

Minutes for the BIO Staff Student Liaison Committee 2018/19

Date/Time: Wednesday 05th December 2018 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 – Abbey Doormann (AB), Adaobi Anyaeche (AA), Andrew Gates (AG), Charlotte Price (CP), Eden Joyce (EJ), Gary Rowley (GRo), Graham Riley (GRi), Isla Hoskings (IH), James Lovatt (JL), Jack Fendley (JF), Jack Jones (JJ), Jenna Chapman (JC), Katie Noble (KN), Keir Whiting (KW), Liz Clarke (LC), Maria Vardakou (MV), Mellieha Allen (MA), Saleen Chowdhury (SC), Sheena Macrae (SA), Tamas Dalmay (TA)

Additional – Simon Burroughs (SB), Individual supporting SSLC members with an issue for the committee (Name not given)

NB regarding these minutes

Please note that there are some terms in these minutes that some people may find offensive. These terms are used solely to capture and explain in full the discussion held and are not intended to offend in any way.

1. Welcome

2. Apologies for absences

Ilse King

3. Minutes from 24th October

Actions Arising –

AG to talk to TD about the timetabling/communication issues and for TD to then decide if these issues should be directly addressed with ARM – Discussed in meeting between AG and TD – TD explained that BIO have no control at a faculty level

MC to raise the issue with Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee – MC has spoken to the Committee, they advised to raise the issue with the relevant LTS Hub, and they would like specific examples i.e. screenshots. **Action Point – Anyone with specific examples to send them to AG.**

Senior Advisor to instruct BIO advisors to speak to their advisees about the UEA Award and its benefits – GRi reported that previously the UEA Award have provided him with information and literature to give to students. **Action Point – AG to chase the UEA Award team for up-to-date information for the Senior Advisor to pass along.**

AG to speak to Director of Biochemistry course and the Module Organiser for the skills workshop re: SPSS access for students – AG has spoken to both – they have taken on-board the concerns and will adjust accordingly for the future.

Minutes Accepted.

4. Use of language in taught sessions

It was brought to the committee's attention that in more than one instance (since it was last raised in an SSLC capacity) that there has been unacceptable ableist language used in teaching sessions, including use of the term 'cripple' used in a debate about evolution. Students are upset at this and asked for the committee to take action at a Faculty level to eradicate this behaviour. It was asked what the context of the comment was and whether it had been used in a historical context. The perception was that it was not, and any such derogatory term should only ever be used with warning and in a specific and controlled manner.

Director of Learning and Teaching (DLT) was given three examples of language being used in teaching which students found offensive, and he sat with the lecturers involved and they changed the teaching materials together. While students were pleased with this, it has become a wider issue and they feel that they are firefighting each instance as it arises, and would like a Faculty led response to the issue.

It was discussed that the terms used around disability are treated in teaching as 'fact' and that these reinforce stereotypes around disabled people – students learn this, become scientists/teachers etc. and the cycle continues. Talking about disability in teaching and in terms of research is not the issue; the use of offensive terms such as 'mental retardation', etc. is the issue. Students acknowledged that offense is not meant when the terms are used, but the use of them as 'everyday' language perpetuates the idea that casual ableism is acceptable.

DLT has checked the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) which is published by the World Health Organisation, and is used as a health care classification system used to identify amongst others, diseases and illnesses. In May the ICD changed from ICD10 to ICD11, and 'mental retardation' was removed from the publication. DLT spoke about the term 'cripple' being

unacceptable but that the standard medical classification only recently removed a term (retardation) that many find offensive.

Students responded that the ICD is still centred around the medical model of health (which views disability as a 'problem' that belongs to the disabled individual) whereas a more acceptable model is the social model (the idea that society disables an individual, by designing everything to meet the needs of the majority of people who are not disabled). The terms used whilst medical in nature, can also be used socially as insults, and teaching staff have an obligation to recognise this and structure their teaching accordingly. The Student Partnership Officer (SPO) asked students if they would like to see BIO teaching materials changed to reflect the new ICD-11 standard. Student response that they would like this.

Head of School (HoS) spoke about moving forward that we would still need to rely on students to 'flag up' any instances, as unfortunately he and the DLT couldn't guarantee that all lecturers wouldn't make mistakes, or references in the future even if they received direct instructions from himself/DLT not to. The HoS will do everything in his power to ensure that lecturers make the changes to their teaching materials, but it comes down to the individuals to make the changes themselves. Students accepted this. HoS also spoke about his involvement in 'background' meetings about the specifics of a particular instance and that there is very much a desire on his part to ensure that this situation is resolved.

BIO Careers Advisor pointed out that the University as a whole has an obligation under the Equality Act of 2010 to ensure that students are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly and asked if support is available at a University wide level. Response from the Student Union (SU) that the University Student Support Services are investigating increased training for staff and there is some current mandatory training for staff based on equality and diversity. SPO pointed out that CSED runs an increased awareness course, but that if the terms have changed recently then this would take time to filter through at the training level.

5. Course rep election update

SPO talked about the vacancies that are still available for various positions – some have been applied for, some have not. SPO asked SU Officer if other SSLC's have high or low student numbers in their membership. Undergraduate Education SU Officer didn't have figures to hand. Discussion about SU and SPO not being aware of the various positions that are/were available

AP: JC and AG to exchange lists to try to get a complete picture.

Student feedback that most 1st years want to enjoy their first University year and that they might be lacking in both confidence and experience. As a 2nd year, they would have more knowledge and experience of how BIO works and might be more comfortable joining. SPO officer asked if Course Reps are allowed to contact the rest of their cohort – does the SU provide email addresses for example. Response from was that this didn't happen. Feedback from Course Reps was that face-to-face contact with students detailing what the SSLC is, what it does and why it's important for students to be involved, was vital in them applying to become Course Reps. DLT response that any student or Course Rep who wants 5 minutes of lecture time to address students about the SSLC, should please contact him as he can arrange for this to happen. If it is not a course specific lecture then it could be arranged for the end of the lecture, anyone it doesn't apply to could leave. SPO acknowledged that this is a continuing issue for the BIO SSLC, and has been for several years. Question from students if mass emails can be sent to all students – response from staff that only certain BIO staff (such as HoS & DLT) are allowed to. Follow up from student that students if put on the spot in a lecture/seminar might not be comfortable raising an issue or speaking up, therefore a system where can raise issues anonymously could be useful. Discussion around whether Blackboard could be used for this – issues around how to respond to anonymous queries if follow up is required, and whether a mechanism could be put in place for students to provide contact details if a follow up is required. It is understood that these issues are not just confined to just BIO.

Feedback to Course Reps should be passed along to the SPO, the Student Convenor the SU, depending on the subject. The Committee can't act on it unless it knows about it. If it is not school specific, or something the school has no control over (such as timetabling) then the SU should be informed. However the SSLC can signpost issues to the relevant committee or individual, if Course Reps are unsure – e.g. it's a teaching issue, then the SPO can take it to the Teaching Committee.

6. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission Feedback

DLT explained to those present that BIO has gone through a process to prepare for TEF (how BIO's teaching is evaluated), and that now he is being asked to assist with looking at TEF from a University wide perspective, which will happen in 2019. As such he asked if students could help in this process. DLT will provide a document for students to work from, and they can provide him with their thoughts. SU Officer stated that they have guidance information for students who wish to be involved in the TEF process.

AP: JC to provide AG with TEF student guidance for AG.

AP: AG to send request out to students for TEF assistance, with guidance documents provided by the SU.

7. Any Other Business

BIO Careers Events

Currently the event is scheduled for Wednesday 13th February, however students were asked if a Wednesday or a Saturday would be a better day. It was acknowledged that sport is a huge activity for many on Wednesdays, so this might limit engagement. Discussion about scheduling – resource limits mean that the event can't run on 2 days (Wednesday and Saturday), Do Something Different Week is unsuited due to belief that students use this time to go home/catch up on work/difficulty booking rooms, students have commitments on Wednesdays/Saturdays (sports/jobs etc.). Also can't timetable the event via Evision as it is 4 hours long. Discussion about using a Thursday afternoon for the 2019-20 academic year, using a composite timetable of SCI (BIO, ENV, CHE etc.) to try to reach the most students possible, or designating a set day as a BIO Careers day, and using the whole day for careers events and timetabling it so. Request for more student engagement in the process, such as thoughts about speakers, presentations etc.

AP: Any ideas related to the BIO Careers Events, or who would be willing to meet GRo or IH for a coffee and a chat please contact them.

Request for Student Reps (2 UG's & PGT posts available) - From BIO Safety Committee Secretary

AP: If anyone is interested please contact AG who is the Safety Committee Chair.

Library Staircase Closure over Christmas – Science Academic Librarian

The back staircase (the one closest to the lake) is closed over Christmas to be recarpetted. The PGT room on floor 2, and the research Postgraduate room on floor 2 will also be closed due to health and safety reasons. They will be closed from the 17th December to the 10th January. These closures will be mitigated by reserving some of the PC's on floors 2 & 3 for PG use – library staff will check campus cards to ensure that they are used by only PG's.

Autoclaves in BIO

3rd year student spoke about BIO only having 1 working autoclave available for students to use, and this if not rectified this will have serious repercussions in the future (40+ students will need access in January 2019).

AP: KN to email AG with their concerns and he will raise it to a higher level.

AP: JC of the Student Union to raise it at Learning & Teaching Committee (University level).