

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Unconfirmed minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos at **2:15 pm on Tuesday 17 October 2006 at 17 Mill Lane in Seminar B Room.**

Present: Dr N Holmes (**Chairman**), Dr D Busher, Dr P Dupree, Dr J Little, Dr S Holden, Dr K Johnstone, Dr J Keeler, Dr R Padman, Dr I Wilson, Dr N Woodcock, Mr T Whyntie, Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Absent: Professor TW Clyne, Mr A Lakhani, Dr B Nolan, and Prof MG Worster.

Apologies: Dr R Barnes, and Mrs S Stobbs.

329. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a current list of members and the Committee's terms of reference (**CM.374**) and noted that Dr James Keeler from the Faculty of Chemistry and Physics had returned from sabbatical.

The Chairman welcomed the new members, Dr P Dupree and Dr R Padman.

330. MINUTES

The Committee requested that the Secretary confirm with the Departments the mechanism by which the Supervisions of NST projects at Part II and III will be paid, as agreed by the Management Committee and the Senior Tutors.

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 June 2006 were approved.

331. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.375**). It included:

- Annual Report 2005-2006 (**CM.376**)
- Changes to Regulations: Part II Biochemistry (**CM.378**)

The Committee approved the Annual Report and the changes to regulations.

332. MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

(i) NST Late Submission of work (Minute 426.11)

To facilitate the Committee in producing a common scheme of penalties to which all Departments and/or courses can work with, **the secretary has written to the Departments asking for their current practices to be submitted by the end of the Michaelmas Term.**

(ii) Mathematics in the NST (Minute 319)

The Committee noted that the Mathematics examples classes held on Wednesday-afternoons had been abolished. The Committee asked if the Maths Department would provide an update on the changes implemented for this year. **The Secretary will contact Prof. G Worster.**

(iii) Part IA Practical Registrations (CARET) (Minute 319)

The Committee noted that both the Schools of Physical and Biological Sciences had agreed to pay their contribution for the completion of this project. The process had been considered a success in terms of student allocation, and a great improvement over last year's allocation run.

The Committee discussed the following two items:

- The process to be run earlier, over the long vacation.
- Run the practical allocation process for Part IB students.

It was noted that the Committee may wish to seek the opinions of the different agents involved after they have seen the Secretary's full report on the administrative aspects of the registration process and student feedback from their induction; this will be circulated at the next meeting.

(iv) Entry into Part III (minute 317, i)

The Committee noted that the relevant Faculty Boards had agreed that "consideration of special cases", must be judged by the relevant Faculty Board and not the Departments. The notice will be submitted to the *Reporter* for publication in late October.

333. PART II ALLOCATION PROCESS

The Annual Report noted that the Part II allocation process had been a success this year. However, a query over the transparency of departmental numbers and the selection criteria was discussed at length. The Committee felt this information must be clear and well communicated to all staff and students, so that published quotas are adhered to.

The Department of Chemistry may be restricting numbers of students accepted at Part II from next year.

The incident involving incorrectly entered student marks had been resolved by the Secretary.

334. TRIPOS EXAMINATIONS 2005-2006

i. Statistics

The Committee received statistics relating to:

- Classing of candidates in Parts IB, II and III of the Tripos, compared with classes obtained in the previous year's examinations (**CM.379**)

The Committee discussed at length the methodology of the current marking and classing criteria, and decided they would like to review the report published in 2001 from the Strategic Committee. **This will be circulated by the Secretary.**

ii. Amendments to class lists

Attention was drawn to the Notices published in *Reporter* 4 October 2006 p.25 (**CM.380**). In most cases these amendments were as a result of applications rather than appeals.

iii. Part IA

Dr J Little gave his report in his capacity as Chairman of Examiners in Part IA in 2005-06. The Examinations had, overall, gone very smoothly but several concerns were raised including:

- The circulation of warning letters – the current system is unclear to Departments and Examiners, and the information was received too late in many cases.
- The inconsistency of receiving Exam scripts from Colleges, delayed marking and therefore the releasing final marks.
- The late arrival of the files to the Examiners from the Board of Exams.

iv. Parts IB, II, and III

Dr D Buscher gave his report in his capacity as Chairman of Examiners in Parts IB, II, and III in 2005-06. He noted that the Part IB, II and III Examiners were reporting the same concerns as those at IA, including:

- The problem with warning letters was exacerbated by some Colleges or in some cases students relaying this information to departments.
- Student code combinations were, in a couple of cases, difficult to deal with as there was only a one digit change, (e.g. 5918T/5198T).
- Security in reprographics was non-existent over the examination period, with people entering and rifling papers without being challenged or IDs being verified.
- Examiners were feeling a little overwhelmed with guidance paperwork from different sources.

The Secretary will write to the Board of Exams raising these issues. The Committee recommends that information sharing between Colleges, Departments, Board of Exams and Senior Examiners needs to be clearly defined and communicated.

v. Reports of External Examiners for the Tripos

The Secretary reported that most of the reports have now been received and distributed to the Departments for their comments, most EE are happy with the overall process.

A digest will be provided at the next meeting.

335. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place at **2:15 pm on Tuesday 28 November 2006** in the **Syndicate Room at the Old Schools.**