faculty Mental Health Student Support

RM reported that she had submitted a request to the Faculty to recruit two Student Wellbeing Advisers.

8. Dates of Future Meetings:

Committee	Date	Time	Call for Papers	Paper Deadline
UG Wellbeing Student Staff Committee	Weds 09/06/2021	12.30-14.00	26/05/2021	02/06/2021