

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

DEPARTMENTS OF BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY

Biology – Chemistry Planning Group Minutes of Meeting held on 18th February 2011

Present: Richard Taylor (RJKT- Chair), Debbie Smith (DFS), John Pillmoor (JBP), James Moir (JM), Tony Wilkinson (AJW), Christoph Baumann (CB), Ian Fairlamb (IJSF), Jennifer Potts (JP), Keith Wilson (KSW), Rod Hubbard (REHu)
In attendance: Belinda Wade (BJW)
Apologies: Colin Kleanthous (CK)

Action

11/01 Minutes of the last meeting: 17th December 2010

The minutes were agreed.

11/02 Matters arising from 17th December 2010

i) From minute 10/19(ii) UG Biochemistry: practical teaching

This item will be dealt with under 11/04 below.

ii) From minute 10/20 Biology Strategic developments

DFS informed BCPG that the Molecular Biophysics candidate had received a written offer of the Chair position, with a final decision expected by the end of February. The advertisements for all the Chair and lectureship posts were on hold until this decision was made.

iii) From minute 10/22(ii) Wellcome Trust 4-year PhD programme

DFS provided an update on progress with the WT CIDCATS programme. No award letter with details about the funding has been received as yet but the studentships have been advertised on the Biology website, together with links to all the other Departments involved, and 53 applications had been received to date for 2011 entry. Only those applicants considered to have the necessary quantitative skills and intellectual rigour were shortlisted. Eleven interviews will be held on March 8th with a further 2 overseas students being interviewed via Skype. The 5 studentships available for 2011 do not all need to be filled and some could be held over if students of sufficient calibre are not identified. The first year programme plan has yet to be finalised but there could be teaching overlap with both the Computational Biology and Post-Genomic Biology Masters courses; PhD projects will be allocated at the end of the first year. Each student will have two supervisors in different disciplines and staff named as supervisors will be encouraged to contribute. A meeting of the PEC involving staff from all the partner departments is being arranged for April.

11/03 Purchase of screening equipment by Dept & Univ equipment fund

REHu informed BCPG that the joint bid to the University's strategic equipment fund had been successful providing an additional £22K to match that from the Departments. This would be used to obtain a sample changer for the NMR to aid structural and chemical biology, plus a dedicated instrument for thermal shift analysis. Several companies were bidding for the latter and would be holding machine demonstrations.

11/04 Biochemistry intake 2011/12

Both Departments had agreed about how to handle Biochemistry offers and up to November last year, the number of applications was the same as previous years; however there was a 20% increase late in the year which could not have been predicted. Consequently a large number of offers have been made which could lead to an intake of 67 in October 2011 if all these students achieve their grades, well over the usual 52. This will lead to problems with space for practical teaching and allocation of projects in future. JM has talked to Nick Wood, Practical Course Co-ordinator in Chemistry, about how to cope with numbers this year and in future. The initial suggestion of teaching Chemistry practicals in the Biology labs was considered unworkable, but a change to the Biology timetable, with Biochemistry practicals being held together with Chemistry on Mondays, would be better. Some lectures may need to be rescheduled to Thursdays but this timetabling change would open up possibilities. There would be a knock-on effect for 2nd and 3rd year chemistry students requiring lab space but it was suggested that more biologically-oriented mini projects could be offered and these could use the Biology labs conveniently located close to YSBL. As regards projects, Biology is trialling supervision by a single member of staff of 6-10 students on related projects. RJKT said that Chemistry has set up a working party to look at projects overall. It was thought that not all students benefit from projects and they should be allowed to choose whether to take this option. AJW suggested a levy from undergraduate fees to contribute towards costs.

A meeting to discuss all these issues is scheduled for February 25th.

11/05

Any Other Business

CB said that he had only found out about a talk in Chemistry by Hagan Bayley at the last minute and suggested an exchange of seminar speaker lists at the beginning of each term. He said Christina Hudson could organise the publicity in Biology.

Next Meeting: **Rescheduled to Wednesday April 27th at 10:00 in Biology K126**

Richard Taylor
Belinda Wade
23rd February 2011