

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

DEPARTMENTS OF BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY

Biology – Chemistry Planning Group Minutes of Meeting held on 21st May 2012

Present: Richard Taylor (RJKT-Chair), Debbie Smith (DFS), Jennifer Potts (JP), Tony Wilkinson (AJW), Gavin Thomas (GHT), Christoph Baumann (CB), Rod Hubbard (REHu), John Pillmoor (JBP), Neil Bruce (NCB)
In attendance: Belinda Wade (BJW), David Smith (Chair-Chem BoS) for item 12/08
Apologies: Keith Wilson (KSW), Ian Fairlamb (IJSF)

Action

12/06 **Minutes of the last meeting: 2nd March 2012**
The minutes were agreed.

12/07 **Matters arising:**

i) From minute 12/02(ii) WT ISSF/C2D2

REHu said that the need for support for chemical libraries could change and will be revisited bearing in mind Chemistry and Biology strategy.

ii) From minute 12/02(iii) Joint Symposium

JP said that a convenient date for this symposium was proving difficult to find but it was hoped that this would be held before the end of the summer term.

JP

iii) From minute 12/02(iv) Atomic Absorption Spectrometer

NCB said that his group were frequent users of this spectrometer and he enquired if it was likely to be repaired in the near future, as it was important for his collaborative grant with Green Chemistry. It would be useful if IJSF could look into this.

IJSF

iv) From minute 12/04 MRes in Computational Biology

DFS said that Biology is currently reviewing the administration of all its Masters courses and a discussion document will be presented at the June meeting of Biology Strategy Group. CB and KPW are involved in rethinking future Masters teaching across the Departments. The University is also looking at Masters fees and viability across campus and this was discussed at Senate last week.

v) From minute 12/05(ii) Biochemistry Chair

DFS said that after the new Biology Chair appointments had settled in, it would be easier to make strategic decisions about this appointment. YSBL staff would be consulted for input before advertising the post.

12/08 **TF Review**

JBP apologised that it had taken so long for the TF review report to come to BCPG. NCB said it should be borne in mind that the assessors had carried out the review without consideration of any departmental financial constraints. The report provides a good endorsement of the facilities and clearly states the facts. Five areas for improvement had been identified:

(i) Engagement/interaction with users – A TF Research Committee will be set up in the next few months, to be chaired by JP, to address strategic development in the context of various groups/labs. User focus groups for each of the TF labs would also improve communication and integration.

JP

- (ii) *Masters teaching* – This is on hold pending the review of Masters courses in Biology.
- (iii) *Cost recovery* – JBP said that it was necessary to keep an eye on the balance between internal and external work. The TF charges the same rates for everyone but a more auditable charging process is required.
- (iv) *Quality assurance* – JBP said that feedback and communication would improve.
- (v) *Future strategy* – Once set up the TF Research Committee will carry out more frequent reviews of the facility.

The two major issues were organisation/quality control and the inequalities of graduate student funding. JBP said that help with covering PhD costs could lead to more usage of the TF in the long run. It was agreed to set up a small working group, consisting of JP, AJW and CB, which would bring a document for discussion to the next BCPG.

JP/AJW/CB

Regarding TF organisation, there were different levels of understanding among BCPG members about how to cost for TF staff time on grants, particularly advice from lab heads, since there are no longer two different levels of service to choose from on the pull down charges menu. There is also a perception that including TF costs makes grants too expensive. Several members of the Group said that, in their experience, if the costs on grant submissions were justified this was not a problem for the funding bodies. Pls need to discuss requirements with TF lab heads early on in the submission process. JBP said that the Peer Review College form in Biology is being altered to include a tick box for TF staff time. It was thought that it would be a good idea for the TF to advertise again and for contact to be improved between the different facilities in Biology/TF and Chemistry. It was suggested that JBP give a presentation to Chemistry's Board of Studies and/or Research Committee.

JBP

AJW said that the TF was a wonderful facility and grant submissions looked more professional when these services were part of the bid. JP said that communication needs to be improved between Pls and the TF, and to this end the new TF Research Committee will include researchers from various labs, a YSBL member to feedback to Chemistry, as well as the TF lab heads. All of these measures will help build a future vision and direction for the TF. Now the TF report has been discussed at the relevant departmental committees it will be put on the web.

JBP

12/09

Disbanding the Bioinformatics Advisory Group

JBP said that the Bioinformatics Advisory Group had not met since 2009 and the matters it was set up to deal with have now become routine. Therefore BCPG agreed to disband this group.

12/10

Any Other Business

(i) *NMR* – RJKT asked for information about Biology's new lecturer in Molecular Biophysics to be sent to Chemistry to help assess the potential usage of the Chemistry NMR facilities.

JP

(ii) *Biochemistry admissions/course* – RJKT suggested a complete rethink of the Biochemistry course and admissions numbers. It was agreed that it would be a good time to consider this as there are several complicating factors on the horizon, such as the influence of new appointments and the Biomedical and Natural Sciences degree courses due to start in 2014. A small working group, including GHT from Biology and Gideon Grogan from Chemistry plus a couple of others from the BCH Executive Committee, will meet to discuss ideas and produce a document for discussion at BCPG in the Autumn.

GHT

(iii) *Standing items* – It was agreed to bring updates about Green Chemistry and YSBL to future meetings, along with discussions of various collaborative research projects.

Next Meeting: Wednesday October 17th at 09:30 in Biology K126

Richard Taylor
Debbie Smith
28th May 2012