



Minutes of the 22nd Annual Meeting held at the University of Bath 2004

Thursday 15 April

Welcome

The meeting began with a welcome from Jonathon Slack, Professor of Developmental Biology, and Head of Biology and Biochemistry since 2000. The Department has 140 staff, 80 PhD students and an annual turnover of £10 million. Professor Slack acknowledged the importance of the technical staff in supporting teaching and research and touched on the competition in research, both nationally and internationally. Some of the issues that concern him include:

- Person management, for example, problems with people on fixed-term posts on research grants and the challenge to get such people fully involved with the Department
- Cost/complexity of maintenances of facilities, for example, DNA sequencers, confocal microscopes, mass spectrometers, which need dedicated staff and incur high maintenance costs which may have to be recovered by charging internal customers.
- Maintenance of colonies of organisms – HO requirements and competition for research may need complex facilities (eg Xenopus).
- Teaching – an undergraduate course used to be seen as a professional qualification, but today's graduates are not qualified to do anything practical when they leave. Students now learn practical skills when they do a PhD. This begs the question, what are undergraduate practical classes for? Open-ended projects provide a better educational experience, but are expensive, and there may be problems with there being more students of lesser ability
- Promotion for technical staff – the structure does not permit promotion on ability – can only re-grade a post. Nowadays the University needs a smaller number of people but with higher levels of skills, so the number of people supervised may not help with promotion.

Professor Slack hoped that the meeting might consider some of these issues as being common to all Higher Education Biosciences Departments.

Presentations

'Managing Health and Safety at the University of Bath'

Mr Peter Adams, University of Bath Safety, Health and Environment Adviser

'A New Training Initiative for Department Safety Coordinators'

Mr Kevan Horne, Health and Safety Adviser

Peter Adams gave an interesting overview of the role of the Safety, Health and Environment Unit

'What we do'

- Provide ionising radiation and contaminated waste advice
- Make university policy, translating legislation into plain English
- Create a H&S Management System that encompasses all policies and relevant legislation
- Enforcement of H & S
- Investigation of accidents

- Monitoring performance (accident statistics, fire alarm statistics etc.)
- Training
- Audit procedures in Departments – every two years is the mean:
- Environmental management – no boundary between H & S and the environment in waste disposal, especially of hazardous substances.

‘What we don’t do’

- We don’t stop things happening (unless really have to). It’s not up to the Safety and Health Unit to tell the University what to do (eg bungee jumping, fireworks, cycle racing down steps). It’s about getting managers to manage and look at the risks.
- We don’t provide the entire specialist expertise – may have to work with academic experts, eg physicists.

‘New Stuff’

- <http://www.hse.gov.uk> is an excellent website and a good source of news
- The Unit sends out new legislation to Departments BUT all staff have the responsibility to seek out information
- Anti-Terrorism legislation (police)
- DSEAR Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations show how H & S legislation has shifted – these replace the Petroleum Act of 1928 and place the responsibility with the managers and the organisation, not with the fire brigade.
- Fire safety legislation will change next year – the onus of responsibility will shift from the authorities to the employers. The fire brigade will not come in and inspect the site in future – it will be up to the University (fire alarms, escapes etc)
- First Aid regulations are changing. There will be refresher training (one day) every year
- Noise at Work regulations will change (probably from 85 to 80 decibels)
- COSHH – a major revision is due – MELs (maximum exposure limits) and OES (occupational exposure standards) are likely to be simplified
- Waste – a crossover between H & S and the Environment. Recycling targets are being introduced, including for electrical equipment (producers will have to introduce recycling of components)
- Stress can cause absenteeism; it is becoming a bigger issue with more cases of litigation.

‘Driving Forces behind Health and Safety’

- Litigation. For example, control of stress comes back to good management, insurance companies may become a driving force
- Global threat (counter terrorism)
- HSE have seven to ten key objectives each year, for example, allergens, stress, trips and falls, fragile roofs
- Environment Agency has been involved particularly with ionising radiation, but will have more of an input in future.
- Legislation
- Local operational issues, such as construction work (noise, dust, access)
- Statistics
- H & S committee, which includes trade union involvement

‘Change’

Nothing really changes...or does it?

- Smoking in the work place
- Much more emphasis on H & S in work place
- Corporate responsibility – looking for individuals within organisations in the future as well as the company, so people at the top will be under threat. Will need good systems and a good chain throughout the organisation so weak links can be

identified. This may cause problems in universities in which there may not always be hierarchical structures

'What the Future Holds'

- H & S
- Environmental Management
- Quality systems
- Risk management
- Commercial Activities
- Outsourcing
- Leased premises
- Professionalism
- Corporate Responsibility
- Personal prosecution

In summary, the Safety and Health Unit is looking for partnerships with managers in department to help them take responsibility

Discussion

The following points were made

- Fear is a better driving force than selling the benefits
- Resistance may arise due to the conflict of academic freedom and the hierarchical management of H&S issues, for example, some academic staff don't recognise the departmental head as a line manager
- In some institutions the technical staff now have the role, because the academic staff weren't doing it, but they don't have the clout. The meeting felt it was important that if someone is willing to undertake the role, they are given the authority
- Concerns were expressed about outsourcing – contractors are not trained in laboratory situations

The meeting thanked Mr Adams

Mr Horne outlined the new training initiative for Department Safety Coordinators (DSCs)

Why more training

DSCs were appointed under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1989 that stipulate the appointment of one or more competent persons. There has been an ever-increasing complexity of legislation since then, and internal auditing has demonstrated huge variability in risk assessments across the University. The need for training has therefore been identified.

External courses are available (eg IOSH, ROSPA, NEBOSH, NVQ3) but the University Safety and Health Association has recognised NVQ3 as being the appropriate level for DSCs. NEBOSH National general certificate is widely recognised, covers a broad base of knowledge and can lead to further specialist H & S training. It has been nominated as the technical certificate for modern apprentices (foundation and advanced) at level 3, and has recently been revised to mirror HSE management systems.

Bath considered offering this course in house, but it would be costly in terms of the time to produce a fully taught course (although it could be tailored for the University).

The certificate can be done by day release (12 days, consecutive weeks, approx £700, block release – two consecutive weeks, approx £1200 fees plus accommodation, by distance learning (which is flexible) at a cost of £350-£600, or by blended learning, with flexible support both internally and by the internet at a cost of £250.

Distance learning offers the advantages of flexibility, low costs, and the ability to work on site or at home and at own speed. Disadvantages include needing high self-motivation, isolation and no learner feedback

Blended learning provides a combination of on-line and face to face contact plus the distance learning can be supported by on-line conferencing which helps remove feeling of isolation, on-line quizzes to check the student progress and notices and additional coursework. This was adopted at Bath.

Two routes can be followed:

- Examination route leading to the NEBOSH national certificate
- Non-exam route leading to a University of Bath Open Studies Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety, for which the student needs to complete a number of units (progress is monitored by on-line quizzes) and prove competence by carrying out a workplace inspection, producing a report persuading management to take appropriate action

The Open Studies Material is given out on a CD that contains all the learning texts, NEBOSH syllabus and guide. The CD costs £40, the NEBOSH fee £61, tutor fees and admin fees are to be determined. It will cost £1200 (one-off fee to NEBOSH) for the University to become an approved centre, then £125 per annum.

Twenty were interested, seven actually took the course. Need minimum of five to run another course. It is hoped this training will expand the knowledge base within the University. The course will be advertised externally as well, and candidates will be enrolled for a fixed period of three years for one fee.

Conclusion

- There is a need for increased training for DSCs
- NVQ3 is an appropriate level
- NEBOSH is recognised as proof of NVQ3
- Flexible learning meets the needs of busy people, is cost effective but needs support
- Still some problems getting managers to take responsibility for H&S and support DSCs in getting properly trained

COFFEE and biscuits in Trade Exhibition area

AGM and Association Business

Part 1 of the AGM started at 1115h with reports from officers and representatives

22/1

Welcome

The Chairman (Alan Willcocks) welcomed members, particularly new members attending for the first time.

22/2

Apologies

Apologies were received from the Honorary President and ten members.

22/3

Minutes of the previous meeting and Matters Arising

Proposed, seconded and approved.

There were no matters arising from the AGM, but Roger Dainty gave a brief update on the Hay system at Nottingham University.

- October 2003 saw implementation of Hay
- Technical, administrative and managerial staff have been assessed, academic and academic-related staff will be completed by April 2005
- Top level for technical staff is Hay level 5, and for academic staff Hay level 7 (professorial)
- Pay bands determined by job families.
- No annual increments or cost of living rises – all done on performance rating. For example, a level 4 technician may have five set goals each year, and will get a rating from 1 to 4 on if these have been achieved. If 1, gets nothing, not even cost of living. If 2, gets cost of living plus one increment (the norm). If 3, double increment plus cost of living, and if 4, triple increment plus cost of living. This is determined by Head of School (academic) and Technical Manager.
- No progression once reached top of pay band
- University expects increase in pay bill to be <15%
- Level 5 equates to smaller school managers, level 6 to large school managers, level 7 to, for example, Director of Estates
- In School of Biomedical Sciences, 63 technical staff were evaluated, of whom 21 were green circled (job was graded higher on the Hay scale) and 3 were red-circled (Hay resulted in a £3-4K drop, protected for three years).
- Administrative staff, no-one was green-circled, but 10 were red-circled (finance people mostly)
- Appeals mechanism in place: red-circled posts suffer significant pay cuts (£3-4K)

There are hidden extras that follow the assimilation on to the Hay system

- Have to exit interview people who are leaving to get a performance indicator of what they would have got
- Goal setting and monitoring has to take place each year (eg H&S compliance, good housekeeping) for performance review committee
- Recruitment – role profile form has to be submitted for approval
- Extra salary costs from funding bodies may be refused – University is picking up shortfall until October 2004.
- Explanation letters and salary scales have to be sent to funding bodies with grant applications.
- Adverts have to explain possible progression to maximum
- Lots of turmoil and lots of work

Under the National Framework Agreement all Universities have to have a job analysis system by 2006.

Roger Dainty was thanked for his contribution

22/4

Chair's Report

.1

- This was his first year as Chair, and he acknowledged roles played by other committee members, and thanked Ray and Felicity in particular as hosts
- 2000 saw the introduction of the new constitution of UBMA, which is seen as sustainable and effective: UBMA is run by its members for its members
- Noted that Supt-UBMA traffic has diminished (as have some other links)
- There has been a net increase in members, unlike other associations. Membership and the size of UBMA will be discussed under Agenda Item 12.
- John Kent is retiring, so UBMA will need a new membership secretary. Thanks were expressed to John who has put in an enormous amount of work in setting up the mailing lists and keeping records.
- Steady membership means there is a steady income. Funds are building up, and it is up to the membership to decide how these are used.
- Thanks to Anne for last year's minutes.
- Thanks to Ray and Felicity for all their work in organising the event
- The Chair welcomed new members in particular and expressed his hope that

- they would find the opportunities for networking helpful and reassuring
- UBMA's aims are to represent its members' views. It aims to be open to new ideas as an association, as does its committee, and encourages all to take an active part.

.2

Officers available for re-election

Basil Boam (President) is elected for life

All other officers are willing to continue except for the membership secretary

22/5

Membership Secretary's Report

.1

Membership summary

The association now has 72 members (70 full and 2 associate members). This is an increase of 5 since April 2003. Five members have left in the past year, and ten new members have joined. Our membership is spread across 41 universities, with two in the Republic of Ireland and one in Nigeria.

At the time of writing (23 March 2004) there were two other applications in process awaiting reference.

.2

Mail groups

Supt-link, which covers all disciplines, has over 200 members. Supt-bio has been shut down (it only had 12 messages in its last year) It would be possible to set up a discussion group on the Supt-UBMA website

.3

Overseas applications

The member from Lagos came highly recommended. There have been two further applications from Lagos, but references have not yet been received. There was some discussion about overseas members. The constitution does not limit membership to the UK (there are two Irish members) but there was some concern expressed about whether members from too far away could fully benefit from membership.

22/6

Treasurer's Report for year ending 31 December 2003

.1

Targets for the fourth year

1. Maintain book keeping/financial records suitable for audit. (The books were audited on 14 April 2004)
2. Invoice members. This target was not met because of pressure of work (especially as the treasurer hosted the conference). The treasurer proposes to invoice members for two years this year to bring it into line with the subscription year
3. Assist host of conference with financial matters as necessary (this was not necessary as he was the host)
4. Chase members for outstanding payments
5. Close account on 31 December 2003 and prepare report.
6. Assess financial status of association and make recommendations

.2

Income and Expenditure

The treasurer presented a detailed report of the accounts (available to UBMA members on

request) showing a comfortable balance at the end of the year.

.3

Recommendations

The membership fee for this year should remain unchanged unless income generation for other purposes is felt necessary

The treasurer's report was accepted.

22/7

UBMA Representatives Reports

.1

HUBS

Peter Hague attended the HUBS Spring Meeting and AGM held on 7th and 8th April at Dartington Hall, near Totnes, Devon.

Sessions covered included

- Supporting and promoting science education in schools and universities
- Recruiting students to study biology and promoting career opportunities in Biosciences
- Careers opportunities in Biosciences

Points of note

- HUBS joined the Biosciences Federation in August to become a full member
- Under AOB Peter explained the role of UBMA and urged the Heads present to encourage their Technical Managers to join UBMA and to make funds available for them to attend UBMA's meetings. The secretary, Professor David Coates said he would circulate the UBMA web address to HUBS members

Summary

Peter felt it was useful to have attended. The Heads realise the value of technical support in teaching and research. Many discussions involved technical support to which Peter could contribute and therefore raise the profile of UBMA. His comments were respected and promoted discussion. Peter suggested that a reciprocal arrangement could be set up with a HUBS executive committee member attend UBMA – this was positively received by HUBS. Peter felt it would be useful to maintain the contact to raise the profile of UBMA.

The meeting thanked Peter for attending HUBS and for his report.

.3

Biosciences Federation (formerly UKLSKC)

Alison Bates is UBMA's representative. Alison has not been invited to any meetings, but she admitted to not being proactive due to pressure of work and suggested someone else should take on the role. John Robinson said that the Federation is focussing on signing up organisations for the sum of £1 per head He suggested UBMA ought to sign up, Alan Willcocks agreed

Items 22/7.2 and 7.4 were postponed to the following day

This part of the meeting closed at 12.15

Presentation

'How good bacteria turn bad - regulation of gene expression'

Dr David Clarke, Molecular Biology, University of Bath

Dr Clarke gave a fascinating presentation on how bacterial gene expression is affected by eukaryotic host and by environment changes. For example, the main cause of bacterial food poisoning in the UK (approx 100K cases a year) is *Campylobacter*, which exist as commensals in the guts of chickens without causing any problems. Bacteria on a solid surface form bio films, which occur naturally in the environment. However, they can cause clinical problems

- surgical implants such as valves, catheters etc
- dental plaque which consists of various species of bacteria
- lung infections in cystic fibrosis sufferers

Bio films

There are five stages in the formation of bio films: aggregation, micro colony formation, maturation leading to three-dimensional structures, detachment. Gene expression is different in each of these five stages. 15% of the genes of *E.coli* are differentially expressed between the free-living and the bio film form

The 3D structures are especially important, for example, because they make it difficult to treat with drugs.

There are sensor proteins that respond to different parameters and response regulators. These can result in the formation of, for example, polysaccharide building blocks such as colanic acid, which is needed for the maturation stage of the bio film, forming the 3D structures.

It is known that the gene RcsC is required for bio film maturation. Microarray systems have been used to compare wild-type and RcsC- strains to identify the genes involved, as well as genes already known about. Identifying and inhibiting the pathways involved may be important for future drug development.

Response to different eukaryotic hosts – mutualism and pathogenicity

Have been using *Photorhabdus*, an insect killer, which lives harmlessly in nematodes during their infective juvenile stage. When the insect is infected, the insect dies rapidly, the bacteria grow, and the nematode juveniles feed on the bacteria. Eventually juvenile nematodes are released.

It is possible to inject bacteria into insects in the lab
It is possible to feed nematodes on bacteria on agar plates in the lab.
It is possible to isolate mutants of *Photorhabdus* that aren't symbiotic, or aren't pathogenic and compare these with wild-types. It was assumed genes for symbiosis are different from the ones involved in pathogenicity BUT the pmr operon was found to be necessary for both systems

The meeting thanked Dr Clarke

13.00 LUNCH in Trade Exhibition area

14.00 Breakout sessions

The following sessions were held in the afternoon with the facilitators who would report back to the meeting the following morning. Members were invited to sign up for the two sessions of most interest to them during the lunch break.

1	Core Services	Peter Crosby
2	Safety Officers	Joyce Macmillan
3	Job performance	Robert Campbell
4	Hay/HERA	Haydn Morris

Tea and biscuits in Trade Exhibition area

15.30 Town – Roman Baths

19.30 Conference Dinner

Thursday 15 April 2004

AGM and Association Business

Part 2 of the AGM started at 09.15

7.2

NABBS

John Dwyer did not attend but obtained an overview of the last meeting of NABBS (National Association of Biological and Biochemical Superintendents). Its membership is approximately 30, and 20-25 attended the meeting

Talks included:

- Safety update – latest legislation and Sheffield's view
- Hay pay and reward scheme, and Sheffield's progress
- HEEp / eProcurement – Sheffield is at the forefront in the development of this rival to Science Warehouse, which is proving popular with suppliers
- SRIF procurement with particular reference to procurement of equipment/services for SRIF projects, including an insight into the future and advice on the best way to formulate bids (this was presented by a HEFCE auditor)
- Disaster contingency – a requirement for all businesses including universities and usually insisted upon by insurance companies
- Environmental achievements – legislation and implementation

It was asked if there would be further interaction between NABBS and UBMA. Currently Roger Dainty (a NABBS member) attends UBMA and John Dwyer attends NABBS. It was John's view that NABBS might like to collaborate over certain issues, for example by holding a joint meeting, but not the joining of the two associations. John was thanked for his report.

7.4

HESDA and IST

Bob Hardwick is the President, John Robinson is the Chair and Mandy Taylor the Secretary of the IST (Institute of Science Technology). Bob has been granted money by HESDA (Higher Education Staff Development Agency) to produce a skills development programme. He is looking at other relevant courses to be brought in under this umbrella. This CPD programme is available on-line (jointly funded by HESDA and IST). It has been tested on technicians in Exeter and has been well received. In John's opinion it is a good overall package and should be useful in future.

IST is reviewing the national framework of NVQ1-3. There is no technical NVQ available at this time, but IST is submitting an application of a formal training programme to lead to a NVQ in technical competence. IST organises regular conferences on technical staff development. More information about events and training programmes is available on <http://www.istonline.org.uk/>

The following points arose out of questions and discussion

- CPD is aimed at new technicians who may have a degree but little practical experience. It takes 40 hours a year for three years for full corporate membership and a further three years for fellowship. An NVQ is attractive for school leavers working in labs. It is a technical certificate similar to City and Guilds and provides a breadth of basic lab training refocused to fit into the NVQ framework.
- VQ programme is being used in Scotland as an integral part of training for

modern apprentices. VQ could apply to technicians at many levels – 2,3,4 (Robert Campbell)

- Bob Hardwick is in discussion with the Leadership Foundation (LF), an initiative from Universities UK to build managerial/leadership skills for senior managers
- HESDA is relocating to London and Bob isn't moving with them, but LF wants to keep HESDA 's work going. Bob is retiring but he wants to put bids into the LF to keep the technical programme going.
- IST and technical development could be a topic for future meetings

The meeting thanked John Robinson for his report

22/8

Election of Committee Members

The following officers were re-elected unopposed

Chair	Alan Willcocks proposed by John Dwyer, seconded by Audrey Jeffries
Secretary	Anne MacMahon proposed by Jon Dwyer, seconded by Audrey Jeffries
Treasurer	Mark Cosgrove, proposed by John Dwyer, seconded by John Robinson

Membership Secretary (John Kent is retiring) Steve Parker was nominated by John Dwyer and seconded by Peter Hague. There were no other nominations so Steve was elected unopposed

Committee members

John Dwyer and Audrey were willing to stand for re-election and were re-elected unopposed

John was nominated by John Robinson, seconded by Joyce Macmillan
Audrey was nominated by John Dwyer and seconded by Mark Cosgrove

Auditors

Alison Bates and Jayne Bromley were re-elected unopposed (both proposed by John Robinson and seconded by John Dwyer and Audrey Jeffries respectively). There were no nominations or volunteers to act as a third auditor

22/9

UBMA Representatives

.1

HUBS representative

Peter Hague was nominated by John Dwyer, seconded by Dave Diggins. **Agreed**

.2

NABBS representative

John Dwyer was nominated by the committee – NABBS has set a condition that they want a member of the UBMA committee to attend. John Dwyer will continue. **Agreed** as long as he goes! It was asked whether it would be possible to send a replacement if someone cannot go? **John Dwyer will ask the NABBS committee.**

.3

Biosciences Federation (formerly UKLSC)

Alison Bates felt she wouldn't have the time to continue as UBMA representative. John Robinson was nominated by John Dwyer and seconded by Robert Campbell because Professor Nancy Rothwell of University of Manchester is a member of the Federation's executive committee. This was **agreed**

Membership of the BF was discussed and it was **agreed** that the secretary and John Robinson should look into this

22/10

Changes to Constitution

.1

Subscription – amendment to Rule 8

Old wording:

8 Subscriptions

The Committee shall set a subscription rate and annual date of renewal. This decision shall not take effect until confirmed at the subsequent annual meeting.

New wording:

8 Subscriptions

The subscription year will run from 1st January at a subscription rate set at the previous annual meeting.

This change was **AGREED**

.2

Annual Conference financial arrangements amendment to Rule 10

Add the word *normally* in 10b so it reads 'The financial arrangements for the conference shall normally be handled through the host university and in accordance with its financial regulations.'

This change was **AGREED**

22/11

Subscription for 2005

Mark recommended this should continue as £20. This was **AGREED**

22/12

Recruitment

There are 100 Higher Education institutions, of which UBMA represents approximately 40. Much discussion took place about whether UBMA should stay as it is, or recruit new members and/or combine with other groups, listed below as bullet points

- Alan Willcocks met Mark Lane, Chair of BUCLAS (British University Chemistry Laboratory Administrators and Superintendents) which has 30 members, of whom 15 attended its meeting. Given the decline of Chemistry, its numbers are dwindling. Do we want to merge?
- Caution was expressed about getting too big for conferences, would rather see Bioscientists from other institutions not represented at UBMA
- Idea to have joint meetings to discuss shared issues such as Hay/HERA, but there could then be separate sessions for UBMA/BUCLAS. The University administrators' group manages with over 1000 members
- Too large a meeting might be unmanageable
- If we want to raise our profile we have to increase membership. It is possible to have meetings of 500
- If BUCLAS is in a shrinking part of the education system then they would be grateful if someone else would help
- This is a strategic decision – we are happy with our meetings as they are, but we do need to grow if we are to have a voice. It is possible to host conferences with a thousand members. Indeed, the funds would increase so conference organisers could be bought in
- Have to expand to increase power. What about Europe (eg France/Germany)?

- We should increase our membership, but should we bring in other disciplines?
- Biosciences bring in sponsorship, would other organisations be piggybacking on our success?
- We only represent 40 institutions, we could still recruit other bioscientists alongside working with other groups
- Perhaps we could hold more than one meeting a year, one AGM, but possible regional meetings on a 6 monthly basis (eg northern/southern for one day)

The Chair summarised the discussion. The consensus is that UBMA wants a bioscience representative from all universities (have 40 out of 100). Could look at Europe as well. People don't want to actually merge with other disciplines, but the links could be increased and there could be joint meetings. A merger would need a change to the constitution which would involve formal notice.

It is clear that this needs more debate over some time. It was requested that the committee discusses this, investigates links with BUCLAS and reports back. It was proposed that funds could be used to send Mandy to BUCLAS. This was seconded.

22/13

Use of UBMA funds

Suggestions included

- Paying someone to prepare a database of prospective members by interrogating university websites
- Each member could then approach one university – may need appropriate flyer
- Subsidising people who have trouble getting funding (people can already do this – it was suggested this should be on the reservation form in future)
- Prizes for young technicians to generate more publicity
- New, glossy promotional literature

It was **AGREED** the committee would discuss these suggestions, bearing in mind the sums are relatively small

22/14

Future Meetings

.1

UBMA

Dublin was confirmed as the venue for 2005, Wednesday to Friday 30 March to 1st April. Thanks to Michael O'Sullivan and Michelle Finnegan.

Aberdeen was confirmed as the venue for 2006 (probably a Wed/Thu/Fri) host Audrey Jeffries.

.2

Joint conference

It was proposed that UBMA, NABBS, BUCLAS and the Engineers could hold a one-day conference in the Midlands, perhaps convened by Bob Hardwick and associates (depending on HESDA), with speakers such as the Minister of Science, the HE minister, HEFCE. **The Chair and Secretary would contact other organisations to investigate feasibility/support.**

22/15

Any other business

.1

HUBS

It was proposed a HUBS representative be invited to attend UBMA meetings. This was **AGREED**, and **Peter was asked to approach HUBS**

.2

Farewell to John Kent

John Robinson moved a vote of thanks to John Kent, who is retiring. John Kent set up the mailing groups including Supt-link, started the UBMA website, and set up the membership database. Apart from these highly visible and valuable contributions to UBMA, John R personally has found John K to be a source of calm, measured, helpful opinion. He asked the meeting to join him in expressing his best wishes to John

The AGM closed at 1030h

1045

Feedback from Breakout sessions (chaired by John Kent)

Core Services presented by Peter Crosby

General agreement was that core services are a good thing BUT

- Cost recovery an issue. Some provide a free service, others charge. Some recover costs for consumables, but don't build in costs for replacement of capital equipment such as autoclaves, glassware washers, for which money has to be found
- Equipment replacement (eg autoclaves, centrifuges) are not very 'sexy' for getting funds, but they should be included in grant applications
- Stores – most had central stores, with implications for provision of space and staff. Some used suppliers to control enzyme stocks
- Invoices – in Ireland grant-providing bodies ask directly for invoices. Most organisations buy in stock and 'sell it' to others

General preference to have core services. Everyone has their own way of doing things. The government is pressing for full economic cost recovery in universities from 2005, which will mean more money coming from funding bodies from 2005

Safety Officers presented by Joyce Macmillan

Seven of the discussion group were safety officers/advisers of whom only three had had any formal training (to a high level at Lancaster)

All universities represented had a safety office, responsible for writing policy, giving advice and keeping up to date with legislation. Only one member of the discussion group had a job description and was paid an honorarium for the safety role. Some safety advisers wrote policy.

A lot of safety advisers now seem to be technical staff rather than academics, but it was of concern that the Hay system does not give them much credit for this. There is generally no budget for safety issues, although it was felt money was spent as needed. There was concern that technical staff advisers might be ignored by principal safety advisers and by senior academic staff unless they are given the support of the Head of School or Department to allow them to be effective.

Training was an issue, and Bath should be congratulated on introducing a professional training scheme

Job Performance presented by Robert Campbell

The discussion focussed on managing performance and the evaluation of jobs. It is apparent this happens everywhere but with different styles. The review process has been happening in English universities for some time (appraisal is now called performance review). At Glasgow it has been optional for a couple of years but will be compulsory for new staff.

Performance and development reviews involve one stage in some places, but a two-stage process is possible. The feeling was that performance reviews happen when chatting with staff, and should not be drowned out by paperwork. Formal reviews are a management tool therefore paperwork is probably necessary. Nevertheless, forms are not important, the information conveyed is important, that is the two or three points that emerge. Normal performance and development review should take place on a day-to-day basis, it can involve others, but it should be embedded into the management process.

Academics may have line-management responsibility in research labs, but the overall infrastructure is the responsibility of the Chief Technician. At Glasgow, academic staff have been educated to keep out of the running of the teaching labs. Conflicting demands of research and teaching needs a Chief Technician to co-ordinate this and make it work. How this is managed will be different everywhere.

Attitudes may change with the onset of Hay/HERA and the relationships between technicians and chief technicians may change because salaries are involved.

The point was made that HEFCE has made a formal appraisal system a requirement but the current appraisal system is to identify training and development needs. The points system for performance related pay would be very different (for example, under Hay, performance reviews are directly linked to pay). Training and development needs are related to performance reviews, but it is important to keep these separate from performance related pay.

HERA/Hay presented by Haydn Morris

The discussion was dominated by the concrete example of the experience at Nottingham and included details of the work involved in maintaining the position of technical staff and doing the best for them. Didn't discuss the implications for managers.

Various points came out of the discussion

- Lack of transparency, although analytical, 90% of posts done by whole-job matching in committee
- Can any scheme adequately reward technical skills? Experience at Nottingham suggested yes
- Terminology reflects blue book BUT also allows a specialist to achieve a high level without line management responsibility
- Southampton found HERA would reward technical staff better than Hay
- Nottingham has set up its own pay schemes – may be unique (apart from Birmingham)
- There is a 51-point salary scale. Some will be on technical scale, some on academic –related, but all will be measured by the same system
- Performance related pay – the 51 points are grouped in blocks, may be incremental progression within a block
- Writing job descriptions for evaluation will require training to ensure people are put on correct band on pay scale

At Glasgow 2.5K jobs were evaluated, 111 appealed. Of these, 34 were heard and only 1 upgraded. If jobs change in the 18 months since the job descriptions were written, this won't be taken into account until the next stage when it is possible to apply for re-grading.

There was general concern about the lack of transparency, various reports of problems in different institutions and lack of knowledge and experience in the sector. Role analysis is about the post, not the person

The discussion ended at 1130 for coffee and biscuits

Presentation

'Why Study Behaviour?'

Dr Tamas Szekely, Evolutionary Biologist, University of Bath

Dr Szekely gave a fascinating and very entertaining presentation on studying animal behaviour, focussing on the Kentish plover.

Darwin developed the theory of natural selection, but also noticed sexual selection (for example, the peacock's tail, stag antlers, birdsong). He made some observations about the polygamous ruff, in which species the male is very pugnacious and larger than the female. However, painted snipes (a related species) and some other shore birds, the females are larger and more colourful and the males are more devoted to the care of the

young.

Dr Szekely chose the Kentish plover for study, a shorebird widely distributed in the world (except in Kent). There are two approaches to studying behaviour

- Model organism approach – have an idea and choose a species to study
- Natural history approach – choose an interesting species and find a suitable idea

Dr Szekely started his work in Hungary and found that plovers change breeding sites, and change their mates whilst changing sites. Eventually he moved to a site in South Turkey, Lake Tizla, with about a thousand birds. The work involves trapping and ringing the birds. 60-90% of the eggs don't hatch due to predation

A mobile hide was developed to assist with the work (with the adroit use of a bicycle)

Discovered the birds would incorporate rubbish in their nest materials (eg pebbles, dried twigs) and would precisely regulate the amount of 'rubbish' in their nest, increasing them during the day and removing some at night. If nest materials were removed by hand, the parents would put them back in the nest. If more 'rubbish' was added, it would be removed by the parents.

They also learned that the female incubates mostly during the day and the male at night, but they still don't know what determines the division of the sex roles

Clutch size is normally three eggs (compared with most waders which lay 4 eggs). If the clutch size was manipulated to give a larger clutch size then there was an increase in incubation time.

Brood care – plover chicks are precocial. The parents brood and attend the chicks but they do not feed them. Instead they take them to the lakeshore or to the salt marsh. On the lakeshore, families get crowded together resulting in lots of fights between families for territory. Chicks often get killed in fights. Parents stay with chicks longer on the lake shore than on the salt marsh. On the salt marsh, the female tends to desert the family and leave the male with the chicks.

The male has breast bands. Looked for evidence of an effect on mating success by manipulating the width of these bands using dye, but it made no difference

The females often desert the family before the chicks are mature, and shortly after deserting she will pair up with a new male

The population is male-biased. The birth rate is 1:1, but early chicks are mostly male, and later ones are mostly female. Females are more likely to die than the males.

Mating systems are mostly monogamous, but about 8% raise a chick unrelated to the male or female parent. Where the chicks are fathered by another male, the father and mother are genetically related, thus in-breeding depression is avoided

The Future

Will be looking at the interactions between parents, mate choice and parental care
Will also look at conservation

Future research will include

- Lapwing research in Wales
- Madagascar plover
- Malaysian and Javan plover
- Global changes in wetlands

Why study evolutionary biology?

- Good model system to investigate a particular problem
- Very common and thus easily accessible
- Easy to work with in nature or lab, ie easy to keep and/or experimentally manipulate
- Because behaviour is exciting!

The meeting expressed its thanks to Dr Szekely for his beautifully illustrated and interesting talk.

Closing remarks and vote of thanks

Anne MacMahon thanked Ray and Felicity for organising the conference. Again, there had been a wide range of experience, from the visit to the Roman parts of Bath, and beautiful Bath itself through to cutting edge molecular biology, anchored by gritty issues such as safety and Hay and HERA. Even the weather was wonderful as was the conference dinner in particular. Thanks to Ray, Felicity and the staff at the University of Bath.

Ray thanked Felicity and Chris, and also the purchasing team at Bath

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