

Royal College of Science Union

Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Academic Affairs Committee

Held at 19:05 on 8th March 2018 at the RCSU Office (Sherfield 214D)

PRESENT:

- Michael Suarez – RCSU Honorary Secretary (MS)
- Abhijay Sood – RCSU Academic Affairs Officer (AS)
- Michael McGill – Maths Departmental Representative (MM)
- Michaela Flegrova – Physics Departmental Representative (MF)
- Yizhou Yu – Biology Departmental Representative (YY)
- Lloyd James – RCSU President 2016/17 (LJ)

APOLOGIES:

- Lidia Ripoll Sanchez – Biochemistry Departmental Representative (LR)
- Katerina Stavri – Chemistry Departmental Representative (KS)

Meeting opened at 19:05.

A. Revision of Last Meeting's Minutes

This is awkward as they seem to have disappeared - Becky Neil was Clerk.

B. Strike Update by the Departments

a. Maths

- Not conclusive by how much Year 3 and 4 are affected due to a lot of electives and final year projects
- Year 1 and Year 2 lecturers are striking (2 and 4 respectively). One lecturer quit striking in order to support his/her students.
- The department's stance for exams is that 'lecturers have to explicitly say what is not examinable' as exams usually have been prepared well-ahead of time and been externally approved. There is some flexibility as Maths sometimes prepares exams quite late towards this cycle.
- Student Liason Officer is somewhat helpful with forwarding relevant information to the students.

b. Physics

- Tutorials are taking place for some students and not others who as a consequence are negatively affected by the strike in preparation for the exam (EM course in specific). 3 contact hours are affected at most but no lectures are held either. Resolution could include the release of the Mark Schemes for this course.
- Panopto of previous years has been withdrawn from students but is made available again based on the consent of each individual lecturer.
- Student Liaison Officer is little help with regards to the strike.

c. Life Sciences

- The strike has very little effect on Life Science and classes/tutorials/coursework continues as usual with very few exceptions. Core courses and essential classes are being taught after rescheduling and other exceptions are dealt on a case by case basis.

d. A.O.B

- A proposal to counteract the negative impact of the strikes on the exams has been made in three forms: 1. adapt grade boundaries based on exam distribution, 2. change the questions by adapting exam marks, 3. change the questions by altering the exam duration. This will vary from department to department.

C. AAO Updates

a. National Strike Update

- Strike Ballot
- Cambridge comes out and says we need proper Negotiation,
- Oxford accepts the status quo (having pension risk at the current level).
- Imperial conducted a transparent analysis which came down to the current risk level to be okay but it is quite hard lined in this negotiations nationwide.
- National Talks were stalled on Monday 5.03 (had a proposal by UCU the week before) and resumed yesterday (Wednesday 7.03). Negotiations are happening right now (8.03 afternoon).
- UCUnion has grown by a third since beginning of strikes.
- Striking could potentially keep continuing incl. administration and marking for exams.

Minutes

Academic and Welfare Committee (What Meeting)

- KCL is getting a refund for tuition fees.

b. Meeting with Alan Spivey

- New college regulations are being passed in the next weeks regarding exams.
- AS pushed to include release of mark schemes in it to deal with departments like Physics.

c. Plan of Mandatory Horizons

- The college want to standardise ECTS throughout the departments to allow registration at cross-departmental introduction courses as well as making Horizons a fixed part of the degree.
- Problem with latter could be standardising the relative difficulty of courses (i.e. languages level 1 for native speakers etc). An incentive for people to not just pick the easiest courses is to make them pass/fail.

d. Student Space with Life Sciences

- three ways: sherfield space (random), redesign ground floor of SAF, or use space made available during White City Move. Alan wants shared space with students and staff, or having half being staff-only and half being mixed. Argued that fairer if half only for life sciences, half for all students in order to have sense of camaraderie amongst life scientists (Bioeng have no space and Civ Eng are getting a nap room, clear lack of fairness). Imperial made post on social media about SAF being a medic-only building, clear disregard for life scientists. Burstow and Files are good medics.

e. AOB

- ERB is next week Thursday.
- FONS FFC got rescheduled, AS to suggest it is cancelled.
- AS asks for another push of the survey about student satisfaction in last week of term (no longer 09/03/18).
- MM likes Tom, needs to get out more. Elections colours are the two ugliest colours ever according to MF, AS knows uglier colours.
- AS is getting bullied, Mike works for all students. Where is Ansh? Nobody cares about the student trustees, there was talk of boycotting the candidate debates. Mike has a lot of deadlines. Memeperial was finally funny.

Meeting closed at 19:40.