

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 4th May 2010** in the Seminar Room, Pathology, Tennis Court Road.

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

Apologies: Mr F Floether, Professor H Griffiths, Dr R Padman, Professor J Secord.

531) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd March 2010 were agreed.

532) MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

A summary sheet of action points and matters arising was circulated (**CM.618**).

533) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.619**). It included:

- Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty of Biology, Biological Sciences Committee held on 10th March 2010 (**CM.620**). It was noted that the reference to withholding of examination papers from the printed bound volume (Minute 338.02) related specifically to MCQ questions or those, frequently containing pictures, which were connected to practicals and where a limited stock was available.
- Proposed Committee dates for 2010-11. The proposed dates were based on the dates for this year which included a trial date for the last meeting in June. If necessary this would be reviewed for next year.
- An amended Preliminary Reading List 2010-11(**CM.621**) was circulated following discussion at the Committee Meeting on 2nd February. The list had been revised in consultation with the Departments concerned.
Action: Secretary to circulate the final version to Colleges and update the webpage.
- Changes to Regulations:
History and Philosophy of Science – Preliminary Examinations and Part II
The Board of History and Philosophy of Science had requested to remove the names of individual essay topic fields from the Preliminary Examinations, Natural Sciences, Regulation 6 (Statutes and Ordinances p. 252), and to remove the names of individual Part II papers from the Supplementary Regulations (Statutes and Ordinances p. 399).
Preliminary Examination topics would be approved by the Board of History and Philosophy of Science and a list of Part II papers would be published in the Easter Term preceding the examination. These changes will take effect from October 2010 and no student's preparation will be adversely affected by these changes.

The Committee noted the changes which were part of a general move to remove the detail from the Regulations which could be more appropriately addressed by a Faculty Board Notice published in the Reporter.

Part III Experimental and Theoretical Physics

Following discussion with the Board of Examinations, the Education Section and other relevant parties, examinations for Part III Experimental and Theoretical Physics will be fully modularised from October 2010. The Committee noted the minor change to the Regulations which was required in order to allow candidates to sit more than the minimum number of examinations. The process for calculating marks for those candidates who sat more than the minimum number of papers would be communicated to students by the Department.

Action: Secretary to report changes to the Education Committee and arrange for publication in the Reporter and changes to Regulations.

- Notices:

Part III Interdisciplinary Papers (CM.622)

In accordance with Statutes & Ordinances pg 395, Regulation 33, the Management Committee was required to publish details of the Interdisciplinary papers in the Easter Term in the year next preceding the examination. The Notice for submission to the Reporter was circulated. The Committee noted the content. Some clarification was needed with regards to the papers listed which would be checked prior to publication.

Action: Secretary to amend Notice and arrange for publication in the Reporter.

- Revisions to Open Day information (**CM.623**). It had not been possible to complete these in time for the meeting and they would be circulated for comment and approval.

Action: Secretary to circulate completed documents.

534) MANAGEMENT OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS.

Following discussion at the Committee of Management meeting on 2nd March 2010 a document had been prepared summarising the recommendations that led to the revised remit of the Committee of Management, their background and progress so far (**CM.624**). A draft paper listing the responsibilities of the various stakeholders had also been circulated together with an update on discussion regarding the administration. Clarification was provided on the role of the Committee with regard to syllabus content which remained the responsibility of the Department. The Committee may be involved if proposed changes impacted on other courses. It was noted that the working party had suggested an additional meeting to discuss strategy but it had been agreed at an early meeting of the new Committee that such matters were better addressed as they arose and integrated into each meeting. This was open to revision but there was agreement that there was a need to be responsive and that that the Committee currently met more frequently than regulations required.

It was agreed that the report should be circulated to stakeholders for comment, with the explanation that the document was an attempt to clarify respective roles rather than to bring about change.

Action: Secretary to circulate report and appendices to Schools, Faculty Boards and Teaching Committees.

535) FUTURE OF ORDINARY EXAMINATIONS AND THE ORDINARY BA DEGREE

The Education Committee had considered responses to its consultation on the future of Ordinary Examinations and the Ordinary BA degree, and had agreed recommendations subject to further consultation with the Senior Tutors' Committee, Applications Committee and Faculty Boards. A paper outlining these recommendations, together with supporting documentation, was circulated (**CM.625**). An explanation of the changes and their relevance to the NST was provided. The Committee was content for these revised proposals to be taken forward.

Action: Secretary to advise the Education Section.

536) SOCIAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

The Deputy Academic Secretary has asked the Committee to nominate a representative to join the Management Committee for the new Social Sciences Tripos (SST). Draft Terms of Reference for the new Committee were circulated (**CM.626**). The similarities and differences to the NST were discussed. It was agreed that it was important that the Natural Sciences was represented on the new SST Committee. Dr Rachael Padman had served on the General Board's Review Committee for the Social Sciences and was willing to serve on the SST Management Committee. The Committee were content to nominate Dr Padman.

Action: Secretary to advise the Deputy Academic Secretary.

537) PART III ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

An updated notice was required to define the standards required for entry to each subject of Part III. The current version together with an extract from the website was circulated (**CM.627**). Discussions are taking place at subject level to consider whether the current entry requirements are appropriate both at IB and Part II. The Committee was asked for its views prior to the Notice being sent out to relevant Departments for updating.

It was noted also that recent discussions at the Education Committee following an OIA recommendation, referred to the need to ensure that entry hurdles should be clear and unambiguous and that an appeals process is in place. All Part III subjects have a defined procedure for consideration of special cases by Faculty Boards who will be reminded by the Education Section that appeals against acceptance on to a Part III course should be dealt with by the Applications Committee.

It was noted that the requirements had become more diverse between subjects for justifiable educational reasons and it was agreed that there was no need for convergence. Some subjects were likely to consider removing the IB hurdle and to consider increasing the Part II requirement. This would need to be clearly explained to potential candidates possibly by a link to the full Notice from the Part III page and by providing information on the Part II subject allocation criteria pages. The summary of criteria currently published on the NST webpage would need to be reviewed. It was agreed that the notice should be sent out for updating to the Departments and reported back to the Management Committee prior to publication.

Action: Secretary to circulate the current Notice to Departments for updating.

538) PART II AND PART III GEOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Following approval by the Committee to discontinue the teaching of Part IB Mineral Sciences with effect from October 2011, the Department of Earth Sciences was seeking to

discontinue the sub-set of lectures in Part II and Part III Geological Sciences which permit the attachment of a mark (m) to the name of any candidate who offered two or more papers relating to one of both of the subject areas Mineralogy and Mineral Physics and whose research project falls within the field of mineral sciences. A paper was circulated **(CM.628)**. The Committee approved the proposal.

Action: Secretary to forward the proposal to the Education Committee which will include changes to Parts IB, II and III.

539) PART II PHYSICAL SCIENCES

As a result of consultation by the Education Committee, Faculty Boards were asked to ensure that pathways to the BA Degree were robust in their particular Tripos, specifically with regard to Part II level content. It had been agreed that Part II Physical Sciences could be strengthened by the inclusion of a dissertation and an adjustment of the maximum marks for each component. Following discussions within Departments, and at Faculty and School level, a proposal for the amendment of the Part II Physical Sciences regulations had been prepared, to take effect from October 2011. The revised regulations were circulated **(CM.629)**. It was noted that Part II Physical Sciences was taken by a relatively small number of candidates and that Materials Sciences would not be offering a half-subject in the future. The new marking scheme was discussed and the Committee approved the proposal.

Action: Secretary to forward the proposal to the Education Committee and to arrange for publication in the Reporter and changes to Regulations.

540) PART IA SCIENTIFIC COMPUTING

A paper was circulated **(CM.630)** which summarised the discussions of the first meeting of the Course Management Group on Monday 26th April and the Committee noted the contents. James Keeler reported that there would be a staged introduction of the new course which would run for the first time in 2010/11 for those candidates taking Part IA Mathematics. For the first year, the marks would be included in the total marks for Part IA Mathematics. It was hoped that Mathematical Biology would be able to participate in the future following further assessment of the course content. Changes could be made to the proposed timetable to enable a better match with the Mathematical Biology subject content. It was thought unlikely that the content would be suitable for candidates taking Elementary Mathematics for Biology. The application for a licence for Matlab was progressing and detailed course content was in preparation. The FTEs previously attributed to the Computer Laboratory would now be transferred to the Department delivering the lectures – Earth Sciences for 2010-11. The methods of assessment were being considered: assessment was intended to be light touch and was not intended to create a fine distinction between candidates. It was agreed that support would be important and that a drop-in help session may be appropriate. A handout would be provided at the start of the course. No College support would be needed as problems were relatively simple and, if necessary, the Mathematics supervisor could be approached. Clear details on submission would be important especially as this was at an early stage in the first year. At a future meeting the Management Group would consider face-to-face advice, a point of contact and submission deadlines.

The Committee approved the proposals for 2010-11.

For the future, consideration would need to be given to how the marks should be distributed. Maximum marks for individual mathematical subjects were currently:

Mathematics (75), Mathematical Biology (75) and Elementary Mathematics Biology (70). Maximum marks for Scientific Computing would be 10. Currently these marks were included in the overall marks for Mathematics. It was thought preferable for these marks to appear as a distinct entry in CamSIS so as to appear on the transcript in a distinguishable form. Consideration would need to be given marks for EMB if additional marks were available to candidates taking the other two mathematical subjects. It might be possible to include a similar component for EMB candidates although there was already quite a lot of computing within EMB. It was agreed that further discussion with the EMB Course Organiser would be helpful together with a clearer picture of the mark breakdown for the course. Committee Members were asked to apprise relevant people of the ongoing discussions.

541) DIGITAL EXAM PAPER PROJECT

As part of the next stage in the Digital Exam Paper project, Dr Keith Johnstone had requested permission to upload to DSpace NST papers for the last 3 years which are currently published in the bound volume of Examination papers. A paper was circulated (**CM.631**) and an explanation provided of the process and its current status. Papers for Plant Science had been uploaded on to the test site as PDF documents and Departments would be asked for electronic copies of their examination papers. Some Departments already had similar resources some of which included additional information such as notes or solutions and which were searchable. CamTools could also be used to store examination papers but these would only be available to specific course members. Concern was expressed with regards to whether the electronic paper would be an exact replica of the paper which had been sat and whether any corrections would have been included. It was important that checks were in place to ensure that information was correct and that the system would run smoothly. It had been suggested that the Digital Exam Project would replace the bound volumes for the 2011 examinations but it was felt that this was not an adequate period of overlap. Instructions for providing future papers would need to be clear to ensure accuracy. The student member felt that an electronic version would be beneficial. Whilst it was agreed that students should have access to past papers it was accepted that Departments sometimes had sound educational reasons for restricting access or providing additional information. The Committee agreed that a trial should go ahead and that feedback should be provided. It was felt that an overlap, perhaps of three years, between the paper and electronic versions would be preferable and that measures needed to be taken to ensure the accuracy of the information published.

Action: Secretary to inform Dr Johnstone of the Committee's recommendation.

542) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters of other business.

543) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:00 pm** on **Tuesday, 29th June 2010** in the Dixon Room, 1st Floor, Department of Pathology, Tennis Court Road.