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Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Department Leadership Team Meeting

**Minutes**

Date: Wednesday 13th April 2022

**Part 1 Attendees**;

Mike Burton (Head of Department)

Ann Webb (Deputy Head of Department)

Helena Gittins (Deputy School Operations Manager)

Katie Joy (Chair of Widening Participation committee)

David Polya (Line Manager)

Mads Huuse (Line Manager)

Scott Heath (Line Manager)

David Topping (Line Manager)

David Schultz (Line Manager)

Rhian Jones (Admissions)

Carl Jackson (PS Safety)

Rob Gardham (PS PA)

Rob Sansom (Forum Chair)

Alison Smigova (PS TOM)

**Apologies;**

Bart Van Dongen (Discipline Head of Education), Jon Pittman (PGR director), Luis Garcia-Carreras (Employability), Russell Garwood (IT Director), Cathy Walton (Chair of EDIA committee), Gordon McFiggans (Discipline Head of Research)

**Summary Actions**

**Rolled over:**

**ACTION: (URGENT) Advertise and recruit to PDRA mentor role (MB)**

**ACTION: Delegate to a member of TLSE to improve content for Field Trips web page (BVD/RG)**

**Matters Arising**

The minutes from the previous meeting were confirmed.

**HoD Introduction and report**

**Mike Burton (MB)**

Academic recruitment is going ahead as follows: Data Science Lecturer contract has been issued, Anna Joy Drury is visiting at the end of April re DKO Fellow position, Global Ecology Lecturer advert is live, 2x NCAS positions also now live. HR have regulated these last two must be fixed-term due to funding from NCAS.

Discussions about space involve the Dover St lab becoming a PhD shared office, swapping G33 for R279 in Williamson, and partitioning off a third of computer cluster (R245) for a common area.

A point to be raised at the Forum will be developing a potential policy around staff usage of social media. We don’t currently have any Departmental guidelines around this, although there is a University policy.

**Reports – please refer to grouped report handout**

**Recruitment & Admissions Update**

**Rhian Jones (RJ)**

**Report submitted**

MB commented that Petroleum Geoscience was looking precarious and the future viability of this was in question. To withdraw a PGT course we need to find out if the Dept. is committed yet to delivery in 2023.

**For all other Reports, refer to Appendix below**

**PS Update**

**Helena Gittins (HG)**

The GTA Review meeting will go ahead tomorrow.

HG and Dave Norwood met with the RGLs to discuss fieldwork and implement a system to help with organising these.

Further alternatives to Key Travel are now authorised, including credit card payments and Diversity Travel in certain circumstances.

**Carl Jackson (CJ)**

CJ will be carrying out inspections around Williamson in the next few days.

There will be guidance for lab PIs and a policy with examples of best practice sent around in draft form shortly.

It was raised whether we need to continue the contract for liquid nitrogen.

For known fumehood defects, we can make a note on the system and/or notify staff before waiting for Alions testing.

**AOB**

The next Departmental Forum will be kept online and will be Rob Sansom’s last.

DS gave a reminder about the UG Research Conference on May 19th.

**Date of next meeting**

Wednesday 11th May 2022, 2pm.

**DLT Grouped Reports April 2022**

**5. Recruitment and Admissions**

**2022 Entry, Undergraduate (UG) Recruitment**

There is just a small increase in numbers since the last report. Both home and international applications are up on the same period last year. Overall applications are up from 598 last year to 675 this year (368 to 409 for Home; 230 to 266 for Overseas). However, home offers are slightly down on the same period last year, at 283 vs 296 last year. There are still some applications to be processed. The number of offers to overseas students is currently around 50 lower than last year, but again there is a backlog of applications to be processed. Overall, the eventual number of offers is likely to be comparable to last year. The deadline for applicants to select their firm choice is 9th June.

We have now completed UCAS day interviews for this cycle. We have interviewed about 300 applicants.Many thanks to all the staff who have taken part in this process. It would be useful to hear feedback on the Tuesday / Thursday format we ran this year. This was done to avoid the many meetings that often involve large numbers of staff on Wednesdays, as well as the Colloquium on Wednesdays. For next year, perhaps it would be possible to identify one Wednesday each semester that could be designated as interview days, to be kept clear of all other meetings, so that we could maximise the number of staff available.

We have run two on-campus offer-holder open days, Wednesday 16th March and Wednesday 30th March. Both were at their capacity of 80, including applicants plus their parents / supporters. We are going to hold a third event on 11th May so that we can invite the remaining applicants. The events have included taster sessions for applicants, information sessions for parents, and tours of Williamson and the campus.

FSE arranged a second online event for Foundation Year applicants on 7th April. Again, there were no attendees for the EES breakout room.

We will be holding an online event for International offer holders, the date of which is still to be confirmed. We are also discussing (with Luis) holding an online employability event for offer holders.

Dave Topping has run an online recruitment event with NUIST for the 2+2 programme. Ten students expressed interest and he is now holding one-on-one meetings to discuss their applications.

There is currently a call to recruit more Student Ambassadors. The announced deadline was 8th April, but applications are remaining open for EES students for an additional few weeks. There appears to be little interest in these positions. Please encourage your students to apply.

**2023 Entry, Undergraduate (UG) Recruitment**

Planning for the University-wide Open Days is progressing (Saturdays 18th June and 2nd July). Planning is being coordinated across FSE by Alison Evans. I am working with Joe Phelan and Jez Lloyd to plan our EES display material. We will have a stand in the Schuster building, and our talks will also be in Schuster. We will work to make a clear link between the talks, and a display within Williamson.

Explore Your Planet (EYP): Katherine Harrison is leading on the EYP programme. This is primarily aimed at showing Year 12 students (first year of A levels) how various science A levels are used in Earth and Environmental Sciences. A second virtual event for this academic year was held on 16th March. Attendance was around 50. Due to the International Office promoting the event to International Feeder Schools, we had an international audience, including schools and students in India.

We are working to promote the visibility of what is essentially our Geology degree (Earth and Planetary Science / Geology Pathway). Jez and Joe are creating a "Geology at Manchester" web page and making an effort to improve the Field Trips web page (not just for Geology), with Russell Garwood’s assistance. They are seeking input for an Instagram story during the upcoming field trips, which will afterwards be converted to web page content. For Geology in particular, we need to ensure that content for the new Italy field trip is highlighted.

At the last Recruitment and Outreach committee meeting, Alexandra Martin Hernandez, from Marketing, provided insight data on student numbers for geology, focussing on trends and forecasting potential evolution of this discipline nationally, and on competitors’ approaches and numbers. Following discussion in the meeting, Alexandra will make some additions to the slides and then they will be circulated.

**2022 entry, Post-graduate Taught (PGT) Recruitment**

For MPEC, applications have increased over the last month, from 345 to 404. This compares with 356 at the same time last year. There has also been an increase in the number of offers to 268 (vs 205 last month) compared with 314 at the same time last year. There are currently 144 accepts (111 last month) vs 263 at the same point last year.

For the Distance Learning MPEC, we are not accepting applications for 2022. The first year of the degree will be 2023.

For MSc Petroleum Geoscience, applications and offers are still low compared with last year and a significant number of applicants were not qualified. Applications are still down significantly from last year (97 vs 158 last year). There are currently 47 offers and 22 accepts (last year there were 94 offers and 50 accepts at this point).

For MSc Geoscience for Sustainable Energy, there are currently 50 Applications, 19 Offers and 5 Accepts, all slightly up from last month. A large number of Sustainable Energy applications have been rejected as degrees are not in a relevant subject. We will look into whether this can be addressed from a marketing perspective.

MSc Subsurface Energy Engineering is closely related to our Geoscience PGT courses. There are currently 54 Offers and 34 Accepts for this course, compared with 14 Offers and 6 Accepts at the same point last year.

MSc Data Science (Environmental Analytics) currently has 8 Offers and 2 Accepts, which has not changed since last month. There are currently 93 Applications, and we need to understand why the offer rate is so low.

Further online conversion events for PGT courses are being planned: 29th April for MPEC and a date to be determined for Geoscience.

Rhian Jones, Admissions Tutor

**6. Employability Update**

A shortlist for the External Advisory Board has been put together as well as a draft email to send out. Ian Kane is now taking this forward. The roles/companies shortlisted are listed below (I have removed names and emails).

•             Energy storage lead at BGS

•             CGG - hydrogen and energy transition local lead

•             Leads in geoscience for geodisposal and hydrogeology at RWM (Radioactive Waste Management)

•             CCS and energy transition at British Geological Survey (bgs.ac.uk)

•             IUGS president (UoM alumni), ex BGS CEO

•             Oil and wind industries geoscience (UoM alumni)

•             Reynolds (Shallow geophysics)

•             Environment Agency

•             Jacobs or similar environmental consultancy

•             G&G campus ambassador to Manchester for BP (tbd)

**7. T&L Update**

No updates

**8. PGR Update**

I am not able to attend this month’s meeting in person but please email me if there are any specific queries/questions.

**Admissions and recruitment:**

Latest admissions data shows that we have so far received 207 applications (46 H, 161 OS), which have so far converted into 38 offers (8 H, 30 OS), and 20 accepts (5 H, 15 OS). While these numbers are lower than last year, they are in line with 2019 and 2020. In order to speed up processing of applications it has been agreed that applications directed to named supervisors can be referred to staff without references once the application is otherwise complete.

Two candidates from EES have accepted a President’s Doctoral Scholarship following interview success (a third candidate declined) and two candidates have been successful following Dean’s Doctoral Scholarship interviews. The details of the second round call for Dean’s Scholarships in May have been distributed to staff. Selection of STFC and BBSRC DTP studentships for EES has now been completed and we are awaiting for candidates to decide whether they will accept their offers. A reminder for nominations to the Faculty competition call for PGR Teaching Associate (PGRTA) Scholarships has been sent out to staff.

**UKVI updates:**

The UKVI remote study concession for Student visa holders has been extended until 30 June 2022. From this point, all PGRs are required to be in the UK and remote study outside of the UK will no longer be permitted, unless for authorised fieldwork. There is also a continuation of the requirement for all students entering the UK with a Student visa to attend in person on campus, with a minimum attendance requirement of two face-to-face academic interactions in any rolling 4-week period with this recorded using the attendance monitoring on eProg. An update of UKVI information and requirements has been sent out to all PGRs.

**UKRI CDT call:**

In expectation of a CDT call later this year, Faculty would like to know outline details from individuals thinking about putting in for a CDT as part of the next call; either as lead, or as part of a bid being led from elsewhere. A proforma has been circulated to staff for completion by 23rd April (see circulated email from Steve Chipp). Contact Steve (stephen.chipp@manchester.ac.uk) if you have any queries about this.

**EES PGR conference:**

We have begun discussions with PGRs about plans for a department PGR conference for 2022. Volunteers for the organising committee and likely timing for the conference are still being decided but we will update staff and PGRs when details are agreed.

**End of year PhD progression information:**

We have distributed instructions to supervisors and September starter PhD students for the upcoming progression reports. In particular, we are now asking staff to provide nomination of an appropriate independent assessor by the end of May at the latest to avoid delays with the assessment process. It has been agreed that independent assessor activities are included in the Department Faculty Contribution Model.

Jon Pittman

**9. Research Update**

**DHoR Report Apr 2022; 13/4/22 Gordon McFiggans**

**NERC Large capital call**: The 2 institutional bids for NECR call came from DEES and submitted 15th March.. FLT co-funding for EPMA not forthcoming – suggested to redevelop into EPSRC bid.

**NERC standard** round now replaced with Exploring the Frontiers and Pushing the Frontiers. Information and internal deadlines circulated, along with links to NERC webinars.

**Wellcome visit**: provided slides for visit from Director of Wellcome to Nancy and Colette on 10th March.

**Seminars**: Concern expressed that these were becoming particularly poorly attended. RGL proposal to revamp Departmental seminars with groups taking ownership of 1 major seminar per year to follow.

**Workshops**: Meeting with head of workshops, Stuart McIntyre on 16th March. Commitment to improved throughput from centralised service, but as I understand it, not to increased local resourcing.

**Awards and Applications**: Funding success is not massively picking up. Need to watch this – FSE applications are now above the same point in the last 3 years (even if the awards are lagging in the same way as ours), so any recovery elsewhere in the Faculty may not be replicated in DEES.





**10. EDIA**

No updates

**11. IT Report**

-- We have sent out an email regarding the RLP2 investment in computing infrastructure. Thanks Gordon for assisting with this. If anyone in the meeting has the opportunity but has not done so, it would be really valuable to get maximal EES input on this survey: <https://www.qualtrics.manchester.ac.uk/jfe/form/SV_bj5we6Ww9xMVLRI>

-- In the coming months we're going to sounding out EES faculty regarding a more formal shared EES presence on the computational shared facility. If anyone is interested in discussing how to go about this, please give me a shout.

-- Attempts to update the website stafflists via research group leaders have been a limited success, but it looks like me might have an alternative approach for this, and there have beena  range of other updates to try and keep it current. If anyone spots anything massively out of date please give me a shout.