

## **FACULTY BOARD OF BIOLOGY - BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES COMMITTEE**

There was an online meeting of the Biological Sciences Committee at **2 pm on Wednesday 10 March 2021**

### **MINUTES**

#### **874. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Dr Deborah Longbottom (Physical Sciences)

#### **875. MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2020 were circulated and approved.

#### **876. MATTERS ARISING**

##### **876.1. Proposal for new IB Course –Mathematical and Computational Biology (862)**

It was noted that the working group had decided to delay introduction of the course until October 2022 so outstanding questions of delivery could be resolved in good time.

#### **877. DIGITAL TEACHING**

Dr Scadden reported that two learning technologists had been recruited. A web-based form would be made available to help prioritise requests from departments to these new posts. Dr Scadden would circulate the email address for this after the meeting.

***ACTION: Dr Scadden to circulate address of web-based form.***

#### **878. EXAMINATIONS**

The Chair and Dr Weil reported. NST biology Students had been informed of the structure of their examinations for Parts IA, IB, II and III. There had been some push back for Part II and III examinations that were planned to be three or six-hour papers instead of 24-hour papers. Some late changes might be permitted by the Student Registry depending on the outcome of discussions within departments. At the BBS Student Consultative Committee students had expressed concern at the different examination conditions students would be operating on depending on their choice of major and minor subject. Students had been reassured that historic mark and class distributions would be used to ensure candidates in the 2020-21 cohort were not disadvantaged compared to other years.

For Part IA and IB not much feedback had been received from students. The format of the MedST/VetST examinations was still under discussion.

It was queried whether there was any guidance for how candidates should approach 24-hour examinations. The Department of Psychology had produced a guidance document and offered a training programme for students; they would be happy to share this with other departments. The students were very positive about this, and the guidance also involved DoS.

As part of any guidance it was agreed that the extended 24-hour time period was principally to accommodate students taking examinations overseas. Therefore candidates should not use the full time to prepare their answers, and they should be aware that the marking and classing criteria will remain the same.

## **879. PART II BBS**

### **879.1. Student Consultative Committee**

A meeting was held on 9 March. Dr Sage reported that there had been a suggestion for a dissertation database held by the central library. Depositing of dissertations would need permission from students. Any dissertations deposited would not have their marks recorded on them.

### **The BSC supported the establishment of a dissertation database.**

The students reported that they were generally happy with online teaching and that recording of lectures and Q&A sessions were particularly useful. Arrangement of supervisions seemed to be more structured in some departments than others.

## **880. STUDENT WELLBEING – PBS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

At a recent meeting of the PBS Management Committee the following were discussed with respect to student wellbeing and engagement:

### *1. Discord Server*

The Department has been encouraging students to communicate with each other as much as possible, and it was noted that students do not like to communicate on channels that they think the Department can see (e.g. the Teams teaching channels). Therefore, our student reps have set up a Discord Server, where students can play games, chat, and watch lectures together. This is entirely student run.

### *2. Events – Would I Lie To You?*

The Department has run two WILTY events on Zoom, hosted by a member of staff. The two teams have representation from staff, students and admin staff. Our Deputy HOD for Wellbeing, Equality and Diversity

notes that this is a low-effort event, as long as willing participants can be found.

### 3. *Civic Prize*

As a one-off this year, the Department will be awarding a Civic Prize to one student rep (tbc) in recognition of their hard work and input.

The BSC were happy with these suggestions and other departments could adopt or adapt as they saw fit.

## **881. NST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting held on 10 November 2020 were circulated as **BSC.21.01**. The Chair reported on a meeting of 23 February, in particular with respect to a possible change to the IA allocation process. It was originally intended to work on an entirely new system (led by the Department of Physics), but UIS were now looking to improve the existing system and thus the Department of Physics work had been put on hold.

## **882. PNB MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the PNB Management Committee meeting held on 18 January 2021 were circulated as **BSC.21.02** and noted.

## **883. DOBS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Minutes of a meeting held on 18 February were circulated as **BSC.21.03**. Examinations and admissions processes were discussed, and a further meeting would be held at the end of term. Students were more anxious/stressed in the middle of Lent term. Numbers of offers had been dropped on the assumption that most applicants would achieve their offers. It was noted that applicants would have suffered some disruption to their teaching.

## **884. REPORTED BUSINESS**

### **884.1. Form and Conduct Notices**

Details of a form and conduct notice approved by circulation for the BBS minor subject in Bioinformatics was circulated as **BSC.21.04** and noted.

### **884.2. Proposal for changes to Psychology teaching in the NST (870)**

These were approved by the Faculty Board of Biology and had been forwarded to the NST Management Committee for their consideration.

### **884.3. Regulation change for Part II PNB course (871.1)**

These had been approved by the Faculty Board of Biology and had been forwarded to the NST Management Committee.

**884.4. Form and conduct notice for Part II PNB (871.2)**

The issues around this notice had been resolved with the Chair at a meeting of the Course Management Committee and a notice published in the Reporter on 10 February.

**885. A.O.B.**

**885.1. Payment for online Q&A**

It was queried whether external lecturers should be paid for Q&A sessions as well as the time spent on the lecture. Zoology were considering allowing payment at the seminar rate (which was around 50% of the lecturing rate). There was no official policy for this but the Chair of the Faculty Board considered the seminar rate to be the most appropriate for this kind of work.

**885.2. Teaching and examinations in 2021-22**

GBEC had been considering what the teaching aims might be in 2021-22 and how they may need to be amended depending on the teaching environment. For examinations, in general the science Schools preferred to get back to normal, whereas arts and humanities would like to retain some features of the past year, including 24-hour examinations. As for teaching these were difficult to consider given the uncertainties over what the conditions would be in October 2021. Things would have to be taken on a term by term basis – it was unlikely that large scale in-person teaching could take place in Michaelmas 2021.

**886. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The next meeting would be scheduled for 21 July at 2pm.