

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 **2.00pm on Tuesday 27 November 2007** 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 B Nolan, Dr R Padman, Dr R Preece, Mrs S Stobbs, Dr N Woodcock, Miss E Bailey and, Mrs K Allen (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr R Barnes, Dr K Johnstone, and Miss A Turnbull

Absent: Dr S Schaffer.

395. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 October 2007 were approved.

396. MATTERS ARISING

i. Part IA Allocation Process (minute 391)

The Committee had noted that there had been a large increase in students this year, and concerns were voiced on the capacity of some labs to cope. The Secretary reported she had circulated an article from the Education Guardian, (17 October 2007), to the Committee, re the national increases in numbers of students studying sciences this year.

The Committee noted this may be good problem to have and was a reflection on the popularity of such a flexible course.

ii. Part III Course Sharing Proposals (minute 388)

The Secretary had contacted the Board of Examinations to ask for the Interdisciplinary paper to be timetabled first for the Part III examinations. The BoE have noted the request.

iii. Amendments to class lists (minute 390,ii)

The Secretary had discussed with the Secretary of the Board of Examinations the Committee's concern about the occasional carelessness in checking the marks being entered onto examination spreadsheets. The Secretary of the Board of Examinations suggests this is a local issue, where training and due diligence should be monitored. A note has been added to the Guide for Senior Examiners to ensure attention to detail is monitored in checking marks entered into spreadsheets.

397. REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

The Committee received a summary of reported business (**CM.441**). It includes:

- Form and Conduct Notice, 2007 (**CM.442**)
- Minutes of Biological Sciences Committee: 04th October 2007 (**CM.443**)
- Revised Guides for Senior Examiners; Part IA, IB II & III (**CM. 444**)
- Education Committees Response to NST Annual Report (verbal report)

The chairman drew attention to the Biological Sciences Committees disappointment in the timetabling of CST against Biology of Cells, as this combination of subjects would be a useful background for students wishing to progress to Part III Systems Biology. After some discussion the Committee acknowledged that this was the inevitable consequence of offering an expanding range of subjects, but would monitor the uptake and demand over the next couple of years.

The Chairman of Senior Examiners for Part IA suggested some amendments to the guide re health and safety issues, and the need to check entered marks before final meetings. These will be incorporated into all the Senior Examiners Guides.

The Secretary to action these amendments are transferred to all guides.

398. INDUCTION EVENTS, INCLUDING ON-LINE PART IA PRACTICAL REGISTRATIONS

The Secretary reported that she had written to the Senior Tutors on the process of Practical Registration for Part IA students, submitting the Students' feedback on the Induction Programme; a copy of the letter and paper (**CM.445 & 446**) were circulated. The Committee noted the students request for a tabular format of the timetable, but accepted that at present, this would not be possible to supply. The problem of access to usable maps was also discussed; the NATSCI website could be a useful depository for this general information.

399. PRE SESSIONS FOR NEW STUDENTS

The Committee were circulated with the notes from the first meeting of the Senior Tutors working group on 'induction and study skills' (**CM.447**). The Committee noted the different programmes on offer at the Colleges for induction and study skills. No Department currently run induction courses, although some do host them in partnership with the Colleges. The Committee were mindful that this provision was best served by the Colleges, and not via the Departments; and that there were serious implications of increased costs and resources to Colleges if the terms were expanded to provide extended induction programmes.

The Committee would like to see greater equality of the provision across all Colleges for all students. The secretary will try and obtain a chart of provisions be provided by all the Colleges.

399.

400. NST PART II PHYSICAL SCIENCES (minute 380)

The Secretary had written to the Faculty Boards of Physics & Chemistry; Earth Sciences and Mathematics to clarify the current arrangements of Part II Physical Sciences course asking whether Part II Mathematics should remain an option in the course. Responses have been received from the Faculty of Physics and Chemistry (**CM.448**) and the Faculty Board of Mathematics (**CM.449**), both are content for the Part II Mathematics option to be removed. The Committee agreed that the current Mathematics option at Part IB of the NST should remain an option for students at Part IB or Part II Physical Sciences, if it had not been previously taken.

The Secretary will write to DAMTP re this decision.

401. THE GOVERNANCE OF THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS (minute 351)

The Committee were reminded that the General Board's Education Committee had established a Working Group to run a consultation exercise. The final Report **(CM.450)** now circulated formed the 'formal consultation processes'. The Committee noted that the main change to the document was the removal of the explicit proposal for Directors of Teaching in the School of Physical Sciences to meet regularly, with the recommendation of the adoption of a "School-level network".

The Committee's responses to the 'summary of recommendations' are:

5a). The Committee agreed with the suppression of the Strategic Committee. Strategic issues would be best dealt with at School level; however the Committee also noted the need for decisions to be made involving Faculty/Departmental Directors of Teaching.

5b). The membership of the Management Committee represented those involved with teaching and admin. The balance in the makeup of the membership needs to be maintained to reflect a fair representation of the departments involved in the NST;

5ci). The Committee felt it would prefer to address strategic issues as they arose, as a standing item on the agenda, rather than setting aside one meeting per year;

5cii). The Annual Report was considered to be an important document which could be better used to reflect what the Committee had achieved and what its future plans were. Transparency and communication are important aspects of the Committee's work.

5civ). The Committee noted that having clear statements on the roles and responsibilities would be a useful tool for new members. The primary role was considered to be acting as a 'conduit of information' (both ways).

5d). The Committee fully supported the move to establish a full-time NST Administrative Officer; stating that any developmental work or initiatives are constrained by lack of admin support; currently the increasing load in paperwork involving QA issues; time involved with the co-ordination required between Colleges and Departments to action various processes (Part IA & IB examination markbooks; Part IA Practical Allocations and Part II Restricted Subjects, co-ordinating MVST & NST cohorts) was sufficient to justify this option. The Committee felt this post should be 'housed' within the Academic Division to maintain the relationship with QA initiatives within the University; jointly funded by the Schools of Physical And Biological sciences.

402. JUNIOR MEMBERS

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

403. ITEMS OF RESERVED BUSINESS

- **Standing of student**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting shall take place at **2:15 pm** on **Tuesday 5 February 2008** in the Meeting Room at the Old Schools.