

Royal College of Science Union

**Minutes of the 3rd Ordinary Meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee**

Held at 12:00 on 5th December 2014 at the RCSU Office (Sherfield 214D)

**PRESENT:**

- Zoe Hsu – RCSU Academic Affairs Officer
- Philip Kent – RCSU Honorary Secretary
- Alexander Nash – Biochemistry Departmental Representative
- Annina Sartor – Chemistry Departmental Representative
- Sinziana Giju – Biology Departmental Representative

**APOLOGIES:**

- Clark Baker – Physics Departmental Representative
- Arijit Gupta – Maths Departmental Representative

**ABSENT:**

- Serena Yuen – RCSU President

**OBSERVERS:**

None

*Meeting opened at 12:00.*

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**A. CHAIR'S WELCOME**

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by ZH.

**B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE AA COMMITTEE**

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by ZH.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To approve the minutes.

**C. DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS**

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by each dep rep in turn.

**NOTED:**

1. AN reported that lobbying for Panopto is looking to not be successful. There is a focus group on which AN cannot attend and is looking for someone to provide an update from the meeting. ZH suggested a year rep or an ERB member could attend. Sky Yarlett from ICU will be met later to discuss how Panopto affects attendance in lectures. Chemistry may already have data on this matter. Currently no lectures are being recorded this year beyond introductory lectures and this will be brought up at the next SSC, the College policy on the

matter will be brought up. Aside from Panopto, coursework returns are generally on time and within the two week guidelines, and other matters are generally working well. ZH reminded the Committee of the need to publicise SACAs. AS reported that she can obtain attendance numbers from Chemistry however initial observations show they are not poor.

2. SG reported that the department is completely against Panopto due to a number of concerns, and the department is now fed up with requests being made for Panopto to be instigated. FoNS have reported they will not force departments to use the service. It was noted that College policy is lectures must be recorded, but may not necessarily be released. Considering the circumstances, SG was advised to continue pushing for Panopto especially through a move to allow departmental representatives to chair SSC meetings. Research from other departments has been submitted to the Biology department.
3. AS had nothing to report, however pre-SSC meetings have been effective in ensuring constructive discussion at the meeting itself.

**ACTION:** Discuss department opposition to Panopto at FoNS teaching committee.

**ACTION:** Send year rep/etc. to Life Sciences Panopto focus group.

#### **D. STAFF STUDENT COMMITTEES**

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by each dep rep in turn.

#### **NOTED:**

4. SG noted that the last Biology SSC was poor due to low attendance of staff members. The agenda consisted of general feedback on lectures, labs, and tutorials. Tutorials are of concern in the content, as whilst overall comments are improving, in some cases the content is lacking in detail. There was a suggestion of requirement specifications for feedback in tutorials, so a minimum standard can be guaranteed.
5. AN noted that the last Biochemistry SSC was good. The first year reps were met beforehand as points tended to be recycled and other issues could be resolved outside of the SSC meeting. The general procedure is each year and AN submits reports to the meeting to give a general overview of the situation and reduce duplication.
6. ZH stressed the need to feed back outcomes to year groups.

#### **E. SOLE AND SSC FEEDBACK**

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by ZH.

#### **NOTED:**

7. SOLE has opened on the previous day and publicity must be performed to ensure a good turnout. Biochemistry will be providing a bribe in the form of print credit. SOLE turnout has improved overall due to replies from departments so people are aware that feedback is being listened to.

## F. PANOPTO UPDATE

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by ZH.

### NOTED:

8. ZH requested that departmental representatives ensure people attend focus groups.
9. A lot of students have provided feedback that centralised audio only recordings are useful to have but where Panopto is not allowed, such recordings are not allowed either. This is in contrast to personal recording of audio by students on mobile phones/Dictaphone, which tends to be permitted. This is thought to be inconsistent.

**ACTION:** AG and CB to provide Panopto attendance statistics to SG and AN.

## G. AIMS FOR NEXT TERM

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by ZH.

### NOTED:

10. ZH asked departmental representatives in turn what areas in their departments need to be focused on for next term.
11. AN requested regular lab workshops would be beneficial.
12. SG reported that first years have poor knowledge of chemistry, which is an issue for some modules in the course. Pre-sessional study lessons may be a good move. The department has proposed hiring second years to teach chemistry (it is currently taught by staff). There are no reading lists or preparation material prior to the start of each year or the degree, which is also a concern.
13. AS reported that there should be an aim to improve departmental communications, as students currently do not complain to the department, but then complain about the department in the NSS. There is a concern over the anonymity of providing feedback. One aspect the department has been good at is running focus groups, which ZH suggested could be extended to drop-in sessions. AN suggested these could be done via Facebook however AS reported the Chemistry ones tend to not be used. ZH suggested all departments could learn from whatever method Chemistry chooses to implement. The department will start trialling random sampling of students in the next term.

## H. DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATIVE POLICY - CANCEL

**RECEIVED:** This item was verbally presented by PK.

### NOTED:

14. PK requested to withdraw the previously promised paper, as this will be factored into a review of the Constitution later this year.
15. Members requested that the online description during elections is updated to reduce confusion as to the role of departmental representatives, especially as many do not know that the General Committee exists.

**ACTION:** PK to update Big Elections role descriptions.

**ACTION:** PK to update RCSU constitution to clarify role of departmental reps.

**I. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**NOTED:**

16. ZH thanked the Members for their hard work over the past term.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** To be decided.

*Meeting closed at 13:00.*