

Faculty of Natural Sciences Undergraduate Wellbeing Student Staff Committee

Date: 12th December 2018

Time: 12.30 – 14.00

Location: SAF 120

MINUTES

Present:

Shervin Sabeghi (SS)	Chair and RCSU Vice President (Welfare)
Richard Thompson (RT)	Co-Chair Faculty Senior Tutor
Amelia Barron	Chemistry Student Experience Officer
Yasmin Andrew (YA)	Physics Student Liaison Officer
Chris Ford	Maths Senior Tutor
Stuart Haslam	Life Sciences Senior Tutor
Ingo Mueller-Wodarg (IMW)	Physics Senior Tutor
Stephen Connolly	Life Sciences Undergraduate Liaison Officer
Sai Yoghananthan	Student Experience Coordinator, Mathematics
Rebecca Middleton (RM)	Faculty Education Manager, FoNS
Becky Neil (BN)	ICU Deputy President (Welfare)
Felix Thompson (FT)	Chemistry Wellbeing Dep Rep
Catalina Costenco (CC)	LS (Biochemistry) Wellbeing Dep Rep
Immanuel Adewumi (IA)	Physics Wellbeing Dep Rep
Seoyeon Lee (SL)	LS (Biology) Wellbeing Dep Rep
Anna Mossop	Physics Year 2 Wellbeing Rep
Josef Willsher	Physics Year 3 Wellbeing Rep
Geoff Sang	Maths Year 1 Wellbeing Rep
Aishwarya Chidambaram	Maths Year 2 Wellbeing Rep
Arvind Narayan	Maths Year 3 Wellbeing Rep
Lei Shen	LS (Biochemistry) Year 1 Wellbeing Rep
Ruben Colindres Zuehlke	LS (Biochemistry) Year 2 Wellbeing Rep
Gabriel Ing	LS (Biochemistry) Year 3 Wellbeing Rep

Apologies:

Pietro Spanu	Life Sciences Senior Tutor
Inkeri Hibbins	Maths ULO
Emma McCoy	Vice-Dean Education
Michaela Flegrova	RCSU Academic Affairs Officer
Nikolaus Schumacher	Maths Year 4 Wellbeing Rep

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

2. Staff Student Committee Guidelines

The committee noted the Staff Student Committee Guidelines

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 14th June 2018

The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

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

The action tracker was reviewed and updated.

5. Reports from Department Student Representatives:

5.1 Chemistry

It was reported that at the Department Wellbeing Student Staff meeting members focused on matters specific to Chemistry:

- The department plans to set up an LGBT+ Network.
- Discussions had been made with regards to the split between White City and South Kensington and students being located at both sites. RT asked whether the move had been fully completed. In response to that FT said that there are still 10 research groups at South Kensington which need relocating to White City. This is causing delays for students and their projects. Moreover, they are missing lectures and are unable to use the equipment available at White City.
- Some services such as counselling that run at White City are not advertised, therefore students are not aware of them. The committee agreed that systems informing students about services available at white City must be put in place.

ACTION: RM to contact Hannah Bannister to find out what services run at the White City and what system could be put in place to pass the information to students.

5.2 Life Sciences- Biochemistry

CC and SL submitted a joint report for the Biochemistry and Biology Departments. They reported that:

- A survey had been conducted among the students in the whole department, with around 25% response rate which still allowed the understanding of the general state of wellbeing, and awareness of wellbeing in the Department of Life Sciences.
- The approval for organising a 'temporary common room' for Biochemistry and Biology students had been granted in the form of a series of small events will be arranged at the department with the first event planned for week commencing 10th December.
- Students are not aware of the resources and events available at the College that aim at improving their wellbeing hence the Life Sciences Student Reps had sent out an email with the list of resources, events and links. In addition, they would like to publish a monthly wellbeing newsletter at the Faculty level which would include a collection of wellbeing events from all around campus. The committee requested more information about the newsletters published by other departments. YA reported that the Department of Physics used to have a newsletter, but now she sends emails to students with various information. The Chemistry Student Rep said that their department publishes a Newsletter, but it is not specific to the wellbeing matters. RT pointed out that if the publication of a Newsletter is going to go ahead, it must be ensured that it stays sustainable, as a lot of work is involved in creating a newsletter. IMW pointed out that posters do not work anymore as they are not being noticed anymore hence a regular messaging students works better. He also suggested adding a column on wellbeing news in Felix. In response to that, BN said that this might not be feasible, as students are too busy with their coursework and would not be able to meet the submission deadlines. However, SS mentioned that there used to be a section on Welfare in Felix so perhaps all the wellbeing news could be included there.

ACTION: SS to contact the editor of Felix to find out more details on the Welfare section.

5.3 Life Sciences- Biology – please see item 5.2

5.4 Mathematics

It was reported that:

- The Maths students had been invited to the Curriculum Review group weekly meetings to give their input into the curriculum review process. To date, the Department of Mathematics created a document outlining a detailed curriculum content for Y1 and Y2.
- The department tries to organise the Wellbeing events more often and to keep them consistent, aiming for once every two weeks. It was noted that the MLC is considerably better venue than the Common Room, as this way a lot more people are aware of the event and can drop in as it happens.
- It was noted that the Maths Common Room (also known as the Maths Computer Room) is currently not used very much for either work or socialising, as the MLC is used primarily for these things. Therefore, it had been suggested to convert the Maths Common Room to a proper social space. Before any changes would be made, the Student Reps would need to consult it with the students to ensure they want that change and what the pros and cons would be as well as how much it would cost.
- A lot of coursework had clashing deadlines or the amount of time required had not been proportionate to how much the coursework had been worth. This had led to more stress. Therefore, the Student Reps addressed that problem and the department is trying to produce benchmarks/standards in terms of how long a given coursework should take (based on how much it is worth).
- Students are encouraged to send their feedback on what they expect from Student Reps.
- The Mums and Dads scheme is up and running.
- Similarly to students from the Department of Physics, the Maths students found the changes made to the Mitigating Circumstances policy very positive.

5.5 Physics

IA reported that:

- The first rep team meeting took place on 1st November where members had discussed various matters that needed improving such as work cultures in the department and the sexual health awareness as well as increasing the department activities between staff and students.
- The students had a meeting with IMW regarding various positive changes which had been implemented to the Mitigating Circumstances procedure. Students found the changes positive, making the procedure clearer and accessible.
- The department had a Meet Your Reps session which was helpful. Students had been provided with clearer information about the roles of Wellbeing and Academic Rep networks and what matters they can help students with.
- Physics Student Reps had a meeting with Dr Carl Paterson (Department of Physics) to discuss the planned changes to be implemented through the curriculum review. These key modifications included reducing the course content and adding more effective learning.

YA reported that:

- The department SSC meetings are very productive and successful. Recently the committee had discussed the introduction of the Wellbeing Strategy which outlines the work to be done for the next five years.
- The Physics LGBT+ Network had been set up and it is successfully running various activities i.e. Pride in Physics Summer Event. She added that the network has its

own committee now. A new Chair had been recently appointed and a new Co-chair will be recruited in due course. The major positive feedback the Network had received, is its visibility for example via posters displayed in the departments. BN added that a requirement of having one LGBT+ Tutor per department might be implemented in the near future.

- The Q&A Desk has been run by the students which has been also very successful.

6. ICU Welfare business

BN reported that:

- The College is currently recruiting more counsellors to meet the increased demand for counselling. The problem is also with finding rooms to hold the sessions however recently some space had been identified and it will be hired for a limited period to accommodate this.
- Some individuals are selling 'ready made' essays on Exhibition Road. The Student Reps were encouraged to speak with their students who are tempted to buy such essay and strongly discourage them from doing so.

7. Standing Items

There were no standing items to discuss.

8. Chair's business

8.1 Personal Tutoring Review

SS presented the data gathered from FoNS/RCSU Personal Tutoring Survey Summary. 758 responses had been submitted which is 25% of the Faculty. The split of the responses across the departments had been as expected:

- Department of Maths ~200
- Department of Physics ~200
- Department of Life Sciences ~100
- Department of Chemistry ~100.

Almost 60% of the students expressed that they had a meeting with their Personal Tutor once a term, 22% once a month and 15% once a year. The survey had shown that most students would not know what to do if they have had an issue with their Personal Tutor. This includes not receiving a response from Personal Tutors or personality clashes. Senior Tutors present at the meeting, suggested that the students should contact the Student Liaison Officer in the first instance as they can act on student's behalf and often are able to resolve any problem. Alternatively, students can contact someone more senior at the department. They agreed that requesting a change of the Personal Tutor should be the last resource. IMW also suggested that students could discuss their issue confidentially with their Student Rep who would advise on how to best approach a problem with the Personal Tutor. He also added that every situation is different hence creating a guideline would be difficult. RT informed the committee that the Faculty Management Committee had decided that each Personal Tutor would need to complete a compulsory training.

9. Any other business

There was no other business to report.

10. Dates of Future Meetings:

Spring Term:

- 6th February 2019, 12.30-14.00
- 19th March 2019, 12.30-14.00

Summer Term: 12th June 2019, 12.30-14.00