

## 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 28 October 2003** in the Room U202, Chemical Laboratories.

Present: Dr J Keeler (Chairman), Dr W Allison, Mr A Jefferies, Dr R Hardie, Dr N Holmes, Dr K Johnstone, Dr P Oliver, Dr J Riley, Dr I Wilson, Dr MG Worster, Mr J Zwart and Dr MG Russell (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor TW Clyne, Dr K Plaisted, Dr S Hand, Dr S Schaffer and Dr N Woodcock.

#### **158. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 June 2003 were approved. The Committee noted that the changes to regulations for progression to Part III had been approved by the General Board (minute 151).

#### **159. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received a current list of members and the Committee's terms of reference (**CM.194**). Mr Andy Jefferies, representing the Senior Tutors' Committee, and Dr Philip Oliver and Dr Roger Hardie, the current Chairmen of Examiners for the Tripos, were welcomed to their first meeting.

#### **160. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS**

The Committee received a paper of reported business (**CM.195**). It included:

##### **i. Annual Report 2002-2003**

The Committee received and approved the final version of the Report (**CM.196**), to be submitted to the Strategic Committee, the General Board and the appropriate Faculty Boards and other authorities.

##### **ii. Changes to regulations: Part II Genetics**

The Committee noted that the Chairman had, on its behalf, approved a proposal to withdraw the requirement of a written test in statistics for this examination.

##### **iii. Allocation of Students to Part II Subjects: 2003 allocation**

The Committee noted the statistics from the 2003 allocation round (**CM.197**). and **agreed that the Chairman and Secretary should proceed similarly for the 2004 allocation round.**

The Committee also noted that the Faculty of Biology were putting proposals forward to provide courses and places for more biologists from next year and that these proposals were likely to come to the Committee in due course.

##### **iv. Website: Advice for new students (Learning Day replacement)**

The Committee received the advice for new students, as presented on the NST website (**CM.198**) and noted that there had been no comments received regarding the cessation of the Learning Day. **It agreed to discontinue the Learning Day.**

**v. Tripos Examinations 2003: Statistics**

The Committee received the following statistics:

- classing of candidates in Parts IB, II (General), II and III of the Tripos, compared with classes obtained in the previous year's examinations (**CM.199**);
- cohort tracking data for Parts II and III of the Tripos (**CM.200**).

It noted that the cohort tracking data showed consistency of examination practice from year to year.

**vi. Tripos Examinations 2003: Amendments to class lists**

The Committee noted various amendments to class lists (**CM. 201**).

**161. TRIPOS EXAMINATIONS 2003: EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

**i. Part IA**

The Committee received Dr Shachar-Hill's report in her capacity as Chairman of Examiners in Part IA in 2003 (**CM.202**).

It noted that there remained disquiet amongst the Senior Examiners about how "classing" is defined for Part IA of the Tripos and whether it is properly explained to students and Directors of Studies (*see minute 162 for the points raised*).

It also noted the concern over arrangements for the management of continuous assessment in Quantitative Biology and **agreed to raise this point with the course organiser**.

The Committee also noted the concerns of Senior Examiners over the arrangements for dealing with requests for examinations data and **agreed to remind Examiners of the Data Retention Policy. It also agreed to remind Directors of Studies of the status of unmoderated subject marks and the usefulness in indicating the performance of a candidate**.

**ii. Parts IB, II, II (General) and III**

The Committee received Dr Miller's report in his capacity as Chairman of Examiners in Parts IB, II, II (General) and III in 2003 (**CM.203**).

It discussed the extent to which marking guidelines for Part IB should be mandatory or advisory and the reduction in the proportion of those awarded a 1<sup>st</sup> class this year (*see minute 162 for the conclusions of the discussion*).

It also noted the removal of a name from the class list, under the proviso of the Data Protection Act 1998. The Secretary reported that this issue, including the development of proper procedures for such cases, was being discussed at the General Board and elsewhere.

**iii. Reports of External Examiners for the Tripos**

The Committee received a paper, summarising comments made by External Examiners, which relates to Tripos-wide issues (**CM.204**) and **agreed that:**

- **the current marking schemes should be made clearer to External Examiners;**
- **Senior Examiners should be reminded of the Committee's position on writing on scripts, as outlined in the paper.**

It further noted the concerns of the External Examiner in Part II Biochemistry and **agreed to receive the Department's response, if appropriate, at a future meeting.**

#### **162. REPORT OF WORKING PARTY ON CLASSING IN PART IA**

The Committee received the report of the Working Party on Classing in Part IA of the Tripos (CM.205) and **agreed with the recommendations as laid out in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report. Consequently, it agreed to:**

- **state more clearly in the marking schemes about the purpose of classing in Part IA of the Tripos;**
- **advise the Strategic Committee of its conclusions on marking and classing in Part IA and its revisions to the marking and classing scheme for Part IB;**
- **encourage Examiners in those subjects in Parts IA and IB which assess essays to use as wide a marking range as practicable;**
- **await the conclusions of the Computer Science Syndicate on the integration of marking schemes for the two Triposes, but had no objections in principle.**

In addition to discussions on earlier items, the Committee were of the opinion that revisions to the marking schemes for Part IB of the Tripos were required to alleviate the concerns raised by the Chairman in his report and to ensure comparability with previous years. **It agreed to revise the marking scheme for Part IB in the following ways:**

- **to clarify the guidelines for the distribution of marks in individual subjects, indicating that subjects with fewer candidates (<50) may have more scope to depart from the guidelines;**
- **to indicate that candidates who offer more than three subjects (papers) shall only have the best three marks taken into account for classing;**
- **to replace the current classing scheme with one of fixed classing distributions. After discussion, the Committee agreed that classing should be awarded in Part IB of the Tripos, such that:**

**25% of the candidates received a 1<sup>st</sup> class;**

**35% of the candidates received a II.1 class;**

**35% of the candidates received a II.2 class;**

**5% of the candidates received either a 3<sup>rd</sup> class, an ordinary degree or were failed.**

#### **163. TRIPOS EXAMINATIONS 2004: REVISION OF MARKING SCHEMES**

At their meeting on 7 May 2002, the Committee agreed to post the examination marking schemes for Parts IA, IB and II (General) of the Tripos on the web site. **Subject to the conclusions outlined in minute 162, the Committee agreed to the proposed revised marking schemes (CM.206).**

#### **164. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm on Tuesday 25 November 2003** in the Council Room, Old Schools.