

Faculty of Natural Sciences Silwood Masters Student Staff Committee

Date: 20 March 2018

Time: 13.00-14.30

Location: Boardroom, Silwood Park

Present:

Samraat Pawar (SP)	Chair and Silwood Park Masters Coordinator
Emma McCoy (EMcC)	Vice-Dean (Education) FoNS
Anne Dell (AD)	Head of Department
Abigail Baines (AB)	CMEE MRes Representative
Lorcan Pigott-Dix (LP)	CMEE MSc Representative
John Coppock (JC)	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Emma Muench (EM)	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Alexandros Kellaris (AK)	EEC MSc Representative
Steven Allain (SA)	EEC MRes Representative
Bethany Smith (BS)	EEC MRes Representative
Alasdair Robertson (AR)	Tropical Forest Ecology MRes Representative
Helal Ahmed (HA)	Graduate School
Rebecca Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager
Amanda Ellis (AJE)	Postgraduate Administrator (Silwood Park)

1. Welcome and Apologies

SP welcomed attendees to the meeting and outlined the purpose of the committee.

Apologies:

Niki Gounaris	DPS Life Sciences
Luke McCrone	GSU President
Nick Burstow	ICU Deputy President (Education)
Rachelle Todd	Conservation Science MSc Representative
Wenjia Cai	eeChange MRes Representative
Hannah Vigus	Tropical Forest Ecology MRes Representative

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2017

It was noted that Steve Allain and Beth Smith were missing from the list of attendees.
The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising/Action Tracker

Action 1- SSC Meeting 1/11/2017/

EEC had been highlighted as being problematic, but SP had held discussions with the course director to make improvements for next academic year.

ACTION 2- SSC Meeting 01/11/2017

The work required had been completed.

Action 5- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017

There had been some teething issues with iCal, and difficulties for Conservation Science due to the number of external speakers.

EMcC/RM would look at the possibility of integrating the department's google timetable with Celcat.

ACTION: EMcC and RM to discuss options for Celcat timetable integration with Will Bennet, FoNS ICT Digital Partner.

Action 6- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

Overall Blackboard seemed to be working well although there were still lecturers who did not upload teaching material in advance. But overall BB is OK. Some lecturers were unsure how to use Panopto and RM agreed to arrange training and access to training materials.

Action 7- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

RM would hold further discussions with LM and NB as this is a union issue. SP agreed to investigate the possibility of using the CPB car.

Action 8- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

RM had agreed to reimburse expenses for student travel to faculty-level SSC meetings at South Kensington, but had also received one request to cover travel to a SK based Grad School course, which was referred back to the Department. Going forward, agreement would need to be made about how such costs would be covered. Laura Lane, Head of Strategy and Operations, would be holding focus groups at Silwood in May/June so funding could be discussed then.

Laura is keen to run courses at Silwood, but would need to know what students feel they need. HA suggested that students could vote for the courses they would like at the beginning of the academic year. There had also been problems with lack of attendance, even when students have signed up, as well as some issues in fitting around lecture timetables. One solution could be to embed courses within the timetable rather than having them as an extracurricular event.

ACTION – SP to discuss Grad School timetabling at Course Directors meeting.

ACTION: RM to liaise with the FoNS AV Support team to arrange Panopto training sessions for Silwood-based staff

ACTION: RM to send SP the link to online Panopto training resources

Action 9- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

SP working on getting all courses to work consistently with regard to budgets and would chat with the Conservation Science course directors to ensure they were familiar with the processes.

Action 10- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

This is an ongoing process, but no issues had so far been raised.

Action 11- SSC Meeting 12/05/2017/

It was noted that the timing of releasing results and the format differed across courses. SP commented that differences can occur depending on the type of assessment, but the

Department does have a 2 week deadline for issuing exam results. SP would discuss the particular issues relating to Conservation Science with the course directors.

The expectation for final results was that they were released on the same day or within 24 hours of the final exam board.

EEC MSc usually received results within 2 weeks and with feedback so had no issues.

CMEE were happy with feedback generally, but felt some sort of rolling feedback in first 9 weeks of term would be useful. SP to discuss with the class.

The supervisor feedback for the EEC MRes had been inconsistent across the winter project. Clearer guidelines on what to expect in terms of supervisor feedback would be useful. It was also noted that the class would like to have more events organised for the group as a whole, perhaps one event a term.

It was agreed to retain this as an ongoing issue on the Action Tracker.

4. Reports from Student Representatives

The following issues were raised:

4.1 Conservation Science

Clarity was needed regarding the process for conducting projects overseas (as placements)

ACTION: RM to liaise with Stefan Hoyle and Registry regarding to producing a checklist for the organisation of an overseas-based project.

It was also noted that clarity and transparency was needed around the process/ information on the allocation of project budgets. SP agreed to review this in consultation with the Dept. Operations manager.

4.2 EEC MSc

For the January exam, fewer questions were set than expected, which potentially could have disadvantaged some students.

Precise guidelines on coursework were not given, which resulted in students losing time emailing the course directors for further clarification.

There was also one lecture where no-one had been scheduled to give the session.

However, it was noted that these issues have since been resolved with the course director.

4.3 EEC MRes

There was a feeling that the combined project budget of £1k was far too low for an MRes programme. Many felt that, relative to the MSc, there is a big gap in what MRes students receive for their fees, for example, only 6 weeks of teaching. More flexibility with the project budgets, and perhaps a much larger budget, would be welcome.

SP commented that budgets had been discussed amongst the directors, as there were huge inconsistencies across courses, but that this was still being reviewed. Major changes would need to be agreed with the Operations Manager.

ACTION: SP to review project budget allocation, in consultation with Course Directors and the Dept. Operations manager.

It was also noted that some things were poorly timed i.e. today's meeting and a First aid course shortly before exams started. RM noted that in terms of SSC meetings the aim is always to get dates out as early as possible, so students can plan earlier. She also noted that this meeting had been rescheduled because the original date had clashed with the PG Graduation in May. The next Masters SSC, taking place at South Kensington, is scheduled for 27th June.

4.4. CMEE

Students felt feedback on proposals would be useful. SP mentioned that he could include advice on proposal writing as part of his project workshop run at the beginning of the year.

4.5 General Discussion

4.5.1 It was agreed that it would be helpful if all courses were to identify a timetable slot to accommodate Graduate School courses. SP agreed to liaise with Course Directors on this matter.

ACTION: SP to liaise with Course Directors to identify a timetable slot to accommodate Graduate School courses

4.5.2 It was noted that unlike the RCSU, or GSU, the Silwood Students' Union was treated as a student society by the ICU, rather than as a constituent union. RM agreed to raise this with the ICU.

ACTION: RM to raise the issue of Silwood Students' Union being treated as a student society, as opposed to a constituent union, with the ICU.

5. Chair's business

SP asked for thoughts on holding a Life Science Dept. SSC meeting in South Kensington with all courses participating. AD noted that many of the comments raised, such as projects, feedback, could be resolved quickly if discussed at departmental level meetings. It was noted that the purpose of Faculty meetings is to raise issues that the Faculty can help with, such as the minibus, and that it is also useful for Student Reps to hear about issues affecting other faculty or department students. AD recommended thinking about joining colleagues at South Kensington, with perhaps one meeting at held at Silwood.

AD clarified that each CD should hold course specific meetings once a term.

6. Any other business

6.1 It was noted that the heating did not work properly in the Hamilton building and the lecture rooms were often freezing. It was noted that any requests for changes to

temperature required a phone call to South Kensington, that requests took a long time to be dealt with, and any solutions were often short lived. Some rooms currently have air-conditioning running, but to counter the cold, portable radiators have been brought in to provide some warmth.

EMcC agreed to take the matter further.

ACTION: EMcC to raise the issue of temperature control in the Hamilton Building with Estates.

6.2 SOLE was not of great relevance to Conservation Science as the questionnaires were difficult to complete due to the number of lecturers. However, weekly feedback was completed for the course. RM to talk to George Yeorghaki about changing structure of survey to make it more suitable. AD commented that feedback from SOLE went to Heads of Department and the Director of PG Studies and was used to benchmark against other courses/departments. AD to notify ATK/MM to forward their weekly feedback, as it would prove extremely useful.

ACTION: RM/EM to talk to George Yeorghaki in Registry about changing structure of SOLE to make it more suitable for Con Sci students.

6.3 It was noted that there were no external litterbins on the site. EMcC agreed to raise this with campus services.

ACTION: peter

7. Dates of Future Meetings

Dates for 2018/19 to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 14.50