

Staff-Student Action Log



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| Purpose | The core purpose of the academic representation system, which aligns with the revised UK Quality Code, is to achieve positive change that improves the educational experience of students at Royal Holloway and engages students as partners in the development, assurance, and enhancement of their learning. |
| Reports to | School Education Committee – UG and PGT School Research Student Oversight Committee - PGR |
| Department | Biological Sciences |
| Regular meetings per year | 3-6 |
| Quorum | 5 |

Attendance Monitoring

| | Date and Time | Location | Attendance |
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| November Meeting (compulsory) | 08/11/2023 | Queen's 136 | Dominika Biel, Taqwa Hussain, Safyr Irwin, Arianna Pizzo, Zoha Qureshi, Amy Webb, Paris Valentine, Lucy Davidson, Cristina Garcia, Lydia Hanna, Jenny Murdoch, Rachel White |
| December Meeting (optional) | 06/12/2023 | Wolson 130A | |
| February Meeting (compulsory) | 31/01/2024 | Wolson 130A | Dominika Biel, Taqwa Hussain, Arianna Pizzo, Lucy Davidson, Jenny Murdoch, Rachel White, Brett Harmony |
| March Meeting (optional) | 06/03/2024 | Wolson 130A | Dominika Biel, Allison Pizzo, Safyr Irwin, Amy Web, Jenny Murdoch, Lucy Davidson, Emma Bennet, Christina Garcia, Zoha Qureshi, Lydia Hanna, |
| April Meeting (compulsory) | 29/04/2024 | Wolson 130A | Arianna Pizzo, Amy Webb, Zoha Qureshi, Lydia Hanna, Brett Harmony, Lucy Davidson, Cristina Garcia, Debbie Philips |
| May Meeting (optional) | 22/05/2024 | Wolson 130A | Arianna Pizzo, Brett Harmony, Cristina Garcia, Jenny Murdoch, Lucy Davidson |

Actions

| Action No. | Agreed Action (Include reason for agreed action) | Date Action Agreed | Responsible | Due | Date Action Completed | Outcome |
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| 1 | Investigate creating spaces for neurodivergent students to study at the library | 08/11/2023 | Rachel White | Update at next SSAM | In progress | Rooms are looked for (some computer rooms are 24 hours, could be possibility) |
| 2 | A poll will be sent out to all Biological Sciences students regarding the balance of coursework and exams | 08/11/2023 | Arianna Pizzo, passed to Jenny Murdoch | 09/11/2023 | 19/11/2023 | 34 responses with the top choice being 50-50 split between coursework and exams. |
| 3 | Email to be sent to lecturers to upload pre-lecture recordings for BS2550, BS2520, BS2510, BS2570, and BS2060 if there are 50+ slides in the PowerPoint | 08/11/2023 | Jenny Murdoch | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | Staff have been reminded not to have too many slides per lecture |
| 4 | Lecturers need to be reminded to give students a 10-15 minute break during long labs | 08/11/2023 | Jenny Murdoch | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | Staff with long labs (e.g. BS1031) were asked to make it clear that students are able to take a short break during the practical w |
| 5 | Email to be sent to remind students of the UG handbook for lab reports and past paper repository | 08/11/2023 | Jenny Murdoch | End of term 1 | Nov. 2023 | Module coordinators in key modules have done this, which we thought would be more effective than me sending out an email. |
| 6 | PASS leaders will have more drop-in sessions for revision | 08/11/2023 | Arianna Pizzo | From 22 nd November | 06/12/23 | PASS debrief on 06/12 to discuss engagement following the addition of the |

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| | | | | | | drop-in session and outline steps moving forward. |
| 7 | BS1021 – The BBC article could be changed to a lab report instead. | 08/11/2023 | Jenny Murdoch | End of term 1 | 13/11/2023 | Discussion is underway with the module coordinator – other assessment changes are being considered more broadly. |
| 8 | All lecturers will be asked to include a progression bar and 'done' buttons on Moodle sites | 08/11/2023 | Lydia Hanna | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | Staff have been asked to include the Activity Completion on their Moodle sites |
| 9 | Lecturers will be asked to remind students of online assessments more frequently as the deadlines approach | 08/11/2023 | Jenny Murdoch | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | Staff have been asked to ensure all assessments show up in the Moodle timeline (and we think we have found a way for external assessments to show up!) |
| 10 | Seminars will be advertised more as talks | 08/11/2023 | BioSoc, Ruby Tomlinson and Arianna Pizzo | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | More academic, career focused, and networking events will be run from next term. |
| 11 | Email lecturers to standardize the layout of the PowerPoints with a white background and the Royal Holloway logo | 08/11/2023 | Dr Murdoch | End of term 1 | 10/11/2023 | Staff have been asked to avoid dark backgrounds on slides |
| 12 | Email to be sent to Rudy Reisch to include more Graduate medicine placement opportunities | 08/11/2023 | Safyr Irwin | End of term 1 | 08/11/2023 | MedSoc is in the process of being approved by the SU. Graduate medicine events will be organised by the society once fully operational. |
| 13 | Email Careers department to suggest moving careers week earlier in the term / include more events earlier in | 06/12/2023 | Allison | End of term 1 | 29/01/2024 | Siobhan Swindells is already aware of this and will try to raise the issue |

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| | the term as current careers week is too close to application deadline. | | | | | again with the employer engagement team. She also mentioned she will get in touch with us again as she has some ideas she would like us to work on together. |
| 14 | Organising more trips for Molecular Biology side; events with St. John's (either run by BioSoc / future MedSoc); speaking with other universities about any talks/seminars they have available that we can attend. | 06/12/2023 | Biosoc, Ruby Tomlinson | End of term 2 | 12/01/2024 | > Museums: in the process of planning the following 3 trips: 15th Feb - Hunterian Museum 29th Feb - Gordon Pathology Museum 21th Mar - Anatomy and Pathology Museum (Dates are not official) Can BioSoc invite Lecturers as well? > Speed Networking (16 th March) is also being finalised and will be advertised soon. > MedSoc has been approved by the SU, will be starting to organise events soon. |
| 15 | Letting peers know there will be a Pre-Registration session in Term 2 to go through Year 2 Module options (also it's on their timetable) | 06/12/2023 | Dominika | End of term 1 | 29/01/2024 | The information was posted on the year 1 MS teams general chat and circulated around via more informal means. |
| 16 | Speaking with whoever is responsible for Biological Community (SU) idea on 1) how the money will be split across different communities | 06/12/2023 | Allison | End of term 2 | 07/12/2023 | 1) The money will be allocated based on the number of students enrolled in the department |

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| | <p>2) if students genuinely prefer this new community structure</p> <p>3) What will the benefit of having this new structure as opposed to how we have societies/course reps set up now.</p> | | | | | <p>2) From the focus group ran by the SU most students seem ok with the changes as not much is changing.</p> <p>3) The main benefit is to increase Student engagement within the department.</p> <p>4) If not, enough students volunteer and the key roles for the academic community are not covered, the SU will help to promote these roles but it's unclear what the implications will be.</p> <p>I'm still waiting for the SU to send me the PowerPoint they used in their focus groups containing all the information about academic communities.</p> |
| 17 | <p>PASS committee, Student union and Committees of societies (African/Caribbean societies) meet to discuss how we can better support Black students at university to close gap between results. Discuss making a survey to send out/approach people in person for feedback (ask society committee to send email to society members).</p> | 06/12/2023 | Allison | End of Term 2 | 29/01/2024 | <p>A meeting to discuss the ideas has been scheduled for 06/02/2024 with Becky Thomas, and Shobana Dissanayeke</p> |
| 18 | <p>Email Biological Sciences students the survey regarding exam/coursework grading</p> | 06/12/2023 | Dr Murdoch | End of Term 1 | 7/12/23 | <p>Request to complete this survey was emailed out 7/12/23. Majority view was for a 50-50 balance.</p> |

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| 19 | CeDAS support for stats, remind students how to access CeDAS and find out whether maths support can help with stats questions too. | 31/01/2024 | CeDAS – Brett Harmony | | 06.03.24 | CeDAS Report for Biological Sciences SSAM 06.03.24.docx |
| 20 | Promote Surveys, especially the National Student Survey for the 3 rd year. Send reminders in group chats | 31/01/2024 | Course reps. | ASAP | 05/03/24 | Students have been reminded to fill in the survey. |
| 21 | Remind student info on how to write a lab report is in the becoming a bio scientist module | 31/01/2024 | Allison | | 05/03/24 | Students have been informed, but they mentioned that each lectures have their own idea of how their lab report should be formatted and it gets confusing. |
| 22 | Include notice in the Student handbook with general extensions info (e.g. Turnitin date doesn't change even when the extension has been granted) | 31/01/2024 | Dr Murdoch | Next academic year | | |
| 23 | Get more “organismal” course rep | 31/01/2024 | Allison | | 05/03/24 | Because of how long it took for some people to be added as course rep, I think its bets to implement this from next year. |
| 24 | If they are interested in being involved in a discussion about year 1 modules for the next years. | 29/04/2024 | Allison | | 01/05/24 | Eva-Mea hart, Ruby Tomlinson. |
| 25 | Remember students to buy their tickets for the graduation ceremony | 29/04/2024 | Allison | | 01/05/24 | Asked 3 rd year students to remind their peers |
| 26 | Does CeDAS offer support for RStudio, each term? | 29/04/2024 | Brett Harmony | | 29.04.24 | Dr. Arash Ardalan, who works with Dr Boulton has experience with RStudio. Dr. Ardalan is available for 1:1 tutorials on Mon & Wed |

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| | | | | | | till July 31 st . Next term's booking tbc. |
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Notes:

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| Meeting 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students find coursework more useful and enjoyable • CeDAS does not have a person to help with statistics • Increase in use of Macmillan would also be useful • Everyone wanted to keep January exams – the timetable is released at the end of November, and most are in person • It would be useful if there is a quiz after the pre-lecture recordings (like BS1031) • Healthcare week could be earlier, possibly at the start of October |
| Meeting 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library will be opening back up to 24/7 in Spring term (2) • Survey for exam/coursework format: so far, responses suggest a (50%/50%) or (60% exam/40% coursework) but the survey will be passed to Dr Murdoch to share further. • Further discussion taking place for reduction of assessments for next year to align with the university assessment protocol. • Discussion of a Biological Community rather than having a separate BioSoc and Course Rep group. • January exams – provisional marks for these exams will be released by the middle of term 2 for most modules (except two modules in year 3, BS3530 and BS3590) but students won't receive their scripts (to not break anonymity). • Continue signposting students who may be struggling to: Wellbeing department, Mental health first aiders in the library, their tutor, the senior tutor, their favourite/preferred lecturer, someone they feel comfortable with within the department, Dr Murdoch and/or school helpdesk. |
| Meeting 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting lecturers to the museums via LSE help desk • Doping for maths via CDAS • The library is able to offer adjustments until more definitive changes can be made. Can offer referencing dropping from 10 am to 11:30 and one-to-one support. (promoted on social media) • New exhibition is open in the library from 10 am to 6 pm • National Student Survey for 3rd year students • Most of the modules will have only 2 summative components, and more modules will now have no written exams. • The module spec draft has been updated with the new grading • The new 3rd year project option running in term 3 year 2 is limited to 30 places. • BS3020 will not be running next year |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Lydia Hannah lectures have received a lot of positive attention in terms of the setup (very frequent compliment is about how soothing voice is; very pleasant to listen to the lectures); Difficult concepts are well structured into simple sentences for understanding • Biochemistry overall good feedback; some students have raised stress over the setup (14 weeks into 7 weeks), explained that lectures are the same number of hours in the week • Green planet: lecturer very engaging, wants students to learn and loves what he's doing so it makes the lectures enjoyable (sometimes occasional tangents from the material?) • If struggling with personal issues, contact D&N team to inform lecturer about any additional needs OR inform lecturer before lab/lecture • Remind students to not put their name on their work: This includes lab reports etc- if unsure about anonymous marking, email school help desk! • Resits: wait until results! at that point you will know the options you have available for you, progression option given to student, go to department for advice AFTER JULY 3RD (Results day) |
| Meeting 4 | <p>REVIEW OF ACTION LOG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bret (CEDAS) statistics support in place with exams for year 1s - Lecturers have different structures for lab reports so many students haven't found the becoming a bioscientist lab report powerpoint very helpful (since some professors want more focus on methodology, some professors want more focus on results); some students complained about lack of clarity on how lab reports are marked - Cedas; Do they help with R studio? - Specify confusion in Shobonas module; specify what you're confused about (eg. excel vs R studio / what values to use for report etc.); Tell students to feel open about talking to the lecturer about any confusion; professors are there to support you :) - Moving forward in course reps; if you're not doing a specific module, as for more specific feedback to give back to the group - Lab reports will be different across modules due to the nature and structure within differences of the lab - Involve more organismal course reps but that will probably be more implemented from next year <p>LIBRARY UPDATE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Library open 24/7 - Founders reading room 24/7 - Rebranded former books-to-use scheme; if you need any books you can use this platform to ask for new books |

- Davidson building exhibition
- Monthly drop-in-references in the library; every Thursday, then 9th of April 10am-12pm
- Ongoing maintenance on the second floor; areas closed off due to leak; books sent away to be cleaned; if you need access to spaces you cannot currently get to, you can ask the library staff via email or live chat; 826 book onwards, call in advance to see if item is available
- Very expensive to keep it open 24/7

CeDAS update:

- Stats tutorials now available, Monday (1pm-2pm) Wednesday (12:30pm-1:30pm), can book on Moodle
- Further maths and statistics support starting on 25th (or possibly 28th) of April until the 10th of May; Dr Wilkinson and Prof McEvoy will be helping.

ACADEMIC STFF UPDATE:

- NSS over 50%
- Assessment changes that have been submitted; waiting for official acceptance from university but confident that they will be accepted as they confirm to protocol
- New format of project stream for 3rd years starting next year; 34 students signed up, lab work done in term 3
- 25/26 Maybe more changes coming down in terms of changes to options available or mandatory modules as part of universities drive for simplification; possibility of closing modules but at the moment person in senior management is leaving university so updates on where this will be going
- Attendance at practical is generally very good; we need students to be more punctual; if student is late, they should go immediately to academic in charge; missed health and safety briefing is unsafe!
- Attendance at lectures rather poor, occasionally very poor; why is this, how can we get students back in? Marking exam papers, we can see that some students are missing crucial information. Recordings are there as a backup NOT a substitute. How can we get students more involved?
- Exam results; some professors are struggling to find time to mark so provisional results have been late; will aim to get results before we do May exams but more realistically at the end of this term rather than sometime soon. Students have to learn material and understand the material, you need to have information in your head when going into exam hall. Exam results haven't been great and we think it might be related to attendance.
- 2 Formal warnings; then you're out.
- Encourage movement during break

- Bringing more energy; both lecturers and the students; it's a two way system.
- Many people commute; difficult to travel into University, many don't feel the need to come in since recordings are available etc.
- If you're ever curious to know your attendance, ask your personal tutor!

ACADEMIC REP:

- Students feel scared to give feedback to the lecturers directly
- Whatsapp groupchat

BS1091: Protein enzymology

- Big issue which has transcended just the year 1 cohort and moved onto an issue of the TA's too: the lab instructions
- Extremely confusing for everybody, we have to spend about 20-30 minutes at the beginning of the lab deciphering what we're supposed to be doing (even if you have pre-read the instructions, it doesn't matter, because the instructions you get printed are half of what they are on moodle)
- The TA's are also just as confused as the students in terms of lab procedure, so instead of doing the lab we are trying to understand what the professor means; very distracting and unnecessary
- Even once we figure out what the lab wants us to do, we have uncertainties in procedure that aren't specified (eg. using spectrophometer; what solution to use as our blank/control) There has been a lab where we were told by the TA's to use solution A, but later they were told by the professor to actually use solution B
- Pretty much everyone has stated for the need to implement a lab book that is in the style of Prof McEVOYs; clear step by step, with a nice pre-reading explanation of what we're doing

BS1091: Protein enzymology

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| | <p>been a lab where we were told by the TA's to use solution A, but later they were told by the professor to actually use solution B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pretty much everyone has stated for the need to implement a lab book that is in the style of Prof McEVOYS; clear step by step, with a nice pre-reading explanation of what we're doing - WhatsApp groupchat between cohort - More help based on lab report structure, some students find it different for each lecture and aren't sure which 'version' of structure is correct. <p>Lecture key points (second and third year):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timings of when lectures are posted (suppose to be at least 24 hours before) - Coursework information provided for cancer module (BS3?) - making sure it is clearer, regarding timing restrictions, marking criteria for presentations. - Past paper revision questions in lectures, instead of having a 'Q&A' type session. - Most past papers are based on online exams but now they are in person exams – module coordinator should tell students what type of questions will be coming up (ie. Mcq/essay) |
| Meeting 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CeDAS: R studio will be checked (each term) <p>Library:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff partitioned on the ground floor • Extra study spaces provided <p>Academic Staff Updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of module surveys – staff was unaware of survey being released, student response is very low (1 or 2 responses/module) – main issue was students were very busy • Students were told to do the surveys in the lectures as well • Curriculum: no response from staff from survey, trying to simplify and reduce number of modules and courses and too many options in first year (hassle to organise timetabling etc.) • Removing optionality all together – does not affect biomed <p>First Year</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths Cafe – very useful – asking for more availability (difficult for commuters) – will continue until 13th and wont be bioscience support but there will br form other. No more slots available for biosciences • Tuesdays and Wednesdays – bookable slot days departments, asking for feedback. Online appointments available. 1-1 sessions are also flexible (email/sharepoint file follow up) • Office hours: could be renamed as drop-in hours? Students feel like they are ‘bothering’ staff. Drop-in sessions could be advertised more. Noticeboard was used a lot • BS1091: Excel layout unclear (screenshot or Word document) – should be communicated with the module coordinator • Feedback: Each comment should show number of people who think the same (enables ranking problems). Whatsapp polls could be used. SU should be contacted regarding rep training – perhaps discuss with Amelia Thomany – not departmental feedback • Department is running very well • Set person as student academic tutor/liason • Good to know where certain feedback should be directed • Open days: message is clear that this is not an open university • Unclear where to direct other feedback, such as wellbeing • BioSoc: Boat party Friday17th May – pirate theme |
| Meeting 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CeDAS working with department on BS1021 Becoming a Bioscientist and PASS programme. PASS is effectively being ‘absorbed’ into BS1021 workshops. It was agreed that there is a huge benefit to students receiving support from Y2/3 students. • There is a large focus on supporting Y1, but that same support may benefit other year groups. <p>Updates from Jenny Murdoch (UG Education Lead)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams are happening – the department are aware of some exam paper issues (BS2160 and BS2540), these issues will be considered by the Department Assessment Board and discussed with the External Examiners. • There is an agreement with Shoolini University. A group of students may join us this September, but more likely the following year. The students would enter as Y2 students and undertake Y2 and Y3. |

Year 1

- BS1091 – students had some issues accessing the exam due to computer competency. The exam structure wasn't made clear by the MC. *Response from dept: guidance was provided in lectures and example exam and IAs on Moodle.*
- BS1032 - mixed feelings about it being too easy or too difficult. Students felt that the knowledge required to complete the exam was outside of the lecture slides. Generally good feedback though.
- BS1062 – fluctuating opinion on the difficulty of MCQs

Year 2

- Students are concerned about getting their BS3010 project if they're going to a specific location to complete said project. Students have to leave before 3 July (release of results). *Response from dept: the department are considering the Operation Wallacea projects as students who undertake this style of project receive more support and gather more data – this is a huge advantage compared to students who cannot undertake this opportunity (EDI issue). There are also concerns that students may be in a technician role, rather than independently gathering data. Project allocations will be shared with students on or around the release of results day.*

Anonymous Feedback from Y2 Moodle page (BS2000) - note, feedback is from 1 student:

- Quality of teaching
- Lack of availability to Panopto recordings – unhelpful responses to students querying availability for Panopto recordings (feedback appears to be re: Y1 lectures in 2022-23). *Response from dept: in 2021-22 lecture recordings released automatically and some staff did not realise that this changed for 2022-23. If students have feedback and they are not getting polite responses from staff please notify Jenny Murdoch or School Helpdesk or Tutor. Please do tell staff if recordings are unavailable, don't wait until the end of the module or the days/weeks before the exam. Brett Harmony suggests a guide to help students make the most out of Panopto recording- how to use to consolidate learning, rather than an exam revision tool.*
- Concern about inconsistencies in coursework marking and the marking criteria. Advice given by one lecturer is not always correct when completing an assessment for another lecturer.
- BS2160 – the lecturer is too quiet to be heard, even when students are in the front row.

- Lecturers regularly run out of time and they do not manage to get through all of the slides during the lecture.
- Minimal lecture slide content, this is a particular issue when there aren't recordings.
- Issue re: consideration of ECs relating to illness and transport issues.
Response from dept: ECs are considered at a University level rather than at department level.
General response: please speak with the department when there are issues so they can be resolved in a timely manner.

Year 3

- No feedback.