

Minutes of the School Meeting held on 22nd February 2017

1. HOS Update

Researchfish

The annual report on research council grants and some charity organisations is coming. You will be informed if you are expected to contribute and the deadline is March 16th. Tamas asked people not to leave it until the last minute.

Appraisal & Researcher meeting

For ATR & ATS staff, Tamas has decided, in consultation with the Dean, to merge the separate appraisals and researcher meetings into one meeting. Tamas feels that there is too much overlap between the two meetings and it makes more sense to combine them into one meeting. Tamas will be joined in the meetings by the Director of Research & the Director of Learning & Teaching.

Question –

Will appraisal forms still need to be completed before the meeting?

Answer-

Yes

Question –

When will this process start?

Answer –

It will start sometime in the 2nd half of March. Appraisals will hopefully be finished by June.

Department relocations –

Central finance office are moving from the Registry into the Enterprise Centre. All of REN are moving into floor 1 of the Registry. For the 2017-18 academic year there will be more teaching space. ZICER is freeing up a lot of room, some small seminar rooms and some medium sized rooms will become available, exact numbers haven't been confirmed yet. Due to the lack of space in BIO, Tamas is exploring the possibility of removing the photocopier from its room to free up this space. Additionally Tamas was considering rearranging the Post Room to be an office, however due to health and safety restrictions this won't be possible. The photocopier can't be moved behind reception, as confidential

documents are printed and this wouldn't be secure. It can't be moved into an occupied office as it emits toxic fumes. Tamas explained that the current thinking is to install ventilation in the post room so that the photocopier can be moved there. Nothing has been finalised yet as there are multiple factors to consider such as security and space concerns.

Health & Safety Executive inspection

Tamas expanded on the email he sent regarding the inspection and the outcome being that food and drink are no longer to be consumed at the large tables on floor 0, 1 and the small area by reception on floor 01. Tamas was advised not to challenge the HSE decision. Tamas has spoken to Iv Bacic about their options and Iv has asked estates for a quote for converting the areas to be 'enclosed' and thus acceptable for Health & Safety regulations. For floor 01 there are no options unfortunately due to its small size and close proximity to the reception desk. The quote is for creating a larger room that includes the kitchen and small table area (expanding out the current kitchens with walls creating a 'new' kitchen room). Tamas has no idea of the potential cost, and when the quote comes back it would have to be cleared by the Dean.

Question –

Could Charlotte's office, Emma/Ros's office and your office be somehow combined and joined by doors, like a hotel suite?

Answer –

No, health and safety won't allow an office, inside an office, inside an office (ie. connected). All offices need an escape route for fire safety (i.e. their own door)

Question –

Do we need somewhere to eat of every floor? Surely if there is such demand for office space, kitchens could be converted into offices?

Answer-

Tamas – I'm unsure on this. It could be worth further discussion.

Grant – I think the kitchens are used by students, project students etc. The kitchens get used regularly all through the day, so it would be valuable to keep them.

Question –

Does it have to be full height? Would the HSE allow half height walls?

Answer-

It has to be full height. Iv has asked for the cheapest quote but a wood and glass combination would look better.

Tamas couldn't promise that this idea would happen. It depends on the cost and potential disruption the work would cause. The idea would also have to be 'sold' to the Dean, and with a potential refurbishment of the entire teaching wall, potentially happening at some point in the next 5-10 years, it might not be worth doing.

2. Reasonable Adjustment Forms – Update from Maria Vardakou

Maria met with Jane Lawrence from Student Support Services (SSS) on 21st February to discuss the Reasonable Adjustment (RA) forms. She is aware of the problems with the forms, such as the multiple versions. SSS will be scrapping all the forms in the 2017-18 academic year, and introducing a single electronic form. SSS would like to allow students to access it through a drop down menu from Evision, and they are in talks with I.T on what they can do. Module Organisers (MO's) would have access to these reports and could print hard copies if needed. The new forms will provide links for MO's, on how to get help providing the adjustments that a student might request. Maria also spoke to Jane about the communication issues that BIO has been experiencing with SSS. Jane acknowledged that there have been issues mainly due to short staffing but they are actively recruiting new staff to fill gaps.

Maria asked Jane about how to implement the requests made on an RA form, and Jane responded that the forms are meant to act as a 'guidance'. The forms are for 'reasonable' adjustments. If an MO feels that a request doesn't fit the criteria for your course then you are within your rights to refuse the request, as long as this rejection can be justified. 'Reasonable' means that they make sense for the module or the course, not just the student.

Question –

What if a student complains that their request isn't followed up?

Answer-

If they complain, but as MO you could justify why you couldn't make the adjustment, such as it would be unfair on other students or it would lower standards, then you could make your case. An appeal could be upheld or it could be rejected.

The form will be redesigned to be clear that the emphasis is on the student to approach an MO with a request for a reasonable adjustment. The process is not about offering it to every student on a module, but if a student approaches an MO with a form then the MO needs to react to this and consider the request. Maria advised though that MO's do their due diligence on their courses. If students see their MO on a regular basis with questions, these might be students who could potentially benefit from an RA form. Jane explained to Maria that feedback from students showed that they wanted it to be more 'proactive' for students. An example of this is that students who have special circumstances for sitting exams will have to request a separate room rather than automatically being placed in one. Again, this change has been brought about due to feedback that these students

don't want to be separated from the other students on their course/module in exams unless they request it. Jane is open to suggestions, as this can be used by SSS to push for change. If anyone has a suggestion please speak to Maria and she will co-ordinate a reply to Jane, who has allowed Maria to contact her directly.

Question –

Would it be worth working with Jane to produce a short guidance document?

Answer-

Yes, we spoke about this. Jane is working on producing one.

3. Additional Item from HOS

I.T Equipment

I.T have generated a list of PC's that are for core funded staff (core funded staff are ATR, ATS, core funded technicians and LSO staff. PGRs and Post docs aren't included). This list has identified the exact specification of the PC's and I.T have been able to identify which PC's are 'critical', as they cannot be upgraded to Windows 10 and thus need to be replaced. There is money for 30 new PC's spread across SCI and BIO will be getting some of these. The 1st phase will be happening soon and then the second phase will include 40 PC's.

Question –

Are Mac's included?

Answer-

No Mac's aren't included.

Question –

Research councils no longer funds computers for Post Docs, as the expectation is that they should be on indefinite contracts and thus provided with a computer. Research grants should not be used to buy computers.

Answer-

Tamas – I'm aware of this issue. I have spoken to Emma King of REN and as I understand it there are 2 ways of interpreting this. The first is that computers can't be bought under any circumstances. The other is that you cannot ask for money specifically for a computer, but that you can still buy one from your consumables budget. I will ask Emma to get clarification as we need to buy computers for our Post Docs.

Action: Tamas to ask Emma King (REN) for clarification on how computers are funded by various research councils (BBRC, NERC etc)

Gabriella – At the SCI PGR event there was a discussion on whether PhD students should be provided a standard computer with the cost coming from their fees. Alistair Grant is going to go ahead with this idea pending final approval. We could do this in BIO.

Tamas – The consequence of this is that the fee and the overhead income would be affected, which would mean less money in other areas. We should wait and see how ENV's proposal turns out.