

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Committee of Management for the Natural Sciences Tripos held at 2:15 pm on Tuesday 20th November 2018 in the **Seminar Room, Department of Pathology, Tennis Court Road.**

Present: Dr Nicholas Holmes (in the Chair), Professor John Richer, Dr Kate Plaised-Grant, Dr David Summers, Dr Deborah Longbottom, Dr Tim Weil, Dr Sandra Fulton, Professor James Elliott, Professor Nick Butterfield, Dr Bill Nolan, Dr Eric Rees, Dr Dee Scadden, Dr Stewart Sage, Dr Daniel Margocsy and Jane Clare (Secretary).

Apologies were received from Professor Grae Worster, Mr Stanley Quek and Mr Gilbertas Umbrazunas

949) Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2018 were approved with one amendment: minute 947)i. should show that the Committee had agreed the Chemical Engineering route through the Tripos should be mentioned in the NST booklet.

950) Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

i) Biology of Cells lectures have moved from the Physiology Lecture Theatre to the Bristol Myers-Squibb Lecture Theatre. Lecturers and students are happy with the move and there has been no effect on practical session attendance.

The Cockcroft Lecture Theatre will be re-opened from January 2019 to December 2019, and possibly for Lent and Easter Terms 2020. Any department interested in moving lectures to the Cockcroft should contact the Student Registry.

(ii) Minute 932, 16 October refers
Possible Materials Science/Earth Sciences timetable swap in order for Materials Science to move to the Bristol-Squibb Lecture Theatre.

The Chair confirmed that the swap would cause various timetable clashes. It was also noted that IA Earth Sciences lecturers were content with their current teaching slot.

Action: Further discussion between the Chair , Secretary and relevant Departments would look at solutions for potential timetable clashes.

951) Reported and Straightforward Business

The 2019 Form and Conduct Notices were approved.

It was noted that the BBS amendment to the weighting of the examinations would require a change to the supplementary regulations. The amendment had been made in response to student feedback, and for uniformity across Part II and BBS.

Action: Secretary to forward BBS regulation change to the Reporter for publication.

952) Recording of lectures on religious grounds

The Committee noted a request from a Part IA student who does not attend Saturday lectures on religious grounds, to be sent video and audio recordings. Currently, there is

no facility for this unless the lecture theatre is part of the lecture capture pilot. The Course Organiser is confident that all the necessary material is available to students on Moodle.

The view of the Committee was that departments should facilitate students as far as possible in these circumstances, whilst recognising that the University is under no legal obligation to do so. Recording of lectures by students would require a signed agreement confirming that the lecturer had given permission and that the student was aware of the confidential nature of the material. A template agreement is available from the Disability Resource Centre.

The Committee agreed that audio recordings would suffice as any visual material would be available on Moodle.

953) Overall Degree Classification and Ranking

The Committee noted two letters and accompanying papers from Alice Benton, Head of Educational and Student Policy.

The Faculty of Biology discussed the matter and consulted with departments, and (with one exception) there was agreement that the NST course should be weighted 100% in the final year. The HPS Faculty Board had come to the same conclusion.

There was some discussion around how students on the Medicine and Veterinary Triposes would be classified, given that their third year was spent in diverse departments. Mrs Benton's letter indicated that the relevant examination board would be expected to decisions of this kind.

Other points raised in the discussion:

- despite the modelling that had been undertaken there was no mention of the possible effect of an overall degree classification on students from a widening participation background.
- It was possible that students would be less likely to choose subjects they had not previously studied, thus preventing them from experiencing the breadth of the course.

The Committee agreed that the 0/0/100% model was the only one that could work for NST.

Action: The Chair to send a formal response to the consultation.

954) Annual Report 2017-18

The Committee noted and approved the Report (with some minor amendments) for circulation to the Education Committee of the General Board and to Faculty Boards.

955) Part IA Practical Allocation Report 2018

A report on the Part IA Practical Allocation containing subject choice statistics and a summary of the 2017 allocation process was noted.

Lower student numbers had made the process easier (and very slightly quicker) this year, although there was still concern about the lack of progress on a new allocation system. The Committee look forward to a further report from UIS in Lent Term 2019, to provide an update.

956) Part II Subject Allocation Report 2018

A report on the process was noted and approved. It was further noted that there are still ongoing problems with CamSiS.

957) Part II Allocations – Use of rank metric

A paper authored by the Chair was noted. The Faculty of Biology had asked the Chair to look at how the effects of the different marking criteria used by the Medical and Veterinary Triposes and the Natural Sciences Tripos, might be mitigated. It was clear that NST students were being put at a disadvantage.

The use of a rank metric system where students were allocated on rank rather than marks, would effect a 10% re-balancing. If agreed by the Faculty Board of Biology, the Committee were content with the principle of providing this metric to departments at the time they are sent their list of first choice applicants.

958) Tripos Examinations 2017-18**i. Part IA**

The Committee noted Dr Dee Scadden's report as Chair of Examiners for Part IA in 2017-18.

Dr Scadden mentioned two appeals that were received after the final examiners meeting but noted that neither were related to last year's strike action.

It was noted that students can now initiate appeals through the Office of Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeals (OSCCA) without necessarily having taken advice from their Senior Tutor.

ii. Parts IB, II, III

The Committee noted Dr Kate Plaisted-Grant's report as Chair of Examiners in Parts IB, II and III for 2017-18.

Dr Plaisted-Grant indicated that three appeals were received after the final examiners meeting. Whilst two were fairly straightforward, the other took up a great deal of time and the new process of appeals being conducted through OSCCA seemed unnecessarily complex.

Data showing the classing of individual subjects broken down by gender had been circulated. Dr Plaisted-Grant said that it was fairly inconclusive and more data was required. It was suggested that statistics on the progress and achievements of students from a widening participation background would also be useful.

iii. Reports of External Examiners for the Tripos

The Committee noted that the majority of reports have been received and distributed to Departments for their comments; in general, External Examiners are happy with departmental processes bar a few minor issues. It was noted that External Examiner reports must be made available to students unless cohort numbers mean individual students are identifiable.

959) Proposed Zoology and BBS Module in Astrobiology

A paper had been circulated and Dr Tim Weil outlined the proposal.

The Committee were generally supportive and agreed that it could be an interesting course but wanted to see a firmer commitment from those who had expressed an interest in teaching and some evidence that students were interested in such a course. Dr Weil agreed to bring the proposal back to a future meeting.

960) Any Other Business

There was none.

961) Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as 2:15 pm on Tuesday 29th January 2019 in the Greaves Dixon Room, Department of Pathology, Tennis Court Road.