

**Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Consultative Committee held on Wednesday, 2 December 2009 at 11.30 am in Meeting Room B, Sanger Building**

**Present:** Ms N Bowers, Professor C J Howe, Professor P F Leadlay and Professor J O Thomas

**Student Representatives:** D Abell  
A Buchanan-Hughes  
B Li  
A Streeter

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

The Chairman welcomed the representatives to the first meeting of the year. He emphasized that the main purpose of the meeting was for the students to express their views on the course.

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Dr H R Mott and Professor C W J Smith.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Friday, 13 March 2009 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.

**Chemistry content of Dr G C Brown's lectures.** TRH said it was necessary to achieve a balance of the chemical content in Dr Brown's lectures. He had spoken to some of the students and discussed this with Dr Brown and he hoped that this problem had now been resolved.

**Lecture overrun.** TRH reported that the Lent Term lecturers had been reminded that students had other commitments and it was important that lectures did not overrun.

**PA system.** The lecturers had confirmed that the PA system was now working properly.

**New practical.** TRH reported that Professor Brindle had been working hard to resolve the problems with the new practical.

**4. Michaelmas Term Lectures (Professor C J Howe, Professor J O Thomas, Professor C W J Smith, Professor T L Blundell and Professor P F Leadlay)**

The Chairman asked the student representatives for their comments and feedback on the Michaelmas Term lectures. He informed the students that the questionnaires were still running and would be available at the next meeting. The student representatives commented that in general the lectures had been enjoyable and had not overrun.

**Professor C J Howe.** The students reported that Professor Howe's lectures had generally been well received.

**Professor J O Thomas.** The students said they would have liked more emphasis on journal references in the lectures by Professor Thomas and some tying up of the material. They asked if the slides could be uploaded onto the CamTools site. JOT said that she would do this, but explained that there were very few slides that were not in the handout. She did not want the students to think that the slides contained additional information. TRH explained that lecturers had different views about uploading their handouts and slides onto the CamTools site. Some preferred to wait until after they had given their

lectures and others would not do it at all and the students had to accept that this was the situation.

PFL informed the meeting that he was delaying uploading all his slides because changes still had to be made. He would, however, be willing to do this if the students were willing to accept that the slides were different from the ones used in the actual lectures. CJH said that it was for this reason that he did not upload his slides until after his lectures.

**Professor C W J Smith.** The students commented that Professor Smith's lectures had been delivered too quickly and it had been difficult to keep up with the pace. They felt they would have benefitted from a recap or a concluding slide.

**Professor T L Blundell.** Professor Blundell's lectures had been generally very good.

**Professor P F Leadlay.** The lectures given by Professor Leadlay had generally been very good. The students commented that the order of the handout had been different to the slides and it had been difficult to follow the lecture.

## 5. **Practicals**

TRH reported that he had looked briefly at the student feedback so far and the practicals had been well received. The students commented that the chemistry practical had been set at too low a level. It was very slow for students who had taken chemistry last year. TRH informed the students that this practical had been introduced after a review of the Biochemistry practicals. The students said it was useful, but that the pace was too slow. NB said that if possible students who had taken chemistry last year would be grouped together in future. The students confirmed that main problem had been in the combined class on the Friday. NB stressed that the organising of the practicals this year had been very difficult as there had been more conflict with other subjects and numbers in CDB and IB had increased. Pathology also put constraints on the subjects students could take which added to the problem. TRH said that they would keep this problem in mind for the future.

NB reported that there had been comments from the students last year that demonstrators did not know what they were doing. This year they had tried to solve this by using academics rather than PhD students.

The students reported that the bioinformatics practical had been very short of time. They felt it would be better if this was split into two time slots. It would also be helpful to have the material made available in advance in the practical handbook or at least the day before the practical. TRH said that the problem was getting material prepared in advance, but he would look into this possibility. **ACTON: TRH**

TRH said he was encouraged by the comments on the practicals.

## 6. **Journal Club**

TRH said that this would have been a new experience for most students. He asked if the students felt it was a useful experience. The students said they had found it a very useful and enjoyable exercise. The second Journal Club would be held in the middle of the Lent Term. There would be a different paper and subject area.

## 7. **Questionnaires**

TRH reported that the response to the electronic questionnaires was down on last year. The students requested that the comment box at the end of the questionnaire should be reinstated. They said they were unable to give constructive criticism without this box. TRH explained that the new system did not allow the inclusion of the box, but that the students still had the facility to make a comment by email to the Teaching and Examinations Administrator. TRH said that he hoped the new system soon to be introduced would allow the comment box to be reinstated, but at the moment this was not possible.

8. **Any other business**

The students said that they found it inspiring to hear about recent or previous research in lectures as it made the subject seem more real and it was also useful to have links to references, etc. TRH said that he thought most people did give references but that they were keen in IB not to overload students. He said that lecturers tended to avoid talking about what they had actually done or were doing because of the time constraints, but of course this approach meant that the material came across as being set in stone and something that had always been known which was not the case. He agreed that this was a good point.

The students asked if it would be possible for lecturers to set a few essay questions at the end of their handouts for supervisors to use. This would provide them with additional material to the past examination papers and would lead to more consistency amongst the supervisors. The lecturers commented that it was very difficult to set novel questions and that the best resource to draw on was the past examination papers.

9. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 11.00 am on Friday, 12 March 2010 in Meeting Room A, Sanger Building.