

School of Biological and Behavioural Sciences
Postgraduate Student Staff Liaison Committee
22nd February 2022

Staff members present:

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

Student members present:

Vida Svahnstrom	Course Rep - MSc Plant and Fungal Taxonomy, Diversity and Conservation
Zoe Sturgess	Course Rep - MSc Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Apologies for absence:

Branita Sekaran	Course Rep - MSc Psychology – Mental Health Sciences
Samiha Tahsin	Course Rep - MSc Biomedical Science

Part 1 – Preliminary Items	
1(a)	Welcome
2021.014	The Representatives were welcomed to the meeting.
1(b)	Apologies for Absence
2021.015	Branita Sekaran. Samiha Tahsin.
1(c)	Minutes of the previous meeting
2021.016	The minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The actions were complete and there were no matters arising.
1(d)	Confirmation of Co-Chair
2021.017	Zoe Sturgess had confirmed via email to Co-Chair.
Part 2 – Student feedback, Programme Delivery and other matters	
2(a)	BIO788P – Problems and Analysis in Biodiversity, Evolution & Conservation
2021.018	It was reported that the module had been very beneficial to students in terms of understanding how to conduct a literature review and it was felt that it would have been helpful to have a module like this last year. In the previous year the research project had 105 credits attached and the literature review was a component of that module and as such there hadn't

	<p>been a specific taught module to deliver the transferable skills that the current module was able to cover.</p> <p>An extension had been applied to the literature review deadline to align with the significant word count and level of work expected.</p> <p>The students felt supported by the Module Lead and feel confident that this has been a valuable foundation to their research project.</p>
2 (b)	BIO741P Plant Taxonomy and Diversity
2021.019	<p>The students reported that they had students said that they spent too much time going through order after order of plant and this had felt like an overload of too much information that they couldn't properly digest. A suggestion was made, to focus on a few economically and or ecologically important orders and explore them in depth.</p> <p>The students also reflected on the assessment in that they found the wiki entry a little shallow and would prefer something like a presentation of a few minutes each on additional families or orders to extend a more focussed look at fewer plant orders, as above.</p>
2 (c)	BIO737P Ecosystem Structure and Function
2021.020	<p>The students reported that the content in the first week, which focused on the background and foundation knowledge, was easier to follow than the sessions focused on modelling in the second week. For the second week of activity, students asked for clearer guidance on how to extract knowledge to apply to the coursework, and for lectures to have more materials in advance of the lectures and for clearer structure and signposting of what is needed in coursework during lectures. They recognise that some students were coping, when their background had prepared them, and they recognised that for these students, the depth provided in week two was needed.</p>
ACTION:	ARL to contact Module Leads of BIO737P and BIO741P with student feedback and to provide a response to the next meeting.
2 (d)	Field Trips

2021.021	<p>Students raised their frustration at not yet knowing if the field trips were going ahead, where they would take place and when they would go ahead. This was not only inconvenient in terms of planning ahead but also presents genuine visa complications for a number of international students.</p> <p>It was confirmed in the meeting that field trips were to go ahead. The dates and exact locations were not yet formally approved but an update to all students would follow.</p>
ACTION:	Students to receive an email in March with update on field trips.
2(c)	Research Projects
2021.022	<p>There was some discussion about selecting research projects and early phases of the project, where, in some cases, students felt that communication between staff and students could have been better. ARL agreed that in advance of the research projects, students need to establish effective communication with their project supervisors. ARL pointed out that there is a lot of support for projects, and this can only be put in place effectively if there is an open dialogue, encouraging students to come forward if there are problems, in order to keep them on track with their projects. If that was proving unsuccessful with the project supervisor, then they were encouraged to contact the programme lead.</p>
ACTION:	Reps to remind students of the importance of communicating with their project supervisors and to contact the programme leads if there are any problems that cannot be readily resolved
2(d)	Drop-in sessions
2021.023	<p>A discussion took place regarding the idea of potential drop-in sessions which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistics advice session (using R) • Project writing support • How to present results <p>The idea of one-day field trips was also discussed (e.g. a trip to Dover in May) and students were encouraged to let ARL know which locations they were interested in going to.</p>
ACTION:	Reps to provide ARL with their requests for advice sessions and potential locations for one-day weekend field trips.
Part 4 – Date of the next meeting	

2021.013	TBC
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Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Action status	Issue resolved?
2021.020	ARL to contact Module Leads of BIO737P and BIO741P with student feedback and to provide a response to the next meeting.	ARL			
2021:021	Students to receive an email in March with update on field trips.	ARL			
2021:022	Reps to remind students of the importance of communicating with their project supervisors.	Reps			
2021:023	Reps to provide ARL with their requests for advice sessions and potential locations for one-day weekend field trips.	Reps			