



## GRADUATE STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Thursday 12 May 2015, 2.00 pm, Bragg Committee Room

**Present:** Professor Haniff (Chair), Christopher Ashcroft (SD), Giovanna Cottin-Buracchio (HEP), Hippolyte Astier (SP), Nandan Gokhale (CSC), Tejas Guruswamy (QS), Kamrad Javid (AP), Siri Luthman (BSS), Peter Newton (TFM), Peter Townsend (SMF), Yago del Valle-Inclan (NP), Konrad Viebahn (AMOP), Ms Khan (Secretary)

**In attendance:** Ms Emel Kus (Caven/dish III Project Manager)

**Apologies:** Adrien Amiguez (QM), Ankita Anirban (SP), Carmen Palacios Berraquero (NanoDTC), James Hamp (TCM), Leah Weiss (OE), Bono Xu, Dr Gripaios, Professor Parker (HoD), Ms Dann (Graduate Office)

### 1. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March were confirmed.

### 2. Matters arising

- i) Cavendish III – the chair reported that Emel Kus had been invited to attend GSCC to talk about the Cavendish III consultation event schedule.
- ii) Alumni Industry Day – members were informed that the event had been scheduled for the afternoon of Monday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and that 5-6 speakers had been booked. The speakers came from a range of professions, from teaching, finance, patent law, journalism and an entrepreneur. The event would be publicised as soon as the schedule was finalised.

### 3. Chairman's business

- i) Researcher development – the chair reported that he had met with Dr Deborah Longbottom (Head of Graduate Education, Department of Chemistry) to discuss researcher development and the graduate student web portal, and that she had expressed interest in collaborating and pooling resources.

Members were shown an example of the Department of Chemistry's graduate researcher development and training programme. The programme was colour coded according to category and had taken three years to fully develop. Speakers were recruited from the Department of Chemistry as well as other parts of the University. It was available online as well as in booklet form. It was noted that some courses were compulsory, and some optional, and that there was a requirement within the programme for graduate students to accumulate credits. Departments have a responsibility to formalise graduate training and record activities and the Department of Chemistry's programme was a successful model. Members were informed that the Department of Physics would develop a similar programme for the next academic year 2016/17.

**ACTION: Student members to identify which courses on the Department of Chemistry's graduate training programme and/or other technical courses would be of interest to Physics graduate students and send to Chair.**

- ii) Information for current graduate students – the secretary confirmed that the webpage(s) were being drafted and that examples of other Departmental websites were being looked at.
- iii) Researchfish entries – members were informed that the collection period ended on the 10<sup>th</sup> March, and that the Department had achieved a 91% completion rate. The 9% who had not submitted their outcomes consisted mainly of students, and one academic, who had left the Department.
- iv) Policy for graduate engagement in UG demonstrating - the chair reported that a policy to facilitate graduate students taking part in teaching and demonstrating had been drafted and was being considered by academic colleagues at GEC and the Cavendish Board. The policy formed part of the graduate researcher development and training programme, and would adopt a similar paradigm to the Department of Chemistry's system of accumulating credit. It was noted that graduate students would be required to make themselves available for demonstrating (to form a demonstrator pool) and/or to volunteer for other teaching/supervision related activities. The policy would take effect for new incoming graduate cohorts, however existing graduate students were welcome to participate and volunteer. It was confirmed that some flexibility could be factored in to the credit system to accommodate other teaching-related activities, however the overall take-up of departmental demonstrating activities would need to be taken into account.
- v) PTES survey 2015-16 - members were informed that the PTES survey for 2015/16 had gone live from the 26 April to 16 June 2016. Graduate students on the Part III, MAST and MPhil in Scientific Computing programmes would have been invited to take part via email. It was noted that the School had set a response rate target of 85% for each programme in all Departments. The School had also put aside funds (£5 per student) for a social event for students if the target was met by any programme.

**ACTION: Chair to ask School if a similar incentive would be put in place for the next PRES survey.**

- vi) EPSRC DTP Doctoral Prize 2016/2017 – the chair reported that a request had been sent to supervisors to nominate PhD students for the Doctoral Prize scheme by the 17 June deadline. It was noted that students were only eligible if they were awarded scholarships from EPSRC DTP funds, were about to complete their PhD and were intending to embark on a post-doctoral career within Physics. The scheme was competitive, aimed at the top 10% EPSRC DTP funded graduate students across the School, and involved supervisors completing a nomination form with student CV attached. The prize consisted of a 6 month or 12 month post-doctoral research staff position within the Department of Physics, in order to establish a post-doctoral career. It was noted that the funds for the scheme had been top-sliced from the School's EPSRC DTP award and therefore only students in receipt of EPSRC DTP scholarships were eligible according to the criteria established by EPSRC.

**ACTION: Chair to investigate whether a similar Doctoral Prize scheme could be developed for non-EPSRC DTP funded PhD students.**

- vii) First year report – members were reminded that first year reports were to be submitted via Moodle by the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016, and that the review process was formalised by a viva involving two assessors. It was noted that all PhD students in the Faculty were probationary in their first year and that progression to the second year (and registration for the PhD) would depend on a successful first year review. Members were invited to give feedback on their experiences of having undergone the probationary review process in order to improve the experience for future cohorts, and noted that:
- a. more information on how the assessors were selected and if students had any input in the selection could be made clearer;
  - b. in at least one instance two external assessors had been used instead of internal assessors;
  - c. more re-assurance could be provided as to the 'finality' of the report in order to make it clear that the subsequent PhD project and final thesis would not be fixed by the content of the report;
  - d. it could be made clearer that the report is not public;
  - e. more information could be provided on what to expect from the viva;
  - f. there could be an additional point of contact for students to go to for help and advice;
  - g. students who started in Lent or Easter terms often got left out of the communication.

#### **4. Cavendish III consultation**

Emel Kus (Cavendish III Project Manager) had been invited to the meeting to update members on the Cavendish III consultation event schedule. Members were informed that three design options would be presented to students at a consultation event on the 14 June in the Pippard Lecture Theatre. Graduate students would be able to comment on the designs and provide feedback at the event, and also provide feedback before the event via an online survey. Members were invited to give feedback and it was noted that:

- i) the design options would show blocks of shapes but no specific detail as to internal room layout;
- ii) the design options were quite different to the existing POM and Maxwell buildings;

- iii) the design needed to be timeless, for at least the next 50 years, and easily serviceable in line with the pace of research;
- iv) the baseline user experience would be the same across the board;
- v) the new building had to meet regulatory and statutory requirements and that this had therefore already dealt with some of the accessibility and health and safety issues raised by the current Cavendish buildings in use;
- vi) a range of types of study space, quiet time areas and shared areas were being explored;
- vii) the extent of sharing of space and facilities between cohorts were being explored, i.e. final year undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs etc.;
- viii) the location of catering facilities were being explored, i.e. the extent of centralisation and/or attachment to group areas;
- ix) the only unavoidable disruption caused to graduate students would be during the move to the new building.

## **5. Graduate Student Matters**

No items were received.

## **6. Any other business**

No items were received.

## **7. Date of the next meeting**

11th August 2016