

Minutes of the School Meeting held on 9th January 2019

1. HOS update – Tamas Dalmay

Tamas wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Phil Gilmartin the PVC for SCI is leaving at the end of March, so a vacancy will be available from 1st April. Tamas applied for the position but was not shortlisted so he will remain HoS for BIO for another 3 years.

BIO has received 3 new positions, and additionally Marco Archetti is leaving so BIO will have 4 spaces to fill (Slide 2). Tamas broke down how BIO plans to use these positions (Slide 2). Two of these positions are ATR positions, but the speciality has yet to be decided as BIO is waiting on the outcome of the E3 bid (Slide 2) which is expected at the end of March 2019. These new positions are not linked to new targets (i.e. student intake numbers) but Tamas isn't sure how many students BIO will be expected to take in the next intake, but that student applications are up for SCI as a whole. Kelly Edmunds spoke that this was important, as increased applications would mean BIO would be less likely to rely on Clearing to fill places – if BIO uses Clearing we are not in full control of the outcome.

2. Assignment Brief & Marking Criteria – Mark Coleman – Director of Learning & Teaching

Mark started his presentation by highlighting some data from the National Student Survey (Slides 4 & 5) that shows that BIO scores relatively poorly (compared with other areas), and in particular 2 areas where BIO does not score well, in marking criteria and comments on student work. Mark stressed that the scores of the National Student Survey are important as they relate to the Teaching Excellence Framework, which will be linked to how much money the University is to be allocated.

UEA is introducing a policy that from the 2019 academic year all coursework items must have an assignment brief, which is an overview telling students what to do in a particular assignment (Slide 6)

Mark explained that BIO is going to introduce via Blackboard a 'Marking criteria and Assignment Brief' document for all coursework items (Slide 7). Mark also showed an example of an Assignment Brief document (Slide 8) and a Marking Criteria document (Slide 9)

Finally mark explained how this is going to be introduced (Slide 10), namely that Tamas and Mark will be meeting with Module Organisers to discuss and plan the implementation of the Marking and Assignment briefs for the individual modules and that an email address will be created to allow UG students to email Tamas if they think the briefs are not clear or they have other related queries.

Concerns were raised about the 'generic' nature of the briefs/marketing criteria. Response from Mark that they can be as bespoke as they need to be, but there needs to be something. Tamas will monitor the emails at the start of the process to see how many students send in – if its lots and they are around the same issue, then that might mean that students do not understand something. Tamas and Mark in agreement that students can copy in MO's, or they will forward the emails to MO's if students forget. Tamas stressed that the process is not about secretly spying on MO's or trying to catch anyone out. Mark followed by pointing out that BIO needs to take action in this area as the NSS score shows that BIO can improve in this area, and the scores have been consistently low for a number of years leading to Mark and Tamas deciding that action needed to be taken. Tamas explained that he will email the students about the new process, and Mark stated that he will be doing a reintroduction with the students, so students will be made aware, but both spoke about it being a 'work in progress' and that they understand that students and staff will take time to adjust. If students have a better understanding of what is expected of them, they should score better in coursework/exams which will lead to BIO having better honours. Discussion about the UEA Senate Scales. Mark stated that external examiner feedback was that UEA Senate Scales were vague and unhelpful to students. The BIO marking criteria is much more specific, and if students do read the UEA Senate Scales, they will see that they use subjective terms that do not mean anything in the abstract. If any students ask, the BIO marking criteria is aligned with the UEA Senate Scales, but they should use BIO's, as it is more specific to their learning. Tamas and Mark will discuss implementing on level 6 courses first, rather than a full roll out.