



Meeting **FACULTY RESEARCH STUDENTS' COMMITTEE**
Place **Wessex House 3.36**
Date and Time **Wednesday 17th December 2014, 12.30 pm**

Present	Professor S Wonnacott (Chair) Dr L Caggiano Dr J Doughty Dr A Hill Dr R James Dr J Laird Dr S Lewis Mr J Kenny	Associate Dean (Graduate Studies) Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology Department of Biology and Biochemistry Department of Mathematical Sciences Department of Physics Department of Computer Science Department of Chemistry Students' Union Officer
In attendance	Mr S Gane	Graduate School Manager
Apologies	Miss S Cabezas-Hayes Dr Catrin Yeomans	Faculty Student Representative, Department of Chemistry Deputy Graduate School Manager

Action

920 **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 12th November 2014 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

921 **MATTERS ARISING**

M894 What needs to be done better?

Professor Wonnacott informed the Committee that Professor Jane Millar had told her that the change required on SAMIS to enable second supervisors to access supervisee records on SAMIS-on-the-web was about to be implemented.

M896 Confirmation process

Following on from the notification at the last meeting that 54 out of 57 expected confirmation reports were submitted to the Graduate School (either paper copy or electronically) within the expected time frame, Professor Wonnacott queried whether the three outstanding confirmation reports had been submitted. Dr Lewis confirmed that one Chemistry report had now been submitted and Simon Gane said that he would investigate what had happened with the other two.

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908 Research SSLC Annual Report Overview

Simon Gane updated the Committee on progress with the Graduate School actions arising from the SSLC report. He informed the Committee that he had contacted Departmental Coordinators in each department to enquire about allocation of desk spaces for PGRs and he had received some responses but would wait until he had all of them before feeding back to the Committee. He also said that he would look at the results of the PRES survey

and contact departments about the allocation of software licences in the New Year. These matters would also be discussed at the next Graduate School SSLC.

SG

922 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

Alumni Fund Travel Bursaries

Professor Wonnacott informed the Committee that the first batch of bursaries had now been awarded (4 awards of £250: 2 to E&D, 2 to H&SS), following a selection panel meeting on 17 December. No applications had been received from Science students. Dr Lewis said that he would expect a number of applications from Chemistry students as EPSRC funds that would have been used to support travel to training or conferences had been withdrawn.

Professor Wonnacott outlined the steps that would now be taken to publicise the scheme and Jordan Kenny offered to help with this if needed.

Update on allocation of 50:50 URSA studentships

The Committee received an update from Professor Wonnacott on the allocation of three 50:50 studentships (1 each to CH, PH and BB) and Simon Gane informed the Committee that the majority of the 14-15 fee waiver pot had now been used up, and the 15-16 fee waiver funds had now been allocated, although applications were still welcome and, if approved, would be kept in reserve in case current awardees decide to go elsewhere.

CDT/DTP sub-committee and CDT/DTP Operations Group feedback

Professor Wonnacott told the Committee that the CDT/DTP sub-committee had its second meeting that morning, and that terms of reference had been discussed further as well as the tension between what professional services and CDT Directors want, or need, from the sub-committee. She also confirmed that two student representatives would be sitting on the sub-committee.

Simon Gane updated the Committee on the first meeting of the CDT/DTP Operations Group, which reports to the CDT/DTP sub-committee and which comprises Graduate School Managers and administrative leads from each of the University's collaborative doctoral training entities. He explained that the Group had agreed terms of reference and a core membership that would be supplemented by selected representatives from central professional services when necessary.

923 ANNUAL MONITORING REPORTS

The Committee noted that four out of the six departmental Annual Monitoring reports had been produced and circulated to Committee members, although some had been circulated quite close to the meeting and paper copies were not available at the meeting, so some Committee members had not had a chance to read the reports.

The Committee discussed the reports that had been produced. The main areas of discussion were as follows:

- Dr Caggiano commented that he had noticed some common themes when reading through the reports (e.g. the need for more URS funding).
- Dr Doughty felt that fee waivers had had a positive effect on recruitment to this cohort, and that SAMIS progress reporting had improved.
- Professor Wonnacott drew attention to the comment in the Computer Science report about verifying that a student's suspension has ended smoothly. Simon Gane explained that the Graduate School does not currently monitor the return of suspended students. The possibility of a SAMIS alert email reminding a DoS that a student is returning from suspension was discussed, and it was agreed that this could be explored by the SAMIS PGR User group.
- The Computer Science report also highlighted an issue with the time taken to approve and record changes in student status. An example was given of a student who had failed their first attempt at confirmation but who had only received formal notification of the failure after successfully passing their second attempt. Dr

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Caggiano recommended that the automated email about such a failure should contain more detail about the decision to avoid any confusion, and Dr James felt that the wording should reflect the delay in communicating the outcome. Dr Hill felt that no student should be told by a computer that they have failed. Professor Wonnacott made the point that this should not be the first time that a student is told they have failed, it should merely be a ratification of a decision already communicated by the student's examiners. It was agreed that the Graduate School would review the process for approving and recording these changes on SAMIS to see whether improvements could be made.

- There was some discussion of the point made in the Computer Science report about the lack of awareness amongst students of the role and function of the Graduate School. Simon Gane said that the Graduate School would continue to promote what it does to students before, during and after induction, to ensure they understand what services it provides. GS
- Dr Doughty highlighted the difficulties in collecting some of the data required for the report, although he felt that the information provided by the Graduate School had been very useful. Data on student destinations and student achievements was the hardest to source. The Committee discussed whether information on achievements could be recorded on progress reports and extracted in some format when needed. Simon Gane agreed to investigate what is possible.
- Dr Hill queried the value of completing the Annual Monitoring form and asked what the purpose was of the report. Dr Lewis felt that the purpose was to "speak truth to power" or to use the report to highlight issues associated with doctoral provision. Dr Doughty said that it was valuable to discuss issues at FRSC meetings but the information that's needed to compile the report needs to be more easily available and of good quality. Professor Wonnacott explained how the reports were reviewed at URSC. She felt that although the process as it stands was clearly not working for the Directors of Study in Science, the exercise of completing an annual report was a useful way for a DoS to take stock and to share issues with others, and it was also valuable as a means to communicate criticisms or needs to those at University level that might be able to address them. SG
- Dr Caggiano said it would have been more useful to have had the information in August and to have completed the report then, before the new intake comes in.
- Professor Wonnacott queried how long Directors of Study had taken to complete their reports. The average time taken was 2-3 hours but with some taking longer.
- Dr James felt strongly that collating data was not the job of a Director of Study. He also said that the Committee had not had a chance to read most of the reports submitted so it had not been a truly reflective discussion. Simon Gane made the point that reports could also be reviewed at the next FRSC meeting once everyone had had a chance to read them.
- Dr Hill and Dr James were encouraged to complete their reports in time for the January URSC meeting (deadline 7th January).
- Jordan Kenny queried why there was not a Faculty overview report, as there is for UG ones, as that would enable the identification of common themes and issues, and might perhaps carry more weight. He also said that he needed more time to read the reports so would appreciate revisiting them at the next meeting.
- In light of the lengthy discussion on this issue, Professor Wonnacott committed to producing a paper that summarises the key points of the reports and the discussion, to be circulated to Committee members before the URSC January meeting. This paper would then form the basis of her presentation of the reports at URSC.

924 APPROVAL PROCESS FOR JOINT RESEARCH DEGREES

The Committee discussed the draft paper on the approval process for joint research degrees, which had been produced by Sarah Ibbotson of LTEO.

Whilst it was accepted that a process had to be put in place to facilitate joint programmes, the general feeling amongst Committee members was that the process outlined was too heavy-handed. Dr Hill said he was disappointed that it was such a

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cumbersome process. Many members felt that the proposed process was far too procedural and that other institutions (especially in Europe) were able to address this issue in much simpler ways.

Professor Wonnacott pointed out that there was clearly a disconnect between academic aspiration and the University's need to ensure rigour and reduce risk. She felt that the process as described was too much but that some checks had to be in place.

Jordan Kenny had concerns about Annexe M 7g, which concerned supervisory arrangements across more than one institution. He wanted reassurance that it would be clear which ombudsman a student should go to if there was a problem. Dr Hill pointed out that 7i seemed to address this issue.

Dr James also raised concerns about the fact that this process did not seem to include any checks on whether sufficient funding was available to support such a scheme. He felt that the relevant Head of Department needs to be involved in the approval process to ensure that what is being proposed is affordable.

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Simon Gane agreed to feedback the Committee's views to the author of the draft process.

925 **SAMIS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

Simon Gane updated the Committee on discussions of SAMIS maintenance and development priorities that are taking place at the Graduate School Managers Forum and the PGR User Group. He explained that the automation of the Candidature form was being considered as the next priority for development, but offered Committee members the chance to comment on this proposed development and/or to outline their own SAMIS development priorities.

Dr Hill said that he was not convinced that automation was the best solution. Dr James felt that automation of the Candidature process would be a good thing but automation of the Confirmation report process should be considered more carefully. Dr Doughty also agreed that automation of the Candidature process would be a positive move.

926 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Dr Doughty said that he was concerned about submission rates in Biology & Biochemistry so it was agreed that these rates, and those for other departments, should be discussed at the next meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 1.55pm