

School of Biological and Chemical Sciences
Undergraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee

18/11/2020

Confirmed

Staff members present:

Dr Caroline Brennan	Director of Student Experience (Chair)
Ewan Main	Deputy Director of Student Experience
Dr Chris Bray	Director of Education
Professor Richard Grose	Professor of Cancer Cell Biology
Pooja Kanani	Teaching Services Manager
Kawtar Serroukh	Receptionist and Student Support Assistant (Secretary)

Student members present:

Ramesh Wilson	School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep
Shreya Suresh	Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 3
Jyoti Singh	Pharmaceutical Chemistry Year 4
Lara Carter	Biology and Zoology Year 2
Foteini Bifsa	Biochemistry Year 4
Simranjeet Duhra	Chemistry Year 4
Upkaar Rajend Ramlall	Biochemistry Year 3
Srooley Harp	Neuroscience Year 3
Najma Ali Warsame	Biomedical Sciences Year 1
Fatima (Insiya) Merchant	Biomedical Sciences Year 2
Diane Lee	Psychology Year 2
Zainab Zarnab	Biochemistry Year 1
Maria Malik	Pharmacology and innovative Therapeutics Year 3
Soha Khan	Biochemistry Year 2
Parth Bhatnagar	Pharmacology and innovative Therapeutics Year 1
Aisha Najee	Psychology Year 1
Sara Mostafa	Psychology Year 1
Zena Thaier	Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 2
Sara Othman	Biology and Zoology Year 3
Polen Bareke	Neuroscience Year 2
Sanjay Babu	Biomedical Sciences Year 2
Ushna Zaineb	Biomedical Sciences Year 3
Maria Kahloon	Neuroscience Year 1
Oya Avcin	Chemistry Year 2
Yeahia Ahmed	Biomedical Sciences Year 3
Czarina Amor Camay Nercua	Pharmacology and innovative Therapeutics Year 2

Apologies for absence:

Richard Pickersgill	Head of School
Abidur Rahman	Year 1 Chemistry and Pharmaceutical Chemistry
Annabel Louisa Bittner	Year 2 - Pharmaceutical Chemistry

Part 1 – Preliminary Items	
1(a)	Welcome and introduction for new members
2020.001	
1(b)	Apologies for Absence
2020.002	The meeting noted the apologies from members as recorded above.
1(c)	Minutes of the previous meeting
2020.003	The committee approved the minutes of the meeting held in April and June
1(d)	Report on matters arising and actions taken
2020.004	Dr Caroline Brennan - In April the committee discussed potential concerns of the upcoming exams and in June issues arising from the May exam period. Concerns raised include the exam time window of 48 hours being too long and a debate on the structure of the exams. This was raised at TLC and a shorter timeframe was proposed. The university has reduced this time window to 24 hours, however, the feedback from the student voice meetings suggest this has caused more concern.
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	The committee discussed the processes of admissions, enrolment and induction and noted the following: Aisha Psychology Year 1 – Students felt they didn’t experience the Welcome/Fresher’s week they were hoping for due to the pandemic and this has hugely impacted their student life experience. The admissions team have been very supportive online. Najma Biomedical Sciences Year 1 – The admissions process has been more convenient for students due to the online processes replacing the on campus compulsory visits. Dr Caroline Brennan – The School and Students Union (QMSU) tried to organise events and online activities however, the restrictions set out by the government were difficult to overcome. Course Representatives (reps) should encourage students to join the subject specific societies available within the QMSU. They organise online/on campus events where possible and provide opportunities to interact with other students within your cohort and discuss topics within your respective degree programme.
2020.007	ACTION: Course Reps to encourage students to join subject specific societies available within QMSU.

Part 2 – Student feedback, Programme Delivery and other matters	
2(a)	Programme/module developments and amendments
2020.008	The committee reviewed proposed programme / module developments and amendments. The following feedback was received from student representatives: Dr Caroline Brennan and Dr Chris Bray - Not aware of any major changes.
2(b)	Learning and teaching matters
2020.009	<p>Representatives reported on learning and teaching matters and the following points were noted:</p> <p>Ramesh School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep – The asynchronous sessions are overloaded with material and modules rarely consider the time taken to complete formative/coursework assessments alongside any additional wider reading. Students also feel discouraged from attending synchronous sessions as frequently they only cover a review of the material taught and many find this not productive. Students propose that a fraction of the asynchronous material should be transferred to a synchronous presentation.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – We have identified some modules which are bulk delivering and are not identifying core material vs additional and wider reading material. Based on the student feedback, Steve Buckingham has reviewed all the modules within SBCS and traffic lighted in red and amber those which require improvement. These modules have been flagged to the Directors of Teaching and Learning (DTL’s) for monitoring. Has there been any changes since reading week?</p> <p>Ramesh School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep – There has been a slight change in some modules however, the general feedback is that asynchronous material is still overbearing. An example of a very well taught module is Behavioural Ecology (BIO311) which students believe has the right balance.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – Specific subject areas may require a different structural approach therefore this matter should also be raised at the Town Hall meetings for DTL’s to respond accordingly.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – The Biomedical Sciences teaching group have suggested a 1/1.25 hour of asynchronous material viewed prior to the synchronous sessions. Any additional reading should be clearly marked as self-directed learning. The synchronous sessions should be broken down into 30/40 minutes of new material followed by a review. 15/25 students in the meeting agree with this proposed structure.</p>

2020.010	<p>Najma Biomedical Sciences Year 1 - Since reading week synchronous sessions have been adapted; many have removed the use of the Mentimeter and shifted their focus on delivering new material. However, the changes have resulted in academics condensing the session into a shorter time e.g. 20 minutes minimising our contact time with the academic. The use of the Mentimeter helps to consolidate students learning and so a combination of new material and the use of the Mentimeter would be beneficial.</p> <p>Sara Biology and Zoology Year 3 – Supports the above course reps and suggests the new material being presented should also link back to the 1 hour preparation students are required to complete.</p> <p>Maria Neuroscience Year 1 – For some webinars e.g. ‘Cells’ the chat is closed so it becomes difficult to ask questions in real time and understand the content.</p> <p>Shreya Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 3 – Her cohort has seen a positive change in Endocrine Physiology BMD311. The asynchronous is less heavy loaded and they have adopted a case study approach in the synchronous sessions. As a result, there is more interaction between students and staff and students are more engaged. Cancer Biology BMD381 hasn’t changed much. The reviews are lengthy, the Mentimeter quizzes are not productive or challenging.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – If the total work for a module (weekly) is 10 hours and the synchronous session is 2 hours, how much do students think should be spent on asynchronous prep?</p> <p>Ramesh School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep – It is difficult to set guidelines as there are many factors to consider such as differing modules and when assignments are scheduled. On average, a maximum of 2 hours should be spent on preparation.</p> <p>ACTION: Dr Caroline Brennan to circulate a summary of the student voice meetings to the SSLC committee.</p>
2(c)	Assessment and feedback
2020.011	<p>Representatives reported on assessment and feedback processes and the following points were noted:</p> <p>Ramesh School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep – When will the University communicate the changes in the timeframe window of exams. Academics have relayed this information informally which has led to confusion, stress and anxiety.</p>

Dr Chris Bray – The changes from a 48 to a 24 hour window timeframe was a College based decision. This was based on feedback from students who were stressed and spending excessive time to complete the assessment. We are unsure why this wasn't communicated by the college to students. As a School we will be updating the QMplus assessment policy and will be available for students to access on Friday 20 November.

Jyoti Pharmaceutical Chemistry Year 4 – Highlights the recommended guidelines to complete the alternative assessments was 4 hours and students were aware of this. The SSLC in June recorded positive feedback from students in SBCS regarding the window timeframe. The decision to shorten the timeframe seems abrupt and has had a significant number of students who are either unhappy or have raised concerns.

Pooja Kanani – January exam timetable will be released by the 30th November 2020.

Simranjeet Chemistry Year 4 – Will the timetable released on 30 November identify what time the assessment will begin and what provisions have been put in place to ensure the system does not crash.

Dr Chris Bray – the system was previously housed on a server; this has now been transferred to a cloud based server. Since this change, only one outage has been reported and this was due to a staff member updating the system. The start of exams will also be staggered throughout the day; based on the above the university do not anticipate any outages. If there were any such cases, students would not be penalised and deadlines would be extended accordingly.

Revised rules will be in place in relation to EC's for the upcoming assessments. It will be the responsibility of students to ensure they are in suitable place with reliable internet. Students should spend 4 hours maximum and academics have been advised marking should be based on 4 hours of work. Students will not be marked down for working on an exam longer than expected however work which appears to exceed the timeframe will not be used as a benchmark to determine grades.

Date/timings for in class assessments should be published at the start of the academic year.

The no detriment policy which discounted 30 credits will not continue into the 2020/2021 academic year. This was a college decision discussed at the Education Quality Standard Board (EQSB) meeting.

Ramesh School of Biological and Chemical Sciences Rep – The 3 Vice Presidents (VP's) are lobbying against the decision to amend the no detriment policy.

2020.012	<p>Shreya Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 3 – Assessments are scheduled much later in the semester for the majority of modules, resulting in deadlines being too close together and feedback not being received until week 8.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – There was a review of deadlines, to ensure this concern is minimised however, there have been some changes to the weighting of coursework which may have affected this.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – Programmes with a high number of elective choices can result in difficulty with spacing out deadlines. We need to find the right balance: offer the appropriate number of electives to manage deadlines accordingly.</p> <p>Zena Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 2 – When a heavily weighted assignment deadline is coming up, student usually sacrifice a few hours of asynchronous learning for that module to complete and submit assignment. Can academics take this into consideration?</p> <p>ACTION: Dr Caroline Brennan – We can raise this at the Teaching Learning Committee (TLC) meeting and to DTL’s. We can suggest a reduction in asynchronous material to accommodate for upcoming heavily weighted assignment deadlines.</p>	
2(d)	Academic support	
2020.013	<p>Representatives reported on academic support matters and the following points were noted:</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan - A point was raised from the Town Hall meeting regarding on campus lecturing. What do students think is the right balance?</p> <p>Simranjeet Chemistry Year 4 – Students are still concerned about returning to campus. If and when students do return, a COVID safe policy should be circulated to students.</p> <p>Zena Genetics and Medical Genetics Year 2 – Multiple workshops could be introduced opposed to lectures. A large cohort could be split into smaller groups to maintain adherence with COVID safe policies and overcome issues pertaining to smaller classrooms.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – Having multiple workshops may not be feasible due to staff time especially with the much larger cohorts.</p> <p>Sara Biology and Zoology Year 3 – We should consider having a blend of face-to-face teaching whilst incorporating a live online meeting for those unable to attend physically.</p>	

2020.014	<p>Dr Caroline Brennan – This is a good idea but will need further discussion on feasibility with IT.</p> <p>Maria Malik Pharmacology and innovative Therapeutics Year 3 – Her cohort believe whilst the learning aspect is most important, there needs to be social interaction between peers and academics. A session once a week would be very beneficial.</p> <p>Diane Psychology Year 2 – First year students should be given priority to return back to campus. The consensus for her cohort is there should be a focus on improving online learning before implementing a return back to campus.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – Since the pandemic we have had a reduction in the number of staff; an increased number of students coupled with teaching rooms only taking 50% capacity due to the restrictions in place. Additionally, many staff are shielding/self-isolating with higher prevalence in Biology. Field courses to Croatia and South Africa are pending based on government guidelines. Biochemistry may introduce computer based lab sessions and workshops. Biomedical Sciences are looking to introduce on campus sessions. Projects for CHE600 will continue in the JP building. Psychology are looking at introducing on campus workshops. Pharmacology and Neuroscience the activities are being organised via SMD; contact Sadani Cooray or Joana Riddoch-Contreras for further details.</p> <p>Zainab Biochemistry Year 1 – How is attendance to synchronous sessions is recorded?</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – Whilst we can check who was logged into a session engagement it is difficult to monitor whether they are engaging in the session. In Psychology, randomly within a session, students are requested to raise their hands to gauge a better idea of who is listening.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – All students should have seen their academic advisors. Feedback: A number of course reps have yet to meet their advisor.</p> <p>ACTION: Dr Ewan Main to contact academics and remind staff to make contact with their academic advisees.</p>
2(e)	Organisation and communication
2020.015	Points discussed are noted in 2020.011.
2(f)	<p>Learning resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library facilities / materials (books, journals etc.) • QMplus; QReview

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates from faculty E-learning forums • IT 	
2020.016	No discussion or points raised.	
2(g)	Student feedback (NSS/PTES/UKES/Module evaluations)	
2020.017	<p>The committee discussed responses to NSS/PTES and UKES and noted the following:</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – A reminder that student feedback surveys and module feedback forms are due to be released soon. Reps are advised to encourage students within their cohort to complete these.</p>	
2020.018	The committee discussed the results of the module evaluations and noted the following:	
2(h)	Consideration of External Examiner reports	
2020.019	<p>The committee received External Examiner reports and noted the following:</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – The reports were very complimentary of the courses within SBCS. The main concerns discussed were relating to movement to online alternative assessments and the Rubrics/marking of research projects. To be discussed at the next SSLC meeting.</p>	
2020.020	ACTION: Dr Caroline Brennan to circulate a summary of the External Examiner reports to course reps.	
2(i)	SEAP, SEAM or TPAP review	
2020.021	<p>The committee received the school/institute SEAP / SEAM / TPAP and noted the following:</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – SEAP is broken down into 4 pillars of excellence:</p> <p>a) Provision of Education</p> <p>i) Many of the topics raised in SEAP has been discussed in SSLC. A topic not yet picked up in SSLC is identifying mechanisms for providing students feedback on take away alternative and final assessments. We are looking into offering feedback for the April/May (2020) alternative assessments. We are unable to provide feedback on the Semester A 2020 assessments due to feasibility.</p> <p>ii) We will be launching an MSc in Psychology (Mental Health Sciences) and Biochemistry over the next few academic years.</p> <p>iii) We are looking into delivering a module fair online.</p> <p>b) Student Employability</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Psychology and Pharm IT with Year in Industry has launched ii) September 2020, Biomedical Sciences and Neuroscience with Year in Industry will be introduced. c) Student Engagement d) Learning space 	
Part 3 – Any Other Business		
2020.022	<p>The following items were raised under Any Other Business:</p> <p>Najma Biomedical Sciences Year 1 – Students within her cohort were not aware the Biomedical Sciences degree programme is not accredited.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray and Professor Richard Grose – The programme wasn't advertised as accredited and the Biomedical Sciences department felt the accreditation was too restrictive.</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan – The Psychology and Chemistry programmes are both accredited courses with SBCS.</p> <p>Polen Bareke Neuroscience Year 2 – Students studying a level 4 elective module have easier alternative assessments compared to those who have chosen a level 5 module. There should be standardisation amongst all level 5 students and how they are assessed.</p> <p>Dr Chris Bray – The university regulations state students can take up to 15 credits at a lower level. This needs to be raised with Aphrodite (Vice President Science and Engineering) to take to the EQSB meeting. The easy solution would be to remove the module from the list of elective choices but this goes against the student body. The alternative solution could be to have two different module codes for level 4 and level 5 students which is co-delivered but assessed differently.</p> <p>Aisha Psychology Year 1 – Students are raising concerns of their mental wellbeing. What support is available for students?</p> <p>Dr Caroline Brennan/Kay – Students should discuss their concerns with their academic advisors in the first instance. They need to be aware of your circumstances and will support/signpost you if you need additional help. The University have an Advice and Counselling team to support students (see the link below):</p> <p>https://www.welfare.qmul.ac.uk/</p>	

<p>2020.023</p> <p>2020.024</p> <p>2020.025</p>	<p>Students can also contact the student support team by searching k.serroukh@qmul.ac.uk or s.batha@qmul.ac.uk via Teams. You can either message Kay via the chat or book an appointment with Shaheda. Students can direct questions relating to student support via the following email: sbcs-student-support@qmul.ac.uk</p> <p>Foteini Biochemistry Year 4 – Her cohort has expressed positive feedback on how the course is being delivered. Can SBCS fund a subscription to SnapGene for 9 months, as this is heavily used by her cohort and currently is on a free trial?</p> <p>ACTION: Dr Chris Bray has advised Foteini to email Dr John Viles and cc Chris Bray for this to be looked into.</p> <p>ACTION: Ramesh to publish the following information on the newsletter:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student support services available to students (mentioned by Kay and Dr Caroline Brennan above) 2. Module evaluations 3. Emphasise importance of the adherence to the campus COVID code <p>Dr Caroline Brennan - An email will be sent to all course reps to request nominations for a Student Co-Chair. Once nominations are in, course reps will then have the opportunity to vote.</p> <p>ACTION: Dr Caroline Brennan will send an email to request nominations for a Student Co-Chair.</p>	
Part 4 – Date of the next meeting		
2020.026	The committee noted that the next meeting would take place: TBC	

Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Action status	Issue resolved?
2020:007	Course Reps to encourage students to join subject specific societies available within QMSU.	Course Reps	Next Meeting	Not Complete	NA
2020.010	Dr Caroline Brennan to circulate a summary of the student voice meetings to the SSLC committee.	Dr Caroline Brennan	Next Meeting	Complete	NA
2020.012	Dr Caroline Brennan to suggest a reduction in asynchronous material to accommodate for upcoming heavily weighted assignment deadlines at the at the Teaching Learning Committee (TLC) meeting and to DTL's.	Dr Caroline Brennan	Next Meeting	Complete	NA
2020.014	Dr Ewan Main to contact academics and remind staff to make contact with their academic advisees.	Dr Caroline Brennan / Dr Ewan Main	Next Meeting	Complete	NA
2020.020	Dr Caroline Brennan to circulate the External Examiner reports to course reps.	Dr Caroline Brennan	Next Meeting	Not Complete	NA
2020.023	Foteini to email Dr John Viles and cc Chris Bray to look into funding a software subscription (SnapGene)	Foteini Bifsa	Next Meeting	Not Complete	No
2020.024	Ramesh to publish the following information on the newsletter: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student support services available to students (mentioned by Dr Caroline Brennan/Kay in section 2020.22) 2. Module evaluations 3. Emphasise importance of the adherence to the campus COVID code 	Ramesh Wilson	Next Meeting	Complete	NA
2020.025	Dr Caroline Brennan will send an email to all course reps to request nominations for a Student Co-Chair.	Dr Caroline Brennan	Next Meeting	Complete	NA