

THE UNIVERSITY of York
Department of Biology

OUTREACH COMMITTEE : 27 February 2008

Present: John Pillmoor (Chair and Strategy Board Link)
Caroline Calvert (CNAP)
Jasper Green (Postgraduate Representative)
Adrian Harrison (Departmental Outreach Organiser)
Thorunn Helgason (Academic Representative)
Ottoline Leyser (Research Committee + Academic Staff Representative)

Apologies: Baur Aituov (Undergraduate Representative)
Nicola Charlton (Technical Representative)

In attendance: Margaret Newton (acting Secretary)

Action

08/1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2007 were approved.

08/2 Matters arising from the minutes

a) **07/007: *Work placement requests:*** are considered on an ‘ad hoc’ basis and a more formalised system was not felt to be required. All enquiries in future should be directed through Andrea Johnson. HMOL noted that fifth form placements have a central system and will find out whether this is SetPoint or some other organisation. ABH will ask Nicola Charlton whether she would accept school children on placement in the Teaching labs out of University term-time but in school term time.

HMOL

ABH

b) **07/14: *Discussion with NYBEP:*** ABH had received a reply to his formal letter expressing his concern following the BA Festival. It was agreed that all future requests should go via ABH. Several requests have been received since. CC noted that she had also received several requests. A key problem is understanding which of the myriad of external bodies is actually involved.

HMOL suggested that a circular should be sent round the department warning about problems with NYBEP and asking for all requests to be directed through ABH. It was noted that Stuart Priest has a good relationship with them.

ABH

CC was concerned about branding with so many different bodies involved – when things go wrong, it reflects badly on the University and appears to be our fault whereas we may not always get credit for successful events.

c) **07/18: *Targeting Schools from Leeds and S. Yorks:*** Will be progressed through the new Excellence Hubs (see #08/07 below)

d) **07/19: *Equipment purchase proposals:*** to be carried forward to the next meeting in NC’s absence

NC

JG reported that he had applied for a grant to EMBO for bioinformatics activities only to find that the grant had closed but the website had not been updated. It was agreed that the Outreach Committee should provide support of £1,000.

ABH noted that there are many different funding sources and it is difficult to keep track of these. For example, the BBSRC outreach fund could be a good source and HMOL is currently submitting a bid. HMOL will ask Jane McCarthy to include information about the BBSRC and other outreach funds in the Research Newsletter.

HMOL

- e) **07/20: Teaching staff inputs in 2006/07:** to be carried forward to the next meeting in NC's absence

NC

08/3 Previous events update

The previous events were discussed. All had proceeded well. HMOL mentioned a new contact, Joe Cutter who designs computer games, and was currently involved in the BBSRC application to make a game for HMOL. It was agreed to inform Phil Roberts as he was likely to be the person most interested.

HMOL

08/4 Events log

- a) **Revised form:** was felt to be a big improvement but a couple of amendments were suggested to avoid confusion:

- Main contact should be changed to Department contact/leader,
- A new box of Partner Organisations and External contact (if applicable) should be included.

JBP

The form should be circulated round the department every six months to academic staff, post-docs, and technicians. CC noted that she is not always included in the standard departmental circulation list and should be individually included

MEN

- b) **Capturing teaching load equivalents:** the new secretarial appointment will liaise with Jenny White to ensure that the credits are included in the staff workload.

- c) **Updated log:** 57 events were listed in the 2007 log. ABH noted that the BA entries were in several different formats, as staff recorded their contribution in varying ways. The updated spreadsheet, sorted by year, will be published on the web shortly.

MEN

08/5 Next major events

ABH predicted a busy March with Science Week and many school visits planned.

HMOL noted that money was available for activities, especially for talented and gifted schoolchildren, from York Council. A contact at the City Council should also be sought, possibly through Science City York or via the University's Schools Liaison office.

ABH

08/6 Academic outreach support pool

JBP outlined the basis of this new initiative which was to create a further pool of

academics who had committed to leading outreach events and who would be the first point of contact for requests for outreach activities. ABH reported that nine people had agreed to be on the list. The nine will be trained so that they can take over some of ABH's repeat work and they will now get credit for their outreach work on the Departmental Jobs List, subject to them actually leading at least two activities per year.

08/7 Central outreach meeting (Widening Participation and Excellence Hubs)

ABH tabled a report on the Widening Participation event in December 2007 on the Excellence Hubs which are to replace NAGTY. York is the centre for Yorkshire and Humberside. The Committee welcomed the new Excellence Hub as it allows us more control to arrange our own events at times to suit us.

In answer to ABH's questions, it was agreed:

- a) To aim activities at students within the 10-18 age group, but to concentrate each event on a tight age range.
- b) Possibly to aim at a certain area (e.g. Leeds and South Yorkshire)
- c) To devise a programme to offer to the Excellence Hub (based on the events in the NAGTY summer school) of 10 separate days to include several events which could be repeated each year. **ABH**
- d) To plan challenging, serious events aimed at the top 1-2% but also visits from whole year groups to encourage widening participation
- e) To discuss timing further – perhaps on Wednesday afternoons or in school terms but out of University terms. School half terms could be particularly considered. Weekend courses were not favoured due to the likely difficulties in getting volunteers
- f) To reduce the load on the Teaching technicians, consider training PhD students. ABH to consult NC. **ABH**
- g) To pay PhD and undergraduate student helpers. Staff (including post-docs who are employees) should not be paid. For this group, income should be retained by the Outreach Committee to assist with the general outreach budget
- h) To hold events in the department. This might also encourage applications for university places, particularly at York **ABH**
- i) To involve the RCUK Fellows who have a specific requirement to undertake outreach
- j) To arrange a meeting with people from the outreach pool and CC to gather their ideas and support. **ABH**

08/8 Science and Society

ABH noted that the science trail is not going ahead as part of Science Week as it has not proved possible to agree dates with the Conference Office. He hoped that the science trail would take place at a future date this year, but definitely as part of science week next year. It was suggested that the City of York Council be approached for funding. **ABH**

08/9 Biology Matters

JBP reported that the next edition, prepared by a new editorial team, is expected to be published soon. He is waiting for feedback to find out whether they will

require the funding of £500 offered for printing costs.

08/10 Budget update

ABH noted little activity on the budget and that about £100 had been spent. As noted earlier, it was agreed to support JG's proposal with £1,000

08/11 Outreach Key Performance Indicators and SWOT

As part of the University's Better Management initiative, JBP had created the Outreach Key PIs and SWOT analysis. Although he had taken the figures from the log, the statistics were difficult to collate. Staff hours were still not clear from the new forms as not everyone was claiming teaching credits. Audience numbers were not a good KPI as thousands had attended the BA Festival of Science. He proposed that:

- staff should be broken down into staff group types, e.g. core academic staff, post-docs, PhDs.
- Group participants should be divided into primary, secondary, adults and other

The Committee agreed with the SWOT analysis but added two items:

- under 'Weaknesses': difficulty in capturing outreach information,
- Under "Threats": potential for brand confusion.

JBP

JBP will update.

08/12 Any other business

- a) HMOL is one of the judges for the Royal Society's book awards for science books for children and TH agreed to help.
- b) Baur Aituov had written to JBP to say that he felt he could no longer act as the undergraduate representative as he could not attend meetings. It was hoped to appoint a replacement from the current first years before the next meeting.
- c) JG agreed to serve on the Committee for another year.
- d) The new appointment in the Undergraduate Office will start after Easter.

JBP

08/13 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held mid-summer term.

MEN

27 February 2008