

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 16 October 2007 at 17 Mill Lane in Seminar B Room.**

Present: Dr N Holmes (**Chairman**), Professor TW Clyne, Dr Stuart Dalziel, Dr P Dupree, Professor R Horgan, Dr K Johnstone, Dr J Keeler, Professor A Mycroft, Dr B Nolan, Dr R Padman, Dr R Preece, Dr N Woodcock, Miss E Bailey and Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr R Barnes, Dr P Barrie, Mrs S Stobbs and Miss A Turnbull.

386. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received a current list of members and the Committee's terms of reference (**CM.428 & 9**) and noted that Dr James Keeler from the Faculty of Chemistry and Physics had returned from sabbatical.

The Chairman welcomed the new members, Professor Alan Mycroft, Faculty of Computer Science and Technology; Professor Ron R Horgan, Faculty of Mathematics; Dr Stuart Dalziel, Chairman of Examiners Part IA; and Dr Richard Preece, Chairman of Examiners for Part IB, II and III.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 12 June 2007 were approved.

387. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.430**). It included:

- Annual Report 2006-2007 (**CM.431**)
- Part II, Genetics 2007; reduction from six to five papers (**CM.432**)
- Part III, Experimental & Theoretical Physics; changes to major options. (**CM.440**)
- Minutes of Biological Sciences Committee: 12 July 2007 (**CM.434**).

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

388. MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

i) Part III Course Sharing Proposals (minute 363, 370,378)

The Committee were happy to note that the Chemistry Department would be offering the module *Atmospheric Chemistry and Global Change* from October 2007.

Materials Science and Metallurgy were concerned that they had not received details on the course sharing options, and whether their students would be able to partake? The Secretary confirmed the arrangements and would re- circulate the paperwork.

The Committee discussed the timing of the single examination paper; the mechanisms necessary for coordinating the marking of the paper, and the returning the final mark to the departments ready for final examiners meeting.

The Secretary will confirm with the Board of Examinations the timing of the paper; and circulate the contact details for the Senior Examiners: Dr James Keeler – Chemistry; Prof Richard Phillips – Physics; Dr Neil Mathur – MS & S; Earth Sciences – Dr Nigel Woodcock.

389. PART II ALLOCATION PROCESS

The Annual Report noted that the Part II allocation process had been a success this year. The Secretary presented a paper **(CM.433)** which gave final figures for the process. Several subjects are running close to capacity.

The Committee discussed the problem of students studying Physical Sciences (where there are no numerical admission constraints) receiving the standard email stating they have been allocated their first choice. This can be misleading if they wish to study the 4 year option, but don't achieve the grades required to progress to the four year programme. To clarify this:

The Committee agreed that the following sentence should be added to the standard email: 'subject to you fulfilling the entry requirements for this course'. The Secretary will action this change in CamSIS.

390. TRIPOS EXAMINATIONS 2006-2007

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.435)**. The Chairman noted the absence, in many subjects, of third class marks. It was also noted that BBS students are not achieving as many firsts as found other comparable biological subjects. The course leader has asked for cohort tracking for these students to monitor their progress through the Tripos.

ii. Amendments to class lists

Attention was drawn to the Notices published in *Reporter* 3 October 2007 **(CM.436)**. Several classing errors were reported to have occurred due to carelessness over checking of marks being entered into spreadsheets, prepared for final Examiners meetings. The Committee discussed the problem at length and recommended that local practice needs to be reviewed and careful checking procedures introduced.

The Secretary will liaise with the Board of Examinations about the procedures/guidance for checking marks entered into spreadsheets; and inform the Committee next time.

iii. Part IA

The Committee has not yet received this report from Dr J Little the Chairman of Examiners in Part IA in 2006-07.

iv. Parts IB, II, and III

The Committee received Dr D Buscher's report as Chairman of Examiners in Parts IB, II, and III in 2006-07. Generally the examinations period had gone well; with the exception of Part IB Geology A/1 & 2 papers being swapped. The Senior Examiners'

received a detailed explanation from the Geology Senior Examiner, his report is attached.

The problem of 'paper overload' on guidance to Examiners, with little information on what to do with it all was identified as being a big problem by the Chairman for the Senior Examiners. A timeline of tasks and list of forms to be completed would be useful.

The Secretary will explore whether all the information could be put onto the web, and devise a simple checking form for Examiners.

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.

391. PART IA ALLOCATION PROCESS

The Committee were informed that the Colleges had registered 706 students online this year for the following NST students; CST 50 & 25%; Physics with Maths and Education Studies courses. Details of final class allocations were detailed on Paper **(CM.437)** paper **(CM.438)** gave the final course sizes per course for this year and the previous two years.

This year has seen a large increase in numbers of students wanting to study Chemistry. Due to constraints in the Algorithm, the practical classes' size had to be increased to accommodate this increase. The Course Leader for Chemistry informed the Committee that the lecture hall size capacity was 460 seated; with 514 students being registered this year, there may be problems later in the year. The department is relying on not all the students being present for any one lecture. Fortunately Chemistry has two labs open this year, so the practicals will be able to run safely.

The department of Physics noted that they now have 401 students registered; although only 377 were registered online by the Colleges.

Next year sees the introduction of Computer Science (25%) into the NST; this will need to be 'factored' into the CARET allocation project. The proposal is that for the timetabling of the CS lectures, to be at 10am on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for the 50% Option. The 25% Option will be timetabled against Biology of Cells, but will allow students a greater range of Physical Sciences to choose from.

The Secretary will contact CARET and advise them of the Committee's requirements, and ask for a costing of the changes.

392. TIMETABLING AT PART IB

The Committee received a suggestion that the timetabling of Physiology against Chemistry B be reviewed, in group E. It had been suggested that these two subjects would be popular with students, but are currently timetabled against each other. Paper **(CM.439)** shows the timetabling slots available. Physiology is also available to MVST students so any changes to the timetable would need the Faculty of Biology's consent; due to these constraints it would seem impossible to easily move this teaching slot.

The Committee noted the suggestion but on reflection will not recommend any changes until a firm and workable proposal is put forward.

393. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Agenda item suggested for next time is to look at the 'pre-sessions' running in some colleges. These run before the beginning of Michaelmas Term for NST and Maths Tripos students to prepare them for their courses. Madingley currently runs a similar course for mature students' which has been very successful.

- What should be the Departments roles in these courses?
- Should all Colleges run them?
- What funding arrangements/implications are there in running these courses?

394. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm** on **Tuesday 27 November 2007** in the **Meeting Room, at the Old Schools, Trinity Lane.**