SCHOOL OF CHEMISTRY
STAFF-STUDENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE
Minutes of Meeting held at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday 7th March 2013 in Rm 208

Present
Staff: Dr Alan Aitken (Director of Teaching), Dr Chris Baddeley (Deputy Director of Teaching, CH2701 Lab Coordinator), Dr Georg Hähner (External Placement coordinator), Dr Petr Kilian (CH3521 Laboratory Convener), Prof Wuzong Zhou (CH2701 Module Convener); Professor Doug Philp (Sub-Honours Adviser of Studies; CH2601/CH1601), Dr Iain Smellie (CH1601 Module Convener), Prof Phil Lightfoot (CH1402 Module Convener), Dr Tanja van Mourik (Hons Project Coordinator) and Vicki Cormie (University Library Representative).

Apologies: Professor Andy Smith (CH2601 Module Convener)

Students:
Anna Prentis (School President – Chair)
Matt Kaminski (Level 1)
Rhiann Ferguson, Charlotte Sansome and Callie Thirsk (Level 2)
Daniel Antón Garcia and Weiwei Zheng (Level 2 – Direct Entry)
Theresa Scharbert, Grace Turner, Rebecca Alcalay (Level 3)
Peter DaBell, Will Kew, (Level 4)
Claire Young, Harriet Hopper (Level 5)

Apologies: Jay Pritchard (Level 4 – External Placement)

Level 5000 (CY and HH)
Some Level 5000 students on the MChem with Medicinal Chemistry degree (without placement) commented that there are insufficient Level 5000 Organic options available to them. RAA pointed out that students should not expect to specialise completely in Organic chemistry in Level 5000 and should expect to study modules from other areas of Chemistry. DP and CJB commented that in 2013-4, the introduction of 50 credit research projects will alter the structure of Levels 4000 and 5000 which should benefit students on this degree pathway by removing the requirement to study so many Level 5 Organic courses in Level 4.

CH5516
Students felt that CH5516 (Advanced Ligand Design) shared too much common material with CH5511 (Homogeneous Catalysis). RAA stressed that this may be partly explainable by the fact that one of the intended CH5516 lecturers is absent due to illness. There was a complaint from students that one lecturer was regularly starting lectures exactly on the hour and finishing at ten minutes past the next hour. It was agreed to raise this issue with the relevant lecturer, though RAA pointed out that at level 5000 students should not necessarily expect to have a full 10 minute break between consecutive 50 minute lectures.

Periodic Tables
Students have made a suggestion that periodic tables should be available in Room 314 and the Common Room. CJB agreed to look into the possibility of having a periodic
table in Room 314, but it was not felt appropriate to introduce one to the common room.

**Level 4000 (WK and PD)**

*Rm 314*

Concern was expressed by students that Room 314 is too small to cope with the numbers of students studying the CH4515 and CH4613 modules. CJB pointed that that considerable difficulties had been experienced with the University’s room booking systems which had allowed other Schools to pre-book lecture venues within the Purdie Building. In addition, the rising number of students studying Chemistry naturally leads to problems with accommodating students within the existing lecture venues. RAA noted that Prof Naismith’s former office on Level 2 of Purdie will soon be available as a room for teaching. This will offset problems associated with the loss of Rm 412 to SASOL.

Students also requested that lecturers ensure that they use pens of appropriate quality to make their writing legible on the whiteboards.

*Timetable changes*

It was noted that some lectures had been cancelled without students being notified. In addition, some lecturers had swapped the running order of the module without informing the students. RAA stated this this was unacceptable and that students should be informed of changes well in advance of the lecture time if at all possible.

*Honours research project*

Some students complained that there had been a lack of communication between the project co-ordinators and the students. TvM stated that all information is available on the website but conceded that some criticism was justified and that communication will be improved.

*Level 4000 External Placement*

JP was unable to attend the meeting, but AP reported that JP had received no complaints from current placement students and that students had been pleased with the feedback received on their Distance Learning exercises.

**Level 3000 (TS, GT, RA)**

*Workload*

The class-reps noted that students were happy with progress in Semester 2 and that they felt that the workload was significantly lower than in the first semester. They inquired as to whether it would be possible to switch a module from Semester 1 to Semester 2 to spread out the workload. RAA said that this would be considered though for any changes to be implemented in 2013-4, action would have to be taken in a matter of days.

*CH3441 Miniprojects*

Students felt that they had not received adequate notice for miniproject related activities. IAS informed the meeting that there had been delays in all project titles being submitted to Prof Cole-Hamilton (CH3441 module convener) leading to information being provided to students later than was desirable. In response to requests for clarification on how miniproject groups were chosen, RAA stated that students’ preference and degree pathway were taken into account when groups were
drawn up. In addition, attempts were made to ensure that groups contained students with a range of abilities. RAA also pointed out that there is likely to be a different module convener in 2013/4 so changes may be made to the way the module is run.

**Chemdraw/Chemdoodle**

Concerns were raised regarding the provision of alternatives to Chemdraw now that there is no longer a site licence for this software. DP advised students to address complaints to IT services (VC suggested emailing the IT helpdesk). DP states that it had been decided to purchase a site licence for Chemdoodle which is significantly cheaper than the equivalent licence for Chemdraw. Pressure from the Research School of Chemistry had resulted in a lower specification version of Chemdraw being made available but this has limited functionality. RAA pointed out that this version of Chemdraw can now be downloaded from the School of Chemistry website.

**CH3514 (Physical Inorganic Chemistry)**

Students felt that the order of lecturers for this module would have been better had it been reversed (i.e. Dr Bode before Prof Cole-Hamilton). RAA pointed out that this module will not run in the same form next year as Prof Cole-Hamilton’s lectures on Green Chemistry are moving to Level 2000.

**Level 2000 (RF, CT, CS)**

**CH2601 Spectroscopy Workshops**

Concerns were raised that students carrying out the spectroscopy workshops at the beginning of the semester have an advantage over those completing the workshops later in the semester. The suggestion was made that all students should do the workshop together. RAA noted that this is the first year when the workshop activity has not been run for the whole class. The changes were brought in to cope with the larger than normal class size for CH2601 and there was regrettably no alternative.

**CH2601 Abstracting Exercise**

A suggestion was made that completed abstracts and tutorials could be handed in online (MMS) to enable feedback and a provisional mark to be provided to students in advance of the main module exam. Staff agreed to look into this possibility. In addition, it was suggested that the abstracting exercise would be more useful in CH2501 as it would help with the preparation of abstracts for lab reports. RAA pointed out that students should not confuse the abstracts for lab reports with abstracts for journal articles as the structure and content are quite different.

**Laboratory boxes**

It was requested that intending Chemistry students be guaranteed not to have to use a lab box for their glassware. It was reported that some items had gone missing from boxes. Staff questioned the feasibility and fairness of this idea and pointed out that lab technicians will be lenient with students who have lost glassware.

**CH2701**

Students asked that more worked examples could be included in the CH2701 Quantum Mechanics lectures. GH stated that the tutorials were a better means for students to practice problem solving and that there was insufficient time in the lecture course to include additional worked examples. A suggestion was made that “drop in
sessions” could be introduced in the weeks leading up to the exam. GH felt that this was unnecessary as students can approach him informally to ask for help. Additionally students requested more practice questions. It was pointed out that a large number of practice questions exist in the online exam papers and RAA stated that model answers are available online for papers from the last two years. Some students felt that the quantum lectures contained material that was also covered in earlier courses. GH pointed out that though students knew how, for example, to place electrons in molecular orbital diagrams, the quantum lectures provided an explanation as to why this is a valid approach.

Tutorial marking

Students expressed their approval for the policy adopted by CH2501 staff in Semester 1 to not mark tutorials and asked that a similar policy be introduced to CH2601 and CH2701. RAA noted that the Organic and Physical sections had considered this and had made a decision to continue marking the tutorials. It was also pointed out that if the tutorials were not marked, that component of the module grade would have to come from another activity, which most likely would deliver a lower average.

Level 2000 Direct Entry (DAG, WZ)

CH2601 lab

The class-reps expressed confusion at the marking of NMR spectra by postgraduate demonstrators. They felt that the instructions on how to assign spectra were different in the lab manual compared with those in the techniques manual. RAA stated that this would be looked into and apologised for any confusion caused.

CH1202 Organic component

Some students felt that the CH1202 Organic component had proved to be insufficient preparation for CH2601 and that a number of students were finding it difficult to follow the material presented in the CH2601 lectures. RAA stated that considerable thought had gone into the content of CH1202 which now had 8h per section up from 6h in past years, and that much care had been taken to try to avoid overloading students who had just commenced their studies. DP and RAA noted that considerable support material is available to direct entrants including lecture and tutorial material from CH1601 which should help students to cope with CH2601.

Level 1000 (MK)

CH1402

Students are generally content with CH1402 providing the class-rep with positive feedback. It was felt that one lecturer provided too much material including many equations whose derivation was inadequately explained. Very positive feedback was provided regarding the quality of the academic staff demonstrators in the CH1402 lab.

CH1601

The relevance of some lab experiments (particularly Expt 1) to the CH1601 module was questioned. IAS pointed out that Expt 1 was a useful introduction to the lab course for those students who had not studied CH1401 in Semester 1 and provided useful revision to the remaining students. Feedback was enthusiastic regarding the provision of podcasts of lectures, though it was felt that one lecturer had included too much material in their course. Concerns were raised that some tutorial questions had not been covered in lectures before the tutorial submission deadline. DP stated that
every effort had been made to avoid this happening and pointed out that one solution would be to delay the tutorials by a week but this would mean providing one fewer tutorial in total.

**AOB**

*Questionnaires*

RAA noted his disappointment with the poor completion rate of Semester 1 questionnaires and asked class-reps to encourage their fellow students to complete their questionnaires for Semester 2. The academics present at the meeting agreed that the feedback provided by questionnaires is invaluable in designing and improving courses.

*Library*

VC informed the meeting that the library is in the process of acquiring electronic books and will pick up as many relevant books as possible in the forthcoming months.

*Athena Swan award*

TvM intimated that an application is being made by the School for an Athena Swan award. She requested that the time of the SSCC meetings be moved from 5pm to a more family friendly time. This was considered by the meeting, but no other time was felt to be appropriate.

*Web Minutes*

RAA mentioned that although the minutes of previous SSCC meetings were meant to be posted on the School Web Site, he had the impression that this was not up to date and would ensure that missing minutes were added.

The meeting closed at 6.30 p.m.

_CJ Baddeley_

_7th March 2013_