

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

School of Chemistry

STAFF/STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Meeting held at 1pm Wednesday 2 November 2011 in School of Chemistry, Room GE.005

Present: Garry Procter (Chair), Andrew Regan, Ben Coe, John Blunden-Ellis, Karen Charters

Student Representatives:

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| Level 1 | James Wilde | Lisa Williams |
| Level 2 | Gyan Quartey | Robert Marsland |
| Level 3 | Conrad Goodwin | Daisy Ray |
| Level 4 | Debbie Jones | Ralph Hick |

1. Apologies for absence

None received

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

There were no matters arising, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved and would be posted onto the intranet.

3. Library Issues

John Blunden-Ellis introduced himself and explained that the University library has a particularly strong Chemistry collection, especially in terms of electronic resources. There is a budget to invest this year and so John would be interested to hear of any problems students have accessing books on reading lists, or any suggestions for interesting titles which could be included.

It was noted that the ACS website has been working very poorly over the last few weeks. It was reported that there were some ongoing issues between the University and the ACS and it was hoped that these would soon be resolved.

One rep reported that during exam periods, especially the January one, restrictions on areas where eating is allowed meant that it was very difficult to take a break (the one area where eating or drinking is allowed being too busy). These comments would be passed on.

4. Careers Issues

Dr Coe was in attendance as part of his role as careers link. It was reported that the recent careers drop in sessions had proved very popular. Another session would be held on 11 November. A virtual advice session had been organized by the RSC, and the RSC and careers service would be helping to organise a 'what has a chemistry degree done for me?' event in the New Year. The careers service had set up a Chemistry careers facebook page, to which all students were invited.

Feedback from student reps included comments that the recent SET fair was geared almost exclusively towards engineering, with very few Chemistry-based companies involved. It was also commented that the careers service is not very easy to find and could perhaps be better signposted. More advice on non-chemistry careers would also be welcomed.

5. Fourth Year matters

- a) It was requested that advance notice of computer cluster bookings could be sent round to students, so that they could plan their time accordingly. It was noted that machines in other clusters did not usually have Chemdraw installed.

Action (KC): a list of bookings would be posted onto the Chemistry intranet, and all students informed of this.

- b) Common room and drinking water facilities. It was clarified that 4th year students could make use of the common room facilities in the Chemistry building. It was noted that signs showing location of drinking water in the building were either located in the teaching labs or were not visible on noticeboards.

Action (KC): an email clarifying location and use of these facilities would be sent round at the start of each academic year.

5. Third Year matters

- a) A further request was made (noted in 2010-11 minutes) for the printers in the cluster to be labeled so that students knew which printer they were selecting. This would save wasted printing credits when one machine appeared to be out of order.

Action (KC): the Senior Education Officer would pass this request on to IT services.

- b) BSc students had expressed concern at the cost of printing three long reports for submission during the year and had asked if free printing facilities could be made available. It was explained that printing costs were not deemed to be excessive and were part of the costs to be expected as part of students' studies.
- c) It was noted that heating and ventilation still appears to be a problem in the Chemistry building, with lecture theatres and the computer cluster in particular being excessively warm. It was explained that this problem had been reported to Estates and that investigations were ongoing.
- d) It was noted that not all workshop and tutorial answers were being released online. It was reported that often all the material was not covered in the tutorial meeting itself, and having access to the answers was helpful in such cases.
- e) It was reported that different students working on group projects were getting very different experiences, with some being given very close guidance and others being left to solve problems on their own. The Chair explained that the nature of group projects, even more so with final year projects, was that they were all very different. This experience is designed to reflect the differences in types of research. However the marking schemes are very detailed and in previous years the marks received by different groups are comparable. Any groups with particular concerns about their project experience should raise these with the project co-ordinator, Dr Burton, in the first instance.

6. Second Year matters

- a) It was reported that in CHEM20311 workshops there was often not sufficient time to get through the whole worksheet and to ask questions. It would be helpful if the worksheets could be provided in advance. It was also noted that Professor Collison did not provide lecture notes online, which was a problem for those who found his lectures difficult to follow.

Action (GP): the Chair would pass these comments on to the course convenor.

- b) It was reported that the feedback session for second year labs was very useful, and that comments made were being acted upon.
- c) It was commented that the huge volume of students queuing outside the labs on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings was creating a hazard. It was noted that sometimes the labs didn't open on time, which exacerbated the problem.

Action (GP): the Chair would pass these comments on to the lab manager, and ensure that the lab doors were programmed to open at the correct time.

- d) It was requested that students could have access to previous year's lecture material, as it would be helpful for labs and projects, as well as for reference for teaching courses. It was explained that this was an ongoing issue to which Schools had been requesting a solution for some time.

7. First Year matters

- a) It was reported that some students were disappointed that, following the recent CHEM10101 test, only results were available rather than feedback on where marks had been lost. It would have been useful to be able to view a copy of the questions and answers together for this purpose.
- b) Some students had reported that they struggled with the first couple of lab reports and wondered if an introductory lecture could be held in future years. It was explained that extensive advice on how to write and format lab reports was available in the lab manual, as well as advice and support from demonstrators.
- c) Some students had requested that lectures be recorded and put onto Blackboard. It was explained that a simple audio or video recording of a lecture would not be of no use and that annotated notes (ie video capture of writing with voiceover) took a lot of time to create. The School was starting to invest in this area but it would take time to build up a bank of course material.

8. Next meeting

14 March 2012