

**Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Consultative Committee held on Friday, 18 March 2011 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room A, Sanger Building**

**Present:** Dr S Ball and Dr G C Brown

**Student Representatives:** N Bazin Lopez  
G Chen  
M Herzog  
A Morgunov  
J Wang  
K Wiles

**Course Convenor (Chairman):** Dr T R Hesketh

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the new Senior Classroom Technician, Dr Siolian Ball.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Professor K M Brindle and Dr M Carrington.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Friday, 3 December 2010 were approved as a correct record.

**3. Matters arising from the last meeting**

The Chairman reported that he had acted on all the points raised at the last meeting. He had not, however, been able to come up with a solution to the poor attendance at the practicals. It had been suggested that they should be assessed, but this would be very difficult to implement. Most people were now aware that the MIT Exchange Programme would not be running next year as the Department did not have the funds to finance it. He was very sorry that this was the case.

**4. Lent Term Lectures (Dr G C Brown, Professor K M Brindle, Professor R W Farndale, Dr M Carrington and Dr T R Hesketh)**

The Chairman asked the student representatives for their comments and feedback on the Lent Term lectures.

**Dr G C Brown.** The students asked how they should deal with the complicated diagrams in GCB's handouts when writing essays. They asked if they could be produced in a format that allowed them to reproduce them. GCB said that they should be learning to extract information from the diagrams. He agreed, however, to modify his handout to make this easier for the students. TRH said that, although this may be a particular problem with GCB's handouts due to the nature of the material, he would make a general point in the instructions for lecturers that they should endeavour to ensure that key points were visible when showing a vast mass of data.

**ACTION: GCB/TRH**

**Professor K M Brindle.** The students were happy with Professor Brindle's lectures and handout.

**Professor R W Farndale.** The students commented on the structure of Professor Farndale's handout. They would like to have clear, numbered headings and more space for writing. A summary at the end of the lectures would also be helpful. TRH said he would relay this information to Professor Farndale. The students complained that some lecturers, including Professor Farndale, did not follow the handout in their lectures. TRH said he would add this point to the instructions for lecturers. The students requested that handouts should be uploaded on CamTools in either .doc or pdf format.

**ACTION: TRH**

**Dr M Carrington.** The students in general did not like the format of Dr Carrington's handout. During the lectures they were clear, but afterwards they were difficult to follow. They would like to see more text on the slides. TRH would pass this on to Dr Carrington.

**ACTION: TRH**

**Dr T R Hesketh.** There had been some repetition in Dr Hesketh's second lecture of material which had been included in the transmembrane signalling lectures. TRH said that this had not happened before, but it was possible that Professor Farndale had changed his lectures. TRH would look at the content of his own lectures and possibly add more material on cell signalling. The students enjoyed the MCQ questions in the middle of the lectures.

**ACTION: TRH**

## 5. **Practicals**

The students reported that a whole group of students had not attended the practicals. SB commented that there had definitely been a lack of attendance in the Lent Term with only approximately 75% of students turning up. She could not comment on the Michaelmas Term. TRH said significant non-attendance at practicals was unacceptable. In the past, the possibility of assessing practicals had been discussed, but this had been turned down for various reasons. Asking students to sign in would now be considered. TRH thanked the students for bring this to his attention.

The students also complained about broken plotting chart recorders and asked if ejectors could be supplied for Gilsons. SB explained that Departments had different rules regarding the use of ejectors. Some Departments felt that there was too much risk of cross contamination from other practicals. SB agreed to look into this and report back at the next meeting.

**ACTION: SB**

The students highlighted several problems with the metabolic analysis practical. The practical had not been explained properly and the students did not have enough time to complete the practical in the time given. TRH explained that this was a relatively new practical and agreed to look at changing it in order to get the right balance.

**ACTION: TRH**

The students reported that some students found the Week 8 data handling sessions difficult and challenging. It was suggested that the students were given reading material in Week 7 so that they had time to prepare for the sessions if necessary.

GCB asked the students if they knew why some students were not attending the practicals. Afternoon rowing commitments and interviews were suggested as possible reasons. One student said that she had been able to answer a practical question

without even attending the practical. TRH said that the main argument for attending the practicals was for the hands-on experience. The students suggested that they should receive minimal marks for handing in course work at the beginning of the practical or alternatively given marks for attending. TRH said this was a running problem that seemed to be getting worse. He thanked the students for their suggestions, which he would take in to account when deciding what to do to try and increase attendance.

#### 6. **Journal Club**

The students reported that they had been given only one week to read the material for the Journal Club. It was agreed that two weeks would be beneficial and would ensure that more people had read the paper. In one case, only four students out of eight had attended the Journal Club. The students felt that this was due to the scheduling later in the term and the fact that they were not examined. TRH said although the Journal Club was not directly examined, it was hoped that the students would learn how to tackle data handling papers in the examination. The students commented that some of the demonstrators were not familiar with the paper and the success of the Journal Club depended on the people running it. TRH explained that it was not always possible to get people who were knowledgeable in a particular area to run the Journal Clubs, but every effort was made to do this.

#### 7. **Any other business**

The students requested access to last year's CamTools site so that they could read last year's Easter Term lectures in advance of this year's lectures. CTT said that this not be possible because it would also give them prior access to the yellow sheets, etc. TRH said he would look into this possibility, but in the meantime, he would arrange for last year's Easter Term lecture material to be added to this year's site. SB informed the students that she had hardcopies of past lecture notes which she could make available to the students if necessary. CTT would ask the Easter Term lecturers to let her have their lecture notes well in advance of their lectures.

**ACTION: CTT**

The students requested that an email should be sent to Part IB students reminding them that they should email the Department informing them that they would be putting Biochemistry as their first choice for Part II. CTT agreed to do this.

**ACTION: CTT**

#### 8. **Date of next meeting**

The Chairman informed the students that there would be no meeting at the end of the Easter Term, but if they wished to raise any issues they could contact him by email or alternatively contact CTT or SB.

The Chairman thanked the student representative for their feedback throughout the year.