

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 2:00 pm on **Tuesday 3rd May 2011** in Seminar Room C, 16 Mill Lane.

Present: Dr R Padman (acting Chair), Dr M Aitken, Dr P Duffett-Smith, Dr S Fulton, Dr N Hopwood (representing Professor J Secord), Professor R Horgan, Professor A Mycroft, Mr J Norris, Professor D Ritchie, Dr S Russell, Dr N Rutter, Dr C Schwiening, Dr T Tiffert, Dr Ian Wilson and Mrs E Oliver (Secretary).

Apologies: Professor H Griffiths, Dr J Keeler (Chairman), Professor S Redfern, Mr T Towers.

595) MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2011 were agreed subject to amendment of the heading for minute 592 to Transitional and Transferable Skills.

596) MATTERS ARISING NOT ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

A summary sheet of action points and matters arising (**CM.705**) was circulated. The points were summarised and attention was drawn to Minute 590 regarding the timetable publishing tool. Work had progressed since the last Management Committee meeting and was ongoing; it was hoped that it would be possible to import data from other timetable sources. A meeting to view progress would be held on 4th May.

The Chairman reported that Helen Webster, the Skills Training Officer referred to in minute 592 had found it difficult to get groups together despite pursuing several lines of enquiry. She had however been in contact with the student member and had attended a lecture which had been followed by a focus group.

The Committee congratulated Dr Schwiening on the award of funds for the trial of electronic devices in lectures. It was proposed to identify possible equipment and arrange groups in July. Initially, the project would be looking at what difficulties may be encountered when electronic devices are used in place of lecture notes. Experimental design methods were discussed and Dr Schwiening would contact those who had provided input. It was noted that other Departments were also looking at the cost of supplying paper handouts and considering alternatives.

597) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS

A paper of reported business was circulated (**CM.706**).

- The Minutes of the meeting of the Biological Sciences Committee held on 17th March 2011 (**CM.707**) were noted. Attention was drawn to Minute 387 and the requirement for A Level Chemistry in order to study Part IA Biology of Cells. It was accepted that this was an indirect way of making A Level Chemistry a requirement for Part IB Biochemistry and Molecular Biology which had been introduced following a recommendation from a Learning & Teaching Review. Although this could result in some students being unable to take Part IA Biology of Cells no complaints had been raised.
- A report from the Education Section following consultation on the Bologna Process and European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) credits (**CM.708**) had been circulated. The Committee noted that ECTS equivalences had not been assigned to any Master of Natural Sciences (M.Sci) awards and that the number and nature of requests for

confirmation of ECTS equivalences would be monitored by the Education Committee. The subject would be revisited if necessary.

- A summary of the changes to the examination structure in Part II Experimental and Theoretical Physics and Half Subject Physics had been circulated together with a draft regulation change (**CM.709**). The changes would complete the process of separating all Part II Experimental and Theoretical Physics examinations so that each lecture course had one two hour examination, thereby making the system completely modular. The number of Papers would increase from 4 to 8; the structure would be maintained but the additional time allowed would enable more complete and coherent responses. The proposed increase had been recommended by the External Examiners and follows consultation within the Department which included students. The Committee supported the change.
Action: Secretary to forward proposal to the General Board's Education Committee.
- In accordance with Statutes & Ordinances pg 392, Regulation 33, the Management Committee is required to publish details of the Interdisciplinary papers in the Easter Term in the year next preceding the examination. The Notice which will be submitted to the Reporter was attached for the Committee to approve (**CM.710**). In 2011 the Interdisciplinary Papers will be assessed by a separate one hour examination, rather than as part of a single 3-hour paper. It is proposed that for 2012 each paper will be of 1.5 hours' duration. This was discussed and agreed by the Physical Sciences Education Committee who felt that it would give scope for two questions if Departments prefer, and mean that candidates should not feel obliged to produce hastily-prepared answers. The proposal to extend the duration to 1.5 hours, together with the content for IDP1 and IDP3 owned by Chemistry and Physics respectively, were approved. Since the initial draft it had become apparent that a correction was required to the entry for the IDP2 paper owned by Earth Sciences with regard to a practical component for Geological Science students. It was agreed that, once confirmed, this amendment could be approved by Chair's action.
A summary of the Interdisciplinary process (**CM.711**), which had been simplified by the separation of the papers, was noted.
- A report prepared by the Students Statistics Office on Transfers between Subjects in 2010-11 had been circulated (**CM.712**). This provided a comparison of courses followed in 2010/11, with the courses followed by second-year and third-year students in the previous year, and with the course proposed on admission by first-year students. The Committee noted that there were very few movements out of the Tripos and that these were mostly at recognised transition points; the overall number of transfers was low and appeared to be decreasing.
- A collection of general leaflets and posters for the Cambridge/NST Open Days on 7th/8th July had been provided (**CM.713**). The posters (**CM.713a,b,c**) were approved subject to the removal of the marker for biological science subjects on **CM.713c**. It was agreed that A4 sized photocopies of these could be offered as additional handouts as they provided an instant simple overview. It was also felt that the more text-heavy documents (**CM.713d,e,f**) were needed for potential applicants to peruse in depth at a later stage. It was felt that **CM.713g** required some amendments.
Action: Secretary to finalise documentation and arrange reproduction for Open Day.
Action: Dr Aitken to consult with the Course Organiser for Elementary Mathematics for Biologists for CM.713g.
- CARET had provided an update on their simulations for the Part IA Practical Allocation. The lab allocator had been run using the students from last year but with the new format for Materials Science (and labs running on Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri

afternoons) along with the agreed change for Computer Science (Physics on Monday or Friday). The combination of those two changes seemed to improve the timetable a fair amount: more students can study Chemistry and Physics on the same day on alternate weeks, and students from the same college are more likely to have labs on the same day (to aid supervision arranging). It was noted that without the Computer Science change, the Materials Science change made the timetable more challenging. Both changes were needed to enable the improvement. CARET would be carrying out further work during the coming month to confirm these results and with a view to improving the situation for Computer science (perhaps by biasing the allocator slightly towards CST in terms of grouping students in colleges). It was hoped that this improvement would reduce the amount of time required for the allocator to produce a satisfactory result.

598) PROPOSED 'TWIN' TRIPOSES

Detailed Regulations for the proposed 'twin' Triposes (Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Tripos [PBS] and Human, Social and Political Sciences Tripos [HSPS]) were being prepared and the following papers had been circulated to the Committee: a report to the General Board from the Social Sciences Tripos Management Committee on the proposed introduction of 'twin' Triposes (**CM.714**), and a report from the PBS sub-Committee established to work up the proposals (**CM.715**), together with a draft set of regulations from that sub-Committee (**CM.716**).

The Management Committee was asked to concur, for its part, in the introduction of these Triposes with effect from October 2013. It is intended that, subject to the necessary consultations, the General Board will sign and Report to the Regent House at their meeting on 1 June 2011. Dr Padman who had served on the 'twin' Tripos Management Committee explained the background to the proposal. Dr Aitken who had served on the same Committee outlined the implications for Natural Sciences and Psychology. The proposals presented a wider choice to students interested in Psychology without full commitment at an early stage. Students taking PBS would be able to offer subjects from NST or HSPS with possibilities of further shared papers in the future. The current borrowing of NST IB Experimental Psychology by the Politics Psychology and Sociology Tripos would cease. It was not anticipated that there would be any impact on the Psychology route through Natural Sciences although it was possible that there may be a slight loss of numbers (c20) who would opt for the new route. There may be an effect on Part IA Elementary Mathematics for Biologists if it were found that those students who did not have strong Maths were opting for the new Tripos. Further consideration could then be given as to whether A Level Mathematics should be a requirement for the Natural Sciences Tripos or whether adjustments to Part I mathematics courses were appropriate. The Psychology department would keep under review the demand for Part II Experimental Psychology and did not intend to reduce the number of places available to NST/MVST students. Accreditation by the British Psychology Society for both courses would not be affected. It is proposed that the Management Committee would remain in place, with oversight of both new Triposes, supported by two separate sub-committees. The Committee congratulated those involved on having arrived in sight of an outcome and supported the proposals as presented.

Action: Secretary to forward the Committee's comments to the Secretary of the Management Committee of the 'twin' Triposes.

599) PART II SUBJECT ALLOCATION – CAMSIS PROCESS

As part of the Student Experience project aimed at improving the student interface within CamSIS it was proposed to enhance the NST Restricted Subjects component.

Whilst the functionality behind the interface would not change, it would enable the development of a 'wizard' style navigation using a step process for the selection of options. A release date of 30th August 2011 is envisaged for the main part of the project, and work on the Restricted Subjects component would continue during Michaelmas Term 2011 which would mean that the improvements would be in place for the next cycle commencing January 2012.

In addition to presenting the information in a more user-friendly manner it would enable additional guidance to be added at appropriate points in the process. The development team at CamSIS were seeking the support of the Management Committee before proceeding.

The Committee welcomed the proposals on condition that the changes would not constrain future modifications to the functionality behind the interface. It was felt that there were aspects of the Restricted Subjects procedure which would merit improvement, such as the number of choices, and the ability for Directors of Studies to see the student view. Given that the process included physical science subjects which were not restricted, it may be appropriate to consider renaming the process as Part II Subject Registration.

Action: Secretary to relay the Committee's view to the CamSIS team and to arrange for further discussion on the functionality aspects.

600) PART IA & PART IB PRACTICAL EXAMINATIONS – STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A paper was circulated with information on the arrangements made for students with special needs (**CM.717**) in examinations. It contained a proposal for revised arrangements for Part IA & Part IB candidates with Specific Learning Disorders (SpLDs) which was an attempt to assist with a situation which had created difficulties during the 2010 examination period. The Committee was asked to comment on the points for discussion and whether or not it approved the new arrangements. The Committee recognised that the current procedure was already complex and that nothing was likely to be ideal. The proposed arrangements would improve awareness of the extra time allowed but would not necessarily improve fairness to candidates. There were no arguments against the proposal but the Committee felt that the Disability Resources Centre should be asked to comment and a revised proposal brought to the July meeting so that any changes could be put in place for the 2012 examination period.

Action: Secretary to consult with the Disability Resource Centre.

601) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters of other business.

602) DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place at 2:00 pm on Tuesday, 5th July 2011 in the Greaves Room, 1st Floor, Pathology, Tennis Court Road.