

Minutes of a meeting of the Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Consultative Committee held on Friday, 30 November 2007 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room B

Present:

Student Representatives: S Gardner
D Itzhak
B T Romero

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

Teaching Staff: Professor J O Thomas
Professor C J Howe
Dr F Hollfelder

1. **Apologies for Absence:** Apologies for absence were received from Professor T L Blundell, Dr C O'Kane (Part IB CDB) and Professor C W J Smith

2. **Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 14 March 2007 were approved as a correct record.

3. **Matters arising from meeting**

Lent and Easter Term 2007 Lectures. The Chairman reported that in general the lectures in the Lent and Easter Terms had been well received. Last year's students had asked for an overview of the series of lectures given by Dr Richard Farndale and he had agreed to provide this.

Practicals 2007. The Chairman informed the meeting that demonstrators had been informed at the beginning of term that some students might have to arrive late or leave practicals early in order to attend other lectures. This had been highlighted as a problem last year.

Out of hours library access. The Chairman reported that last year's students had asked whether it would be possible to use the Department Library out of office hours. This had now been arranged and students could have their cards programmed at the Hopkins Building Reception. **(Post-meeting note from Kashi Gorton: the out of hours library access had been extremely useful.)**

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

The Chairman informed the students that the questionnaire for Michaelmas Term 2007 had not yet been finalised. He, however, reported that a preliminary look had shown marks in the 3.1 – 3.9 band for all sections, which pointed to everything being satisfactory.

The students commented that they had found it confusing that Professor Smith's series of lectures had been mixed with Professor Blundell's lectures. The Chairman said that this had been necessary to accommodate the Journal Club, but he could see how this had been confusing for the students. FH suggested that if this situation arose again, he would be prepared to give his lectures in the earlier slot. The students reported that some people had been confused over the general theme of Professor Blundell's lectures and some of the material covered in the handout had not been covered in the lectures. They had found the space for notes next to the slides useful. However, they felt that the handout as a whole

was too large and could be reduced by deleting some slides which were not shown in the lecture.

The student representatives reported that they had received a lot of positive comments regarding Professor Howe's and Professor Thomas' lectures. Some lecturers gave references to books and the students liked this approach. TRH said he was slightly worried about this because it influenced the students on what they should read and did not encourage them to read further. JOT said that she did this because some topics were explained better in some books than others.

The student representatives reported that the animal biologists were often late for their lectures because the IB lectures did not finish on time. TRH said that he was well aware of this problem and that it had been made clear at the beginning of the course that it was the student's responsibility to arrive on time and the lecturer's responsibility to finish on time. He said he would relay this message again next term. He asked students to alert him if this became a major problem. **ACTION: TRH/REPS**

5. **Practicals**

The students commented that the first computer practical had been unsatisfactory and had taken far too long. The students had, however, found the other practicals useful. TRH said that computer practicals were a problem to organise and run because students had different levels of expertise. The majority of the class had felt that the first practical could be significantly improved. Possible ways to change and improve the practical was discussed. The lecturers present felt that the practical should be more closely linked to the course and should be given by someone who was involved in lecturing on the course. With more students being computer literate it was suggested that students should be allowed to sign up for a short course if they felt it would be useful and work would be set for further study if required. The students made comments on the way the practicals were presented and felt that they were too much like cooking recipes. They would like an insight into the component used. MW suggested that the presentation of the Part IA practicals versus the Part IB practicals should be considered. TRH said it was important to read the practical sheets before the practical and consider the process being followed rather than just following a recipe. It was agreed to provide a glossary of the components used in each practical. **ACTION: TRH**

6. **Journal Club**

The student representatives reported that the Journal Club had been enjoyed by the students.

7. **Questionnaires**

The student representatives informed the meeting that they were experiencing problems accessing electronic journals. TRH said that any journal references should be available through the University licence. JOT suggested that there should be a session in one of the practicals instructing the students on how to access electronic journals. FH said he would be prepared to put links to journals on the CamTools site. It was agreed that this should be done. **ACTION: FH**

7. **Any Other Business**

Card Access. The student representatives asked whether it would be possible to give Part IB students access to the Sanger Building. TRH informed the students that this had been raised in the past, but had not been agreed because it would also give access to the laboratories. TRH said he would bring this up again with the Departmental Administrator. **ACTION: TRH**

9. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Friday, 14 March 2008 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room B, Sanger Building, Department of Biochemistry.