PSE COLLEGE FORUM (UG/PGT), 4 NOVEMBER 2020

In attendance:

<u>Staff</u>
Jane Chukwu, Vice President Postgraduate **(JC)**
Hannah Doe, Vice President Education **(HD)**
Julie Gwilliam, Dean for Postgraduate Studies **(JG)**
Andrew Roberts, Dean for Undergraduate Studies **(AR)**
Tim Fry, Student Voice Coordinator **(TF)**
Dena Stephens, Executive Support Assistant *Minutes*
Kathryn Evans. Education Manager **(KE)**
Linda Davies, College Librarian **(LD)**
Rhian Perridge, Careers & Employability **(RP)**
Paul Jones, IT **(PJ)**
Edward Kidner, Student Advice **(EK)**

<u>Students</u>
Andrea Paris, CHEMY **(AP)**
Elliott Fordham, CHEMY **(EF)**
Omer Hagomer, ENGIN **(OH)**
Josh Shenstone, EARTH **(JS)**
Precious Ijeoma, EARTH **(PI)**
Nana Cargill, CHEMY **(NC)**
Jamal Kawa, ENGIN **(JK)**
Aiden Crofton, ENGIN **(AC)**
Jack Thomas-Hunt, CHEMY **(JTH)**
Harry Morgan, CHEMY **(HM)**
Audrius Kalpokas, CHEMY **(AK)**
Jonathan Matchett. EARTH **(JM)**
Denise Nistor, ENGIN **(DN)**
Ethan Smyth, ENGIN **(ES)**
George Pilios, ENGIN **(GP)**
Jack Tilson, COMSC **(JT)**
Shun Lau, ENGIN **(SL)**
Tharika Thileepan, ENGIN **(TT)**

1. PREVIOUS MINUTES
Agreed by those present at last meeting.
ACTION: HD to distribute previous minutes to new Reps

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES
None.

3. IT UPDATE
PJ indicated that a Q&A session was yesterday regarding campus wifi and that the IT department are aware of current issues. With this in mind, work has been undertaken to allow people to use wired connections in case of wifi issues. JT asked whether a two-factor authorisation is in the pipeline and PJ confirmed that it is. Rollout is currently being executed in a controlled manner to hopefully be completed around Easter 2021 (although this is subject to change).

Additionally, PJ informed the meeting that the Zoom facility provided for students can be used freely, and isn't just restricted to study purposes.

4. LIBRARY UPDATE

LD reported that the library service have spent some six months trying to increase their e-resource provision as much as possible. The intention is to provide as much as possible via electronic format, but this is subject to copyright and publisher issues, etc. A click and collect service is also in force in a number of campus libraries and study spaces are additionally available (Julian Hodgson and Bute coming soon). Study spaces should be booked in advance, as should any books you want. For reference materials that cannot be removed from the library, a study space can also be booked to view that particular item. Among other virtual services due to be launched soon are scanning and postal loan services. For further information, it's worth looking on the Intranet – search for 'welcome to the library' and choose the relevant service, as there is different information for new and returning students. LD indicated that a list of subject librarians had been circulated, which may be of use to attendees. HM asked about the timescale for postal loans and LD replied that this service was imminent.

ACTION: EK TO CIRCULATE LIST OF SUBJECT LIBRARIANS

5. CATERING

No update.

6. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

TF reported that Student Rep training will be taking place via Zoom, which is open to all Reps (especially those new in post). Digital communications form part of this training. November 21 sees the Rep Conference taking place, giving everyone the opportunity to meet their counterparts from other schools. Training will also soon be available for new Secretaries and Chairs. HD added that the training is a great facility to develop skills.

7. LEARNING TECHNOLOGIST UPDATE

UG – AR reported on the mammoth task of moving face to face teaching to a blended and online format. The move and associated software is new to some staff, and a support service has recently been set up. Being a relatively new method of working, it is becoming clear that some things are working while some things aren't. Student feedback is especially important now, so everybody is encouraged to provide feedback on both good and bad aspects of blended/online learning. Module evaluations will be opened on 16 November, earlier than normal, and will follow a simplified process around the digital aspects to allow for a quicker student response. AR asked meeting attendees to encourage as much participation and feedback as possible.

PG – JG echoed AR's sentiments about blended learning and added that even face to face teaching is being rendered unfamiliar now, due to social distancing. Again, JG emphasised the important of constructive feedback about the new systems in order to know how best to tailor the service for all students, and suggestions for improvements are always welcomed. If early feedback is received, improvements can be put in place for next term.

JS remarked on the marked difference this term, understanding the difficulty in moving to a blended learning format and suggested that extra communication (especially to first years) might help increase feedback and raise awareness. There are a number of unhappy students, and providing them with the facility to feed back to the university should be encouraged. AR replied that many hurdles had arisen simply because the blended method is so new, and acknowledged that increased communication was important to garner feedback and to help build an online community alongside explaining the challenges faced. NC agreed with AR's suggestion but highlighted feelings of frustration in some quarters, and asked that if such communications are sent to please take these feelings into account – whilst this period has been unprecedented, some students might misinterpret such explanations as a perceived avoidance of responsibility for issues with the new learning method. JG echoed AR's statement that all students are very much encouraged to feed back to the university, and highlighted the fortuitous position of each student rep to encourage their cohort (and the wider student population) to communicate; more communication equals more understanding and an opportunity to improve things. Without

feedback, the default position will be that current methods are working and no change will be effected. Please don't be afraid to feed back.

In response to JM's comment about early module evaluations, JG replied that early responses would be sought in each semester, although long thin modules may only have one survey across two terms. AR added that with late starter PG students, they are not expected to complete the survey so quickly.

JTH questioned the one-week duration of the exam period, commenting that the reduced timeframe will heighten stress levels in regard to workload. AR replied that all schools are being encouraged to reduce the amount of exams set. If there is a struggle to fit the exams into a week, please contact Tom Tatchell, who might be able to help. JG added that certain modules with numerous exams might have a week's extension. Although this is being discussed, she asked that concerns are communicated.

8. CAREERS UPDATE (REPLACES AHSS COLLEGE UPDATE)

RP updated the meeting on the role of the Careers Service, explaining that dedicated careers advisers are available for virtual 1-1 appointments to provide bespoke careers advice. There is also a large amount of online advice available – just search for 'your future' on the intranet. Within, there are plenty of opportunities for work experience, a CV checking service (AI-based). There are also numerous interactive resources within 'your career journey' on the intranet. JD asked how students can find their relevant career advisor, and RP replied that all students should log in to their careers account on the intranet. The system will automatically know which school the student belongs to and will automatically assign you to the correct advisor.

9. STUDENTS' UNION UPDATE

HD reported that the SU is working hard to provide as many facilities as possible to students and is looking into adding study spaces that aren't time-based and in which you can eat and drink. HD also mentioned that the SU are currently working on a new strategy for the next few years and invited feedback from as many students as possible, also encouraging the following link to be shared: https://www.cardiffstudents.com/about-cusu/plans/strategysurvey2020/?comms&fbclid=IwAR3-9VZ2BHp_pm9wOe9WdgD7wIkWYQXSyK7WAHNOxBkrw1fWU35FPd1-m9c JC stated that future strategies are heavily influenced by student feedback, so everyone is encouraged to participate. HD added that PRIZES CAN BE WON for taking part!

EK stated that the student advice facility within the SU is still very much operational online and welcomed students to get in touch via email at advice@cardiff.ac.uk. Web pages for the service have recently been updated (www.cardiffstudents.com/advice) and now offer even more advice at a glance. Additionally, the service has a social media presence and can be found on insta at cusuadvice.

10. SSP CHAIR UPDATE

JT said that the last COMSC meeting had been held on 28 October with good representation from most years expect year three, and JT also commented that the Secretary was particularly good at recording the meetings, with all module map feedback and information minuted. November 25 is the next meeting and JT hopes to see a continuation of the great staff and student engagement seen so far.

OH reported mostly positive feedback, save for a module issue within ENGIN Statistics where students aren't sure whether to address the problem immediately, or wait for module evaluation. JG replied that students should deal with this before the evaluation and advised those affected to contact Alan Kwan, Richard Marsh or their programme lead as soon as possible. AR echoed this advice, further expressing thanks for the feedback.

DN stated that many students had asked whether library hours will be extended to allow for those attending lectures between 9am and 5pm. LD replied that similar requests had also been received from other schools and confirmed that this issue will be discussed, but is subject to staff numbers and deployment. As regards current study space, group space is not currently available due to Covid restrictions, but individual space is available for advance booking. For these bookings, a feedback form is sent out and LD advised, in terms of extended library hours, that as many students complete these forms as possible with the inclusion of the request - this can only add weight to the argument.

JM reported a general feeling among the EARTH cohort that the workload had increased since moving to a blended format (but that GEOSCI reported a more balanced affair). AR replied that this could be ascribed to a shift from passive (listening, making notes) learning to active (proactive research) learning. JG added that this method enhances the learning experience, but also advised to check the content; the workload might feel heavier when it might just include additional guidance. If there is an increase, AR suggested that the active learning method is promoting memory retention which may result in less revision at the end of term. JM also asked about module map distribution, reporting that some were being sent out in the same week of study. Both JG and AR confirmed that module maps should be distributed in advance and advised affected students to contact the module leader where this isn't happening.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS
JM said that a Rep/mentor had been in touch about a student concerned about a lack of dyslexia/disability support in online forums, and the Rep/mentor wasn't sure what advice to give. AR replied that the uni offers a Disability and Dyslexia service, to which students can be referred. This service can help with making any necessary adjustments for online learning. HD stated that the SU also has resources and are happy to help in these instances. She also added some useful links in the group chat:

> Disability support: disability@cardiff.ac.uk, 029 2251 8888
> Dyslexia support: dyslexia@cardiff.ac.uk, 029 2087 4844
> https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/study/support-and-services-for-disabled-students/support-for-disabled-students-learning-remotely

AR asked attendees for feedback about the blended learning experience.
- JM mentioned one module leader who's made the experience easy and enjoyable, and the module maps providing an organised schedule have been helpful.
- ES reported a general reluctance in seminars to have webcams on, but has heard of instances where the tutor has compelled students to switch the cams on. On a personal level, ES expressed a need for more online guidance with coursework, such as marking criteria. AR replied that an overview of marking criteria is available for all students and there is an expectation that all schools should make them available. Regarding the webcam situation, HD replied that it is not obligatory to have them switched on, and PJ added that it is also dependent on the IT facilities available.
- AC's feedback was a disparity between the module leaders as to online learning and communication, with some using Zoom and others preferring Teams or Collaborate. AR replied that this would be best served by feeding back to the staff student panel in the school, but that it was useful to bear in mind that in the case of international students, geographical access might influence available software. PJ broadly agreed, but added that there was probably an element of personal preference too. If the majority of the cohort feel strongly that they want to use a particular software, then it's worth feeding back to the module leader.
- NC reported an issue that AR offered to deal with outside of the meeting.
  ACTION: NC TO EMAIL AR WITH DETAILS OF THE ISSUE

LD (to JTH and JM) said that there was much concern about student space and the science library last year. However, all capital projects are currently on hold, so therefore there are no plans afoot to make changes to the science library.

HD closed the meeting, reminding attendees again about the importance of feeding back to the SU in order to shape future strategy, and also emphasising that all elected Sabbatical Officers are available for all students.