

## **COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS**

Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at 2:00 pm on **Tuesday 2nd March 2010** in the Greaves Room, Pathology, Tennis Court Road.

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Barrie, Professor T W Clyne, Dr P Duffett-Smith, Dr M Fiore, Dr S Fulton, Professor R Horgan, Dr J Keeler, Dr M Mason, Dr R Padman, Professor S Redfern, Professor D Ritchie, Dr S Russell, Professor J Secord, Mr N Donnelly, and Mrs E Oliver (Secretary).

Apologies: Mr F Floether, Professor H Griffiths, Dr C Schwiening.

### **523) MINUTES**

A query was raised with reference to External Examiners reports and the responsibility of the Management Committee with regard to the recommendations made. It was explained that the Management Committee's role in this regard was to look for Natural Science Tripos-wide issues. Departments and Faculties considered relevant reports and the Education Section also reviewed the reports and associated Departmental responses for the General Board's Education Committee. Changes made as a result of comments by External Examiners are also reported by Departments in their annual quality updates which are reported to the Education Committee.

It was agreed that it would be helpful if the respective roles of the Management Committee/Schools/Faculties/Departments could be clarified, particularly with regard to some of the more complex issues. The terms of reference had been discussed following re-organisation of the committees but it would be timely to clarify the roles. The topic of relative difficulty of Part II subjects was also raised. This had been discussed by the Strategic Committee in the past and it had been agreed that subjects differed widely and that to impose common criteria would not be easy to attempt. All subjects operated within certain common guidelines and the role of the Management Committee was to look out for trends within subjects that appeared inappropriate.

**Action:** Chairman and Secretary to prepare a document clarifying respective roles.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2010 were approved.

### **524) MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

A summary sheet of action points and matters arising (**CM.609**) was circulated. It was noted that the member from Physics on the Course Management Committee for Scientific Computing would be Dr Richard Ansorge and not Dr Rachael Padman.

A copy of a memo from the Head of Student Administration and Records (SARS) relating to publication of class lists was circulated (**CM.610**). The procedure seemed to be slightly at variance with what had originally been planned. The Chairman reported that he had discussed the contents of the memo with the head of SARS who had clarified the position regarding time of publication and had provided reassurance that the new procedure would work.

### **525) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD**

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.611**). It included:

- Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty of Biology, Biological Sciences Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 (**CM.612**).
- Minutes of the meeting of the School of the Physical Sciences, Physical Sciences Education Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2010 (**CM.613**).
- Minutes of the meeting of the Systems Biology Planning Group held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2009 (**CM.614**).

#### **526) CHANGE OF TITLE FOR MATERIALS SCIENCE AND METALLURGY IN PARTS IB, II AND III.**

An email from the Secretary of the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry was circulated (**CM.615**) which reported the approval of the proposal by which 'Materials Science and Metallurgy' in Parts IB, II and III will become 'Materials Science' with effect from October 2010. It was confirmed that this was only a change of title and not a change of curriculum and that accreditation of the course by the Institute of Materials would not be affected. The Committee approved the changes of title.

**Action:** Secretary to report approval to the Education Committee and prepare changes to Regulations and an entry for the Reporter.

#### **527) PART IA EXAMINATIONS**

The Chairman of the Part IA Examiners had noted an apparent anomaly between the number of written examinations for each subject in Part IA. Mathematics was the only subject to have two written papers whereas all other subjects had only one written paper. He had asked the Committee to consider whether the structure of the Part IA Mathematics examinations was therefore appropriate and wondered whether Mathematics may wish to change the current structure. Professor Horgan explained that this had been discussed previously both within NST and by the Faculty Board of Mathematics. The reduced weighting of the Mathematics subject was out of the hands of the Mathematics Department but the method of examining was discussed on a regular basis within the Department who were keen to keep the discussion open. Mathematics did have two written papers but had no practical examinations unlike other Part IA subjects. The present structure was felt by the Department to provide the most appropriate coverage of the subject matter. Related examination matters were discussed; such as the amount of choice of questions, resource issues, and the possibility of increasing papers in certain subjects. An increase in the number of examinations was not likely to be favoured by students although reduced choice in core material questions at Part IA was not thought to be a problem. In summary, Mathematics would take the comments on board and consider them as part of their ongoing review.

#### **528) CARET COURSE TOOLS PROJECT**

An update on progress on the project was provided by CARET (**CM.616**). The NST had a particularly complex structure and such a tool would be most helpful when re-designing courses or introducing new courses. It was important that the project maintained its focus on the timetabling aspect, including location of lectures, which would provide a basis for consideration of new and shared courses. Lecture Explorer was not felt to be as important. The Education Section was also involved in the strategic direction of the project and was keen to ensure that it focussed on the required areas.

#### **529) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A paper was tabled (**CM.617**) containing a request from the Department of Earth Sciences to withdraw Part IB Mineral Sciences from October 2010. Earth Sciences

would no longer be involved in the teaching of the Mineral Sciences component of Part IA Materials from October 2010 and as a consequence the Department is looking at how to reorganise and restructure teaching. The Department is also looking to discontinue teaching Part II and Part III Minerals Sciences as a separate subset of Part II and III Geological Sciences and to integrate Mineral Science topics into Geological Science at these levels. The number of students taking the IB component was small, with a maximum of 14 over the last 7 years, and a request to discontinue was therefore understandable as the course would not be viable in the long term. The timing of the withdrawal was however of some concern as it was felt that there may be students currently taking IA Materials and Mineral Sciences who may wish to continue to Part IB Mineral Sciences next year. Consideration should be given as to whether Part IB should run for a further academic year and what effect this would have on Part II and Part III. The Secretary had consulted with Directors of Studies and whereas there was support for the removal of the IB option, some had felt that adequate warning had not been given and some reported students expressing an interest in taking IB Mineral Sciences in 2010-11. The Faculty Board had confirmed its support for the withdrawal and the School supported the withdrawal from a resources standpoint. A view was now needed from the Management Committee so that approval for discontinuation of Part IB could be sought from the General Board's Education Committee; given the short notice this approval should not be relied upon. It was agreed that eligible IA students should be consulted and advised that Part II and Part III would not continue in their present form. The recommendation to the General Board would be that the proposal was supported by the Management Committee on the grounds that the small number does not justify the resources employed but with a caveat on the timing.

*Following the Management Committee meeting current students of IA Materials and Mineral Science were informally consulted. More than 10 students expressed interest in taking the subject at IB. The Department has therefore reconsidered its request and would now like discontinuation of Part IB Minerals Science to take effect from October 2011. The Committee is therefore deemed to have agreed to this proposal given that its only concern was the timing.*

**Action:** Secretary to prepare paper for GB Education Committee.

### **530) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting shall take place at **2:00 pm** on **Tuesday, 4th May 2010** in the Seminar Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Department of Pathology, Tennis Court Road.