



RCSU Academic Affairs Report

Mariza de Souza

6/2/2014

Faculty of Natural Sciences (FoNS) Teaching Committee

The FoNS teaching committee is held every two months with the DUGS, Senior Tutors, three student representatives (AAO, DPE and RCSU) and other education-related staff within the faculty. There has been a lot of focus on Panopto in recent meetings (and in fact learning technology is a standing agenda item), with staff acceptance of the initiative being quite mixed. However, it seems clear that the faculty as a whole are keen to get it properly implemented (in the lecture theatres it is currently in) for the next academic year.

They have also approved a pilot personal tutorial feedback platform called Starfish for pilot in the Chemistry department.

Science Studies Committee

The Science Studies committee is held once a term with a smaller but similar group to the FoNS meeting, with 2 student representatives (AAO and DPE). Course restructures are approved in this meeting, and the examiners reports for all summer exams were discussed, as was SOLE participation rates, with a discussion on how to improve them further in the future. The NSS results from last year were also discussed. The suggestion of a student-wide database to reduce grade inputting errors was brought up as a suggestion of best practice from other institutions.

Meeting with Maggie Dallman and Alan Spivey

My depreps and I have met with the head of the faculty Maggie Dallman and the Vice Dean of Education for Natural Sciences Alan Spivey, twice this academic year so far. The purpose of these meetings was to highlight recurring issues within Natural Sciences as a whole and gauge the general student experience as it is currently felt.

The meeting and the follow-up meeting were very successful; Maggie and Alan were very receptive. We provided them with suggestions of how to encourage staff to use Panopto, other technology that could be used to augment the teaching, training for academic staff in student-related matters,

how the staff can support reps pushing the NSS/SOLE, among other issues. There will be another follow up meeting before the end of the year.

RCSU Executive Committee

Sitting on the RCSU Exec means that I have been helping them with their events so far this year, in particular the Science Challenge Launch. Additionally, Plabon (RCSU president) and I have been gathering information on UROPs to attempt to encourage FoNS to make the process more standard and fair across the faculty.

We are also hoping to hire the Union bar to have a “networking” session with all of the Natural Sciences academic representatives, this is still being planned.

National Student Survey

NSS has now launched, and I’ve set my depreps SMART targets related to this (thank you Elana for updating your progress). Very well done to Chemistry in being second only to Earth Sciences in response percentage!

This year, FoNS managed to negotiate a deal with Ipsos Mori, meaning that they can no longer cold call students to get them to answer the NSS over the phone, as there were lots of complaints about this over the years. This means that this year, we need to prove we can get the same turnout without the bothersome phonecalls, so requires a big push from all reps.

Staff Student Committees (SSCs)

This term I am going to be visiting each of the departmental SSC meetings in order to compare best practice, get more of an insight into how each department runs internally, and to find out what the current issues that the students are facing are. This will start today with the Physics SSC, followed by Biology on 13th Feb, Chemistry on 18th Feb, Maths on 19th Feb and Biochem tbc.