

## THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

*School of Chemistry*

## STAFF/STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE

---

MINUTES

Meeting held at 1pm Wednesday 3 November in School of Chemistry, Room GE.005

**Present:** Garry Procter (Chair), Andrew Regan, Christopher Whitehead, Karen Charters

Student Representatives:

Level 1	Ashley Rose	
Level 2	Jordan Turner	
Level 3	Sara Harrison	Naomi Hayes
Level 4	Aiden Tierney	Michaela Daubney

**1. Apologies for absence**

Jake Plastow-Chason (Year 1), Rebecca Ruscoe (Year 2)

**2. Fourth Year matters**

- a) Students returning from placement years in 2009/10 had commented on the distance learning materials. Comments had been received that it would be very useful to receive recordings of the lectures as this would make it easier to understand the material. Professor Whitehead commented that recording of lecture material and the posting of this material onto Blackboard was quite a long and complicated process and might not be possible in all cases. However it was mentioned that Dr Watt had put extensive efforts into producing a recorded narrative to his lecture slides this year and that this material had been sent out to all placement students.

**Action:** the Chair would seek information from the Inorganic group about the nature of DL material to be sent out in semester two. The recorded narrative material would also be publicised to academic staff in the School, who would be encouraged to consider this in future. The Senior Education Officer would speak to AV support to find out how easy it is to record lecture material in a format which is easy to transfer to Blackboard.

- b) Comments had been made on the improvement in feedback to students, which was welcomed. Whereas it was useful to receive copies of marking sheets for last year's group projects, comments on the forms weren't always very helpful. Most students simply wish to know how to improve their work.

**Action:** the Chair would speak to the project coordinator and suggest that the final 'comments' section could be renamed to 'general comments and suggestions for improvement' or similar.

- c) Positive feedback had been received regarding the recent Postgraduate open day.
- d) Queries had been received about locations for drinking water in the building.

**Action:** the School Building Manager would be asked to provide this information, which would be passed on to all students.

- e) Students returning from placement had commented that many industrial supervisors expected students to know about Suzuki reactions and suggested that this could be included in the year 2 curriculum.

**Action:** the Chair would take this comment to the upcoming curriculum review meetings, which would this year be looking at level 2. Students would be invited to give input into this process during the next few months.

## 8. Third Year matters

- a) Complaints had been received about the computers in the measurement labs. Some students working on computational projects for BSc had reported that the computers crashed regularly. The Chair reported that these were due to be upgraded.

**Action:** The Chair would check with Chemistry IT services when this was due to take place and report back.

- b) Some students had complained that DL material for students on placement was not sent out until week 4. It was explained that this delay was due to unforeseen problems with links on some of the interactive material. However Dr Regan noted that his interactive material was on Blackboard from the start of term and so the delay should not have disadvantaged anyone.

## 9. Second Year matters

- a) A number of students have complimented the smooth running of synthesis labs, which has been aided by the yellow marking forms and the online lab report submission. However, some have stated their displeasure in having a total of three demonstrators during a single experiment, resulting in being told multiple different methods. In some instances lab bays have been left with no demonstrator on the Wednesday session, which is very unsatisfying. This comment had been passed onto the lab organiser and the problem solved by some reallocation of demonstrators. Comments had also been received about the quality of feedback from some demonstrators. Poor examples being passed on to the lab organiser and were being dealt with.
- b) In the measurements labs, the main issue that has been raised is that demonstrators have been forced to demonstrate for multiple experiments. This results in students waiting for long periods of time before being able to proceed. Additionally, students don't like not being with one demonstrator and lab group for all the measurement experiments as it makes measurements seem less friendly and as personal as synthesis. These comments had been passed onto the lab organiser and an explanation for this method of organisation had been received and sent to all second year students.
- c) Favourable comments had been received regarding the lecture/workshop format of CHEM20310. These comments had been passed on to the head of the inorganic section.
- d) There had been some comments received about the audibility of some lecturers, with the recommendation that microphones be used where possible. Comments about specific lecturers had been passed on and a general recommendation to be aware of this issue.

- e) Problems had been reported with CHEM20210 lectures in the Chaplaincy. It was disruptive and annoying to have to moved from G.51 in the hour before. Additionally, the microphone in the chaplaincy is not loud enough and does not have adequate facilities for lecturing. It was commented that some students have stopped attending this lecture.

**Action:** These comments would be passed on to central timetabling and audio visual services.

- f) Problems with a noisy air intake in G.54 had been reported. It was noted that this problem had already been reported to Estates who would rectify soon.

#### **10. First Year matters**

- a) Complaints had been received about the length of queues for solvents in the synthesis labs. Some attempts to alleviate this problem had been put in place by the lab organiser but it was explained that with a large lab and restrictions on the amount of solvents which could be stored would always mean some queues were likely.
- b) Students had queried why there was no reading week in Chemistry. It was explained that the lecture and lab schedule did not allow for a break as there was too much material to be covered. Also the accreditation of Chemistry degrees by the RSC requires students to undertake a required number of lab hours, which could be jeopardised by the introduction of a reading week.

#### **11. Any other business**

The Head of School asked for suggestions on how interaction with the Careers Service could be improved. Recommendations received included early information about internship opportunities (and the importance of these to employability and career-development) to first and second year students, more information about the possibilities for chemists amongst smaller employers and a repeat of last year's presentation on career options available to chemists (the 'What Chemistry has done for me' evening).

#### **12. Next meeting**

Wednesday 2 March 2011