

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

School of Chemistry

STAFF/STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Meeting held at 1pm Wednesday 24 October 2012 in School of Chemistry, Room GE.005

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

Student Representatives:

Level 1	Ikra Pervaiz	
Level 2	Lisa Williams	Jonathan Phan
Level 3	Jessica Quirke	Kyriacos Demetriou
Level 4	Priyanka Comar	Lisa Roe

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. Fourth Year matters

- a) It had been requested that sufficient notice be given of bookings in the computer cluster. The Senior Education Officer reported that a list of all bookings for semester one had already been displayed on both doors of the cluster and also put onto the intranet.
- 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): this information was made available on the intranet, following a request made by reps last year. The information would also be posted into the 'virtual common room' area of Blackboard.

- c) Some students who were undertaking level 4 projects under supervision of staff with no research students had expressed concern about being appropriately supervised in labs. The Director of Undergraduate Studies explained that in such cases students were always located to labs which had full time research students working in them, and that project students should never be working in labs on their own, no matter which group they were located with. The Director also reiterated that students should be spending approximately half their total working time dedicated to their projects, and that this should not include all hours outside of lectures, as work for taught

courses included further reading, research and revision. Any student who felt that they were being asked to put in too many hours into their project should contact the project co-ordinator.

- d) Some students had commented that the café was not always open at 9am, meaning that they were not able to purchase drinks before lectures began. All members were reminded that food and drink was not allowed into lecture theatres.
- e) It was reported that some students taking CHEM30311 had not been allocated to tutorial groups. The Senior Education Officer asked that anyone affected contact her immediately and this would be resolved.

5. Third Year matters

- a) Some students undertaking group projects had asked for an earlier start to labs, as all preparatory work had been completed in advance of week 7. It was noted that a more flexible approach to lab start dates had been proposed by Teaching Committee in 2011/12, but that the lab organisers would find this difficult to work with in practice, due to the practicalities of ordering chemicals, organising demonstrators and so on.

Action (GP): this would be discussed further with lab staff and organisers.

- b) It was requested that announcements of seminars be kept to a single email once a month, as at present students were receiving many emails per week.

Action (KC): this request would be passed on to the relevant person.

- 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 cold at present.
- d) One student had slipped on wet leaves on the path leading to the building, and had asked if any action could be taken to clean this area.

Action (KC): these requests would be passed on to the building manager.

- e) Some students had reported that there was currently no space to sit in between lectures, as the café was too small and the computer cluster was not designed as a social space. It was explained that there was no space within the building to facilitate the provision of undergraduate common room, but that possible expansion of the café area was being explored. Some students suggested a remodeling of the 4th floor library space, with removal of bookcases in order to expand the available seating area. It was noted however that this space was often being used as a quiet study area, and that use as a social space was not wanted by all users.

Action (GP): the matter would be brought to the attention of the Head of School and Building Manager.

6. Second Year matters

- a) It was reported that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the provision of demonstrators in year 2 labs, with some students having a different demonstrator for all three lab sessions, leading to problems of consistency between sessions. It had also been reported that some demonstrators were not engaging with their students, were leaving lab sessions before 4pm and spending time on their phones or talking to other demonstrators rather than being available to assist. The perceived levels of training did not appear to be

satisfactory, with at least one demonstrator not knowing where things were in the lab and having to be shown by students.

Action (GP): the Chair asked for specific detail of any problems (day, bay number etc) and would pass any comments onto lab organisers for resolution. It was reported that the recruitment of demonstrators had been particularly difficult this year, meaning that early training could not take place in all areas.

- b) Some students had commented that it would be useful to receive some preparatory reading during late August/early September, so that they could better prepare themselves for classes.

Action (GP): this comment would be shared with members of Teaching Committee and any possible future material included in mailings to students about the start of year.

- c) It was felt that there were not presently sufficient leaders for year 2 PASS, leading to larger than useful group sizes.

Action (GP): this would be reported to the PASS co-ordinator for comment.

7. First Year matters

- a) Comments had concentrated on the start of year, with some students reporting that they did not feel sufficiently prepared for their first week of lectures. It was suggested that a campus tour be made available, so that students could identify the buildings they needed to go to for subsidiary lectures.
- b) The lack of social events/mixers was highlighted. The Senior Education Officer explained that the first year cohort was now too large for events to take place within the Chemistry building during the day, and that Estates restrictions made the organising of events in the evenings difficult. There was acknowledgement of the difficulties faced by students who did not wish to participate in events targeted towards drinking, and that the hire of possible external venues might also present these difficulties.

Action (KC, all reps): any ideas about different social events which could take place in welcome week would be gratefully received. The matter would also be brought to the attention of ChemSoc reps.

8. Any other business

The Senior Education Officer notified the committee of proposed changes to the way that course unit selection is made, with a proposal that students choose their options in mid-August. There was no support for such a change, with students expressing a preference to receive detailed information about programme structures and to have access to advice on option selection in Welcome Week.

8. Next meeting

13 February 2013

17 April 2013