

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Teaching Committee

Minutes of Friday 11 February 2011

Present: Garry Procter (Chair), Paul Popelier, Andrew Regan, Jim Thomas, Tim Wallace, Eric McInnes, Steve Yeates, Andrew Horn, Frank Mair, Karen Charters (Secretary)

1) Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Peter Gorry, Joe McDouall

2) Minutes of the meeting of 10 December 2010

The minutes were approved with one minor typographical correction.

3) Matters arising

a) *Curriculum Review Group – RECEIVED – feedback from teaching sections regarding development of year 2 curriculum*

(i) Curriculum

Inorganic – general support for the type of changes proposed, on the understanding that there is sufficient workshop support, that content could dovetail with year 2 lab content and that careful consideration is made to timetabling.

Physical – general support for the proposals

Organic – general support for the proposals, however some concern that trying to remove any repetition of content could mean that knowledge is not reinforced and some students would struggle to understand all of the content immediately (must therefore be reinforced through workshops).

(ii) Examination format

Inorganic – proposed a short problem-solving paper for semester one followed by a longer paper to re-examine knowledge along with semester two material in summer.

Physical – split between wanting to keep year long format and moving to semesterised exams.

Organic – some confusion about the proposals for exam format, some concern that current method of examination does not suit students.

(iii) Future of CHEM20710

Inorganic – support for abolition of this course, replacement proposals included techniques/analytical, applied chemistry, 'grand challenges'. Not keen on MLP.

Physical – analytical or industrial chemistry type of course. Concern about fitting in content currently in 20710 elsewhere. Also must ensure some maths provision – in Comm Chem?

Organic – proposed analytical or 'grand challenges' type of courses.

AGREED: the curriculum review group would meet again with two representatives from each Teaching Section, to review the content of the core course units.

AGREED: the Senior Education Officer would chase up Students as Partners about arranging a focus group.

Action: KC/HoTS

b) *RECEIVED* – feedback from teaching sections on 1st year textbook

Inorganic – need to be sure what the book is intended for (is it only to accompany CHEM10101 for example?). Chemistry cubed is not much different from Housecroft & Constable but is very poor in comparison to Housecroft and Sharpe and would be unsuitable for use in CHEM10312.

It was noted that the online study sections provided by both text books were poor.

There was some discussion as to whether an introductory textbook was actually needed, given current and future scarce resources and that most students did not seem to be using the one given to them.

AGREED: move to buy Chemistry Cubed from 2011 entry, but explore mechanisms to ensure that the book is actually used by students and review annually.

4) E-learning

- a) Blackboard 9 – members were advised that transition to Blackboard 9 would begin in March, with staff being invited to timetabled support clinics on 24/25 March. It was noted that Blackboard 9 has a quite different look and ‘feel’ to Blackboard Vista and that transfer of material is not straightforward. It is therefore quite important that everyone engages with the early transfer, so that e-Learning colleagues can support them through this process.

A School template for the new system would be set up before the transition process begins

Action: Tim Wallace

Where possible HoTS will need to provide details of lecturing duties by the end of March

Action: HoTS

- b) It was reported that the majority of the new equipment to support development of e-learning technology had been bought. An announcement would be made to staff when the equipment was up and running and available for use.

5) Laboratories

It was reported that a bid to the Dean’s strategic fund had been successful and that 12 new rotary evaporators will be bought for the teaching labs.

6) Examinations

It was reported that all semester one marks were to be processed by 16 February and exam grids prepared for the semester one exam board on 23 February.

7) Outreach

The following was reported: the RSC regional co-ordinator post had been filled; £13.5k of HE STEM money had been secured; a mobile spectrometer will be purchased for outreach

purposes. There has been a greater engagement of staff with the Nuffield placements this year, with a better balance of subjects being offered.

8) Admissions and recruitment

A written report had been submitted: the normal application cycle is now closed (Jan 15) - so far things are identical in numbers to last year (918 applications vs 915). There are only 11% of decisions in so at present it is difficult to gauge if conversion to firm acceptances will be the same.

9) Quality assurance and student feedback

- a) *RECEIVED* - draft of School manual of academic and administrative procedures (QA manual). This document had been produced at the request of Faculty. Any comments were invited from members of the committee, to the Senior Education Officer, no later than Monday 14 February.
- b) *RECEIVED: Teaching Survey Results Semester One*. It was noted that the new format of questionnaire, designed by Holly Knight, was a big improvement. The LEO asked whether results could be published earlier once approved by HoTS rather than currently waiting until after Teaching Committee. This was agreed. It was also proposed and agreed that convenors would be invited to submit a short paragraph for each course unit, commenting on generic exam performance and on the feedback received, including any plans for changes/improvements/additions in the future. This would be co-ordinated by the LEO.

Action: Andrew Horn

- c) Members were invited to send any comments on the Faculty strategic plan for Teaching and Learning to the Chair no later than 18 February.
- d) *RECEIVED: proposal from Martin Atfield about possible penalty system for Plagiarism detected in Communicating Chemistry essays*. It was felt that current University policy on plagiarism and student discipline be followed. Advice to be sought from Faculty regarding the distinction between poor academic practice and plagiarism.

Action: Karen Charters

10) Attendance

No business was discussed under this item.

11) Sectional issues

12)No business was discussed under this item.

The next meeting would take place on Friday 1 April at 11.00 am.