

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 **2.15pm** on **Tuesday 10th June 2008** in Seminar Room B, First Floor, 17 Mill Lane

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Barrie, Dr S Dalziel, Dr P Dupree, Professor H Griffiths, Professor R Horgan, Professor A Mycroft, Dr R Padman, Dr R Preece, Dr N Woodcock, Miss Jessica Hatchett and Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr R Barnes, Professor B Clyne, Dr J Keeler, Dr B Nolan, Mrs S Stobbs, and Miss D Kaminski

Professor John Forrester attended the meeting at 2.15pm for item 11, taken first.

427) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4th March 2008 were approved.

427) MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee noted that the Secretary had resigned as Administrative Officer from the Education Section and wished her well in her new post.

427) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.475**) and noted by the Committee.

It included:

- Electronic Calculators in Examinations, 2008-9: Notice (**CM.476**)
- Minutes of Biological Sciences Committee 13 March & 15 May (**CM.477 & CM.478**)
- Programme Specification for 2008-09 (**CM.479**)

427) PART II ALLOCATIONS (minute 405)

The Committee was reminded that it had requested to see data from the first round of Part II biological subject allocations, paper (**CM.480**) gives these details. The Committee also noted the increased in matriculating numbers to the NST in October 2007; the indications are that this problem will reach crisis point next year when the current Part IA students are looking for Part II places.

The Committee noted with some concern that the pressure was on departments to keep numbers for research projects under review, due to resource issues. The Committee asked to see a breakdown in numbers for the subjects vis MVST/NST students. Discussions on how best to maintain a fair system were discussed at length;

- including the allocation of NST students prior to MVST students (dismissed as divisive)
- asking departments to be flexible around their published numbers and take extra students – a possibility
- revisit this issue after the whole process has run – strategic issue for new committee.

Note after the meeting paper CM.480 was amended and circulated to the Committee members. The Secretary can report that currently 98 MVST and 22 NST students have indicated BBS places as their first choice.

427) NUMBER OF SUBJECTS OFFERED

The chairman informed the Committee that this year a Part IA student has entered 5 subjects for examination and a Part IB student has entered for 4 subjects, there is currently no explicit rule preventing this. The current situation would appear to be undesirable in general and specifically it would clearly be undesirable for any student to be allowed to enter 2 different maths exams.

Current Part IA Regulations states: '*16. Each candidate shall offer three subjects from Group A and one subject from Group B*'; and for Part IB '*21. Each candidate shall offer three subjects provided that:*'

The Committee discussed one of two possible options, requesting a regulations change to prohibit the entry into more than 4 subjects at NST IA, and also 3 subjects for Part IB;

- a) examination entry into more than 4 subjects contrary to the regulations. N.B. this would not prevent anyone studying 5 subjects:
- b) examination entry into more than one maths course contrary to regulations.

The Committee decided option a) was the most suitable. The discussion emphasised the relative rarity of the issue and that any student can take more courses of study without being entered for the exam. The question of practical accommodation was explicitly raised; the committee was prepared to issue guidance to Course Organisers requesting that places be made available to any student prepared to commit to diligently attending and whose College were supporting his extra study by providing supervision in the extra subject.

The Secretary will prepare a draft Notice for the *Reporter* and forward, with a covering letter, to the Education Committee requesting the necessary changes to Regulations.

427) EXAMINATION ENTRIES

The Committee considered a proposal to change the level of detail entered into CamSIS for exam entries, email (CM.482) stated that the problems around the entries for Part III Physics, however, the Committee noted this trend as increasing with greater sharing of papers. The proposal is for the NST to move to a more generic entry of subject area for students entering their initial options, and the detail to be managed by the departments; especially for Part II and III subjects, where the choices are wider.

The Committee supported this proposal in principal, but would like to set up a meeting of some committee members with the Board of Examinations, to plan a way forward.

423) OPEN DAYS

These will happen on Thursday 3 and Friday 4 July. Committee members were asked to help ask any (willing) students to help out in the information tent on the New Museums Site.

Secretary to send details to Jessica

427) SYSTEMS BIOLOGY

The minutes from the Systems Biology Planning Group (SBPG) had previously been monitored by the Strategic Committee. The Management Committee were asked to receive these minutes - 16 January and 23 April (CM.483 & CM.484). The Committee were asked to note the timeline for approval and the start date for this option in October 2009.

One optional course will be offered over July. The School would be expected to fund these places, and have recently received information about funding courses for inclusion on the approved 'Pink list' vacation courses

427) HPS PART III

Professor John Forrester, Head of Department for HPS, attended for this item.

Professor Forrester informed the Committee that the Department of HPS had been concerned over the drop in student numbers at Part II over recent years. The department had been exploring ways to reverse this trend and open the course up to a wider range of Tripos candidates. The departments' proposal was detailed in Paper (CM. 487). The department would also make changes to Part II options to allow (as other NST subjects) a route through to either the BA or the MSci. The committee suggested there would need to be a single method of progression to demonstrate this integration.

The Committee discussed with Professor Forrester the current format for NST Part II and Part III Integrated Undergraduate courses; and the expectation that these are undergraduate taught programmes, with Part III being of Masters level thus preparing the students for research work at PhD.

Professor Forrester described the departments plans to open up the course to students who may not be from the NST/MVST usual route, although the ideal route would be students who had taken HPS at Part IB and Part II. The Committee recommended that the (Faculty) HPS Board (rather than the Head of Department) would be the normal channel for exceptions to be discussed and decided on. The department may wish to consider introducing an application process for non standard students, to help assess their suitability.

The University is currently exploring suitable mechanisms to allow students to partake of Part III courses as stand alone options; the naming of these options is still under consideration, (MPhil would not be considered suitable) and the Committee advised Professor Forrester to consult the Education Section if HPS wished to pursue this route with their Part III.

It was decided that in light of the above, a revised proposal be prepared, with Part II changes to be introduced in October 2009 and the new Part III to be introduced in October 2010. The new proposal could then go to the General Board's Education Committee early next Academic year for consideration. The Management Committee offered the Department of HPS its support for the proposal (in principal).

427) ITEM OF RESERVED BUSINESS

428) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at 2:15 pm on Tuesday 14 October 2008 - venue TBC

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AGENDA

Reserved Business

i) **Membership of the new Committee of Management**

As part of review of the Governance of the NST and the proposed changes to the make up of the Committee of Management, paper (**CM.485**) detailed the names nominated by the Schools/Faculties/Syndicates so far. The Faculty of Biology will confirm their final list of names after their next meeting. The proposed names will be forwarded to the General Board for formal appointment.

A letter from the School of Physical Sciences was circulated (**CM.486**) detailing their nominations; they wished to nominate five names, with the Mathematician filling one of the co-opted places.

The Committee were content with this proposal.