

**School of Biological and Chemical Sciences
Postgraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
18 November 2020**

Staff members present:

Prof Andrew Leitch	Deputy Director (PGT Programmes) and SSLC Chair
Natalie Holland	Postgraduate Administrator (SSLC Secretary)

Student members present:

Anjumanara Areefa	Course Rep - MSc Chemical Research
Sophie Dennis	Course Rep - MSc Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
Zoe Sturgess	Course Rep - MSc Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Apologies for absence:

Joeeta Bagchi	Course Rep - MSc Chemical Research
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Part 1 – Preliminary Items	
1(a)	Welcome and introduction for new members
2020.001	The Representatives were welcomed to the meeting.
1(b)	Apologies for Absence
2020.002	Joeeta Bagchi.
1(c)	Minutes of the previous meeting
2020.003	N/A. This was the first meeting of the year.
1(d)	Report on matters arising and actions taken
2020.004	N/A.
1(e)	Terms of reference and membership
2020.005	The committee noted the terms and reference and membership of the Student Staff Liaison Committee.
1(f)	Admissions, induction and enrolment
2020.006	Due to the impact of the pandemic, there had been a slight under-recruitment on MSc Plant and Fungal Taxonomy, Diversity & Conservation, MSc Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB) and MSc Ecological and Evolutionary Genomics (EEG). MSc Bioinformatics recruitment remained consistent with previous years.
Part 2 – Student feedback, Programme Delivery and other matters	

2(a)	Programme/module developments and amendments
2020.007	It was reported that a new 'Biology and Conservation' programme was in the planning stages for 2021. It was to have different streams that mirrored some of the existing programmes, with one additional stream in 'Terrestrial Ecology and Conservation'.
2(b)	Learning and teaching matters
2020.008	<p>Representatives reported on learning and teaching matters and the following points were noted:</p> <p>The online teaching delivery had worked really well and students felt they had been able to understand the material in greater depth given the fact they could revisit recorded sessions. They also appreciated the opportunity to work in breakout workshop groups as this enabled the opportunity to ask more questions and seek clarity on uncertain areas. However, there was a feeling that asking questions in front of the whole class was a bit daunting, through fear of being judged.</p> <p>It was highlighted that in some cases MOs are not sharing lecture notes with students in advance. This was a particular issue for students with Student Support Summary agreements for specific learning differences such as dyslexia.</p>
Action:	It was agreed that the importance of sharing lecture notes in advance to students with SpLDs was to be fed back to all MOs.
2(c)	Assessment and feedback
2020.009	<p>Representatives were reminded of the importance to complete module evaluations. It was also highlighted that the evaluation would ask for student comments on feedback, but that the timing of the distribution of the evaluation didn't always allow for students to have seen their feedback. This was in relation to the block nature of study. In previous years the evaluations were distributed later in the year and after feedback had been provided, but the response rate had been very low. Representatives were also reminded that the evaluations are taken seriously and actions are taken from them, so their input was encouraged and appreciated.</p>
2(d)	Academic support

2020.010	<p>Representatives were asked if they felt the online delivery was enabling a sense of networking.</p> <p>It was felt that the opportunities for this had been by luck more than design. The first module had provided the opportunity for students to work in smaller study groups. As a result small informal networks of support had formed. In online classes some students participated in the group chat area, but the absence of meeting fellow students in face-to-face settings had made an impact.</p> <p>Representatives were reminded that in Semester B the majority of their time would be focused on the research project which would mean networks would form within those research labs, but that the student cohort at large would potentially be even less unified. In response to that a series of face-to-face activities was in the planning stages for Semester B. A provisional schedule that included a series of workshops on topics such as Grant Writing, Coding, Statistics advice sessions and talks from relevant central teams such as Careers Office and Centre for Public Engagement.</p>
Action:	Representatives offered to circulate a questionnaire to all students to gather feedback on their views on what the schedule should include.
2(e)	Organisation and communication
2020.011	<p>Representatives reported on organisation and communication matters and the following points were noted:</p> <p>There had been no issues with the communication between staff and students and they felt that their emails were always replied to promptly.</p>
2(f)	Learning resources
2020.012	<p>Representatives reported on learning resources matters and the following points were noted:</p> <p>The materials that had been shared could be used for future cohorts.</p> <p>On the issue of poor completion rate of module evaluations, it was suggested that a 5% mark could be incorporated into the module diet but it was reported that evaluations should remain voluntary and independent of grades.</p>

	<p>There was also a comment on the timing of the live sessions in that for those on the MSc Chemical Research programmes there had sometimes been a pressure to simultaneously attend live teaching sessions and maintain strict experimental deadlines. But, in general this was felt to be a challenge that could be managed.</p> <p>It was also reported that during the 'Advanced Topics' module, the Module Lead had experienced intermittent internet connection problems but the teaching delivery for all other modules had been successful.</p>
2(h)	Consideration of External Examiner reports
2020.013	<p>The committee received External Examiner reports and noted the following:</p> <p>Of the three external examiner reports that had been shared, two of them had been highly complimentary about the programmes. The report that had provided constructive feedback about the design of the marking scheme had already been responded to. It was noted that the external examiner reports had not yet been shared for the MSc Chemical Research programme.</p>
Action:	NH was to update the QM+ page with the external examiner reports for the MSc Chemical Research programme.
Part 3 – Any Other Business	
2020.014	<p>The following items were raised under Any Other Business:</p> <p>There was a requirement to appoint a Co-Chair and the Student Reps were asked to consider how to appoint this role and to report back in advance of the next meeting.</p> <p>There was also a request for a group to be set up on MS Teams for all MSc students to be invited to. NH was to set this up.</p>
Part 4 – Date of the next meeting	
2020.015	TBC

Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Action status	Issue resolved?
2020:008	It was agreed that the importance of sharing lecture notes in advance to students with SpLDs was to be fed back to all MOs.	ARL			
2020:010	Representatives offered to circulate a questionnaire to all students to gather feedback on their views on what the schedule should include.	Course Reps			
2020:013	NH was to update the QM+ page with the external examiner reports for the MSc Chemical Research programme.	NH			

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