

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Teaching Committee

Minutes of Friday 13 February 2009

Present: Garry Procter (Chair), Andrew Regan, Christopher Whitehead, David Collison, Eric McInnes, Peter Gorry, Jim Thomas, Joe McDouall, Mark Whiteley, Tim Wallace, Karen Charters (Secretary)

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Frank Mair and Paul O'Brien

2) Minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2008

The minutes were approved.

3) Matters Arising

ACTUM 2a The standard agenda had been updated

ACTUM 2b Draft meeting dates for the remainder of 2008/9 had been circulated

ACTUM 2c The terms of reference had been updated

ACTUM 3 MChem group projects

- Received*
- a) Information regarding the current project titles and approximate hours of supervision
 - b) Current 2nd year student numbers
 - c) A draft project proposal form, to be completed by project supervisors and signed off by Heads of Teaching Sections
 - d) A draft project choice form, to be completed by current second year students online via Blackboard

Reported There was agreement that an ideal project would include elements of all disciplines of Chemistry, and all projects should include at least two elements. There was some discussion about whether projects could work well with joint supervision. There was some unease at the idea of student selection, but it was agreed that the survey would be useful to gain an idea of student preferences rather than relying on anecdotal evidence.

Teaching sections reported that there had been queries regarding the cost of equipment for group projects. GP reported that projects were currently funded from the teaching laboratory budgets, but that bids for specialist equipment would be considered. The issue of demonstrating support for specialist laboratories was also discussed, and it was agreed that this was something which could be added to the project proposal form. JCW reported that one Physical/Theoretical project was currently generously funded by BP and that other colleagues could consider this option.

- Agreed**
- a) the survey of second year students' project preferences would go ahead, with students given a deadline of 27th March in which to respond.
Action: Garry Procter/Tim Wallace
 - b) teaching Sections would be asked to prepare for 18 group projects in 2009/10
Action: Heads of Teaching Sections
 - c) suggestions for amendments to the project proposal form to be sent to GP
Action: All

ACTUM 4

Feedback

Reported

Suggestions on possible ways to improve feedback included making model answers to exam papers available on the intranet, access to exam scripts, providing a reading week and using this time to provide online tests, 4th year tutorials, providing a 'bank' of 4th year projects for students to view.

It was felt that simply providing past paper answers and projects could be seen as coaching rather than teaching, something which external examiners had already warned against.

Inorganic colleagues reported that extra Q&A sessions were provided in most 3rd and 4th year courses in order to help students prepare for exams, and that these sessions had been well received.

Organic colleagues reported that a project style guide had been produced by TW and could be useful to all students.

Agreed

A section on feedback to be added to course unit descriptions so that the type of feedback which could be expected on each course unit is made clear. A section would also be added to the student intranet, in an attempt to improve the perception and understanding of what constitutes feedback amongst students.

Action: Karen Charters/Garry Procter/Course Unit Convenors

A question regarding feedback would be added to the semester 2 teaching survey

Action: Mark Whiteley

ACTUM 5

Discussion of the away day was postponed until the next meeting

ACTUM 6

The response to external examiners had been sent

Reported

Although reported that the Physical/Theoretical teaching group would have difficulties arranging a break at the end of 2nd year teaching, this had proved to be less problematical than anticipated, and so teaching would be brought into line with other sections.

ACTUM 7a

MWW reported that EEE, Materials, Physics and Chemistry had been successful in a joint bid for a project to explore methods of improving feedback. Suggestions for inclusion in the project could be forwarded to MWW.

ACTUM 7b

No further discussion of Outreach had taken place.

4) E-Learning

Reported The migration of teaching materials into Blackboard means that students are currently unable to access previous years' materials for reference. There was also concern about archiving past year materials. These issues were being discussed further at Faculty and Institution level, but the initial feedback was that there would be a cost involved in making facilities such as this available and it was not clear whether this cost would be passed on to Faculties/Schools.

5) Laboratories

Noted: JCW asked for assurances that the proposed overhaul of 2nd year measurements labs take place before 2009/10.
It was reported that basic health and safety procedures were not always being adhered to and students, demonstrators and lab supervisors need to be reminded of this.

Action: Garry Procter

6) Examinations

No business discussed under this item

7) Outreach

Reported: The widening participation office had a new member of staff appointed who is a Phd chemist. Noted as a possible useful contact.

8) Admissions and Recruitment

Reported Applications were at the same level as the previous year, a full report would be given at the next School board.

9) Quality Assurance and Student Feedback

Reported Semester 1 teaching survey results were now compiled and would be made available via the staff and student intranets.

10) Attendance

Reported Semester 1 tutorial attendance for 1st year students had been compiled.

Agreed: An analysis of attendance against examination performance to be made available at the next meeting.

Action: Karen Charters

11) Sectional issues

No further business discussed under this item

12) Any other business

Received: A copy of the THES survey results.

13) Date of next meeting

Friday 20 March 2009 at 2.00 pm