

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Minutes of a meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at **2.00pm** on **Tuesday 21 November 2006** in the Old Schools' Meeting Room.

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr D Buscher, Dr R Barnes, Dr P Dupree, Dr S Holden, Dr J Keeler, Dr R Padman, Mrs S Stobbs, Dr I Wilson, Dr N Woodcock, and Mr T Wyhntie, Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr B Nolan, Dr K Johnstone, Professor MG Worster

Absent: Dr B Clyne, Dr J Little, Dr S Schaffer.

Dr Neil Dodgson from Computer Science attended for item 339.

336. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2006 were approved.

337. MATTERS ARISING

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

A Paper prepared by Professor G Worster (**CM.381**) was circulated. The Committee accepted the proposals, but would value clarity on the numbers of students in Course A and B.

ii. Induction Events, Including On-Line Part IA Practical Registrations (minute 319, 332 iii)

The Report on Practical Registration for Part IA students Paper (**CM.382**) was circulated. The Committee noted the Secretary's comments on the length of time the process took, and decided that extending this activity out to the IBs, as suggested at the last meeting, would not be practical or suitable. Most departments felt they needed to see the second year students to advise them on the best options. The supplementary paper provided by the Secretary demonstrated a good fit in most cases for allocating the students to practical classes.

Students' feedback on the Induction Programme Paper (**CM.383**) was circulated. The Committee congratulated Dr J Keeler and Dr K Johnstone for the excellent responses from the students on their induction sessions.

iii. Reports of External Examiners for the Tripos (minute 332v)

A digest of External Examiners reports was circulated (**CM.384**). The only course causing concern has now addressed the issues. The Committee noted that some Part IB courses had External Examiners on them as a requirement for external accreditation.

iv. Classing at Part IA (minute 334.i)

The Secretary had circulated the 2001 Working Party's Report on classing at Part IA. The Committee was concerned at the current boundaries, especially at third class awards. They discussed at length the various options and alternatives to classing at Part IA, including alternative titles and methods for setting the boundaries. The Committee considered abolishing classing and relying on absolute marks and rank order as an indication for student progress, this option was considered to be unpopular with students, staff and employers. The use of transcripts as a means of recording the exam details was seen as a helpful tool for students and employers.

The Committee decided to redefine the target of third class awards from 10% to 7.5%. The Chairmen of Examiners and the Senior Examiners will be notified, and the current Guidelines will be amended.

The Committee would also like to receive cohort tracking for Part IB and Part II students, and an analysis of the thirds awarded from the last 3 years of mark books.

338. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.385**). It included:

- Form and Conduct Notice, 2007 (**CM.386**); (Mathematics was tabled)
- Education Committees Response to NST Annual Report

339. REVISION OF THE COMPUTER SCIENCE TRIPOS

Dr N Dodgson from Computer Science attended for this item and to discuss the timetabling implications for the NST in regards of the proposed changes (**paper CM387**).

The Computer Science Tripos currently runs two options; 50%, including NST Maths and one experimental subject borrowed from the NST; and the 25% option, including NST Maths and two experimental subjects borrowed from the NST. The Faculty Board of Computer Science and Technology are remodelling the Tripos, making the 50% option more rigorous and abolishing the 25% Option.

The Faculty are proposing that the 25% Option become part of the NST, therefore both Papers 1 and/or 2 could be borrowed in Part IA of the NST. The timetabling of the CS lectures, suggested as 10am on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays for the 25% Option; and noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for the 50% Option. The 25% Option will be timetabled against Biology of Cells, but allow students a greater range of Physical Sciences to choice from.

The Committee felt this proposal was acceptable and would prove popular with the students. Part IA is seen as an offering enabling courses, and CS 25% would compliment this mix. There are 10 Practical sessions per annum held on Thursday afternoons (one per fortnight).

The Committee discussed the borrowing of the two papers, but felt it would be appropriate to borrow only Paper 1. The timetabling suggestion was discussed, and although the Committee noted this would, for the first time, restrict options for NST Students, this was felt to be the best fit and marked an historical milestone for the Tripos. These proposals will be available from October 2008.

340. EDUCATION TRIPOS AND NST BORROWED PAPERS

The Secretary had received a paper (**CM. 388**) from the Faculty of Education about proposed changes to the options available to their students. The Faculty Board of Biology (**CM.389**) had approved the Biological aspects of the proposal. The Committee, for its part, also agreed the proposed changes, but was interested in how many students might take up these options.

341. JUNIOR MEMBERS

The Chairman thanked the Junior Members for their time and commitment to the NST Committee and wished them well in their studies.

342. RETIREMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that this was the last meeting for Dr I Wilson and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Committee.

343. ITEMS OF RESERVED BUSINESS

- Payments to Chairmen of Examiners
- Co-opted member of the Committee

344. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm** on **Tuesday 6 February 2007** in the Council Room at the Old Schools.