

Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Consultative Committee held on Friday, 12 March 2010 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room A, Sanger Building

Present: Ms N Bowers, Professor K M Brindle and Dr H R Mott

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

Course Convenor (Chairman): Dr T R Hesketh

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Dr A Smith.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday, 2 December 2009 were approved as a correct record.

3. Matters arising from the last meeting

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 commented that Dr Brown's lectures had been good. The inclusion of a contents page at the beginning of the handout had been very helpful and they suggested that this format should be adopted by all the lecturers on the course. The students highlighted an error in the harvesting complexes quoting frequency given in the handout. TRH said he would pass this on to Dr Brown. **ACTION: TRH**

Professor K M Brindle. The students said that although Professor Brindle's handout had been very good, they would have liked more annotation on some of the slides because they had found them difficult to understand after the lecture. KMB said he would take this into account when preparing his handout next year. **ACTION: KMB**

Professor R W Farndale. The students reported that they had received very good feedback on Professor Farndale's lectures. The handout, however, had not followed the same sequence as the lectures. Although there had been page numbers on the slides, the students would have preferred the slides to be in the same order as in the lecture. They had also encountered this problem with other lecturers' handouts.

Dr D M Carrington. The students commented that Dr Carrington had provided a controversial handout. TRH said that every year there was some discussion relating to his handout. Very positive feedback on the lectures had been received and the general consensus was that having the slides separate from text was helpful. There had, however, been some slides with the same numbers and some without numbers. TRH would pass this on to Dr Carrington. **ACTION: TRH**

Dr T R Hesketh. Dr Hesketh's handout had been very good, but had not contained all the material in the lecture. TRH reassured the students that they did not have to worry about any details that were not included in the handout. The students said they enjoyed the MCQ section in the middle of the lectures. TRH said it was nice to get this positive feedback.

It was suggested by a representatives that Biochemistry should adopt the method used in Chemistry where gaps were left in the handouts for the students to complete as they felt this helped the students to concentrate on the lecture.

5. **Practicals**

The student representatives had received very positive feedback on the practicals. Students had particularly enjoyed the set of platelet practicals with the discussion session in the middle. They felt the practicals were really well done and complemented the lecture material very well. They asked whether there was a follow up sheet for the cell signalling practical. NB said that the results were given on the yellow sheet.

TRH asked whether there was any perception that numbers turning up to practicals had fallen during the Lent Term. NB said that she had noticed that attendance had declined particularly towards the end of term. Some representatives had noticed that numbers had dropped in their practicals from approximately 30 to 20 students. The students could only put this down to there being a lot of illness towards the end of term. They also said that attendance at the Journal Clubs had been much less than at the practicals. TRH commented that the Journal Clubs were slightly different as, although they were obviously run for the students' benefit, there was no point attending if no preparation had been undertaken. The practicals on the other hand were very expensive to run and if attendance continued to be low it might be necessary to either abandon wet practicals altogether in IB or to make attendance compulsory. TRH said it was very useful to have this kind of feedback and that it might be necessary in the future to monitor attendance at practicals.

The students said that it would have been useful to have a list of the buffers used in the practicals. The material already supplied to the students at the start of term was discussed and it was agreed that such a list could be produced. **ACTION: NB**

Students asked if it could be made clear at the beginning of the practicals that they run from 11-4 with an hour for lunch. **ACTION: NB**

The problem of people having to leave practicals to attend lectures was raised. TRH said that this problem was brought up every year and agreed that it was unsatisfactory, but said that until the structure of the IB NST course as a whole was changed there was no solution. Every effort was made to ensure that whole groups did not disappear at the same time. The students said it would be helpful to students who had to leave practicals if the demonstrator recapped on what had happened during the practical. TRH agreed that if a significant number of students left the practical it was not unreasonable to ask the demonstrator to do this.

6. **Journal Club**

The students reported that quite a lot of people had opted out of the Journal Club this Term and some just forgot to attend and asked whether a reminder could be sent out. NB said that they were asked to sign up, so this was a form of reminder. The student representatives had found the Journal Club very rewarding and feedback in general had been very positive. TRH said that it introduced the students to one aspect of real research. KMB pointed out that some of the techniques used might come up in the data handling paper.

7. **Any other business**

The students pointed out that the lecture timetable highlighted the early start to the lectures but did not mention the late finish and some students had made plans to return home on the 12 March. They asked if an email could be sent to the class highlighting this fact. **ACTION: CTT**

The students said that they had attended the Part II briefing session, but there had been considerable overlap with the material on display and the information available on the internet. They had, however, found it useful to talk to current students on the course.

The students commented that there was a problem with the lighting in the lecture theatre. TRH said that he was aware that the lighting was not very satisfactory and would use the students' comments to support his case for improvement.

The Chairman informed the meeting that there would not be a meeting in the Easter Term, but encouraged the students to give their feedback through the usual routes.

TRH thanked the students for their feedback and for attending the meetings throughout the year.