Minutes for the BIO Staff Student Liaison Committee 2017/18

Date/Time: Wednesday 22nd November 2017 from 13:00 to 15:00
Venue: LSB 0.18

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), Malcolm Rae (IT Support Manager), Mellieha Allen, Samhita Chaudhuri, Saleen Chowdhury (Student Conveyer), Andreia Borges De Lima, Olumayowa Showumi, Cuba Riggs, Llse King, Tyler Bunyan

With: Simon Burroughs (BIO SSLC Secretary)

1. Welcome

2. Apologies for absences

Alexander Boliver-Brown, Eloho Oru, Sarah Lucas, Graham Riley

3. Minutes from 01st November – Actions arising

- Deadlines for November – Andy has received a list of modules with clustered deadlines from Mellieha. Concerns have been raised at Teaching Committee and Andy and Mark will be discussing further.
- I.T software and lack of training – Andy has spoken to Tharin Blumenschein and she has taken on-board the concerns raised previously. Maria has also spoken to Andrew Hemming, the course director, so he is aware of the situation and will speak to Tharin.
- Human Physiology – Andy hasn't been able to speak to the Module Organiser Jeremey Rhodes but will do so before the next meeting.

4. Library Update – Dr Liz Clarke

Due to time constraints in the last meeting Liz didn't get time to finish all her points form the last meeting. She continued from where she finished at the last meeting, asking the students for feedback on the Library services as this issue had been flagged up during the National Student Survey (NSS). Liz spoke about the 'Library Trails' a new feature on the SCI Student Zone related to how to use the library. Students present not aware of the new feature. Liz continued by asking about their experience of using the library as new students, how they found the training or what they know now but that they wish they knew when they first started. May responded that she found the leaflets useful. General feedback was that the library is straight forward to use and self-explanatory. Mellieha stated that in her experience the SCI Student Zone was not well accessed by the student cohort so probably weren't aware of the library training that can be accessed. On the issue of student awareness Mark spoke about the best way of getting students to engage is to timetable it to make it part of the module. Discussion then took place about the skills session that Liz provides in week 2, and whether a second slot could be utilized.

Discussion took place about referencing and library services and communication with students (see AOB)

5. **I.T Update**

May asked about a skills register for advisors. Malcolm said he could investigate this. Mark felt that it should be managed at the School level. Andy spoke about the advisor training that advisors go through and that it has to be renewed at set intervals. Discussion about data protection and a private or public list of who has undertaken what training, and if private how this could be managed, could students approach an individual with the list (such as an administrator) to check on an individual's training.

AP: Andy to investigate advisor training and the possibility of a list

Maria asked the students how their relationship with their advisor is progressing. Saleen responded that most students they knew had never met their advisors or not had the need to. The reasons varied but students reported that they knew of times when others had requested to change advisor and found that this improved things.

Andy asked about double booking events through SITS when scheduling an advisor meeting, and his difficulty in using the system this way, as SITS doesn't show the free spaces on student's timetables. Andy asked if SITS could be configured to show the times when multiple students are free and when they

have an event scheduled (i.e. a clash). Malcolm said he would take this back to the SITS IT Team.

AP: Malcolm to report back at the next meeting with an update on the SITS timetabling issue.

Staff Profiles on Teaching Spaces –

Andy asked about his profile not starting on some computers, meaning that he does not have access to some of his programs and documents. This inevitably impacts on teaching and other work. Malcolm explained that there had been an issue with one of the profile servers which failed and the backup server didn't take over as it should have. This issue should now have been resolved. Andy asked Malcolm about the issue of PYMOL and SPSS not being available in teaching spaces on certain computers. Malcom explained that the background to the issue was that certain teaching spaces were used in clearing, and the PC's in these locations were reimaged for this purpose. Some PC's wouldn't accept the new imaging when I.T came to switch them back to their previous setting. I.T weren't able to swap in new PC's fast enough before the teaching spaces were used again hence the software problem. Andy spoke about his difficulties in getting a technician to come and look at the issue when he called during a teaching session. Maria also spoke about her issues with trying to reach IT via telephone and Malcolm apologised for the Service Desk's performance lately. He believed that the issues were related to serious staffing absences (over 50% sickness absence) and hoped that the issue was resolved now.

Malcolm spoke that as the same with Liz, IT are also seeking feedback based on the results of the last NSS. Malcolm and Liz in agreement that their results intertwine, with students asking for more computers (I.T) within study spaces (Library). May asked about getting more space in the library, asking if a student petition might help. Liz responded that the issue of space in the library has been an ongoing concern for many years. Mellieha asked about Eduroam, as feedback she was receiving from students (that she agreed with) was that it has steadily been getting worse, with frequent drop-outs and slow speeds. Malcolm explained that he was aware of the issue and that he is involved in a project on reviewing the internet partner of the UEA and that they are working on implementing a new system, which he hoped would improve the situation.

6. **Internship/ Voluntary Work – University funding streams**

Saleen asked if Year in Industry student's point of contact was their Module Organiser. Richard responded that it was but that the course director was also a point of contact. Saleen spoke about Careers Central and that he felt they offered useful general advice but were lacking when it came to specifically guiding SCI

students. May agreed stating that she felt the careers website was very lacking in BIO related opportunities. Saleen has secured a placement but is now looking for a grant/scholarship which he is struggling to find advertised by UEA. Saleen asked about the potential for having a BIO point of contact who could offer the more specific information that he felt the Careers Centre lacked. May spoke about her experience of the Careers Fairs which she felt was lacking in SCI related employers. Richard explained how the funding worked for the Recruitment Fair, and that SCI represents one quarter of the student cohort but acknowledged that it could be more SCI focused. UEA does charge companies to attend recruitment fairs (they are providing their staff's time) and this helps to recoup some money, but they are still very expensive to put on. Local Schools have some money for career related events but the budget is much smaller. Richard explained that he is leaving his position of Director of Employability to become an Associate Dean and he will raise the issue of funding at this higher level. The university is exploring the possibility of utilising the Alumnus network, so that a student could have a placement funded in this manner. When the new Director of Employability is appointed Richard will get them up to speed on the issues he has been handling, including this one. To finish Richard reminded the students that professional bodies (such as the biochemical society) are available and they have some funding that will typically cover a 6-8 week placement. Andy and Richard in agreement that these placements are guaranteed as competition is quite fierce. Richard encouraged students to pass on information or tips to himself, so he can try and go about making improvements. He also acknowledged that the process should be more student-led, with a focus more on their needs.

7. **Any other business (AOB)**

Update on Student Union

Andy has contacted Eve Dewsnap (from last minutes, the SU directed the BIO SSLC to Eve with queries). Andy spoke to another faculty manager in Eve's absence and was diverted to Laura Mcgonagle to whom he relayed the committee's concerns from the last meeting concerning recruitment to the committee. The university is aware of SSLC issues and Andy hopes to have more information at the next meeting. Andy and Mark hope the current system will be fixed, and failing this replaced with a new system.

Communications and Emails

Maria asked the students about how staff communicate important/urgent information to them, about how the situation could be improved. Students responded that text messages/group chats would be useful. Staff in agreement that this is a minefield of potential issues, particularly around data protection.

Discussion about students not knowing how to access their emails on their phones. May spoke about how in the beginning of term students are shown how to sync their calendars in their phones, and that this could be a good time to also show them how to access emails. Llse asked about auto-forwarding to personal email address. Andy agreed that this was a good idea but he wasn't sure if it was possible, others argued that setting up a UEA email account shouldn't be more difficult than setting up auto-forwarding.

Assessed Laboratories

Mellieha was asked by the SU Disability Officer to raise this issue. This relates primarily to Investigative Skills which has a 3 hour laboratory skills session for 4001A – Biodiversity. The SU Disability Officer and Mellieha feel that this is more a test of whether disabled students can 'get through' the lab rather than a test of their abilities in the laboratory. Mellieha asked if the skills session could be alter or managed better for students with a disability. Mark asked if this issue would be covered by the reasonable adjustments policy and Maria agreed it would, but the student should be contacting the Module Organiser in the first instance. Llse asked if it could be broken down in to 2 shorter sessions of 1.5 hours rather than a 3 hour session. Maria said this would depend on the number of students who would need the adjustment. Students in agreement though that 2 shorter sessions would benefit all students. Mark spoke about the process being student led – getting an assessment by student services is the first step and then BIO can help students leading on from this.

Postgraduate Studies

May asked about PGR and the relationship between students and their supervisor. Andy explained that he sees his PGR's everyday but that there are specific timetabled meetings that must be adhered to, and this is meeting is arranged by the PGR office. Andy was of the opinion that 3 months should be the absolute minimum that students should be meeting with their supervisors, but of course each supervisor's style of how they interact with their students will differ. Andy expanded on this subject by explaining that in real-time, students and supervisors will be meeting constantly, nearly every day or every other day, as they have a vested interest in their student's research.

May also asked about training, in case students are missing some skills or their skills need refreshing. Andy explained that all PGR students will have a Personal Professional Development plan which will track and monitor a student's training needs and provide the necessary training where it is required.

Part Time Students

Llse asked how many part time students there are studying at BIO. Mark replied that there are currently 5, 4 on the Biological Sciences course and 1 on Ecology. Llse asked if part time students are factored in when modules and courses are designed. Mark replied that due to the low numbers of part time students he didn't think that they were considered. He followed up by explaining that the introduction of part time courses for all BIO courses is being considered but that he wasn't sure how a study gap could practically be avoided, as all 1st year modules have some content that will be required by some 2nd year modules so even full time students might have some gaps in their knowledge/skills depending on their module choices. He felt that the improvements in lectures such as audio recording and embedding audio into PowerPoint presentations would help to alleviate this issue. Llse asked about Blackboard access for modules that part time students have missed (i.e. they've started on a 2nd year module but didn't take the 1st year). Richard in agreement with Mark and Andy that this would benefit the students. Mark stated that he is able to add students to courses/modules on Blackboard and that part time students can ask him to be added to any course that they feel might help them in their missing knowledge/skills.