

Agenda for the BIO Staff Student Liaison Committee 2017/18

Date/Time: Wednesday 1st November 2017 from 13:00 to 15:00

Venue: LSB 0.112

For background information concerning the SSLC please see the 'Student Representation Code of Practice' that is now available at: <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/8540534/Student+Representation+Code+of+Practice+2015-16.pdf/86f57373-5624-48f6-8e67-f1b7356f5ab9>.

Present:

Andrew Gates (Student Partnership Officer), Maria Vardakou (Student Disability Officer), Richard Bowater (Director of Employability), Mark Coleman (Director of Learning & Teaching), Liz Clarke (SCI Faculty Librarian), Charlotte Price (School Manager), Madeleine Colledge (SU Education Officer), Eloho Oru, Mellieha Allen, Samhita Chaudhuri, Saleen Chowdhury (Student Conveyer), Andreia Borges De Lima, Olumayowa Showumi, Alexandra Boliver-Brown, Matthew Gardner, Mary Leishman (UG Education Officer)

With: Simon Burroughs (BIO SSLC Secretary)

1. Welcome

- Introduction from Andy Gates (Student Partnership Officer) and Saleen Chowdhury (Student Conveyer) followed by a round the room of introductions from those present.

2. Apologies for absences

Malcolm Rae (SCI & FMH IT Support Manager), Graham Riley (Senior Advisor), Sarah Lucas (SCI Faculty Manager)

3. BIO SSLC Elections / Student's Union involvement in SSLC

Saleen asked about the Student Union elections and asked when the decision was made for SSLC elections to be made through the Student Union (SU) rather than the individual committees. Madeleine replied that this process changed in the last academic year (2016-17) and that the Code of Practice was amended to reflect this. Mellieha asked if the SU would be providing an opportunity to provide feedback, stating that she felt there were several glitches in the IT system.

Madeleine responded that she would be happy to provide feedback and that Eve

Dewsnap was in charge of collecting feedback from SPO's. Madeleine can feedback to the SU and Eve is reporting to the University. Andy asked how many other schools have reported problems with the system, either technical, population or outreach to students such as awareness of the changes to the system. Andy explained that under the SU system BIO can't populate its board positions (such as course reps) due to glitches with the system, and that there is a risk of having 2 people in the same position if the SU run elections and the BIO SSLC conduct their own elections separately. Madeleine responded that Andy should report all these problems back to Eve. Saleen asked if the committee needs to hold an SU election to populate committee positions or if the committee can elect members at its meetings. Madeleine responded that the SU position is that it needs to be through the SU. Andy asked if the SU has the ability to hold 'Ad Hoc' elections if a committee member leaves their position. Madeleine replied that she couldn't make that decision by herself. Mellieha spoke about the difficulties she experienced with the process, particularly the lack of explanation about what being a 'Rep' actually involved, how much time commitment was involved and that she still hadn't received her training. May followed up by adding that people she had spoken to didn't know about the online voting process. Madeleine responded that she would feed this back to the SU. Saleen the student present how many were aware of the elections that occurred last academic year – 1 student responded in the affirmative. Saleen followed up by saying that he had applied for the student conveyer position after he had unsuccessfully tried to apply for another position and that others he had spoken to had felt let down by the SU process.

Maria spoke about how her 1st year students weren't aware of the BIO SSLC. Andy followed up by saying that 1st year students were spoken to at the Induction event in September by acknowledged that a later event would be useful to 'refresh' the students to the committee's existence. Mellieha said that she would be happy to speak to large groups.

Mellieha asked if the summer is the best time to run elections as students have exams and don't have time to necessarily think about. Mary responded that this was a concern and the SU plan to re-run elections in the September, but that other events run in the summer which attract student participation.

Mark spoke about the various avenues open to the BIO SSLC to advertise to students including – speaking at non-module events or re-induction events, module fairs and the Director of Learning & Teaching newsletter. Andy followed by saying that he felt that this year the BIO SSLC had been very proactive in advertising who we are and what we do.

Mark asked if Eve's review is based around making current improvements or improvements for next year. Madeleine responded that she felt the review was

more geared towards next year. She further elaborated that the SU don't 'own' SSLC's, they are a partnership between the SU and the university; the SU are in charge of training and providing a platform for voting and the University is charged with recruitment and the election of course reps. Andy followed on this point by stating that he felt that this had not been made clear enough, and that the BIO SSLC was being hobbled as though whilst the process was democratic there wasn't enough promotion so students weren't aware of what was happening, and hence the SSLC couldn't elect to empty positions.

Mark asked how the School of History had been so successful in recruiting members (in response to Mary mentioning their success). She replied that their SPO attended a lot of lectures to remind students of the SSLC's existence, next meeting date etc. Andy said he was happy to perform this role (and talk to BIO students) but that the committee should be 'student-led' rather than 'staff-led'.

Andy asked for student feedback on training, either this year or last year. Mellieha responded that she was still waiting for an update on when her training would be, 10 days after she was told it would be confirmed within 7 days. Samhita responded that she had had her training but in her capacity as a Chemistry rep. Matthew spoke about his experience being poor, stating that he had to keep chasing the SU to get his own training. Mary responded that the SU had taken on-board feedback and was arranging more training sessions.

4. IT Issues

- Lecture recordings
- Software on computers – SPSS, PyMOL

Saleen asked for feedback on how those present felt about lecture recording. Mark Coleman spoke about his positive experience using it and from this gained Tamas's support in getting the rest of the faculty on-board. He acknowledged some issues, but that a working group has been set up to address these. Maria responded that her students spoke very positively about it. Andy spoke about the difficulty he had faced when recording lectures due to I.T issues in various rooms. Richard followed up that he has had lectures that haven't recorded properly.

Mellieha reported that students she had spoken to had responded positively to the introduction of audio recording. Richard spoke about there not being a noticeable drop-off in attendance since the introduction, which was one of the main concerns from faculty members. Saleen spoke about an issue he had heard, that of the file size (of the audio recording) being too large to download. Mark replied that the files were shrunk to the smallest size but that audio recording for BIO is still in its early infancy so things will improve.

PC's lacking relevant software (SPSS & PyMOL)

Saleen reported that he had received feedback that when in lab sessions users have found that the PC's they are using are lacking software that they need, such as SPSS & PyMOL. Group discussion about the lack of software of certain PC's and the history of this issue. May reported that a friend had experienced issues with PC's in the library. Liz responded that all PC's have numbers of stickers attached to them, and the I.T helpdesk can be contact with this number and they will investigate.

5. Library Update – Dr Liz Clarke

- Unlimited Renewals –

Library books can now be renewed an unlimited number of times. Items can still be 'recalled' though if it is out on loan. Liz advised students to use the library helpdesk as this is quicker than recalling it yourself. Andy asked if the number of books for a course is linked to the number of students (i.e. more students on a course/module then more books are order/available). Liz said it was but that it has gotten lax in recent years and this is something that Liz was keen to tighten up on. Maria asked about bulk buying books from the department. Andy replied this could be done but that the department budget would be used and this would be difficulty to factor in to the library's budget. Liz said she was happy to be a point of contact if any students had wanted particular books, or wanted more eBooks for example. She also noted that Waterstones do offer some 'packs' of books for particular courses which are bundles of books geared towards a module.

- National Student Survey (NSS)

All 3rd year students are invited to fill out a questionnaire on their student experience. Liz reported that there is a question stated "The library resources e.g. books, online services & learning spaces have supported my learning well. For 2016 the UEA library scored 100% for biological sciences and biomedicine. For 2017 this fell to 69% for Biological Sciences and 76% for Biomedicine. Liz is writing an action plan and asked for feedback from the BIO Students. Liz acknowledged that the only comments from the NSS Students were related to study space, and that the library has moved the printed journals to the bottom floor creating 152 study spaces on floor 01, which are a mixture of individual and group study spaces. There is also a water fountain which Liz acknowledged was a long standing BIO SSLC request. Liz asked if the students liked using the library for studying, particularly around the exam period. Students responded positively but that getting a space could be difficult, and that arriving early

(between 6-7am) would be best for guaranteeing a space. Students reported a mixture of preferring both group and individual study spaces, depending on how they like to study. Liz finished by reporting that the study space program will continue in the future, but that it is cost driven, and they only had the funds this year to expand to the current level. Future changes will hopefully include more power sockets which students responded would be good.

6. Internship/ Voluntary Work – University funding streams

7. Introduction of January exams

Saleen asked if there was anything in University regulations that can make course tests of exams more flexible. Mark replied that substantial restructuring would be required to achieve this aim and explained some history behind when the university changed, as part of a wider change amongst universities to reduce the number of exams. A change to winter/summer exams would require a complete restructuring of the academic calendar for every school. Madeleine spoke briefly about the university being in favour of the current set-up as a change to increasing exams could mean more student failures which would reduce the universities number of good honours and thus affect the universities reputation. May asked about the feasibility of organising a petition. Mark replied that he felt this was a good idea but that the chances of bringing about change were slim and that a large majority of the science body would need to be behind it. Mellieha reported that along with the BIOSOC she has been working on a questionnaire to present to the students asking them for their opinions on a winter/summer exam split.

Andy asked if the SU if mental health awareness week was a major part of their recent advertising. Madeleine and Mary replied that it was a major part of the SU's thinking but that the campaign about students mental health awareness had yet to be rolled out. Richard commented that the mental health awareness aspect of exams is an important point he felt had not been talked about enough at a more senior university level.

8. Timetable zoning

Saleen spoke about the issue of student's timetables and having module events scheduled far apart with little time to travel between them, or constantly moving between extreme ends of the campus multiple times in a single day.

Mark spoke the issue of students with mobility issues and that they might find it particularly challenging to attend all their commitments if their locations are far

apart. Mellieha followed up by relating a conversation she had with a student a disability and that they were timetable to go from the JSC to the Sportspark and then back to the JSC.

9. Any other business (AOB)

- I.T Software and lack of training

Mellieha reported that certain courses have requirements for using PC software that students were unfamiliar with, such as Biochemists being expected to use SPFS in a genetics lab report with no training. Andy asked if a workshop would be useful and Mellieha agreed. Maria stated that she does the maths section in her module and would be happy to talk to Tharin who runs the statistics section, as it would fit best in her module for 1st years.

AP: Maria to talk to Tharin Blumenschein about student concerns and ask about software training for 1st years and beyond.

- Deadlines for November –

Mellieha spoke about concerns she had had from students feeling stressed about deadlines piling up in November, and asked if deadlines could be pushed back into December. Andy asked Mellieha to give him a list of known modules.

AP: Mellieha to give Andy a list of known module deadlines in November that students have reported to her. Andy to then investigate.

- Human Physiology

Mellieha reported that some students in 5004A Human Physiology had reported to her having been given an essay with a deadline but that different seminar groups had been given start dates. Therefore some students had more time to complete the work than others as the deadline date hadn't been staggered.

AP: Andy to investigate with the Module Organiser (Jeremy Rhodes)

Nest Meeting – Wednesday 22nd November, 1pm-3pm in LSB 0.18