



Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Department Leadership Team Meeting

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 12th October 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)
Mandy Edwards (Discipline Head of Education)
David Polya (Line Manager)
Mads Huuse (Line Manager)
David Topping (Line Manager)
Rhodri Jerrett (Admissions)
Carl Jackson (PS Safety)
Rob Gardham (PS PA)
Romain Tartese (Forum Chair)
Luis Garcia-Carreras (Employability)

Apologies; Jon Pittman (PGR director), David Schultz (Line Manager), Cathy Hollis (Discipline Head of Research), Russell Garwood (IT Director), Scott Heath (Line Manager)

Summary Actions

ACTION – Coordinate with Mandy to set up event – for 3rd/4th year UG students - introduction to PhDs (JP, actioned later on in JP's report)

ACTION – Handover with new Fieldtrip Coordinator once appointed with Rhodri/Carl/Mike/Mandy – to ensure transfer of knowledge (RJ/CJ/MB/ME)

ACTION – Ensure all risk assessments on field trips are included in ILO activity (new FTC/PGDirs)

ACTION – Come up with proposal for Data Science UG, potentially involving partnership with overseas (Chinese) universities (DT/ME)

ACTION - Check with Cathy H & RGLs on potential miscommunication regarding internal departmental PhDs (MB)

Matters Arising

The minutes from the previous meeting were confirmed.

HoD Introduction and report

Mike Burton (MB)

Recruitment

Matthew Thomas has been appointed as Data Science Lecturer. The EDIA role is being interviewed for shortly. Need for a field trip coordinator has been exacerbated by a serious incident, and recruitment is ongoing despite some issues.

ACTION – Handover with new Fieldtrip Coordinator once appointed with Rhodri/Carl/Mike/Mandy – to ensure transfer of knowledge (RJ/CJ/MB/ME)

ACTION – Ensure all risk assessments on field trips are included in ILO activity (new FTC/PGDir's)

EDIA

There was a discussion about the role of the EDIA Committee. MB suggested some things the Committee should be helping the Dept. achieve, namely the gathering of data such as race/gender distribution and signs of bias in degree outcomes.

DP warned of the danger of agents in certain countries soliciting information from students that might be difficult to disclose due to illegality, etc.

It was suggested the EDIA Committee could oversee the development of mechanisms for formal mentoring of UG students to PhD, and PhD students into academia.

ACTION – Coordinate with Mandy to set up event – for 3rd/4th year UG students - introduction to PhDs (JP, actioned later on in JP's report)

Bullying

MB asked for comments on a planned communication addressing bullying in the Department.

Reports – please refer to grouped report handout

Recruitment & Admissions Update

Rhodri Jerrett (RJ)

Report submitted

Please see report for further details.

Employability Update

Luis Garcia-Carreras (LGC)

Report submitted

Any events information such as Geological Society Careers Days can be forwarded to LGC to circulate to students.

Teaching and Learning

Mandy Edwards (ME)

Report submitted

It was raised that there would be a reputational effect from the Faculty Exam Board delaying release of student results.

ACTION – Come up with proposal for Data Science UG, potentially involving partnership with overseas (Chinese) universities (DT/ME)

The DLT formally recommended that going forward, it desires Geology to be seen as a programme.

PGR Report

Jon Pittman (JP)

Report submitted

The NERC DTP3 will still be organised at Research Council level instead of UKRI level, and so for another year the DTP2s that we don't have will be rolled over. This means we will lose out for another year.

Director of Research

Cathy Hollis (CH)

Report submitted

ACTION - Check with Cathy H & RGLs on potential miscommunication regarding internal departmental PhDs (MB)

EDIA

No updates.

IT Report

Russell Garwood (RG)

Please see report for further details.

PS Update

Helena Gittins (HG)

There is an Operations Information Session happening tomorrow. All staff can promote this especially to new starters.

It has been approved to obtain more staff in Operations shortly.

Ongoing proposals to reinstate Key Travel are happening, HG invited comments and opinions on this. The DLT view was that we need to retain the option to choose to use them or not, and have other available options (i.e. Diversity) for specialist travel like fieldtrips.

Carl Jackson (CJ)

There was a serious incident on a 2nd year fieldtrip which has prompted review of safety procedures on fieldtrip work. This includes use of hard hats and the importance of checking risk assessments.

CJ issued a reminder to wear PPE in labs, and also to share online H&S inductions with new staff/students.

AOB

None.

Date of next meeting

Wed 9th November 2022, 2pm.

DLT Grouped Reports October 2022

5. Recruitment and Admissions

EES DLT, September 2022: Admissions and Recruitment

Admissions, 2022 Entry, summary:

Now that the two week window for late arrivals has closed, student numbers should be settled. I have requested up-to-date matriculation numbers from Mike Atherton:

	Home	Overseas		Grand Total
Programme	Matriculated	Matriculated	Not Matriculated	
Master of Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management		12		12
MSc Geoscience for Sustainable Energy	3	4		7
MSc Petroleum Geoscience	1	19		20
MSc Pollution and Environmental Control	2	84	1	87
Grand Total	6	119	1	126

	Home	Overseas		Grand Total
Programme	Matriculated	Matriculated	Not Matriculated	
BSc (Hons) Earth and Planetary Sciences	32	5	1	38
BSc (Hons) Environmental Science	39	28	4	71
MEarthSci (Hons) Earth and Planetary Science with a Research Placement			2	2
MEarthSci (Hons) Earth and Planetary Sciences	2			2
MEarthSci (Hons) Earth and Planetary Sciences with Industrial Experience	2			2
MEarthSci (Hons) Earth and Planetary Sciences with International Study	4			4
MEnvSci (Hons) Environmental Science with a Research Placement	5		1	6
MEnvSci (Hons) Environmental Science with Industrial Experience	6	1		7
MEnvSci (Hons) Environmental Science with International Study	6	1		7
Grand Total	96	35	8	139

2023 Recruitment and Admissions:

Open Days:

A university open day was held on the 1st October. From the department perspective, displays were held in the student study room, and were well attended by staff from the department, and prospective students. Two one hour talks delivered by M B and Rhodri J was attended collectively by around 200-250 people.

A second university open day will be held on the 15th October. Staffing looks good for this event. The staff helping out are largely different from those that helped out on the 1st October.

Cecilia and Joe P have successfully recruited student ambassadors to make up for those lost through graduation.

Dates for further open days have been confirmed (17/06/2023, 24/06/23, 20/09/23 and 14/10/23 for 2024 intake and 22/06/24, 29/06/24, 28/09/24 and 12/10/24 for 2025 intake).

Offer-holder days:

Next on my priorities are plans for at least four Offer-holder open days during the academic year. These are held during the week, the first of which will likely be in December, and others in March-April. I will liaise with Rhian and Mike B about the format and logistics of these, and report on the next DLT.

UCAS interviews:

Reminder that interviews have been discontinued (at least for one year).

Explore Your Planet: Katherine Harrison is leading on the EYP programme for the coming academic year. This is aimed at showing Year 12 students (first year of A levels) how various science A levels are used in Earth and Environmental Sciences. The first event is scheduled for the 9th November.

Other recruitment: Joe Phelan and Jasmine Barrow are organising a pre-application lecture series set to showcase the role our subjects have in crafting a more sustainable future. It would be useful if staff from our department could deliver one of these at least. Joe and I are contacting potential staff to gauge interest.

Rhodri Jerrett, EES Admissions Tutor

6. Employability Update

- 2nd year careers session was not attended by anybody, as it never made it onto the timetable and wasn't advertised by email as requested. Just raising this as an example of how pressures on earth support and timetabling are having knock-on impacts in this case on careers, who now are looking into rescheduling the session.
- Transferable skills: no news, as I'm still waiting to discuss how to take this forward.
- EAB: first meeting still being arranged last I heard, but Ian Kane out on fieldwork at the moment.

7. T&L Update

Discipline Head of Education Report for DLT October 2022

Resit exams, appeals

The Mitigation panel and Resit exam boards were completed and results sent out to students. There were 9 informal appeals from students and all of these ones have been dealt with by the

Department and the students informed of our decisions. In future the School of Natural Sciences (SONS) will triage all appeals that are submitted and send them on to the Department. Any complicated or appeals that move to a formal appeal are to be sent to the School.

PGT exam boards

The exam boards for our PGT programmes for academic year 21/22 have been set.

Departmental Board 21st October 2022

Faculty exam board (FEB) 21st November 2022

Release of final marks to students on 28th November 2022. An email will go out to students this week of the timeline and information on how they can get a transcript of their course unit marks excluding the dissertation mark. The School will provide a letter for potential employers and universities with this information. A FEB is only used in exceptional circumstances, like Covid, and so far there is no news of one for the academic year 22/23.

It has been agreed across the Faculty that there will be a minimum of 35 days between the date of the exams and the submission of the marks. This will be in place for this academic year 22/23.

Start of year and timetabling

There was a lot of work for both the PS staff and academic staff with student enquiries about registration, unit choices and timetabling issues. The vast majority of these have now been completed. The volume of email traffic to Earth Support has been very large. Extra faculty help has been allocated as a short term solution to help with this.

PS staffing

There have been many issues with our PS staffing levels. Most of the staff from grade 4 to 6 have now been assigned to the new structures, but it is expected that there will still be more movement of staff within various roles. Within SONS there has also been a spate of illness and this has led to extra pressure on the remaining PS staff. The team are hoping to be back up to capacity before Christmas but ask that we bear with them in this period. If there are any serious issues they ask us to raise them directly so they can be looked at as a priority.

T&L Committee

The next T&L meeting is scheduled for the 2nd November.

Accreditation of the Earth and Planetary Science degree programmes

Margaret Hartley (Programme Director) is working on our accreditation application with the Geological Society of London. We hope to have this submitted in the next month. I will report back at a later DLT.

8. PGR Update

I will not be able to attend this month's meeting but let me know if there are any questions.

Admissions and recruitment:

In total 50 PGRs have so far registered for 2022 entry (this includes a small number of registrations of April and July starters in the summer). Approximately half of the new starters attend the Welcome Week PGR inductions presentations. As such we will repeat an induction presentation at the end of the month, alongside the Faculty PGR welcome event (on 31st October) and in future years put back the formal department PGR induction until later in October.

There are still delays to some international starters due to outstanding ATAS. The registration deadline for Sept/Oct starters is 31 October 2022, however, we can allow some flexibility for some cases should it be needed (up until 17 November 2022) – delayed students (or their supervisors) should contact admissions if there will be delays to update their CAS.

Following proposal submission and selection, 8 BBSRC DTP proposal from EES have been advertised. Interviews will take place in February. We have begun soliciting project proposals from 14 staff (mainly early career) selected by each Research Group for a Department PhD studentship; 4 studentships will be available and interviews will take place in January. Calls will be announced shortly for the 2023 Chinese Scholarship Council nominations (for January deadline). There will also be more flexible nomination calls and deadlines this year for President's, Dean's and GTA scholarships in order to recruit the best students and to fast track the very best applicants earlier in the year if needed to avoid losing the best candidates. More details will be made available to all staff and potential students shortly.

A new central faculty webpage for central PhD marketing and admissions is being developed – see here: <https://www.se.manchester.ac.uk/phds-science-engineering/>

The faculty admissions team are currently working with FSE Marketing Team and the University Market and Student Insight team to develop a survey to capture feedback on the PGR application process and key factors affecting applicants' decisions to accept or decline an offer.

EDIA and PGR Interviewing Task and Finish Group

Two meetings have been held to date. The group is working towards developing a suite of standard processes for interview and selection of PGR applicants to be piloted in two Departments and some CDTs from January 2023 in the first instance. These processes will aim to facilitate demonstrable unbiased selection and consistent benchmarking of candidates, taking into account current best practice across the Faculty and beyond. Giles Johnson has been involved in these meetings and would be happy to discuss further if anyone is interested.

PGR Open Day

There will be an on-campus PGR Open Day in the afternoon of Wednesday 16 November 2022 from 1.30pm to 4.30pm starting with Faculty presentations in Engineering Building and then activities in departments from 3pm. We will have a department level presentation and opportunities for prospective students to speak to staff and PGRs from different research groups. I have begun liaising with RGLs to organise activities. Room 2.22 Williamson has been booked for the event. I also suggest that we actively invite final year UG and PGT students wishing to consider PhD opportunities to this event.

UKRI minimum stipend increase:

Details of the UoM response to the UKRI stipend increase was announced and circulated. As anticipated, the minimum stipend for all PGRs who are on a studentship funded directly by the University will increase in line with the UKRI value. This is for all students starting or continuing on a studentship with effect from 1 October 2022.

As a result of processing the large number of stipend changes, as well as some other IT issues that delayed start of year registration from some PGR students, there were a very small number of delays in stipend payments. We have resolved all of these late payments as quickly as we can and both the department and Faculty are continually identify how improvements can be made to avoid similar issues in the future. If there are still some concerns with these issues please contact me.

Jon Pittman

9. Research Update

Departmental Head of Research

The call for Pushing the Frontiers is open; deadline is 4pm on 17th Jan 2023. Anyone who will submit with UoM as lead institution must submit a full proposal via Cassy by 11th November. Feedback will be provided by 2nd December.

The call for proposals for DEES PhD studentships was sent to 15 pre-selected staff, chosen by RGLs to represent staff who were ECRs and/or had a limited track record of PhD supervision. Proposals will be advertised on the DEES website and FindaPhD.com with interviews in January. The four studentships will be awarded to the best shortlisted candidates following the interview day.

Unfortunately, the EPSRC capital bid for a new electron microprobe was passed back by EPSRC with an opportunity to resubmit. The feedback requires us to demonstrate a better fit to EPSRC priority areas and also to demonstrate a greater financial contribution by UoM. I will work with Margaret in the coming month or so to prepare for a resubmission.

Mike Burton and I had a meeting with Kevin Jackson and Chris Muryn in September to begin discussions on facilities management. A role out of Labcup is planned for October, in which we will be able to see all facilities owned by the university. In the meantime, we continue to try to collate our own internal list.

The Williamson N2 tank is to be decommissioned, following discussions with users who are now managing to fill N2 canisters via Physics stores. Alison Smigova is overseeing this.

10. EDIA

Vacancy

11. IT Report

- Dave T along with Rob Haines has set up Research IT Academic Advisory Group, and Russell has joined this as an advisor - hopefully with these links EES will have strong input into future directions for research IT.
- There are further updates to our field trip pages here, with more coming: <https://www.ees.manchester.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/field-trips/>
- I have not heard of any particular issues regarding software roll out for the new term, so fingers crossed this means it went OK. Please let me know if not!

12. Technical Review update

No updates.