

GENERAL BOARD OF THE FACULTIES

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at **2.15pm** on **Tuesday 6 May 2003** in the Old Schools' Syndicate Room.

Present: Dr J Keeler (Chairman), Dr W Allison, Dr S Hand, Dr N Holmes, Dr K Johnstone, Dr J Miller, Dr J Riley, Professor J Secord, Mr K Shiels, Dr I Wilson, Dr N Woodcock, Dr MG Worster, Mr J Zwart and Dr MG Russell (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor TW Clyne, Dr A Findlay, Dr K Plaisted and Dr B Shachar-Hill.

138. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 11 March 2003 were approved.

139. MATTERS ARISING NOT APPEARING ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

Under minute 134, the Chairman reported that the NST Mathematics Committee had been asked to provide advice to Directors of Studies on suitable preparation for the mathematics courses; no reply had yet been received. The changes to regulations for the abolition of the *m* qualifier were to be considered by the General Board at their next meeting.

Under minute 135, the Chairman also reported that the names of those members of the Committee willing to consider Access material had been communicated to the Mature Students' Working Group.

140. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

The Committee received a paper of reported business for information (**CM.183**), which included:

- *Reporter* Notice: Calculators in Examinations (**CM.184**)
- Minutes of the Strategic Committee for the NST, 11 February and 25 February 2003 (**CM.185**)

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the inclusion of a new calculator with pre-programmed physical constants and to the Strategic Committee's ongoing discussions of Part II (General) and cohort tracking.

Under minute 114 of the Strategic Committee, it was reported that, in the context of revision of biological teaching at Part IB, the Biological Sciences Committee had recently concluded that there was no perceived need or motivation for a radical redesign of the teaching programme of the Faculty.

141. PART IB PHYSICS AND ADVANCED PHYSICS

The Committee received a letter, dated 29 April 2003, from the Chairman of the Teaching Committee in the Department of Physics, outlining changes to structure of their Part IB courses and a Notice outlining the required changes to regulations to Part IB and Part II (General) of the Tripos (**CM.186**). It noted that the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry and the Strategic Committee were supportive of the proposals.

Dr Allison outlined the proposals, highlighting that the revised structure of teaching would bring the physics courses more in line with other subjects at Part IB level (in terms of workload and examinations) and would make the courses more attractive to those students wishing to combine physics (single or double subject) with other experimental sciences. He reminded the Committee that these changes were part of a wider plan of extensive revision of

all physics courses, which began last year with the revision of Part IA Physics. He confirmed that students would still be required to read Physics and Advanced Physics to be suitably prepared for Part II Experimental and Theoretical Physics. **The Committee approved of the changes to the courses and agreed to recommend the changes to regulations to the General Board.**

The Committee also noted the hours of practical work (36 hours per year) associated with each course and that there was considerable variance across Part IB of the Tripos. It noted recent discussions at the Biological Sciences Committee, where practical classes and times and their effects of teaching load and resources had been raised as an issue. **The Committee agreed that there need not be uniform practice across the Tripos, but that course management committees should ensure that the practical work was appropriate to the subject. Nevertheless, it further agreed that it would be useful to review data on practical work and assessment in Parts IA and IB of the Tripos, to establish whether there were serious discrepancies.**

142. TRIPOS TRANSFER INTO PART III OF THE TRIPOS

The Committee received an email, dated 28 April 2003, from the Chairman of the Teaching Committee of the Department of Physics regarding Tripos transfers into Part III of the Tripos (from a different Part II subject in the NST or from another Tripos altogether) (CM.187). It noted that, currently, students are not allowed to read Part III of the Tripos unless they have read Part II or Part II (General) of the Natural Sciences Tripos (*no subject specified*) and obtained honours, *and* attained an “appropriate standard”, defined by the relevant Faculty Board at Part IB of the Natural Sciences Tripos (or another approved course) (Regulation 5 of the Tripos).

The Committee acknowledged that the Department of Physics would appreciate a more flexible approach to the admission of students to Part III than the regulation 5 of the Tripos currently allowed but **agreed that the consideration of *ad hominem* cases would be more appropriate than redefining the regulations.** The Secretary undertook to consult with the Draftsman over a redrafting of regulation 5, in order to allow Faculty Boards to grant permission to admit students to Part III of the Tripos as appropriate.

143. EXAMINATION SCRIPTS AND SCRIPT BOOKLETS

The Committee received a letter, dated 28 April 2003, from Mr Dixon of the Board of Examinations regarding the possible introduction of examination booklets (CM.188) and copies of the examination booklets currently available and **agreed it would not be appropriate to recommend their introduction across the Tripos.** The Committee noted that the booklets were more suited to essay-type questions and suggested that their availability be brought to the attention of Senior Examiners at their first meeting each year.

144. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm on Tuesday 10 June 2003** in the Old Schools' Meeting Room.