

## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Confirmed minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at **2.15pm on Tuesday 06<sup>th</sup> February 2007** in the Old Schools' Council Rooms.

**Present:** Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Dupree, Dr S Holden, Dr J Little, Dr B Nolan, Dr R Padman, Professor MG Worster, Miss E Bailey, Miss A Turnbull and Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Dr R Barnes, Dr D Buscher, Dr K Johnstone, Dr J Keeler, Mrs S Stobbs, Dr N Woodcock.  
**Absent:** Professor B Clyne, Dr S Schaffer.

### 347. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2006 were approved.

### 348. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman welcomed the new junior members to their first meeting.

Miss Alice Turnbull, (Part IB, Biological Sciences, Downing College) had been nominated by the Faculty Board of Biological Sciences.

Miss Eliza Bailey, (Part IB, Physical Sciences, Gonville and Caius) had been nominated by the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry.

The two new junior members will serve on the Committee until December 2007.

Dr Patrick Barrie will be representing the Chemical Engineering Syndicate.

The Committee noted Dr N Woodcock's current incapacitation, and wished to send their best wishes for a speedy recovery. The Committee also noted that in Dr Woodcock's absence, would the Faculty of Earth Sciences nominate a Co-optee to serve?

### 349. MATTERS ARISING

#### i. Mathematics in the NST (minute 319, 332ii)

The Committee had previously asked for clarity on the numbers of students in Course A and B. Professor Worster confirmed that there was currently an equal split of students between courses A and B.

#### ii. Induction Events, including On-line Part IA Practical Registrations (minute 319, 332 iii; 337.ii)

Further to the Committee's discussions on paper **CM.382** at the last meeting, (re-circulated) the Secretary asked the Committee to advice on the outstanding areas of concern. The Committee felt most issues raised could be resolved with improved lines of communication. Some of the issues raised however were not possible to change, eg "first day of the week, is a Thursday"!

**The Secretary was asked to circulate the Colleges with the relevant NST literature as early as possible, for dissemination to the students by the Colleges. The web-site to be kept as up to date as possible, and emails to the DoS list to inform of changes.**

#### iii. NST Late submission of work (minute 298; 305ii; 314.ii;332.i)

Paper (**CM.391**) detailing current policies practiced within the Departments was circulated.

The Committee recognised this was a difficult and emotive issue as many Departments' had developed their own practices. However, the Committee was reminded it needs to devise a common policy across the Tripos. After lengthy discussion:

The proposal decided on for circulation and comment from the Departments' was:

1. For small pieces of work/continually assessed coursework, amounting to no more than 10% of the final examination mark for the subject (i.e. records of practical work, fieldwork and further works) if the late submission was not supported by a letter from the students Tutor/Director of Studies, zero marks would be awarded. The material should be marked as normal where a sufficient reason is produced and supported by the student's Tutor/Director of Studies; Course organisers will be the arbiter of such claims.
2. For larger pieces for work, (e.g research projects, dissertations etc) the Applications Committee remained the appropriate body to handle these cases.

**The Secretary will write to the Departments with the Management Committee's proposal, and ask for their break down of examinations falling into the two categories.**

### **350. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS**

A paper of reported business was circulated (CM.393). It included:

- i. **Preliminary Reading List, 2006-7 (CM. 393)**
- ii. **Minutes from the Strategic Committee 14 November 2006 (CM.394)**
- iii. **Final report from Chairman of Part IB Examiners 2005/06 (CM.395)**

### **351. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS**

In response to the review of Part III of the Natural Sciences Tripos in February 2005, recommendation 8.3.1; the functioning of the NST Committees, the General Board have agreed that the Education Committee should proceed with a consultation exercise.

A paper and a questionnaire are re-circulated (CM.390) after some discussion the Committee's response was noted:

The Management Committee of the NST felt comfortable with the current structure in achieving the management of the Tripos. They felt the Terms of Reference were adequate. The Committee's response to question 10:

- a) the MSNT should instruct procedures and policies relating to the fair treatment of students;
- b) the MNST felt they could advise on curriculum development, but this was primarily a matter for the Course Management Committees and faculty Boards;
- c) the MNST felt this issue was for the Schools, who should be responsible for resource allocation.

### **352. REVIEW OF TRIPOS SYSTEM**

The Secretary had received a letter (CM.396) from the General Board's Education Committee asking for views on the current Tripos arrangements. The Committee noted that the NST is the largest Tripos in the University, involving the co-operation of 16 Departments. It offers the greatest multidisciplinary options, with opportunities to transfer in or out at different points. The current structures work well.

The NST is one of the most heavily timetabled Tripos' and the Committee felt there was no room in the current timetabling to offer further 'transferable skills' training. If students wish to develop any further skills or training this should be outside the formal teaching provision.

There is clear understanding of progression through the Tripos; this is well documented in course handbooks and on the web.

There are several areas of course combing/sharing across the Tripos; e.g. Part II Biological and Biomedical Sciences (BBS) and the Part II Physical Sciences.

The Committee felt it was highly desirable for students to take a Part II, but would not want to see a Regulation to prohibit the occasional possibility for a student to take two Part Is, if this was deemed the best educational route for a particular student.

### 353. PART II PSYCHOLOGY

The Department of Psychology had proposed a “rebadging” of the Part II course. Option A to be the accredited route and option B to be the Cognitive Neuroscience option. Paper (CM.397), was circulated. The Chairman gave the background to the proposal, explaining the changes in requirements from the British Psychological Society (BPS) for accreditation. The shift in emphasis to include more Social Psychology has meant leaving some of the Cognitive Psychology aspects out of the current teaching provision. To redress this popular area the Department wish to offer two routes through the current Part II option.

**The Committee supported the changes to Psychology to offer two routes through Part II.**

### 354. PART II ALLOCATIONS

The paper (CM.398) detailing the criteria required by the Departments’ and indicating the numbers of students to be admitted next academic year at Part II were discussed by the Committee. **The Chairman and the Secretary will compare the data with last years, to ensure there is equity of provision.**

### 355. FACULTY OF BIOLOGY EXAMINERS

The MVST Examiners have a very tight turn round of receiving marks and processing the final mark books and are proposing to get PROVISIONAL marks processed and to student records a couple of days later than in previous years. The Secretary has raised the issue that this will impact on the very tight timetable for both student records and the Secretary, and may delay the final Part II allocation meeting. The email correspondence between the affected parties was circulated for the Committee’s consideration (CM. 399).

The Secretary informed the Committee that the CamSIS process for Part II allocations will move from Student Records to the Secretary and the Education Section from this year. The Secretary will therefore review the whole Part II allocation timetable in light of these proposals.

**The Committee noted the suggested changes and the difficulties that might ensue from this decision by the MVST Examiners.**

### 356. MATTERS ARISING NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA

#### i). Shared modules between Part II Neuroscience and Part II PDN.

A paper from the Faculty of Biology was received (CM 400). This details plans to offer eight common modules between PDN and Neuroscience. This will allow for a modest reduction in the teaching load. **The Committee were happy to support this arrangement.**

#### ii). Student concerns

An issue around student feedback was raised by a final year Biochemistry student. Although feedback is asked for at Course/lecture level there is lack of feedback sort on the Tripos as a whole. The Committee noted that there was student representation on the Graduate Board and on Departmental Consultative Committees. However, there was also an opportunity for the Committee to receive any feedback from students via the NATSCI email address. **This would be more clearly advertised on the website and advise sent to DoS.**

### 357. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm** on **Tuesday 6 March 2007** in the Seminar B Room, 17 Mill Lane.