



Royal College of Science Union

Minutes of the 1st meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee

Held at 17:30 on 13th June 2016 in the RCSU Office

Present: - Lloyd James (Pres.), Abhijay Sood (Physics Dep. Rep.), Emma McCracken (Maths Dep. Rep.), Sinziana Giju (AAO, Chair), Michael Edwards (HS, Clerk)

MEETING AGENDA

Summary

Introduction

Meetings

Admin

Before August

AOB and Action Points

Introduction

- Opening the meeting, LJ made clear that moving forward the RCSU will be putting more emphasis on academic representation, and will be supporting representatives (reps) in all departments to excel at their roles.
 - Any suggestions for how this could be achieved will be welcome.
 - A new strategy for next year will be providing each departmental team of reps with a budget of £500 (£100 per dept.), which will cover expenses such as publicity, catering, and miscellaneous spending for effective departmental representation.
- SG then asked if anyone had any plans so far going into the next year, and made clear that any queries could be directed to her at any time.
 - It appears no handovers have been carried out for Life Sciences, Chemistry and Maths, although the Physics handover has been done.
 - The Maths handover has been planned for the week of the 20th June – EM will report when completed.

Meetings

- SG then walked through the various meetings that the members will be attending and chairing:
 - Student-Staff Committees (SSC) for each department – the Dep. Rep. chairs this meeting in most FoNS departments and are the main point of contact with departmental staff.
 - SG made clear that incoming reps should not be intimidated by this and should get in touch if this is the case.
 - RCSU AAO meetings – a casual meeting with the RCSU Exec to inform of progress in the Academic Representation Network (ARN).
 - Education and Representation Board (ERB) – the central Union committee for all academic representation officers to attend and share best practice, and decide where to focus Union lobbying with the Education Sabbatical Officer.
 - A current focus is the standardisation of modules across College to be of equal weighting and to build interdepartmental cohesion (could lead to interdepartmental courses)
 - RCSU General Committee – the next is on the 21st, and these will be a general discussion of all aspects of the RCSU operations.
 - Faculty SSC – a new meeting introduced this year, of which there will be four. These meetings are a way of sharing best practice with staff across FoNS.
 - EM voiced a concern that the concerns of her constituents would not be heard at these meetings, since past meetings had hinged around Life Sciences, Chemistry and Physics to the exclusion of Mathematics.
 - **This needs to be revisited to ensure Maths students are not marginalised at FSCC meetings.**
 - Departmental Teaching Committees – these are high-level departmental meetings. Dep. Reps have little input into these meetings but should aim to reflect student opinion regardless.
 - Health and Safety Committees – Physics and Life Sciences Dep Reps sit on their respective departments H&S committees to ensure student engagement.
 - **Is Chemistry in the same situation? Should we look to put the Chemistry Dep. Rep on H&S?**
- SG stated that Dep. Reps. will be leading a team of year reps all next year, and should aim to meet with them or contact them regularly, and meet at least 30 minutes before SSC meetings to discuss the agenda.

Admin

- With regards to emails – it was noted that all Dep. Reps have an official email address but choose not to use it for the sake of convenience. After discussion, it was decided that incoming Dep. Reps can use their own email if they prefer, and have access to the official address if they want.

Before August

- SG suggested all new Dep. Reps get in touch with the following people from August 1st
 - Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUGS) for their department
 - Dept. Administrator for the email list of students.
 - eActivities – will have the list of students if above is uncooperative.
- **Dep. Reps should also take the lead on creating their FB freshers' group** – Physics has already been done, all others remaining.
- SG asked that Dep Reps **introduce themselves during the Induction Week**, and noted that Dep. Reps may have responsibility for the Buddy (Mums and Dads) scheme, although LJ stated that official Union policy is that the Departmental Societies have responsibility for this from now on.
 - **To avoid crossed wires – get in touch with your DepSoc chairs and make it clear.**
- LJ made it clear that Dep. Reps are a part of their respective DepSoc committee as *ipso facto* members, and should go along to make sure the DepSoc and Dep Rep are working together.

AOB

- The 'Traffic Light' feedback system was brought up – across most departments it was found to be largely positive (EM noted 'mostly good', and AS noted 'a few bad examples' within the Physics department that would be ironed out at the end of the year.
 - The TL system is handled by the UG Office for Maths, and this could be introduced in Physics and other departments for improvement.
- Upper year peer learning within the UG courses in FoNS courses was raised – Maths already has a good scheme in place, and there is work ongoing to introduce 4th Year demonstrators into 1st Year Physics labs, and to boost the demonstrator training that is given to both UG and PG demonstrators.

SG will be in touch following the NSS release – it is anticipated that the results may not be positive. All departments will have an NSS Response – this has been clarified from last year where there was some conclusion.

- Dep Reps could have some input into their department's NSS Response – maybe get in touch?

No further business – next meeting will be of the General Committee on 21st June (next Tuesday).

Thanks for coming.

Section	Action	Person
Introduction	Set a budget for AAO team of £500	LJ and ME
	Organise handovers with your predecessors	All Dep Reps
Meetings	Strengthen Maths representation at FSSC meetings	SG and EM
	Find out whether Chemistry has student representation on the dept. H&S committee.	MM, SG
Before August	Create Freshers FB page for your Dept	All Dep Reps
	Get in touch with your DepSoc Chair to organise Buddy scheme (Mums and Dads)	All Dep Reps
AOB	Prepare for NSS results and Response	SG and Dep Reps