

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

DEPARTMENTS OF BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY

Biology – Chemistry Planning Group Minutes of Meeting held on 29th April 2013

Present: Richard Taylor (RJKT-Chair), Debbie Smith (DFS), Gavin Thomas (GHT), Christoph Baumann (CB), Keith Wilson (KSW), Alison Parkin (AP), Tony Wilkinson (AJW), Neil Bruce (NCB), Jennifer Potts (JP), Rod Hubbard (REHu)
In attendance: Belinda Wade (BJW)
Apologies: John Pillmoor (JBP)

Action

13/09 **Minutes of the last meeting: 26th February 2013**
The minutes were agreed.

13/10 **Matters arising:**
i) From minute 13/06(i) Joint Symposium
The date for a joint symposium was confirmed as the afternoon of July 4th.

ii) From minute 13/06(v) Strategic equipment investment
RJKT had sent JBP Chemistry's equipment list and AJW will check that this is what was wanted.

AJW

iii) From minute 13/07(a)(i) Biochemistry teaching think tank
AJW will liaise with Dave Smith about Fred Antson's teaching on his Stage 3 module and GHT will await the steer from Chemistry.

AJW

13/11 **Standing items**
(a) Strategic issues

(i) Biochemistry programme

Governance – GHT said that the BCH Executive Committee is going to be rebadged as a subject committee within Biology and will also report to the Chemistry Teaching Committee. An extraordinary meeting of the BCH Executive is being held on May 9th to discuss this issue. Richard Waites, Chair of Biology BoS, will make a presentation to the Chemistry BoS on May 15th. From 1st October 2013, the new external examiner will be Professor Frank Sargent from Dundee.

Undergraduate project provision – With record numbers of undergraduates this year, about 22 projects are required from Chemistry, and 2 each should be offered by YSBL staff. GHT can approach staff directly about options, but YSBL lab space is an issue. AJW suggested dry or team projects, and DFS said another option may be to use Biology teaching labs.

GHT said that he would remind Dave Smith about the process for exam boards at the end of term since all BCH scripts need to be marked by the Wednesday of week 9. GHT will also meet with Dave Smith in the near future regarding a possible additional 10 credit Stage 2 module in inorganic and synthetic chemistry.

GHT

(ii) PhD funding/TF subsidy

JP tabled a document listing all the PhD students in YSBL, with an asterisk denoting the 9 who would benefit from a TF subsidy similar to that given to Biology PhD students. The BBSRC have provided a one off payment of £2500 this year to cover consumables, and in future the situation will change with the move from DTG to DTP schemes. In the meantime it would be helpful if an interim measure could be implemented so that students supervised by YSBL/Biology academics are not disadvantaged. RJKT, AJW and Mike Clark will meet to discuss the budget.

RJKT/AJW

(b) Reports from joint activities

(i) YSBL space discussions

REHu tabled a document outlining recent discussions about YSBL space. It had been decided that the priority in the short term was for more wet lab space. An architect had been brought in by Estates and the proposal was to turn the top floor of the YSBL block (K2) into a single wet lab and move the offices elsewhere. This would involve providing services to this side of the building which may be expensive. RJKT has emailed Jon Meacock, Director of Estates, to see if it is feasible to change this area of YSBL, and it would be good if this could be signed off before the end of June when the present PVC for Estates, Elizabeth Heaps, retires.

A further issue is the integration of synthetic requirements within Biology. The new chemical biology lecturer, Martin Faschione, is a synthetic chemist from Leeds who starts in August with a year of his Marie Curie Fellowship to run and he will require space with fume cupboards. AP is moving into the labs vacated by Green Chemistry, but over the next 3-5 years there may be a critical mass of synthetic chemistry/biology staff, requiring creation of a specific suite within the new buildings of either Chemistry or Biology.

(c) Research activities

Nothing to report.

(d) Teaching

Masters in Computational Biology

DFS summarised the situation with the CB Masters. This course was set up to run this year with a 25:25:50 split between Computer Science, Chemistry and Biology. In January Computer Science informed DFS that it could not run the course due to finances. This is unacceptable as about 10 students are predicted for this year, budgeted for within the current departmental MTP. The Academic Co-ordinator for Sciences, Brian Fulton, will call a meeting with all 3 departments if necessary, to resolve this issue. The University of York is known for this course and computational biology is a priority with the Research Councils.

(e) Infrastructure

NMR provision at York

High field NMR provision is necessary for inorganic chemistry applications. A meeting will be arranged soon to discuss future provision, to include AJW, JP, NCB, RJKT, Simon Duckett, Jason Lynam, Gary Green and Brian Fulton. JP sits on the N8 Biology group where there has also been a lot of discussion about biological NMR.

13/12

Any Other Business

(i) Guy Dodson memorial weekend – This will take place on June 15th-16th and proceedings will be opened by Eleanor Dodson. 120 people have registered so far and there will be a dinner on the Saturday evening at the National Railway Museum.

(ii) Congratulations – RJKT congratulated DFS on taking over from John Local as the PVC for Research starting in January 2014. DFS said that the process for appointing a new Biology HoD had begun and a decision will be made in the summer.

(iii) Biochemistry Chair – DFS informed BCPG that the new Biochemistry Chair is Bob White from Glasgow and he starts on June 1st. It was agreed that he should be invited to join BCPG beginning with the meeting in the Autumn term.

Next Meeting: Tuesday July 9th at 09:30 in Biology K126

Richard Taylor
Debbie Smith
13th June 2013