

## 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 11 March 2003** in the Old Schools' Meeting Room.

Present: Dr J Keeler (Chairman), Dr W Allison, Dr A Findlay, Dr K Johnstone, Dr J Miller, Dr K Plaisted, Dr J Secord, Dr B Shachar-Hill, 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 S Hand, Dr N Holmes and Dr J Riley

#### 131. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4 February 2003 were approved.

#### 132. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

The Committee received a paper of reported business for information (**CM.175**), which included:

- *Reporter* Notice: revisions to class list (**CM.176**)
- Undergraduate Prospectus 2004-05: NST entry (**CM.177**)
- Minutes of a meeting of the Directors of Studies in Biological Sciences (**CM.178**)
- Undergraduate FTEs loads per subject in the NST (**CM.179**)

It noted the points regarding the Part II allocations procedure and revision of the Part II (General) course raised in the minutes of the Directors of Studies in Biological Sciences (**CM.178**) and actions that had already been taken in these areas.

#### 133. CLASSING IN PART IA OF THE TRIPOS (minute 125)

At the meeting on 4 February 2003, the Committee had a detailed discussion on the marking and classing procedures currently adopted for Part IA of the Tripos and some broad alternatives. The Committee agreed that the Chairman and Secretary would consult with the Draftsman to produce a number of options for further consideration and now received a paper on comparison of examination candidates in Part IA of the Tripos (2002) (**CM.180**).

The Committee focussed its consideration over the means by which subjects should be compared to one another (point 2 of the paper) in the light of the data provided. It noted that assigning Baxter scores (or classes) to individual subjects and summing to produce an overall "mark" would produce clusters of students rather than an order-of-merit, but that such a method would place undue emphasis on class boundaries at a subject level. It further noted that adjusting raw marks at a subject level to conform to a common mean and standard deviation was an attractive option but that it was unclear at this stage whether this would offer any real improvements on the current method of piecewise linear scaling.

The Committee concluded that producing an overall mark and class corresponded with the aims of providing an integrated science course in the first year and the Tripos and **agreed that producing an aggregate mark and assigning classes to candidates should be retained**. The method by which an aggregate mark and class was arrived at, however, was yet to be determined.

**The Committee agreed to request that Senior Examiners for Part IA of the NST be asked to provide the Secretary with raw marks for all candidates for their paper, in addition to the marks (for NST candidates only) ordinarily provided to the Chairman of Examiners.**

These raw marks would be used to carry out a comparison between the current method of subject mark adjustment (piecewise linear scaling) and normalisation to a common mean and standard deviation. The resulting data would be reviewed by a Working Party of the Committee. **The Committee agreed that the Working Party would consist of Dr James Keeler, Dr Keith Johnstone, Dr Nigel Woodcock, Dr Grae Worster and Dr Matthew Russell**, who would report to the Committee at the meeting on 25 November 2003. Further consideration of ways to produce an overall mark and class would be discussed further at that time.

**134. THE USE OF THE *m* QUALIFIER ON THE PART IA CLASS-LIST**  
(minute 103iia)

At their meeting on 22 October 2002, the Committee discussed the use and relevance of the *m* qualifier on the class list (to indicate whether students could proceed to read NST Part IB Mathematics) in terms of its current and historical usage and the role of College Directors of Studies in advising students. The Committee agreed to defer discussion on whether to retain the qualifier until the views of the Faculty Board of Mathematics and the Department of Physics were known.

The Committee now received replies from the Faculty Board of Mathematics and the Department of Physics (**CM.182**) and noted that they both agreed that the use of the *m* qualifier in the class-list should be discontinued and that clear advice should be provided to Directors of Studies on the appropriate standards of preparation and ability required for all of the mathematics courses under the management of the NST Mathematics Committee *i.e.* Part IA Mathematics (A and B) and Part IB Mathematics. **It agreed to the changes to regulations necessary to discontinue the use of the *m* qualifier and to request that the NST Mathematics Committee prepare appropriate advice for consideration by the Committee and circulation to Directors of Studies.**

The Committee considered the issue of extending this request to other subjects, but noted that Directors of Studies should be well-placed to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge. It noted that this might be more problematic for smaller Colleges.

**135. MATURE APPLICANTS AND THEIR QUALIFICATIONS**

The Committee received a letter, dated 14 February 2003, from the Chair of the Mature Students' Working Group (of the Admissions Forum) regarding the appropriateness of Access (and other) courses for preparation for the Tripos (**CM.181**) and **agreed that Dr Alan Findlay (Biology), Dr James Keeler (Chemistry) and Dr Julia Riley (Physics) would review material on behalf of the Committee.**

**136. DATES FOR MEETINGS IN 2003-2004**

The Committee noted the following dates (all Tuesdays) for meetings next year:

<i>Michaelmas Term</i>	<i>Lent Term</i>	<i>Easter Term</i>
28 October 2003	3 February 2004	4 May 2004
25 November 2003	9 March 2004	8 June 2004

**137. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm** on **6 May 2003** in the Meeting Room of the Board of Graduate Studies, Mill Lane.

*There was no reserved business.*