

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Department of Chemistry

Graduate School Board Meeting

Minutes of the Graduate School Board Meeting held on Wednesday 19 January 2011 at 3.30pm in A122.

Present: Dr Richard Douthwaite, Chair (RED)
Alice Clifford (AC)
Dr Sue Couling (SBC)
Rachel Crooks (RLC)
Richard Gammons (RG)
Ryan Mewis (RM)
Neetisha Mistry (NM)
Kirsty Penkman (KEHP)
Andrew Thompson (AT)

RED welcomed KEHP and introduced her to those student members she had not met previously. She has taken over as Deputy Chair of the Graduate School.

2011-01 Apologies for Absence

None – Aleksandra Borisova was not present

2011-02 Approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2010

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2011-03 Matters Arising from the minutes

2010-14 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2009

SBC is planning to stage the graduate careers event in the summer term and will arrange a meeting to discuss ideas.

RLC has displayed details of the new student reps on the graduate noticeboard and AC has done the same on the graduate web pages.

Action:

SBC to contact AC and the student reps to arrange a time to discuss the careers event.

2010-21 Appointment of Board of Studies and Graduate Students' Association Reps

RED will raise the issue of a replacement for the Board for Graduate Schools at a meeting for Chairs of Boards of Studies and Graduate Schools this week and report back to the next meeting. Kay Mitchell from the GSA has contacted John Local regarding this but as yet has had no response.

RG attended the first Board of Studies meeting. RG, NM and AT will decide who will attend the next one and will inform the Undergraduate Office.

Kay Mitchell has contacted all the student reps with information about the GSA.

2010-24 Health and Safety

AC contacted James Clark and Simon Breeden regarding practical briefings for MSc Green Chemistry students and received a detailed response regarding the health and safety element of the training. AC forwarded this to AB.

AC contacted Moray Stark regarding a new first aider in C-block. Moray confirmed that he is aware of the situation and is looking into appointing a new first aider in C block.

2010-25 The Researcher Development Framework – the Future of Skills Provision

AC has updated the graduate web pages and Research Students' Handbook to show that students can reclaim the cost of any one LFA course in any year of study.

2010-26 Proposal to Introduce a Demonstrating Requirement for Some New Students

RED has met with Ian Fairlamb and Duncan Bruce and has sought approval from the Head of Department to fund PhD demonstrators for 2012 entry. This is particularly important as the large undergraduate cohort progresses through their degree course. For 2011 entry, the Department is seeking to recruit three student technicians; in Mass Spectrometry, NMR and X-ray, to replace those who will complete their PhDs this year.

The PhD reps have spoken to their fellow students and the general feeling is that whilst an element of compulsory demonstrating would not have dissuaded them from applying to York, they would prefer for it remain optional.

2011-04 Health and Safety

RM reported that he had been told that only permanent members of staff rather than post-docs would now be trained as first aiders.

2011-05 Feedback on the Graduate School Forum

Members who had attended, felt that the Graduate Forum was useful and that the short presentations worked well. A suggestion was made that it be brought forward to the Autumn term (late November) as new students would find the information particularly helpful. It was agreed to invite some different speakers next year so that current students might still attend.

Action:

AC to diary the 2011/12 Graduate Forum for November 2011 and to invite speakers in due course.

2011-06 The GSA Review of Student Representation

RG and NM had both attended GSA meetings. It was felt that the meetings could be organised more efficiently and that more information could be provided with regard to the nomination of representatives.

The GSA is holding a review of its procedures. AC will attend a briefing for staff and RG and NM will attend a student focus group. Both events will take place in February.

RED mentioned that the GSA has recently re-launched its website and suggested that this might become a useful source of information.

Action:

AC, RG and NM to attend the review meetings and report back to the next meeting.

2011-07 Update on TAP Forms on Skills Forge

AC reported that Jonathan Carr was currently absent from the University and that Andy Jackson in the Research and Enterprise Office had contacted her with regard to making TAP forms available via Skills Forge. He had said he would contact the Department again next week to make arrangements to take the project forward.

Action:

AC to liaise with Andy Jackson and report back to the next meeting.

2011/08 Marking of Undergraduate Practical Scripts

NM reported that she felt that the guidance time for marking inorganic MChem practical scripts (20 minutes) was insufficient to give a fair mark and provide guidance on errors. RG agreed that the guidance times for other courses were also too low. SBC explained that the guidance time referred to the rate of pay for script marking rather than the actual time it was expected to take, and it was expected that marking takes less time as students become more familiar with the process. The students suggested that it would be clearer to have a set rate of pay for script marking on each practical course (to remain the same as currently) but to have a more realistic guide in terms of the time it would take to mark each script so graduate students could better manage their time.

RG mentioned that script marking was not always evenly distributed amongst the junior demonstrators on some courses and that moderation of marks was not always carried out by Experimental Coordinators.

Concern was also expressed that on some practical courses such as Physical-Inorganic, which attract only a small number of junior demonstrators, each student is required to complete a large amount of marking. This in turn deters graduate students from volunteering to demonstrate on those courses in subsequent years. It was felt important that this issue needed to be addressed before October when the larger cohort of students entered their second year.

Action:

SBC and RED to pass on the concerns of the graduate students to Nick Wood, Chair of the Practical Courses Committee and to feed the response back to the next meeting.

2011-09 Any Other Business

None

Date of next meeting – Wednesday 11 May 2011 at 2.30pm in A132