

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 5th February 2008** in the Old Schools' Meeting Room.

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Barrie, Professor B Clyne, Dr S Dalziel, Dr P Dupree, Dr R Horgan, Dr J Keeler, Professor A Mycroft, Dr R Padman, Dr R Preece, Dr N Woodcock, Miss D Kaminski and Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr R Barnes, Dr B Nolan, Dr Eleanor Robson and Mrs S Stobbs.

405) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 November 2007 were approved.

406) MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman welcomed the new junior members to their first meeting. Miss Danielle Kaminski, (Part IA, Physical Sciences, Clare College) had been nominated by the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry.

There is currently one vacancy for a Junior Member from the Faculty of Biological Sciences; and a vacancy in class (a) from the Faculty Board of Biological Sciences after the resignation of Dr K Johnstone, would be filled by Professor Howard Griffiths.

Dr N Holmes and Dr N woodcock have been re-appointed till December 2008.

407) MATTERS ARISING

i. Part III Course Sharing Proposals (minute 388; 396ii)

The Committee received a paper (**CM.451**) which shows the initial student entries on CamSIS for the Part III interdisciplinary papers. The Committee noted that the three courses were well attended and more students would be selecting these exams.

The Department of Chemistry raised the issue of the disparity (exam entries compared with class sizes) in numbers attending, and wondered whether the 're-badging' of some the courses had led to misunderstanding. The Department were also vexed by the pressure they felt they were under to run their course a year early. The School of Physical Sciences were intending to appoint two new Geography teaching staff who would contribute to the Geological /Climate Change Course, but the appointments have not yet happened. Further, the course leader from the Department of Geography (for the Geological /Climate Change Course) is currently on sabbatical leave. The situation has caused the Department of Chemistry considerable difficulties.

Both the Departments of Chemistry and of Physics allow a choice of two courses, but students may not offer both *Atmospheric Chemistry* and *Climate Change*; Earth Sciences have excluded the *Atmospheric Chemistry* course as an option for the Geologists. The original concern re the overlapping of material for Atmospheric Chemistry and the Climate Change courses was reported not in practice to have happened.

The Committee noted that the 'spirit' of the interdisciplinary options should allow open access for students to all three courses from the three participating departments. Departments may wish to limit the number of interdisciplinary courses they take.

There was some concern that the timing and location of the lectures and practicals may limit access; this issue will need resolving to allow access to all courses.

The Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy are considering allowing their students to participate in the courses for next year.

ACTION: The Committee request the Departments of Chemistry; Earth Sciences and Physics to:

A) allow their students to take any of the three Interdisciplinary courses (may limit number)

B) review timetabling and location of Interdisciplinary courses to avoid unintended constraints on course combinations.

ii. Tripos Examinations 2006-2007 (minute 390iii)

The Report of the Chairman of Examiners for Part IA (CM.452) was circulated. The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the changes that had been made to the aggregated banding last year for the second/third class boundary. The distribution was changed to help address the issue for students who had achieved a 'second' in two or more subjects (from four) but still received an overall third class. The weightings were changed from 25% students achieving firsts; 65% students achieving seconds; and 10% of students achieving thirds; to 25/67.5/7.5% groupings. The pass mark was set at 149, where the candidates had shown some 'good' work in some subject areas, and the 'natural boundary for a fail' was at 126. The Committee noted that as the examination process for the NST was complex and the guidelines had been set after much debate; the Senior Examiners are therefore reminded to adhere to the guidelines as agreed by the Management Committee.

408) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

The Committee received a summary of reported business (CM.453). It included:

i. Preliminary Reading List, 2007-8 (CM.454)

The Biological Sciences Committee had discussed the current list and felt it to be fairly impenetrable and some were out of date, with too many titles per subject. The list is circulated to new students after their places are confirmed about 4/5 weeks before they come up to Cambridge. The recommendation from BSC was for departments to select two titles per subject for students to read. The Committee recommend that the list contains books that will act as a 'bridge' between school and university reading.

ACTION: All course teams to recommend two titles; if they opt for more to indicate which one they'd like the students to read; please notify Kim Allen by the end of the Lent Term.

ii. Minutes from the Strategic Committee 13 November 2007 (CM.455)

The Minutes from the Strategic Committee on the 13 November 2007 were received. The Management Committee were mindful that with the suppression of this Committee they would need to keep a watching brief on outstanding issues; of particular interest would be a follow up report from the changes in Part IA Maths teaching, including the revised syllabus and data from the courses A & B introduced in October 2006 (see item below).

iii. Final Minutes of the Biological Sciences Committee 22 November 2007 (CM.456).

The Committee noted that the introduction of 'Turnitin', the plagiarism detection software, should come with clear guidelines from the Board of Examinations. Both the Biological and the Physical Schools would be advised to implement a joint policy for the NST departments to follow.

The review of Maths provision at Part IA within the Faculty of Biology (EMB & QB) had been discussed at length by the Biological Sciences Committee.

iv. Senior Examiners Interim Meeting Reports

The Committee received the minutes of the two Senior Examiners first meetings; Part IA (CM. 460) and Part IB, II, &III (CM.461).

409) THE GOVERNANCE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

The final report was circulated for information (CM.457). The Committee accepted the revised list of responsibilities as detailed in 7, covering lines of communications and responsibilities for actions.

The Chairman outlined the four issues for the Committee to agree on, as noted in 5. **The Chairman and Secretary will draft a paper of the practical arrangements for carrying out 5a and 5c.** Items 5b and 5d will be discussed at the next meeting and where felt to be straightforward. The Final Report will be presented at the next Education Committee of the General Board; the Report and Grace will be sent to the Draftsman for publishing.

410) ENTRY REQUIREMENTS INTO PART III

The Committee were reminded that this year had seen the introduction of the entry hurdle into Part III, (there are no explicit requirements for entry into Part II). It was noted that the physical science courses mostly offer two routes at Part II -- Option A leading to the BA, and Option B leading to the MSci (and BA). Some courses, including Part III Chemistry, require students to have taken Option B at Part II in order to take Part III; the Physics Teaching Committee wish to establish a similar requirement for Part III ETP.

The Committee noted that previously, it had been a requirement that students proceeding to Part III ETP had taken Advanced Physics (and hence also Physics) at Part IB. With the change to Physics A and Physics B, as standalone subjects in Part IB, the Physics Teaching Committee now require both of these for entry to Part III ETP. The small number of students transferring into Part II ETP from Part IB Mathematics and to Part III ETP from Part II Astrophysics or Mathematics will also have to achieve the entry requirements. The draft Notice (CM.458) clearly explains the hurdles required for entry into Part III ETP.

The Committee agreed to the revised hurdles for entry into Physics Part III. The Secretary will publish the Notice.

411) PART II ALLOCATIONS

The Committee received paper (CM.459) and noted the reduction in PDN places. The Chairman expressed his disappointment in this trend over the last couple of years. The Committee discussed the options of 'regulating numbers' within the Departments, to offer consistency and stability of NST cohorts. The possibility of imposing target numbers for Colleges to admit was discussed, giving a better balance between the Physical and Biological Sciences thus help alleviate this creeping problem. The Committee decided to review the first round allocation figures before making any further recommendations.

The Secretary will forward the first round data to the Committee once it is available (7 May)

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm on Tuesday 4 March 2008 in Seminar Room B, First Floor, 17 Mill Lane**