

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY 13th November 2013

Present: Dr PA Gorry (Chair)
 Profs M Anderson, D Collison, JP Clayden, GA Morris, G Procter, ML Turner, JC Whitehead, REP Winpenny, S Yeates.
 Drs MP Attfield, AK Brisdon, C Casiraghi, AJ Fielding, RH Henschman, MJ Ingleson, A Jones, RA Layfield, JJW McDouall, D Mills, C Murny, P O'Malley, R Pritchard, P Quayle, AC Regan, F Tuna, TW Wallace, SJ Webb, LS Wong.
 R. Barker, A. Dermody, R Graham, SJ Holden (minutes), H Kreissl, C Martyniuk, M Pumford, RJ Speak.

1. **Apologies:** Profs. P Barran, R Dryfe, F Livens, DJ Procter, Drs EM Armstrong, R Goodacre, S Heath, SP Koehler, G Law, N Lockyer, LS Natrajan, C Pearce, V Ramesh, R Whitehead.
 M. Clegg, C Taylor, V Turner,
2. **Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 27th February 2013**
 Confirmed: As a true and accurate record.
3. **Matters Arising**
 Confirmed: There were no matters arising.
4. **Report from the Head of School (Professor Christopher Whitehead)**
 - 4.1 **Staff Changes**
 Noted: A welcome was extended to new staff joining the School and thanks extended to those leaving. There are considerably more people joining the School than leaving.
 - 4.2 **School Management Structure**
 Noted: A layer of management to take responsibility for teaching within each section has been appointed and this will lead to a new Management Team structure.

4.3 School of Chemistry Overview 2012/2013

Noted: An outline of the size and scope of the School and its staff and students was given.

Successes:

NSS result = 97%, top of the Russell Group.

The School obtained the Athena Swan Silver award.

Research income is an all-time high of £25 million.

Admissions – all areas ahead of targets.

Accounts are in good shape (but rate of overhead return has fallen).

Concerns:

The percentage of UG new entrants withdrawing is increasing (10.1% in 2012/2013). There seems to be no apparent correlation to suggest a particular cause for this.

PhD completion rate (within 5 years) is only 72%. This issue will be taken up by the PG Research Committee.

Employability of UG's is 79% and PG's 80% against the target of 85%.

4.4 Forthcoming Events

Noted: The next round of academic promotions is forthcoming.
Applications for sabbatical leave are forthcoming.
President's visit to the School at 11.30 on Thursday 21st November in rooms 7.27/7.28.

4.5 Open access

Noted: Keeping publications up-to-date in eScholar is mandatory.
RCUK grant for open access is operated by the library and is likely to be underspent.
Green access "amnesty" deadline for loading manuscripts is 22nd November (via website).

4.6 Chemistry 2020 – the Future of the School

Noted: The School will have to decide to grow, stay steady or contract in terms of numbers of staff and students, and research activity.
It is generally accepted that the building is full (with the 6th floor out of commission for 3 to 4 years).
Comments on any future direction will be welcome.

Some discussion followed regarding possibilities such as laboratories for Masters/projects; expanding the building and utilising other areas of the University (e.g. PSI, MIB).

5. Report on the Staff Survey (Mrs. Rachel Barker).

5.1 Overall

Noted: That the School compares positively to other areas of the University.

: Particular areas of strength are: Feeling part of the School; valued by co-workers; “not just a job”; research staff feel valued; agreement with core goals; feedback from line manager; sufficient training and development; job security; fair recruitment arrangements; feeling safe and secure; know how to report accidents and having seen positive changes.

5.2 Breakdown by staff category – areas of weakness

Noted: The data was separately analysed for Academic staff, Research only staff and PSS (including Technical staff) and this revealed several areas of concern.

. Areas for improvement for Academic staff were work/life balance and lack of assistance from their line manager in helping them achieve this; not receiving information from the President’s Senior Leadership Team and belief that no or little action will be taken as a result of the survey .

For PSS staff the areas of concern were: not feeling valued; not receiving feedback on performance; ineffectual management of poor performance; ineffective communication from line managers; unfair rewarding of exceptional performance and no place to take a break.

. Research staff felt there was no clear vision from the SLT of where the University is headed; that the SLT do not listen to and respond to the views of staff; work/life balance is poor and there is no clear understanding about expected standards of behaviour.

5.3. The Response by the School

Noted: An action plan was produced and the results of the survey were circulated to staff inviting comments. After discussions the SMT approved an action plan to Faculty.

The main focus points of the School action plan are: Communication; PDR; Staff rewarded and feeling valued and suitable break space.

5.4 Response by the Faculty

Noted: The Faculty produced five action areas: PSS to feel valued as part of the University; Communication; Performance management and supporting work/life balance; PDR and awareness of accident reporting procedures.

5.5 Response by the University

Noted The University is taking four themes forward through working groups: Behaviours; PDR; Recognition and Reward and Leadership.

6. Undergraduate Teaching Matters (Professor Garry Procter)

6.1 School of Chemistry NSS Survey 2013

Noted: Overall NSS score = 97% from a response rate of 77%, highest NSS score of any Russell Group University. The lowest figure was for "assessment and feedback". There has been a continuous improvement across the seven assessed areas from 2008 to 2013. The largest improvements were outlined. Data across the School's programmes was also outlined.

6.2 NSS Action Plan

Noted: To continue to implement the School's 2012/2013 action plan (there are areas that can improve). Continue to review of Year 3 B.Sc. programmes. Run the new teaching peer observation programme.

6.3 Current Issues from EPS T&LC

Noted: There is a University-wide review of programmes. Poorly enrolled programmes are particularly under threat (e.g. Chemistry with Forensic and Analytical Science).

Focus on employability continues.

Progression rates and school action to improve these. Target is >90% (currently below this and falling).

6.4 RSC Accreditation

Noted: Our programmes are to be reviewed in 2014: Submission by 17/03/2014; RSC visit 07/05/2014 and accreditation considered 06/2014.

6.5 SSLC

Noted: The Director of Teaching has been asked to report that student representatives prefer more “interactive” lectures and to remind staff to support material with practice questions.

6.6 Curriculum Review Years 3 and 4

Noted: Year 4 options are under review.
B.Sc. practicals for 2014/2015 are to be reviewed.
External examiners have agreed with the expansion of the scope of Year 4 projects.

Some discussion followed regarding the quality of projects being offered being very variable and how this can be changed. There was also discussion regarding numbers and the motivation driving this change.

6.7 Staff and student Success

Noted: Numerous achievements and prizes awarded to the School’s staff and students.

7. Final REF Position (Professor Mike Anderson)

7.1 Current Situation

Noted: REF1 (Information on staff in post): complete.
REF2 (Details of assessable output): final adjustments in progress.
REF3 (Completed template and case studies): all signed off and complete.
REF4 and REF5 ((Research data and the research environment): being finalised.

7.2 REF 2014

Noted: Outputs = 65%; Impact = 20%; Environment = 15%.
Important dates announced:

- 25/11/2013: submissions.
- 29/11/2013: closing date for submissions.
- 31/12/2013: cut-off for publication of research outputs.
- Dec. 2014: Publication of outcomes.
- Spring 2015: Publication of submissions and reports.

An assessors list has been agreed.
The quality profile will be published.

7.3 The School's Submission

Noted: The internal assessment of Output is much better than RAE2008.
Six impact cases have been selected.
All narrative documents will be on the School server.
The website is being updated and it is suggested that all PI's should update their personal webpages.
Thanks were given to all staff who had contributed towards REF especially the impact case study authors and those who reviewed outcomes.

Some discussion took place regarding whether all impact cases will go on the web, not just the selected ones.
Currently not all the selected cases will go on the website.

8. Undergraduate Admissions (Dr Peter Gorry)

8.1 Thanks!

Noted: Appreciation was expressed to all staff involved in the admissions process.

8.2 Applications National and Manchester

Noted: National applications have been rising for the past 10 years and are at an all-time high.
At Manchester over the same period grade rise, fees and choice reduction have all had negative effects but there was a 42% increase in applications from 2012 to 2013.
The entry cycle is improving as is the conversion rate (1; 2.7 in 2013).

8.3 Confirmation and Clearing

Noted: Initially there seemed to be a real chance of significant overshoot.
However SNC limit of ABB+ and the Dean's rules meant intake was actually 202 home students (target 195) and 26 overseas students (target 21).
An overview of intake grades, admissions by gender, and breakdown by course over the past was set out.

8.4 2013/2014 Entry

Noted: The 2014 entry cycle is currently 6.7% up on last year. The home target will remain at 195 students paying £9,000 per annum. Better pre-screening of BSc applicants will be implemented. A high conversion rate from application to firm acceptance is necessary and interviews will be a key factor in this. A small dedicated team will carry out all UCAS interviews. UCAS visit days have started. Offers will be made at AAA (M.Chem.) and ABB (B.Sc.) and may dip one grade below at confirmation and clearing. The University has agreed a range of bursaries and the Faculty has agreed a number of Student Scholarships.

Some discussion took place regarding how Manchester fairs with offers against other Russell Universities (in the upper third below Oxford and Cambridge). Also it was questioned as to whether instead of grade changes it could be stipulated that an "A" in Chemistry is required.

9. Any Other Business

In accordance with University statutes and ordinances the School Board is informed that currently there are 25 staff on fixed term or permanent contracts whose funding is of finite duration and are therefore at risk of redundancy at the conclusion of their contract of employment. Any comments on this statistic should be sent to the Chair of the Board who will forward details to the Dean for inclusion in the University Staffing Committee meeting.