

## **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 14<sup>th</sup> October 2008** in Seminar Room B, First Floor, 17 Mill Lane

Present: Dr N Holmes (Chairman), Dr P Barrie, Professor T W Clyne, Dr P Dupree, Professor H Griffiths, Professor R Horgan, Dr J Keeler, Dr M Mason, Professor A Mycroft, Dr R Padman, Dr R Preece, Professor S Redfern, Dr S Russell, Professor J Secord, Professor D Ward, Miss D Kaminski and Mrs E Fenn (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr S Dalziel, Miss Jessica Hatchett

### **428) MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE (CM.488, CM.489)**

New members were welcomed and introduced. In accordance with the regulations for the new Committee of Management (Statutes and Ordinances, page 145, para 4) it was proposed that Dr N Holmes be elected as Chairman. This proposal was seconded and Dr Holmes agreed to continue in this role for one further academic year.

### **429) MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008, subject to a minor amendment, were approved.

### **430) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD**

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.490**) and noted by the Committee. It included:

- Student Representatives and Reserved Business
- Minutes of Biological Sciences Committee, 10<sup>th</sup> July 2008 (**CM.491**)
- Minutes of the Part III Systems Biology Planning Group Biological Sciences Committee, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008 (**CM.492**)

### **431) MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA**

#### **Number of Subjects Offered (minute 421)**

The request to the University Draftsman for a change to the regulations to enforce the numbers of subjects offered had been rejected as the current wording was deemed to be clear. Part IA and Part IB candidates would not be allowed to take additional examinations to those stated in the regulations. They may attend additional lectures and practicals, if space and timetabling permit. Any additional supervisions deemed appropriate would need to be provided by the Colleges.

**The Committee agreed that this reflected the earlier decision.**

**Secretary to write to Senior Tutors and Directors of Studies to clarify the position.**

#### **Meeting to discuss CamSis exam entries (minute 422)**

This meeting had been considered necessary due to the increased number of options and interdisciplinary papers being offered. The Examinations Officer from the Board of Examinations was concerned at the number of late changes to examination registrations from candidates within the Natural Sciences Tripos. A simplified examination entry had been considered but this would reduce the amount of information on the student transcript. It was

decided that the fine detail was still needed and that this should perhaps be managed within the Departments. JISC money was available to develop a system to manage examination entries which could be of interest to several departments.

**The Committee approved these suggestions and it was agreed that this proposal should be developed with a view to its being implemented for the 2009/2010 academic year.**

#### 432) CELL AND DEVELOPMENTAL BIOLOGY BIOINFORMATICS PRACTICALS

The CDB Management Committee had requested to run the Bioinformatics practical outside of the normal time slot in order to make better use of resources (CM.493). The proposal, to start in 2009-10, is to run 10 slots (2 per day for 5 days) and review operation as it progresses.

**The Committee agreed with this proposal on the understanding that the CDB Management Committee accepted responsibility for the organisation required and that no other practicals were affected.**

#### 433) PROVISION OF SAFETY GLASSES

The Biological Sciences Committee had endorsed a recommendation from the Teaching Management Committee that for the Biology of Cells course all students should provide their own safety glasses. The Committee was asked to consider whether this should apply for the NST Part IA in general.

**After discussion the Committee agreed that any change should be for the entire NST Tripos and that students should be informed that safety glasses were a requirement for practical work and that it was recommended that they purchased their own. Safety glasses could then be made available for purchase at the start of term alongside lab coats and would still be available to borrow in labs. The relevant stores would need to be notified and the NST website will require updating.**

**Secretary to update NST website and notify parties concerned.**

#### 434) SCHEDULING OF PHYSIOLOGY OF ORGANISMS PART IA PRACTICALS AT WF12

Two issues had been raised with regard to timetabling of Physiology of Organisms where combinations of options had caused a clash either with introductory sessions or between practicals and lectures. The numbers of students affected are usually very small and workarounds have been developed. Handouts or individual assistance replaces the missed introductory sessions and laboratory time has been adapted as in other clash situations.

**The Committee were content with the solutions provided and did not feel further review was required.**

#### 435) CHANGES TO PART II PHYSIOLOGY, DEVELOPMENT AND NEUROSCIENCE

The Committee considered a paper (CM.494) approved by the Biological Sciences Committee, providing details of a change to the Physiology, Development and Neuroscience Part II course and examinations.

**The Committee approved these changes.**

**Secretary to prepare change to regulations and Form and Conduct notice.**

#### 436) PART III HPS (minute 425)

A letter from HPS (CM.495) was circulated in response to Education Committee minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008. 'The Committee approved changes to the requirements for Part II from October 2008, and agreed in principle to the introduction of Part III NST (History and Philosophy of Science) in 2009-10 subject to formal approval by the NST Management Committee, and to certain provisos, including that entry requirements be consistent with those for other Part IIIs in the NST. It was agreed to refer the issue of funding of Masters courses and implications of changing arrangements on Part III provision to the NST Management Committee.'

The letter received from the department of History and Philosophy of Science had been superseded by a discussion at the departmental Board. Professor Secord provided some background to the basis for the decision which was to have a higher requirement at Part II for entry to Part III HPS than for the other NST Part IIIs. HPS would not require a specific level of achievement at Part II. Some concern was expressed that this may undermine the standard of the M.Sci award and therefore the funding arrangements with LEAs. At the previous NST Committee meeting a full programme specification including aims and outcomes had been requested and this had not yet been received. Descriptors of the level of attainment had also been thought to be based more at graduate level and changes had been requested. The Committee were reluctant to prevent progress but requested reassurance that all papers were in order.

**The Committee agreed with the proposal on the understanding that all supporting documents were made available in good time.**

**It was agreed that Part III provision should be revisited later in the academic year as part of the strategic vision for the Tripos.**

#### **437) PART II EXPERIMENTAL AND THEORETICAL PHYSICS, OPTION A AND OPTION B**

The Committee had been asked to respond to a query from the Senior Tutors Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2008 with regard to an apparent discrepancy in the workload between Option A and Option B of Part II Experimental and Theoretical Physics. The Committee received an explanation of the work for each option and was informed that there was no difference in workload between Option A and Option B and that the emphasis on written work differed between the two options as they were leading to different places.

**The Committee was content with this explanation.**

**Secretary to inform the Senior Tutors' Committee.**

#### **438) CHANGE OF TITLE FOR PART IA MATHS OPTION**

The Faculty of Biology and the Biological Sciences Committee had endorsed a recommendation from the Maths Review Group that the title of Quantitative Biology should be changed to Mathematical Biology to take effect from 2009 entry. There is no change to the examination. The Committee were asked to approve this change. The Committee discussed the content of the course which emphasises mathematical techniques in solving biological problems and considered other potential titles. The proposed title had been suggested with the aim of encouraging an interest in mathematics for those taking Biological subjects and was intended to be more attractive to students.

**The Committee agreed the proposal.**

**Secretary to draft notice for Reporter and amend documentation.**

#### **439) FORM AND CONDUCT NOTICES FOR PART IB PHYSICS A AND B (CM.496), PART II ETP OPTIONS A AND B (CM.497), PART III (CM.498)**

Details of changes in Part IB Physics A and B, Part II ETP Options A and B, and Part III ETP were presented and some minor corrections noted.

**The Committee approved these changes.**

**Secretary to prepare Form and Conduct notices and change to regulations for Part II.**

**440) ANALYSIS OF THE CORRELATION BETWEEN PART IA AND PART IB NST**

Copies of a paper (CM.499) were circulated and an explanation given for the figures provided for the last two years. There had been some concern within the Physics department that a number of students may be unfairly treated according to their choice of subject in Part IB and the Physics Teaching Committee had requested the NST Management Committee to consider whether the algorithm in use currently should be reconsidered. It was recognised that various other factors contributed, such as the narrow distribution of marks for essays in biological subjects against the broader marking range in the more physical subjects. In addition there were often differences between biological subjects and marks for practical work often raised overall marks. The main concern was to consider whether the current guidelines meant that certain students were being disadvantaged at Part IB and the Committee was asked to consider whether some mechanism is needed to even out the marks between subjects. Various suggestions relating to marking by class, scaling, and norm referencing were considered and the student view was sought. The Committee was also asked to consider whether the percentage of I/II.i's is appropriate and whether the differences between particular cohorts should be taken into account. The next meeting would discuss the advice provided to Examiners and it was thought appropriate that suggestions for change should be considered as part of that discussion.

**Richard Preece to report back to the November meeting.**

**441) TRIPOS EXAMINATIONS**

**Amendments to class lists (CM.500)**

The Committee noted these amendments.

**442) PART IA ALLOCATION PROCESS**

The Committee noted the difficulty in allocating numbers to practical classes which were reaching capacity and agreed to discuss this paper (CM.501) at the meeting in November.

**443) REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BA DEGREES**

Copies of a draft Report proposing changes to the requirements for the BA degree were circulated (CM.502). The Report recommends that students should be required to successfully complete a Part II for a BA with Honours. Under Part II Physical Sciences students are allowed to take two half subjects (at Part II level) OR a half subject plus a IB subject. The Committee were asked to consider whether that latter option meets these requirements. Although only small numbers of students were likely to be affected it was agreed that further review was required of the half subject regulations. It would be necessary either to confirm that the proposed requirements were being met or to change the regulations. Once reviewed the report would be considered by the Committee.

**444) REPORT ON INTEGRATED MASTERS**

Following discussions with a number of interested parties with the NST and from the Faculty of Mathematics, proposals have been drawn up for a Framework to allow Integrated Masters (Part III) courses to be offered to graduates from outside Cambridge for a Masters award. The Committee is asked to endorse the proposals. Copies of a draft report were circulated (CM.503). The Committee felt that the proposed Master of Advanced Studies was appropriate to undergraduate level study. The alternative of creating additional workload for external students to allow them to qualify for an M.Phil. was not what had originally been intended, given that all students would be subject to the same examination process. It would also add significantly to

the burden of teaching the course and might be financially non-viable. It was accepted that an M.Adv.St would not receive LEA funding but it would enable overseas students to obtain a Cambridge qualification at Undergraduate Master level. The Committee felt that there was a lack of clarity with regard to Masters level qualifications, the Bologna process and concern over equivalences may be contributing to this problem. The Committee wished to commend the proposal for the introduction of the two degrees in principal but would like further clarification on the mechanisms involved e.g admission and regulations.

445) **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was proposed that future meetings of the Committee should commence at 2.00pm. The Committee agreed with this proposal.

446) **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting shall take place at **2:00 pm on Tuesday 25 November 2008** in the **Pathology Seminar Room, Tennis Court Road.**