

Minutes of the School Meeting held on 17 July 2019

## **1. Teaching Presentation – Mark Coleman (MC)**

See attached presentation and accompanying documents below. An audio version of this PPT can be found [here](#) (if access is required, contact Mark Coleman). For the non-audio version, click [here](#).

Student numbers have increased by around 50% over the last ~9 years, whereas staff numbers have increased by 15% at the most. A return to former SSR levels is extremely unlikely and therefore the School must look for the best ways to adapt to current and future conditions. The School is rightly proud of the achievements made by current graduating students; staff have worked incredibly hard in challenging conditions to reach this point.

National Student Survey (NSS) results showed student dissatisfaction with coursework feedback timeliness and marking criteria, although recent improvements to marking criteria transparency were well received. Although we cannot interfere in the NSS process, it was noted that BIO should promote the progressive changes made in the School close to survey time, as students often remember negative experiences more clearly than positive.

### **Assessment briefs and marking criteria**

UEA's new compulsory policy for 2019-20 is to ensure all students fully understand what is required of each assessment from the outset.

Examples of assessment briefs and marking criteria documents can be found below:

- [Marking Criteria and Assessment Briefs guidance for Module Organisers](#)
- [Assessment Brief](#)
- [Marking Criteria for Essays](#)
- [Marking Criteria for Practical Reports](#)

**ACTION FOR MODULE ORGANISERS (MOs):** Set up Marking Criteria and Assessment Brief documents and place these on your module's Blackboard (BB) site for academic year 2019/20.

### **Coursework feedback timeliness**

BIO's aim for 2020/21 is to reduce coursework turnaround times to 15 working days. This will be for all modules, regardless of size. Coursework may need to be altered/reduced/removed entirely to make this happen. Increasing the number of markers or utilising a marking team is also an option.

These changes will be looked at on an individual module level and MOs can expect help and support from the Head of School, Director of L&T and the new 'Year Leads' (titles subject to change), whose role will have a focus on assessment and feedback.

External Examiners are supportive of this and can provide feedback on whether coursework content complements exams. This may also give them the opportunity to review and provide feedback on coursework-only modules.

It was acknowledged that '15 days' does not equal 15 days' worth of marking as MOs rarely receive coursework from the Hubs on Day 1, and usually need at least 2 days at the end for checking and moderation. It was also noted that ATR markers often do not/cannot prioritise marking, which subsequently slows return times.

There were concerns over the quality and authenticity of marking if turnaround time drops from 20 to 15 days, especially for larger modules. MC reiterated that support will be available for MOs to review their modules and amend them where necessary to reduce coursework items, add more markers, or anything else MOs think would help.

**ACTION FOR MOs:** Begin to think about coursework and coursework return times for your module in advance of discussions over the next few months, with a view to reducing feedback return rates to 15 days.

### **Active learning and the application of knowledge**

UEA is keen to encourage the use of interactivity and active learning. Some MOs are already doing this. MC has added quizzes to his modules and has received extremely positive feedback from students.

BIO will aim that in 2020/21, 15% of 'lecture' time will be active learning. Colleagues should not try to cram in the same content into less time to create space for active learning, but neither should they reduce content by ~15%. Support and guidance will be provided on how best to do this.

It was raised that reducing content will make our degree less valuable and the really good students will get a poorer student experience. The counter argument is that we do not know whether even the best students actually learn 100% of what we teach and the aim is that students learn more.

It is hoped that changes like this will help increase student engagement in lectures and therefore aid their learning. A separate project to set up automated lecture attendance recording and monitoring has begun, but this will not be in place until 2020/21 at the earliest.

It was noted that as part of this change and the reduction of coursework return times, module repetition should be examined to ensure content is not duplicated across the years/modules.

One BIO module's interactive content was discussed, with conflicting reports of its success. Positive responses were received from students, but one contributing lecturer on the module reported low attendance at lectures and poor exam results.

**ACTION FOR MOs:** Begin to think about active learning in your module in advance of discussions over the next few months.