



Meeting **FACULTY RESEARCH STUDENTS' COMMITTEE**
Place **Wessex House Council Chamber**
Date and Time **12.30 – 2.00pm Thursday 5th May 2016**

Present	Prof Sue Wonnacott Dr James Doughty Dr Jim Laird Dr Adrian Hill Dr Sergey Gordeev Dr Simon Lewis Dr Lorenzo Caggiano	Chair	Department of Biology and Biochemistry Department of Computer Science Department of Maths Department of Physics Department of Chemistry Department of Pharmacy and Pharmacology
In attendance	Miss Ceri Dibble Dr Jane White Ms Susan Alston Mr Simon Gane		Programmes Officer Senior Lecturer, Department of Mathematical Sciences PG Administrator Graduate School Manager

		Action
1084	<i>Welcome and introductions</i> Sue Wonnacott (SW) introduced Dr Jane White from the Department of Mathematical Sciences and welcomed her to the meeting	
1085	MINUTES Minutes of the meeting held on 15 th March 2016 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.	
1086	MATTERS ARISING 1072: Alternative Thesis Format: Caroline McMurray has drafted another version of the paper which Associate Deans had been asked to comment on. While addressing many of the issues raised previously, it still retained a requirement for an early decision on thesis format, which is not applicable to Science projects. This has been fed back. 1073: The confirmation viva guidelines were circulated by Ceri Dibble (CD)	
1087	TEACHING FOR PGRs Feedback from both PRES and the Students' Union Research Project paper highlighted dissatisfaction with PGR training for teaching. Giles Martin from LTEO attended the Faculty PG SSLC to discuss the matter. The students at the meeting aired their concerns that the central delivery of the training was too much for just one session. It was felt that central oversight to co-ordinate delivery of training in conjunction with individual departments would be helpful. Maths provides all its training 'in-house'; this is mainly tutorial support. Jane White (JW) informed the committee that Maths had been running the tutor training for several years. Previously this was delivered over five sessions totalling approximately ten hours of contact time. It was first run for undergraduate students but postgraduates	

	<p>joined the programme at a later stage. The sessions aimed to make the students think carefully about that a good tutorial might look like and how to prepare for this. The students also had the chance to look at other tutorials and make observations. The training programme has since been compressed into one longer session that takes place just before semester 1 starts and a repeat session is run in semester 2 for anyone that missed the first one. It is run by Dr Geoff Smith, Senior Lecturer in Mathematics. JW confirmed that Dr Christine Edmead from P&P had visited and observed, on behalf of LTEO, and was happy with this setup. SW queried if the course met the needs of the Maths students. JW did not think it did.</p> <p>Adrian Hill (AH) has some reservations about the tutoring in Maths, this is not exclusively about the training but it will be reviewed over the summer. AH thinks that two or three linked sessions would work better than just one long day. The department training does cover the right areas but the session is too compressed. The students do not get PG Skills recognition for completing the training,</p> <p>SW asked for clarification of the tutoring situation across the other departments in the Faculty. Sergey Gordeev (SG) said that Physics PGRs do not do any tutoring but that they are employed as demonstrators in the labs. Training is on an informal basis but can be difficult as there are a lot of different areas to cover.</p> <p>JL commented that Computer Science students tutor in the department and in Maths, AH confirmed that the latter students are provided with Maths training. Computer Science are very dependent on a small pool of student tutors; some students recognise that it is a useful experience. The department has a tutor coordinator (a Teaching Fellow) that runs training sessions and they are well-attended.</p> <p>JW wondered if students should be paid to attend training. It was agreed that training should remain unpaid, but should be better badged as transferable skills training.</p> <p>Simon Lewis (SL) has a large pool of PGRs in Chemistry that want to do tutoring making it competitive, leading to tutors of a high quality (those who do not perform well in the role will not be given further work). Training is unpaid in Chemistry and is all carried out within the department; students were not happy with the LTEO training. LTEO observed the training in Chemistry and are satisfied with the students being trained in-house. It is mostly lab demonstrating training, tutorial training is minimal but the demand for tutors is growing due to the growth in the department. PGR tutors are advised to speak to academic staff if they have any issues.</p> <p>In Pharmacy there is a small pool of PGR students. There have been many queries about pay, terms and conditions. SL has also experienced this in Chemistry. LC has had to remind the students that they are being paid more than the full time technicians and lab assistants in the department. Pharmacy provide in-house lab training but it has been poorly attended – it is not a compulsory session. There have also been complaints about the LTEO training.</p> <p>James Doughty (JD) said that Biology is similar to Pharmacy. There is a meeting for all demonstrators prior to the practicals taking place but this might not be enough. All required courses such as COSHH and Health and Safety are run during induction week and all students must attend.</p> <p>SW then asked the committee for comments on the LTEO training course. JD queried exactly what the course covered but no one was sure of this or whether it was compulsory. SW wondered if it was held at the wrong time of year and commented that the mode of delivery isn't working well. LC thinks that it would work better if the training occurred over two or three shorter sessions with space between for reflection. JW commented that a few 90 minute sessions over the year would work better.</p> <p>SW will compile a short synopsis of the discussion, circulate it to FRSC then forward to LTEO.</p> <p>Simon Gane also mentioned the new Tier 4 visa rule changes with regard to overseas students being employed as casual workers. There is a new 'Tier 4 Worker Booking System' that must be used in order for students to be paid.</p>	SW
1088	<p>CHAIR'S BUSINESS</p> <p><u>Joint degrees:</u> A recent meeting discussed the possibility of joint degrees after a proposal from the Internationalisation team was put forward, relating to Stellenbosch University which is the preferred partner institution. Many issues were raised and it is still a work in progress.</p> <p><u>Students' Union PGR Research Project:</u></p>	

	<p>This report, authored by Tim Stoneman, was circulated and discussed at the most recent URSC. The report highlighted PGR teaching and supervision as particular issues. It needs to be ascertained what actions the SU wants to take so the Faculty can link this with the PRES actions. CD will invite Tim Stoneman to the next FRSC to talk through the report.</p> <p><u>Ede & Ravenscroft Prize:</u> Twenty submissions were received overall with five shortlisted. Three of the shortlisted students are from Science; Kimberley Gallagher (Chemistry), Milto Miltiadou (EngD Computer Science) and Jack Oyston (Biology & Biochemistry).</p>	CD
1089	<p>PRES ACTION PLANS</p> <p><u>Feedback from URSC:</u> The URSC minutes from March have now been circulated to all committee members. Each department action plan was read thoroughly by the PvC for Research, Jonathan Knight. Science was the only faculty to submit a faculty action plan. Two departments in Science (Biology and Physics) needed to make some revisions to their plans, Pharmacy's plan received a commendation. SW will report on the revisions to May URSC: she has received a draft of Biology's amended plan from JD, and SG has Physics' updated plan in progress. All departments need to document their actions on an official template that has been circulated, to assess progress in addressing the actions in October. SW recommended that DoSs complete the new template now to help them keep a check on meeting their targets.</p> <p><u>PRES Consultation:</u> Following the PRES 2015 survey there have been requests from several parts of the sector for PRES to be amended to reflect changing needs. In response to those requests a consultation of the future of PRES has been launched by the Higher Education Academy. Shaun McGall from LTEO, who sits on the national Surveys Advisory Group, is collating comments on six specific proposals before submitting the University's response to the consultation. The specific proposals are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PRES should move to a flexible survey window: a window of February to mid-June is suggested and universities can choose their own opening and closing dates within this period. 2. PRES should contain a module focussing on the experience of doctoral training and relevance to career of PGRs: PGR provision is changing and the survey should be adapted to reflect this 3. PRES should contain a module investigating the engagement of PGRs with their study: there were no question in PRES 2015 about student engagement 4. PRES should enable better understanding of the student experience when students experience provision across multiple institutions 5. The publication of PRES results should include sector and standard mission group quartiles 6. The publication of PRES results should include selected institutional results <p>SL thinks that proposal 4 is important. SW agreed. SG (DoS) said that there should be a 'not applicable' option for the questions, to avoid 'false negatives'. LC agreed SW thinks that proposal 3 is a worthy one but the type of engagement needs to be made clear as student projects are diverse. SG (GSM) made clear that some of these proposals will make the survey longer. AH suggested that the survey should be revised to be made shorter, and should be approved by the Plain English Campaign. LC said that some questions need to be reworded to achieve a more accurate outcome – e.g. asking "Do you find departmental seminars relevant?" is not helpful as they can't all be relevant.</p>	SG
1090	<p>SAMIS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE</p> <p><u>Progress report 'clean up':</u> Susan Alston (PG Administrator) attended to explain to the committee that a course of action to deal with blank, overdue progress reports in SAMIS has been agreed. Computing Services will remove blank progress reports from students' records if they have not been started and they are over 12 months old. The Graduate School will receive a report of which reports will be removed but supervisors will not be informed of this automatically. Partially completed progress reports will not be removed but</p>	

	<p>will be dealt with by the Graduate School. Reports can then be submitted to FRSC while still incomplete (they would be flagged). The timescale for marking reports as incomplete has been left up to the faculties. The committee agreed that two months seemed reasonable. Simon Gane mentioned that Mark Humphriss was particularly concerned about non-completion of progress reports as these are used for attendance monitoring of Tier IV visa holders, and it is likely that completion of progress reports will be discussed at the next URSC SA confirmed that Computing Services will proceed with the clean up once they receive feedback from the faculties.</p>	
1091	<p>PGR CONFIRMATION REPORT GUIDELINES</p> <p>LC wrote a guideline paper for Pharmacy students on how to formulate and set out their confirmation reports. This was circulated to the committee.</p> <p>JD confirmed that Biology guidelines for confirmation reports were included in the department PGR handbook. Both Maths and Physics have guidelines as well. JL wrote one after receiving feedback from the Computer Science SSLC that students wanted clearer guidance. JL now has further feedback from each research group and he will put together revised guidelines based on this. SG suggested that if DoS have guidelines they should forward them to the Graduate School for inclusion in the 2016/17 handbooks.</p>	
1092	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The Graduate School Research Afternoon is taking place on Monday 6th June. Poster submission rates have been poor to date, SW was hoping for some late submissions. SL has emailed Chemistry students and this should hopefully lead to some more posters being submitted. SW and LC have also emailed students. SG mentioned that Physics will have a poster competition in two weeks and he will encourage students to submit their posters for the Research Afternoon.</p>	