

**Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Consultative Committee held on Wednesday, 3 December 2008 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room B, Sanger Building**

**Present:** Dr F Hollfelder and Ms N Bowers

**Student Representatives:** P Ackermann  
A Kowalski  
M Lercher  
B Milholland  
S Mo  
R Murphy  
S Zhang

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

The Chairman welcomed the representatives to the first meeting of the year and explained that unfortunately only one lecturer from the course could be present due to the number of meetings taking place at the same time. He emphasized that the main purpose of the meeting was for the students to express their views on the course. He informed the meeting that unfortunately, he would have to leave at 11.45 am and that FH would take over the Chair from that point.

**1. Apologies for Absence:**

Apologies for absence were received from Professors T L Blundell, C J Howe, C W J Smith, J O Thomas, Drs C O'Kane and H R Mott.

**2. Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Friday, 14 March 2008 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, although this may not be immediately apparent. The points raised had been included in the instructions to lecturers at the beginning of term. He said that unfortunately he could not force the lecturers to put their notes on the CamTools site before the lectures, but that he had stressed to them that the students would find this very helpful.

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

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

**Professor C J Howe.** The students found Professor Howe's lectures enjoyable. They found the guidance notes very helpful, but would have liked to have received the mechanism for RNA interference.

**Professor J O Thomas.** The lectures were enjoyable and well presented. The students would have liked to have a definite conclusion to each lecture.

**Professor C W J Smith.** The students enjoyed the lectures and said the handout was good.

**Professor T L Blundell.** The students said that questions in past papers were hard to answer from TLB's lectures. The questions included topics that had not been covered in the lectures. TRH pointed out that the handouts supplied in Part IB did not give all the information required to answer examination questions. Students were expected to do a reasonable amount of reading around each topic to achieve the level they needed for the examinations. He did, however, appreciate the problem and said that this set of lectures was part of a series and the questions would become easier when more topics had been

covered later in the year. This problem was more acute in protein structure lectures than in any other area, but the students would receive more examples as the course progressed.

The students agreed that the lectures were in the correct sequence, but said they would have preferred the lectures by Professors Blundell and Smith to have been consecutive.

The students stressed again why they would like to have the lecture notes available on CamTools before the lectures. TRH said that some lecturers were reluctant to do this in case students did not attend the lecture. The students said it was helpful to have the handout in the same order as the lecture and asked that diagrams should be referenced. He said that he tried to encourage lecturers to do this, but he could not promise that they would all do it.

TRH would relay the points made by the students to the lecturers. **ACTION: TRH**

## 5. **Practicals**

The students said that, in general, the practicals had been quite good. TRH said that the discussion slots at the end of the practicals were designed to deal with any problems. The students had found these very useful, but said that it had not been clear from the handouts that there would be a discussion. TRH said he would make sure that this was flagged up in the practical handbook next year. TRH stressed that the students would only get out of the practicals what they had put in and it was up to them to ask questions.

**ACTION: TRH**

TRH left the meeting at this point and FH took over the Chair.

The students commented that, in general, the first four practicals had been much more fulfilling and worthwhile than the second four. They had learnt things that were really important technically. The computer practical was helpful.

The students asked for guidance on how much they needed to learn for the practical examinations. They said that some of the practicals had not been enjoyable because had been too much to do in two hours and some of demonstrators were unable to answer questions. FH emphasized that the practicals really just opened a door and that the students could follow them up by doing work on their own.

The students said that the signing up for the practicals had not run smoothly and asked whether this could be done online. NB said that she would look into this possibility.

**ACTION: NB**

## 6. **Journal Club**

The students said that the Journal Club had been extremely useful and enjoyable.

## 7. **Questionnaires**

The students asked why the comment boxes had been removed from the questionnaires. CTT explained that a new system had been introduced this year which did not allow comments to be removed before the questionnaires were distributed to the students and staff. However, comments could be sent to her and would be distributed anonymously. The students said they would like the comment boxes made available again. This request would be relayed to TRH.

**ACTION: CTT**

## 8. **Any Other Business**

There was no further business. FH thanked the student representatives for their input to the meeting.

## 9. **Date of next meeting**

Committee members would be notified of the date of the next meeting in due course.