

## 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 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013** in the Todd–Hamied Room, Chemistry Department, Lensfield Road.

Present: Dr J Keeler (Chair), Dr M Aitken, Dr P Barrie, Dr R Harle representing Professor I Leslie, Dr R Padman, Professor S Redfern, Professor D Ritchie, Ms R Rostom, Dr N Rutter, Professor G Worster and Mrs E Oliver (Secretary).

Apologies: Dr A Alexandrova, Professor M Carpenter, Dr S Fulton, Dr D Good, Professor H Griffiths, Professor J Morton, Dr T Tiffert.

An updated list of members had been circulated. **(CM.823)**

The Faculty Board of Biological Sciences had appointed Ms Raghd Rostom, from Christ's College, as the biological sciences junior member for the Committee. Dr David Good had been co-opted until December 2013. The Committee approved these appointments. A junior member from the physical sciences is being sought.

Re-appointments for the following members had been agreed by the General Board; Dr Michael Aitken (Faculty Board of Biology), Dr James Keeler (Faculty Board of Physics & Chemistry), Professor David Ritchie (Faculty Board of Physics & Chemistry). A replacement for Professor Colin Hughes (School of Biological Sciences) was awaited. Dr Robert Harle was representing Professor Ian Leslie for this meeting.

New members were welcomed.

### **675) MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2012 had been circulated and were approved.

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

A summary sheet of action points and matters arising from the meeting of 20<sup>th</sup> November **(CM.824)** had been circulated.

#### **Minute 661.**

The Committee of Membership of Committees had been advised of the nominations which had been confirmed.

A proposal for the terms of reference and membership of the group to discuss mathematics teaching in the Tripos was on this agenda. It was noted that the NST Maths Syllabus Committee had met and that another meeting was planned.

The Secretary had received a response from the Architect dealing with the Arup building refurbishment. It had been confirmed that the Cockcroft lecture theatre would not be affected in 2013-14 although its future was under discussion. The consequences of the Babbage Lecture being unavailable for 2013/15 were receiving attention centrally. Accommodation had been found for the lectures for Part IB Materials. Part IA Biology of Cells would also need an alternative location. There was some concern at the lack of understanding centrally of the consequences of the Babbage lecture theatre being out of use.

**Minute 662**

The revised notice for Part III Entry requirements for 2013-14 had been published in the Reporter of 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and was linked from the NST webpages.

**Minute 663.**

The Annual Report had been forwarded to relevant Faculties and Schools and to the General Board's Education Committee.

**Minute 664.**

CARET had been informed of the Committee's comments on the Part IA Practical Allocation and improvements would be implemented as part of the annual updating process.

**Minute 666.**

The possibility of changing dates for the Final Examiners' meetings and the Part II Subject allocation decisions had been raised at the Part IB Interim meeting but it had been considered too late to introduce changes for this academical year. It was proposed to contact Senior Examiners and Part II Course Organisers early in the Easter Term to ascertain the impact of any change for future years

A response had been received from the Course Management Team for Systems Biology with respect to the proportion of first class results. The Committee's concerns had been noted and the Course Organiser had provided an adequate explanation. The Committee was reassured to hear that vigilance would not be relaxed.

**Minute 667.**

The changes to the document on penalties for late submission had been checked for consistency and published in the form agreed with an additional sentence added.

The Guides for Senior Examiners for Parts IA, IB, and II and III together with the Exam Administration Timetable had been published on the NST website, uploaded to CamTools and circulated to Senior Examiners.

The draft rota had been forwarded to the School Committees; the Biological Sciences Committee had requested a revised draft of the rota which is being prepared.

**Minute 669.**

Summarised comments on the National Student Survey were included on this agenda.

**Minute 670.**

The Committee's comments on the proposed changes to Part IB Ecology had been forwarded to the Course Organiser and the Biological Sciences Committee. The Biological Sciences Committee's had discussed this at their meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012. An amended proposal had been submitted which included the 'pink list' information, and details of an option for those unable to take part in field work to undertake independent project work during the vacation or in term-time and submit a report of this work, or a critical bibliographic review. This alternative option was the same as that currently available. This proposal had been approved by the Senior Tutors' Education Committee and by the General Board's Education Committee. Changes to Regulations would be prepared and forwarded to the Reporter Editor.

**Action:** Secretary to prepare regulation changes and an entry for the Reporter.

**Minute 671.**

The Committee's comments on the CARET Report on Examinations had been forwarded to CARET. NST administration was under discussion within the Schools and a meeting had been arranged with the Registry. Dr Padman would report at the next Committee meeting.

**Minute 673.**

The Secretary forwarded the Committee's comments on the proposed change of name for Part II and Part III Experimental and Theoretical Physics, to The Physical Science Undergraduate Education Committee and the Faculty Board. The former endorsed the proposal at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 and the proposal is now with the Faculty Board. Once agreed, the changes to Regulations will be forwarded to the Reporter Editor.

**677) REPORTED AND STRAIGHTFORWARD BUSINESS**

A paper of reported business had been circulated (**CM.825**). It included:

**i. Faculty Board of Biology, Biological Sciences Committee (BSC)**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (**CM.826**) were noted. Dr Aitken updated the Committee with regards to Minute 463.03: Classing of IB results. A revised paper, which addressed previous criticisms, had been discussed by BSC at their January meeting and had been well received. Dr Aitken noted that it was important to ensure that the changes were effective, and transparent to end users, and reported that it was planned to run the proposed system as a test alongside this year's examination process. The required information should be obtained easily from Senior Examiners. A further paper, giving details of the revised scheme, would be prepared for the April meeting of the Management Committee.

**ii. School of the Physical Sciences Undergraduate Education Committee**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012 (**CM.827**) were noted.

**iii. Changes to Regulations – Part III History and Philosophy of Science**

An amendment had been made to the Regulations for Part III History and Philosophy of Science to correct the number of short essay titles from which candidates choose two, from four to eight. This was not a change of practice but rectified an error in the regulations which had existed since the introduction of the course.

**Action:** Secretary to prepare regulation changes and the entry for the Reporter.

**iv. Preparation for the Part II subject allocation process.**

The information provided to students had been circulated (**CM.828**) and was noted. Documentation would be circulated to Colleges and updated on the NST webpages mid-February. It was noted that Pathology will not be able to offer Mechanisms of Disease as a Part II BBS subject in 2013 or for the foreseeable future; this is a result of staff shortages in the Department. 32 candidates, mostly from the Medical and Veterinary Sciences Tripos, had taken this Part II subject in 2012/13 and the lack of this option was likely to impact on places for single subjects as well as BBS in future years. The Faculty Board of Biology had asked Departments to look for additional Part II places. The deadline for returning this data to the Secretary was the end of January at which point an overall check on numbers would be carried out. The committee noted that without additional places being offered the allocation process would fail.

**Action:** Secretary to update NST webpages and circulate information to Colleges.

#### **v. Part III Entry guidance**

Updated guidance relating to Part III Entry had been circulated (**CM.829**). This comprised the departmental guidance, information for students considering continuing to Part III, agreed procedures, and a process flow chart. This documentation had been introduced in 2011/12 and had worked well. The student guidance would be updated on the web and, together with the departmental documents, would be circulated to Colleges and Directors of Studies.

**Action:** Secretary to update the NST webpages and circulate the guidance to Colleges.

#### **vi. Redesign of the NST webpages**

The current NST webpages had been transferred into their new format at

<http://www.natsci.tripos.cam.ac.uk/>

This had required some re-organisation and amendments to the current content. The new pages would be transferred into the new templates in due course; an example of which could be seen at: <http://falcon-test.csi.cam.ac.uk/site/NATSCI>

Additional pictures would be obtained from the Admissions Office. The Committee approved the new content and design.

**Action:** Secretary to continue working with the University Computer Service in preparation for the launch of the new website.

#### **vii. External Examiner Reports 2011/12**

A paper had been circulated (**CM.830**) which provided a summary of comments from reports received from External Examiners in 2011/12 together with departmental responses. In the main, comments referred to minor adjustments with a view to improving the process, and there were no areas of major concern or of over-arching Tripos issues. Both External Examiners for Physics had commented on the change of entry criteria for Part III in that subjects; it was felt that adequate advance warning had been provided and that progression hurdles were acceptable and were clearly advertised.

#### **viii. Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos**

The Secretary had met with the Administrator for the new Tripos with a view to assisting communication on key points such as Part IA Allocations and examinations. Dr Aitken confirmed that planning was moving forward for the new Tripos.

#### **678) REVIEW OF MATHEMATICS TEACHING WITHIN THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS**

A paper had been circulated with a proposal for the composition of the working party and its remit (**CM.831**). The Committee had been asked to comment. Professor Worster thought that the paper was a good document and the scope appropriate. He felt that the needs throughout the Tripos were important and that it would therefore be helpful to move point 8 of the remit next to point 2. It was agreed that although questions may be raised with regard to the outcome of previous reviews, it was important that the proposed review was forward looking. It was also agreed that an additional point should be added to include the question of overall organisation and academic responsibility.

Discussion on the composition of the working party took place. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for the Chairman of the working party to have an interest in how mathematics was taught in the University without necessarily being personally involved in its teaching. The value of representation from another University was considered; this could also take the form of a 'corresponding' member. The suggestion of an individual member with knowledge of the teaching of mathematics at secondary level, and in particular the transition to HE, was discussed and it was agreed that their expertise would be extremely helpful. It was important that all interested parties felt represented and it might therefore be appropriate to increase the School level representation with some parties perhaps having a dual role. Appropriate student

members would also be important; these should probably comprise Part IB or Part II students with at least one having taken Mathematical Biology. The Chairman would undertake to redraft the proposal and recirculate it to members of the Committee prior to requesting suggestions for nominations from relevant parties.

**Action:** Dr Keeler to redraft the paper for circulation to the Committee.

#### **679) NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2012**

The General Board's Education Committee had requested a brief response following consideration of the data provided. A paper had been circulated (**CM.832**) which summarised comments received on Tripos-wide issues. Observations relating to specific subjects would be included in replies from Departments and Faculties. The Committee approved the paper.

**Action:** Secretary to forward the Committee's response to Educational and Student Policy.

#### **680) SUPERVISION DATA**

Data from CamCORS had been circulated together with an explanatory note from Dr Paul Chirico who had prepared the data for the Senior Tutors' Committee (**CM.833**). An additional paper was tabled (**CM.834**) which reported the outcome of a meeting held in October 2012 between NST Course Organisers and representatives of the Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education. The Committee noted the contents of both papers.

#### **681) ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

#### **682) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will take place at 2:00 pm on Tuesday, 26th February 2013, Todd Hamied Room, Ground Floor, Department of Chemistry.