

MINUTES FOR MEETING
OF
HEADS OF SCOTTISH CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENTS

held at the University of Edinburgh on
Thursday 22nd January 2004

Attending:

Professor R A Pethrick, University of Strathclyde
Professor D Gani, SHEFC
Professor R F Howe, University of Aberdeen
Professor S K Chapman, University of Edinburgh
Dr Paul Kong, Robert Gordon University
Professor K G McKendrick, Heriot Watt University
Professor N Richardson, St. Andrews University
Professor C Gilmore, University of Glasgow
Dr J A Anderson, University of Dundee
Dr G Walker, University of Abertay
Dr. Jim McDonald, Napier University
Dr H Rendall, University of Paisley

Apologies:

Libby Steele, Royal Society of Chemistry

1. Minutes of the meeting of the 23rd May 2003

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Scottish Qualifications Authority Review of Chemistry

Professor Pethrick reported that he had a meeting in December with Mary Hoey of the Scottish Qualifications Authority. During that meeting Mary indicated that consultants were currently involved in the creation of outline curricula for revised Higher and Advanced Chemistry courses. It is anticipated that the first drafts will be available for consultation in April/May. Consultation is currently taking place through the local sections of the Royal Society of Chemistry, however it was felt appropriate that a more formal recognition of the Heads of Scottish Chemistry Departments Committee would be appropriate. Action: Professor Pethrick to contact Mary Hoey and attempt to arrange a meeting with nominees from the various Chemistry Departments to meet with Mary Hoey.

3. Discussions with Professor David Gani, SHEFC

Professor Pethrick introduced Professor Gani and indicated that the group would be interested to have guidance on issues which relate to the Research Quality Assessment, the level of funding for students taking Chemistry and issues relating to the future health of chemistry in Scotland. Professor Gani indicated that he wished to have an off the record discussion of a number of issues and the details of these will not be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The discussions can be summarised as follows:

Research Quality Assessment

Professor Gani indicated that he would be involved in the discussions of the Roberts report and that the guidelines would be released in the near future. He was not able to indicate at this time the form or the nature of the criteria which would be used, but indicated that quality was seen as the important issue in judging the profile of a department or subject group. Multi-university presentations at the next RQA would be acceptable within a designated assessment area.

Funding of Teaching and Learning

Professor Gani indicated that this was not his responsibility, however he reassured the audience that there was an awareness within the Scottish Executive of the importance of chemistry as a key factor in the sustainability of all of the key initiatives currently being promoted. He indicated that the panel will endeavour to ensure that the importance of sustaining chemistry as a key provider was not lost in any discussions of the future of disciplines in the Scottish context. There is a current funding review and he would hope that the sciences would maintain their profile and relevance to the Scottish economy in those discussions.

Opportunities for Future Funding

Professor Gani indicated that he was aware of the many differences between the funding models used in England and Wales and those used in Scotland. There were areas where it would be more difficult to identify funding opportunities and others where funding would be more available within Scotland. The main thrust of all the Scottish initiatives was the achievement of *inclusiveness, enhancement and sustainability*. There were various opportunities for collaborative bids through the SRDG mechanism, but the competition was high and the benefits for Scotland had to be clearly established. Last year there were over £65M worth of bids against a pot of money of £10M. From this funding several consortia were created which have produced a step wise increase in activity in a range of areas which will impact on the Scottish economy.

Chemistry in Scotland.

The geography of Scotland favours the idea of collaboration between various Universities. SHEFC were in favour of such arrangements and the pooling of activities within the area of chemistry was discussed. It was appreciated that the form this might take and the nature of such arrangements could be influenced by the outcome of the Roberts report. It was agreed that another meeting of the group of Heads of Chemistry Departments would be arranged once the report had been published and its implications had been discussed within the various Departments.

Action: Professor Pethrick to consult and arrange a follow-up meeting to discuss the implications of Roberts for Scotland. Professor Gani would be advised as to the result of these discussions and, if appropriate, invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

4. Date of next meeting

To be arranged.